



Placing the past: 'Groundwork' for a spatial theory of history

Philip J. Ethington

To cite this article: Philip J. Ethington (2007) Placing the past: 'Groundwork' for a spatial theory of history, *Rethinking History*, 11:4, 465-493, DOI: [10.1080/13642520701645487](https://doi.org/10.1080/13642520701645487)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13642520701645487>



Published online: 02 May 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 808



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 13 View citing articles [↗](#)

ARTICLE

Placing the Past: 'Groundwork' for a Spatial Theory of History

Philip J. Ethington

This essay presents an argument that the past is the set of all places made by human action. The past cannot exist in time: only in space. Histories representing the past represent the places (topoi) of human action. Knowledge of the past, therefore, is literally cartographic: a mapping of the places of history indexed to the coordinates of spacetime. The author's reply to published commentary emphasizes the multi-perspectival framework of his theory and the non-narrative potential of visual representation of the past.

Keywords: Historical Theory; Mapping; Past; Place; Space; Time

Précis

All human action *takes* and *makes* place. The past is the set of places made by human action. History is a map of these places.

Introduction

The past cannot exist 'in' time, because time cannot be any sort of frame within which anything can exist. By western definitions, time is something *other* than space, and yet it is incessantly portrayed as something spatial: as a line, a frame, a background, a landscape, and as having orientation. In common usage, the past is behind us and the future is ahead. We speak of the distant past and the gulf of time that separates us from the ancients. These spatial metaphors for time are ubiquitous because they are grounded metaphors, arising from the spatial experience of time. In nature, time—*by*

itself—has no being whatsoever. It is a mere measurement of spatial motion. But human, or *lived* time is another matter. Experiential, memorial time is very real because it takes place. The past cannot exist *in* time: only *in* space. Histories representing the past represent the places (*topoi*) of human action. History is not an account of ‘change over time,’ as the cliché goes, but rather, change through space. Knowledge of the past, therefore, is literally cartographic: a mapping of the places of history indexed to the coordinates of spacetime.

If historical knowledge can mean anything that is distinct from other forms of knowledge, it must mean something about the temporal dimension of human experience in the world. What precisely is this temporal dimension? The experience of memory, common sense, and material evidence all around us strongly indicates that the past *did* exist. What can we add, other than rendering the verb ‘to be’ in its past tense? It is circular to say, ‘the past was.’ What is the signified of ‘*the past*,’ and does it have more than a semiotic existence?

Historians have extensively addressed the question, ‘what is history?’ and how best to study the past. This essay begins with a far simpler question: what is the past, that we could seek to know or represent it in any way? That question depends unavoidably on a larger question: what is time? The process of answering these questions leads to a robust account of experience, as action inscribing the places of the past in spacetime. It also leads to a reconception of historical interpretation as the act of reading places, or *topoi*.

This essay attempts to make a contribution to current discussions about historical knowledge and even to knowledge in general. I advocate a new materialism that incorporates, in good faith, two generations of postpositivist, poststructural, postmodern, and postcolonial critique, and yet moves beyond these negations into a practice that can, in principle, achieve cumulative knowledge through intercultural dialogue on the courses and meanings of the global past. Emplacing historical knowledge entails a radical rethinking of many basic terms that have become nebulous through shorthand use and critical neglect.

Placing the past will also help historians to navigate the most recent ‘turn’ in the human sciences, the ‘spatial turn,’ as instigated by such thinkers as Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Yi-Fu Tuan, David Harvey, Edward Soja, and Edward Casey. Bookshelves groan under the weight of recent discussions of place and space among geographers, anthropologists, and sociologists (Agnew & Duncan 1989; Feld & Basso 1996; Gieryn 2000; Low & Laurence-Zúñiga 2003; Cresswell 2004; Hubbard *et al.* 2004). Amazingly, in the face of all this, almost nothing has been written in the last

three generations by historians directly on the concept of time. I have come to realize that historians cannot merely borrow new ideas about place and space without first conducting a searching examination of their own discipline's home dimension of *temporality*. Just beginning this necessary and long-overdue task may lead to some exciting new possibilities for historical knowledge that can overcome the fragmentations of perspectival contingency.

Before the spatial turn even joined the list of 'turns' in the late 1980s, philosophers, critical theorists, intellectual historians, and others had developed a very advanced debate about the possibilities of producing knowledge of society. This was *not* a debate between some naive believers in objective, scientific value-neutral knowledge on one hand, and relativistic poststructuralists, on the other, as in Peter Novick's (1988) misleading account (Kloppenbergh 1989). Instead, it has been a debate among those who all *agree* that we are in a post-foundational age, aware that linguistic construction, cultural difference, and historical contingency have eliminated the possibility of appealing to timeless, underlying truths, impartial epistemological methods, and the positive accumulation of uncontested knowledge.

Concerned primarily with the possibilities of knowing the past, I shall build my case by remapping the past of knowing. My starting point is the rise of the pragmatic-hermeneutic tradition inaugurated by Wilhelm Dilthey in Germany and William James in the United States, in the closing decades of the 19th century. In that tradition, knowledge of the past lost its atemporal universality and the foundations of universal truth began to crumble. In temporality and historicity, the contingency of knowledge became inescapable. The linguistic turn further separated knowing from the past by adding the semiotic critique of representation to those of historicity and contingency. These traditions branched into several intellectual pathways. Dilthey's historicism was recast by Heidegger, who radicalized Husserl's phenomenology into a temporalization of human being, and then by Derrida, who added semiotics to produce a radical deconstruction of knowledge. James' and John Dewey's closely related pragmatism branched into reconstructive and radically skeptical positions on the possibilities of knowledge, represented by Jürgen Habermas and Richard Rorty, respectively.

I shall argue that a cornerstone of the pragmatic tradition: *temporality* as construed by fin-de-siècle hermeneutics—is in need of reconstruction now that the *spatial* turn has been added to the *linguistic* and *cultural* turns. My interrogation of 'time' will lead back into space and place, through historical regions yet unexplored by the current state of the spatial turn.

From Timeless Historians to an Account of Time

If anything is obvious about the practice of historical research and writing, it is that 'time' is the discipline's most defining feature. For historians, the question 'what is time?' is so basic and essential to our craft that it should be a cause for wonder that historians have evaded it almost completely and for so long. History has been as active as any other discipline in probing its most profound issues of theory and method. The major essayists on the historian's craft, from Carl Becker ([1931] 1966) and Marc Bloch (1953) to E. H. Carr (1961), Fernand Braudel (1980), Siegfried Kracauer (1969), David Hackett Fischer (1970), David Lowenthal (1985), Joan Wallach Scott (1988), Pierre Nora (1996), Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob (1994), Alun Munslow (2000), and most recently, John Lewis Gaddis (2002), show us the necessary limits and also the open possibilities for interpreting and representing the past. I can neither summarize these important works, nor improve on them. Rather, I wish to show that by exposing the ontologic status of time, the questions that all of these works address will take on a new light.

Fernand Braudel's influential scheme of three time scales went farther than most attempts by historians to define the time of the past. In *The Mediterranean* and elsewhere, Braudel argued that human history is composed of three types of time, each 'one aspect of the whole.' In the conclusion to *The Mediterranean*, he wrote of

an attempt to write a new kind of history, total history, written in three different registers, on three different levels, perhaps best described as three different conceptions of time, the writer's aim being to bring together in all their multiplicity the different measures of time past, to acquaint the reader with their coexistence, their conflicts and contradictions, and the richness of experience they hold. (Braudel 1972, II, p. 1238)

The first of these three Braudelian conceptions is the *Longue durée*: 'a history whose passage is almost imperceptible,¹ that of man in his relationship to the environment, a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles.' The second type of time is also a long time span, but less daunting. This conjunctural history: '*histoire conjuncturelle*,' as Braudel came to call it, is a time of 'slow but perceptible rhythms...one could call it social history, the history of groups and groupings' (1972, I, p. 20, italics in original). The third type, a '*histoire événementielle*,' deals with the 'short time span, proportionate to individuals, to daily life, to our illusions, to our hasty awareness—above

all the time of the chronicle and the journalist ...' (1980, p. 28). 'But the worst of it,' Braudel added,

is that there are not merely two or three measures of time, there are dozens, each of them attached to a particular history. Only the sum of these measures, brought together by the human sciences (turned retrospectively to account on the historian's behalf) can give us that total history whose image it is so difficult to reconstitute in its entirety. (1972, II, p. 1238)

Braudel's brilliant pluralization of time scales emerged from his attempt to see the history of a place, which his training under Lucien Febvre had taught him to see geographically and led to his 'homage to those timeless realities whose images recur throughout the whole book' (1972, II, p. 1239).

The thesis that the time of the past must have multiple scales and simultaneous, yet inharmonious, rhythms, was also developed by the art historians Henri Focillon ([1934] 1992) and George Kubler (1962), and further elaborated by Siegfried Kracauer (1969). Neither Braudel nor Kracauer, however, went further than to subdivide 'time' into multiple registers. Left whole as a single timeline, stratified into three or twelve layers by Braudel's 'depth metaphor' (Megill 1989) or separated into different rhythms, time has remained unquestionably necessary as a frame or background for historians to situate 'the past.'

The most recent, and most suggestive, case of portraying the past as a background is John Lewis Gaddis' recent Oxford lectures (2002), comparing the past to a landscape, as a *simile* or *analogy*. Gaddis convincingly shows that the production of historical knowledge is very much 'like' that of a cartographer: the need to operate at different scales, to contextualize, to generalize and particularize simultaneously, to skip time periods and to portray non-adjacent places. But, when Gaddis freely admits that he is *only* offering a simile, he begs the question of what the object of that simile is: if the past is only *like* a landscape, then what *is* it?

To be sure, historians have studied the social and intellectual history of time as perceived, conceived, and lived by past societies (Kern 1983; Pocock 1989; Haraven 1991; Landes 2000), but amazingly, even these historians have left the entire question of *time* as such—the time that makes it meaningful for *them* to say anything at all about 'the past'—unexamined. To historicize anything, including time, requires some assumptions about the nature of time to the historicizing historian. The mother of all assumptions has been that 'time' is a static background, transcendent in its universality. For all their vast differences, the philosophers Kant, Husserl

and Heidegger took the stand that time is transcendent a priori (Dostal 1993), so historians can hardly be blamed for doing so.

Most commonly, historians simply confuse time with chronology and chronometry—the ‘time’ of calendars and clocks. No one seriously debates whether the 18th century came before the 20th, nor that Denis Diderot lived before Jean-Paul Sartre, so this framework called ‘time’ remains reassuringly stable, unproblematic, and consensual. But this convenient evasion tells us nothing about what time actually is, and without knowing that, we cannot ask: what is the past, or history, to time? An excellent starting point is Paul Ricoeur’s (1984–1988) distinction between *cosmic* or *natural* time—that which seems to occur throughout the universe, independent of humanity; and *human* or *lived* time: time as conceived, perceived, and experienced by individuals and their societies, as for example in the studies of ‘collective memory’ (Halbwachs 1992; Nora 1996; Confino 1997; Klein 2000; Kansteiner 2002). As my argument proceeds, I hope to make it clear that these two types of time actually converge by intersecting in places (*topoi*).

Natural Time

To physicists, cosmic or natural time is only part of relativistic ‘spacetime,’ a large-scale structure postulated by Hermann Minkowski and Albert Einstein. Since humans do not yet travel at speeds nearing that of light, historians can be forgiven for not worrying too much about the behavior of time under conditions other than the plodding Newtonian rotations and orbits of the Earth, which tick off the days and years. Even less do they need, on a daily basis, to ponder the bizarre issues of space and time at the quantum level. The commonplace lesson drawn from relativity theory is that there is no privileged perspective or frame for ‘time,’ and therefore, that time cannot be absolute. The speed of light provides the only parameter. Quantum mechanics holds that a particle can be in two different locations at the same time, a possibility that may have no relevance to human affairs, but one which further confounds reassuring notions of some standard background called ‘time’ against which history happens (Sklar 1974).

Time in nature ‘is no more than an arbitrary parameter that is used to describe dynamics, or the mechanics of motion.’ This arbitrary parameter has proven very difficult to standardize precisely. The basic unit used by scientists and engineers to describe these motions and to coordinate the increasingly complex technology of society is the *second*, fixed in 1956 under the *Système Internationale des Unités* (SI) as ‘1/31,556,925.9747th of

the orbital period of the Earth about the Sun.’ But alas, the Earth’s orbital period actually fluctuates slightly, so *that* standard was replaced in 1968 by Resolution #1 of the 13th Conférence Générale des Poids et Mesures (CGPM), to be, rather, ‘9,192,631,770 cycles of the ground-state hyperfine splitting of the unperturbed cesium atom’ (Diddams *et al.* 2004, p. 1318).

Paired with the basic unit of time is the basic unit of space, the SI meter, today defined as ‘the path length traveled by light in a vacuum during the time interval of $1/299,792,458$ of a second’ (Diddams *et al.* 2004, p. 1318).² The original meter was born in the French Revolution as a neat subdivision of the circumference of the Earth (to supplant earlier measures such as the ‘hand’ and the ‘foot’). Humans will calibrate motion with such arbitrary units until the end of the world, never measuring time itself.

We *never* observe time isolated by itself in nature; only motion and the traces of motions. Those traces are the innumerable various inscriptions by natural events and by purposive beings onto their environments. Because collective action is coordinated by cyclical repetitive motions in nature, as in the Earth’s solar orbit or the Moon’s terrestrial orbit, it should be no surprise that these motions and their periodicity became central to human consciousness of time. Classified into units that vary widely by varying conceptions of time (linear, circular, discontinuous, etc.), ‘time’ is nothing *in itself*, but rather a culturally specific reading of the dynamic environment.

That said, natural scientists and philosophers of science have come to agree that in the physical universe, ‘time’ (enclosed in quotes because what follows is actually about the energies and motions of things, and not about time as something independent) is *asymmetrical*: it only ‘flows’ in one direction, and cannot be run backward as a movie can (Feynman 1965; Savitt 1990). Hans Reichenbach (1956) demonstrated why this is so. The argument is simply that thermodynamic processes have an infinitely higher probability of running from low to high states of entropy (from organized to disorganized) than from high to low states of entropy. Sugar cubes dissolve into hot coffee, but sugar in solution with coffee is extremely unlikely to form itself into a cube and rise to the surface. Hence, ‘the direction in which most thermodynamical processes in isolated processes occur is the direction of positive time’ (Reichenbach 1956, p. 127). Here again, however, time is defined as the interval between one entropic state and another. It is the behavior of matter and energy that is observed, not that of time.

It is easy to see, from the ‘asymmetry of time,’ that time travel is impossible because there is no time *in which* to travel. Understanding the being of the past actually depends on an understanding of why this is so.

The spatial field of human experience is an immense, aggregate complex of subatomic and molecular motion. To go 'back in time' cannot mean anything less than forcing all of the particles in our bodies and the world around us into the negative performance of all the motions that they had just completed. This necessarily includes the molecules of the entire planet, because adjacent energies cannot be separated. No individual could break free of the network of energy and matter to visit an earlier state of that network. Either the entire planet goes backward, or nobody does. And even if we could run the entire planet backward, it wouldn't make a difference to anyone, because no one would remember the difference. Memories—stored in the neurobiological complex of the brain—would be *unmade* as time went backwards, and *remade* as time went forward again. A different 'present' might result, but no one would be able to remember the original 'present.' This kind of time travel means that the entire world must always experience each 'time' for the first time. Natural or cosmic 'time' cannot be a container or background of any spatial sort, in which to travel. Time *is* travel.

All matter is in motion, so all space is dynamic. The only sensible term for this environment is 'spacetime,' which I shall use from this point on.

Lived Time

What then of human, or experienced, time? It may be clear that time is illusory in nature, but isn't our experience of it in daily life, our feeling of it passing, our conviction of it as memory, and our collective knowledge of it as history, real? Let us now enquire whether there can be a substance to this time, and if so, is it possible to speak of a 'past' as something real enough that we can obtain knowledge of it?

Despite historians' indifference, a mountain of philosophical and scholarly texts since antiquity are devoted to unraveling the mystery of human and natural time (Grünbaum 1963; Sherover 1975; Carr 1986; Flood & Lockwood 1986). Models of time—as linear, circular, eternal, fragmentary, discontinuous—are as diverse as the cultures of the globe (Aguessy *et al.* 1977; Fraser 1981). Limitations of space require me to enter this massive background through a single regional tradition: the Euro-American beginning of the 20th century.

In two very different ways, the philosophers J. Allen McTaggart and Henri Bergson cast damning doubt on the 'reality' of the linear, or spatial, model of time. McTaggart's influential 1908 essay, 'The Unreality of Time,' established the convention of distinguishing between two very different kinds of temporal 'series.' In the 'A series,' events occur in moments that

run from the future to the present and then into the past. In the ‘B series,’ events are either ‘earlier’ or ‘later.’ Considering ‘pastness,’ ‘presentness,’ and ‘futurity’ to be either relations among or qualities of events, McTaggart concluded that the A series is contradictory, because past, present, and future are ‘incompatible determinations,’ and yet ‘every event has them all’ in that each event somehow changes its state (1908, p. 468). The A series also clashes with the B series. The event of the death of William Shakespeare (1616) occurred before the event of the death of Queen Anne (1714), and remains, always, 98 years prior to the latter. Thus, these events must remain fixed and yet they are asked to move or change states in the A series from being future, to present, to past—to shift down the line, as it were, to make room for new events. From this, McTaggart reasoned that time cannot be part of reality.

But McTaggart neatly dispatched from ‘reality’ only the *abstract* time that corresponds to another abstraction—space. Since this time is only read from planetary motion with everyday clocks, it cannot function like something spatial in itself, much less something with the capacity to ‘move,’ as when time ‘passes.’ It is not a background or ground of any kind, just the interval point-observations of bodies in motion. But neither consciousness nor social action is possible without a real sense of time. That kind of time was theorized vividly by Henri Bergson.

Bergson cut through McTaggart’s Gordian Knot with his famous distinction between linear time sequences and ‘duration’ (*durée*). In a series of essays, books, and his immensely popular lectures at the Collège de France, Bergson argued that ‘real time’ is essentially a human phenomenon, since two ‘moments’ can only meaningfully constitute a temporal relation via memory ([1890], [1896], [1907], [1922]). ‘To tell the truth, it is impossible to distinguish between the duration, however short it may be, that separates two instants and a memory that connects them, because duration is essentially a continuation of what no longer exists into what does exist. This is real time, perceived and lived’ ([1922] 2002, p. 208).³ In nature then, time in isolation quite definitely cannot exist, but in human consciousness it must. We are left with the result that human, subjective, psycho-socially constructed ‘time’ is real, while natural, objectively measured ‘time’ is an illusion. Given the typical prioritization of the physical over the imaginary, this irony deserves further attention. Indeed, since humans are part of nature, the irony may indicate a conceptual flaw in the distinction between human and natural time. I shall return to this possibility later.

Certainly, if human experience is real, then the temporality of that experience is no less real. But Bergson’s distinction between ‘real’ time and

the abstraction of measured time, and his dismissal of the latter's 'spatial' character, is fundamentally flawed and requires a historical critique.

The Time of Metaphoric Space

Bergson's conception of 'real time' as *duration* thematized 'the present' as the genuine field of human temporality. In this project he had good company. United as 'philosophers of life,' Wilhelm Dilthey, William James, and Henri Bergson successfully raised *presentness* in streams of time as a critical feature of consciousness. The temporality of consciousness, in turn, was a key feature of the pragmatic-hermeneutic project to establish the contingency of knowledge within historic contexts. So far, so good. But I want to reinforce these intellectual achievements by exposing the weak metaphoric spatiality deployed by the founding generation of the hermeneutic and pragmatic traditions.

William James, whose enthusiasm for Bergson is well known, independently developed the idea of 'stream of consciousness' to characterize the indivisibility of lived time. Already in his *Principles of Psychology* ([1890] 1983) he concluded his chapter on the 'Perception of Time'

by saying that we are constantly conscious of a certain duration—the specious present—varying in length from a few seconds to probably not more than a minute, and that this duration (with its content perceived as having one part earlier and the other part later) is the original intuition of time. Longer times are conceived by adding, shorter ones by dividing, portions of this vaguely bounded unit, and are habitually thought by us symbolically. ([1890] 1983, p. 603)

James' influential account apprehends time in its 'flow': the present is specious because as soon as we can think of it, it is past, and the duration of this passage has no fixed measure. As in Bergson's *durée*, the specious present seems to refute the very logic of measured time, which represents moments as points.

'The representations by which we possess the past and the future are there only for us as we live in the present,' writes Wilhelm Dilthey in his uncompleted *Critique of Historical Reason*. 'The present is always there, and nothing is there except what emerges in it.' 'Nothing' is a strong claim. How literally can we take it? If the past is part of reality, then according to Dilthey, it must exist only 'in' the present. 'The present,' continues Dilthey, 'is the fullness of a moment of time being filled with reality; it is reality as distinct from memory or representations of the future as found in wishes,

expectations, hopes, fears, and strivings' (2002, p. 215). *Presenting* the past is a cornerstone of Dilthey's philosophy of history because his goal was to situate both the historical subject and the historian, a goal that had deep epistemological implications.

'Action everywhere presupposes the understanding of other persons,' Dilthey explains, 'so at the threshold of the human sciences we encounter a problem specific to them alone and quite distinct from all conceptual knowledge of nature' (2002, p. 235). Dilthey successfully enshrined 'interpretation' as the core method of the human sciences and therewith erected a formidable barrier between the human and natural sciences. He also made it clear that an endless circle would bedevil the interpreter, whose own interpretive 'position' (a historically situated cultural perspective) would also be implicated in the interpretation of others, and vice versa. Thus, Dilthey also founded 'hermeneutics' as a branch of philosophy devoted to reflecting on the problems of interpretation, the goal of which is to reach intersubjective understanding (*Verstehen*). Further, Dilthey thoroughly historicized the human sciences: 'The decisive element in Dilthey's inquiry,' writes Martin Heidegger, 'is not the theory of the sciences of history but the tendency to bring the reality of the historical into view and to make clear from this the manner and possibility of its interpretation' ([1924] 1992, p. 17).

But Dilthey's clarity regarding historical temporality is mitigated by his lavish use of spatial metaphors, the irony of which requires serious attention. 'The ship of our life is carried forward on a constantly moving stream, as it were, and the present is always wherever we enter these waves with whatever we suffer, remember, and hope, that is, whenever we live in the fullness of our reality' (2002, p. 215). The lack of precision in this sentence was perhaps intentional; Dilthey's 'as it were' flags the image as intended metaphor. But 'wherever' is conflated with 'whenever.' Throughout his direct examination of time, Dilthey never breaks free from a basic spatial metaphorization, which he never stops to examine. 'When we look back at the past, we are passive; it cannot be changed. . . . But in our attitude toward the future we are active and free. . . . thus the lived experience of time determines the content of our lives in all directions' (2002, p. 215). 'Back,' 'toward,' 'directions.' The 'present,' Dilthey writes, is 'there.' *Where?*

As a painter and physician whose literary creativity rivaled that of his novelist brother, William James' richly visual language for time perception delivers a flood of metaphor: '*The knowledge of some other part of the stream, past or future, near or remote, is always mixed in with our knowledge of the present*' ([1890] 1983, p. 571, italics in original). 'To think a thing past is to think it amongst the objects or in the direction of objects which at

the present moment appear affected by this quality' (p. 570). Without irony, James quotes the following: 'Le moment où je parle est déjà loin de moi' (p. 573).⁴ By the end of his chapter on the 'Perception of Time,' James is swept away by his own spatial metaphors: 'In short, the practically cognized present is no knife edge, but a saddle-back' (p. 574). And finally: 'The same space of time seems shorter as we grow older ...' (p. 588). Not surprisingly, James' otherwise compelling chapter on 'The Perception of Space' (pp. 776–912) has nothing to say about spatial metaphors, much less is it marked by temporal metaphors for space.⁵

I contend that this metaphoric entanglement with space is filled with powerful clues as to the nature of time, and holds profound importance for the debate about historical knowledge of the past. In their enthusiastic embrace of temporality, the modernists of Dilthey's generation failed to appreciate the implications of their own metaphors. Spatiality, presumably an indispensable dimension of being, was left behind as these modernists entered the flow of time. Dilthey and James left spatiality in the unthematized condition of metaphor; while Bergson considered spatialization a curse and left it in negation, banishing it from 'real time.' Building in part on Dilthey's historical hermeneutics, Martin Heidegger further radicalized the implications of *Lebensphilosophie* by constituting human temporality as an *ontological* question. He also surpassed his predecessors in the metaphoric evasion of spatiality.

Being and Time (Heidegger [1927] 1962) is the limit case of the modernist prioritization of time over space. 'Our provisional aim,' Heidegger writes in the Preface to *Being and Time*, 'is the Interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being' ([1927] 1962, p. 1, italics in original). But the temporality of Heidegger's *Dasein* is, a priori, a transcendent dimension, as Dostal (1993) shows. Time to Heidegger is the mother of all assumptions. It simply is, and everything 'whatsoever' appears to consciousness against this 'horizon.' Heidegger's opus, it turns out, helps us to confront time only in an oblique way, because *Dasein* can only know itself temporally. It is always already temporal and always already being-there: 'primordially' ([1927] 1962, p. 385) engaged with the everyday. Despite his profound conceptualization of being-there, and the presentness of *Dasein*, Heidegger is determined to keep the spatiality of that being secondary to its temporality. Heidegger purchased his achievement through a massive (and evasive) metaphorization of space: *Dasein* is '*already alongside*' itself, '*ahead-of-itself*,' or '*thrown and falling*' ([1927] 1962, pp. 141, 375, 477, italics in original).

Heidegger was not neglectful of space in *Being and Time*. On the contrary, he aggressively pursued a project to temporalize it. In section 70 he writes of 'the function of temporality as the *foundation* for *Dasein*'s

spatiality ...' ([1927] 1962, p. 421, emphasis added). But an older and wiser Heidegger admitted that his temporal existentialism had led him into a dead end. In his 1962 essay 'Time and Being' (what was originally, in 1927, supposed to be the title of the second volume of his *magnum opus*), he writes: 'The attempt in *Being and Time*, section 70, to derive human spatiality from temporality is untenable' (Krell 1995, pp. 43–44; Casey 1997, pp. 243–284; Heidegger 2002, p. 23).

I propose reading Heidegger backward: disregarding his unsustainably transcendent temporality, literalizing his spatial metaphors, and imagining *Dasein's* horizon as that of its given spatiality, against which time becomes meaningful. Spatiality is the missing keystone of the pragmatic-hermeneutic edifice, just as temporality is its elusive foundation.

Etymologies Past and Present

The unreflective spatial metaphorization of time by the modernists was a fateful mistake, but it can be easily explained. Spatial metaphors for time are 'grounded metaphors' in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980, 1999) terminology. It is not accidental that we use them to talk about time, because our experience of time is movement in space. If metaphors form a bridge between language and experience, they also open a door to escape the prisonhouse of language, enabling us to express more than that symbolic system can signify (Ricoeur 1981). Metaphor cuts two ways, then. Observed historically, it illuminates the intersection of language with experience. In communicative action, it transcends experience to enable the creative transformation of language in purposive projects.

The metaphoric conflation of time and space is observable in the *Oxford English Dictionary's* historical etymology of 'the present' and 'the past' (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 2003). The OED's entry for 'present, *n.*' provides the following account: 'Anglo-Norman and Old French, Middle French *present* (French *présent*) presence (early 13th cent. or earlier in Anglo-Norman), thing which or person who is present (c1225 in Old French), (in grammar) present tense (c1245), present time, period of time now occurring (a1278)' (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 2007). To *be* present and to *be in the present* originally held the same meaning. This conflation is evident today in the simple answer to a roll-call: 'present!'

We learn the same lesson from the etymology of 'past.' As the past participle of the verb 'to pass,' it gradually evolved a nominal form. The spelling 'passed' was truncated into 'past' over the centuries by speakers and writers, observable between Chaucer's 'The day is short, and it is passed' (*Franklin's Tale*, 1476) and Charlotte Brontë's 'It was past four o'clock, and the beclouded afternoon was tending to drear twilight' (*Jane Eyre*, 1847).

In both of these examples, time is metaphorically represented as a spatial passing. The nominal form of ‘the past,’ expressing ‘a time that has gone by; a time, or all of the time, before the present,’ did not appear until about 1500, but the same spelling continued to signify a strictly spatial passing, as in Shakespeare’s ‘My lord, the enemy is past the marsh’ (*Richard III*, 1596), and today’s ‘just past the next intersection’ (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 2003).

This brief look at the past of ‘the past’ shows evolution from a verb signifying action and motion of bodies in space, to an adjective and adverb signifying time by metaphorizing space, to a noun referring to prior times. Withal, the temporal meaning of ‘the past’ contains a spatial understanding of phenomena in motion: that which had ‘passed’ the observer. ‘Time’ begins to make sense again as a landscape, but only in a de-metaphorized, spatial sense. We *do* push off into the future with every move of our bodies, but that ‘future’ is nothing more than the next emplacement of the bodies of the world, leaving behind the places of the past (passed) with every new configuration of presence. As the later Heidegger explained, even our most fundamental verb, *to be*, evolved from the verb *to dwell* (Heidegger [1951] 1993).⁶

The Social Choreography of Georg Simmel

Georg Simmel was the *only* modernist in the hermeneutic revolution inaugurated by Dilthey to theorize spatiality as integral to the human sciences. His formulation is worth examining in detail because he developed a method of linking the metaphoric with the non-metaphoric senses of space. It provides us with a link to the historicism of Dilthey, and thereby a direct path toward the reconstruction of that tradition. It has also been completely ignored by the current discourse on spatiality.

Spatiality as an analytic category finally came into its own in the 1960s and 1970s, with the work of Gaston Bachelard [1958], Michel Foucault [1967], Henri Lefebvre (1974), and Yi-Fu Tuan (1977). Thanks primarily to the work of Edward Soja (1989, 1996) and David Harvey (1989), a ‘spatial turn’ has occurred in many of the human sciences. So successful have Soja and Harvey been in spreading the pathbreaking ideas of Lefebvre that it is no exaggeration to call the current discourse on spatiality ‘Lefebvrian’ (Elden 2001).

Lefebvre’s *Production de l’Espace* (1974; tr. *The Production of Space* 1991) is justifiably admired as a deep well of insight, reworking many strands of western philosophy to interrogate the category of space from a variety of angles. Lefebvre has contributed permanently to our conceptual tool set with his distinction—already widely cited in the human sciences—between

‘spatial practice’ (the practical material work carried out spatially in any given society), ‘representations of space’ (the ways that society represents its own spatiality), and ‘spaces of representation’ (the arts, architecture, and other environmental texts that society deploys in its self-representation). This triad is useful in itself, but Lefebvre encloses it within an unnecessarily convoluted tangle of neo-Hegelian ‘moments,’ comprehending, in Edward Dimendberg’s (1998) succinct explication,

existing social space as a concrete universal containing three terms (spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representation), three levels (perceived, conceived, lived), and three forms of space (absolute, historical, abstract) that particularize themselves with specific contents at different time periods. (1998, p. 29)⁷

The current Lefebvrian discourse, however, ignores the pioneering spatial thinking of Georg Simmel.⁸ Limitations of space force me to summarize my much more extensive treatment of Simmel (Ethington 1997, 2005), but it is notoriously difficult to summarize Simmel’s thought in any case. Max Weber, Siegfried Kracauer, and Talcott Parsons all abandoned the effort, leaving their manuscripts on Simmel unpublished (Frisby 1987, 1990, pp. xxvi, 2; Levine 1991). His own contemporaries ‘... clearly found it difficult to locate Simmel’s work within some readily recognized discipline and tradition’ (Frisby 1990, p. 2). Nevertheless, it is quite clear that his thought is a variation on *Lebensphilosophie*, despite his failure to acknowledge his deep debt to Dilthey.⁹

Integral to Simmel’s formal approach was his spatial understanding of intersubjective social interaction. His distinctive treatment of social spatiality is evident in one of his best-known essays, ‘The Stranger’ ([1908] 1971). Simmel constructs ‘the stranger’ as a social form: ‘a form of being together,’ ‘a form of union based on interaction.’ Strangeness is ‘create[ed]’ by ‘factors of repulsion and distance’ working together (Simmel [1908] 1971, p. 144). Not mobility itself, but the ‘appearance of this mobility within a group occasions that synthesis of nearness and remoteness which constitutes the formal position of the stranger’ (p. 145). Simmel expands this treatment of the near/far synthesis to claim that in the stranger he has identified a feature of ‘every human relationship’:

In the case of the stranger, the union of closeness and remoteness involved in every human relationship is patterned in a way that may be succinctly formulated as follows: the distance within this relation indicates that one who is close by is remote, but his strangeness indicates that one who is remote is near. The state of being a stranger is of course a completely positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction. (p. 143)

Simmel makes space work in two distinct senses in this passage: as *metaphor* for intersubjective intimacy and as non-metaphoric *geometric* space. ‘Closeness’ and ‘remoteness’ are at first unspecified, but after the colon, ‘close by’ and ‘near’ are meant geometrically, while ‘remote’ is meant intersubjectively.

Simmel’s signal achievement is the fusion of metaphoric and geometric spatiality in a single conceptual framework, one that successfully resists hypostatizing or abstracting ‘space’ in the ways Lefebvre (1991, pp. 229–292) complains of. Crucial to Simmelian space is the ineluctable quality of the ‘boundary,’ a social form that is common to both consciousness and to society. Simmel also outlined, but did not fully flesh out, the idea that social interactions are spatial configurations for the same reasons that consciousness is organized (as he took from Kant) by a series of categorical *boundaries*. ‘The boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially’ (Simmel 1997, p. 143). The boundary is perhaps the most suggestive aspect of Simmelian spatiality, reflecting the indeterminate position of the subject: ‘By virtue of the fact that we have boundaries everywhere and always,’ Simmel writes, ‘so accordingly we *are* boundaries’ (Simmel 1971, p. 353, italics in original).

Simmel’s ‘boundary’ is both geometrically and metaphorically spatial. It is the intersection of these two types of spatiality, a parallel to the pragmatists’ denial of the mind/body dualism. The spatiality of experience complements its temporality in ways that the pragmatic-hermeneutic tradition has not fully appreciated (in large part because Simmel’s sociology was largely a-historic). Historians, ever indebted to Dilthey’s construction of the human sciences, have carried forward his incomplete account of experience, which is historical but placeless. By emplacing experience, Simmel’s theoretically compatible handiwork repairs Diltheyan epistemology by accounting for experience *as form*, with both geometric and metaphorical spatiality.

Placing the Critique of Space

The world comes bedecked in places. It is a place-world to begin with.
(Casey 1996, p. 43)

Simmel’s insistence that all social forms are in a perpetual state of dynamism through sites of interaction; his location of those forms in the embodied self as intersection and boundary; and his refusal to reduce contingency and plurality to system and abstraction, well suit the spirit

of today's post-foundational world. It is no accident that two of his students, Walter Benjamin and Sigfried Kracauer, have returned to prominence with such force (Frisby 1986; Schwartz 2001). Among many other qualities, Simmel's work makes visible the suppressed spatiality of Dilthey's historicism. Simmel's achievements, however, are hard to appreciate in part because most of what he calls 'space' is now understood as place, and this distinction is of major importance in current debates.

Two very different approaches to the space–place distinction will now be explored: Henri Lefebvre's neo-Marxian approach and Edward Casey's much more radical phenomenological approach. While simplistic, it is not misleading to say that in the current discourse, 'place' is good and 'space' is bad. 'Place is an organized world of meaning,' Tuan writes (1977, p. 179). Places are experiential, memorial, emotive, subjective, even poetic (Bachelard [1958] 1964). Spaces are objective, abstract, measurable, 'scientific' and universal. Space in this framework is the alienating and exploitative handiwork of the capitalist bourgeoisie, bearing the same relation to place as exchange value does to use value in the Marxian account of commodities.

Henri Lefebvre's 'history' of the entire period from the Italian *quattrocento* through the 20th century is one long rise of the bourgeoisie and its alienating gaze: 'The outcome has been a brutal and authoritarian spatial practice, whether Haussmann's or the later, codified versions of the Bauhaus or Le Corbusier; what is involved in all cases is the effective application of the analytic spirit in and through dispersion, division and segregation' (1991, p. 308). Lefebvre's broad brush smears the diverse work of the Bauhaus (which in the hands of Walter Gropius was deeply social-democratic) by association with Hausmann's destruction of Paris and Le Corbusier's ill-conceived sterile spaces.

Lefebvre's thesis of panoptic and authoritarian implications of abstract space have been echoed in the neo-Marxian writings of David Harvey, and by a wide range of postcolonial thinkers who trace the abstraction of space and time to European imperialism (Blaut 1993). The development of precision clocks and reliable latitude and longitude measurements for navigation during the 16th and 17th centuries was conducted by imperial, authoritarian regimes, and by the cultures that invented the racial categories and generated the brutal boundaries of colonial exploitation. But the abstract grid of 'space' is ultimately a neutral frame, mere *instrumental* rationality, not to be confused with the *value* rationality of a particular instance of deploying it—to use Max Weber's important distinction.

Technically, flat maps of the globe are not panoptic but orthogonal: every point is seen from its own perpendicular, so they can be instruments of subaltern perspectives and multicultural dialogue as substantially as anything else. Besides, the grid of global spacetime has now become institutionalized among all cultures, so it is more important to understand its relation to place, and that task has been accomplished by a thinker whose intellectual history of the space/place split has now made Lefebvre's ideas on abstract space seem obsolete.

In *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (1997), Edward Casey shows that place long reigned as the 'supreme term' in western thought, but that 'by the end of the eighteenth century, it vanished altogether from serious theoretical discourse in physics and philosophy,' demoted during the rise of modern science into mere *position*. Modern natural and social scientific method relegates places to mere instances or points in space. In the Newtonian model infinite space is the foundation and frame that gives meaning to any given position. All local cases are but variant particularities to be combed for common patterns that are the golden nuggets extracted by scientific methods. But Casey convincingly dismantles this denigration of place by asking: 'What if things are the other way around? What if the very idea of spaces is posterior to that of place? . . . Could place be general and "space" particular?' (1996, p. 17). Casey's starting point is 'our own lived body,' always already emplaced. 'The body,' he writes, 'is the specific medium for experiencing the place-world' (p. 24). Bodies, moreover, are bilateral, with left, right, forward, and backward orientation. In structure and function, bodies orient, and so all (always embodied) perception and consciousness is already emplaced. 'We are never anywhere, anywhen,' Casey writes, 'but in place' (p. 39).

What then is place? 'A place is more an *event* than a *thing* to be assimilated to known categories,' Casey writes; it is not 'a mere patch of ground, a bare stretch of earth, a sedentary set of stones' (1996, p. 26). Most usefully, Casey explains that 'places gather': 'Being in a place is being in a configurative complex of things.' Furthermore, 'places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts' (pp. 24–25). Places 'hold' and 'keep' in Casey's terminology. Memories 'belong as much to the place as to my brain or body' (p. 25). They are, therefore, collective phenomena, transformed by the sentient bodies that inhabit, know, or recognize them. Places are the condition of possibility for human culture itself: 'To be cultural, to have a culture, is to inhabit a place sufficiently intensively to cultivate it . . . Culture is carried into places by bodies. To be encultured is to be embodied to begin with' (p. 34).

Casey's interpretation trumps Lefebvre's critique of abstract space by demonstrating the dependence of the abstract time/space binarism on the primacy of place:

Not only do imperial space and time require recourse to lowly places in their very definition (rather than conversely), but also the status of space and time as equal but opposite terms is put into question by their common emplacement. The binarist dogma stretching from Newton and Leibniz to Kant and Schopenhauer is undone by the basic perception that we experience space and time together in place—in the locus of a continuous 'space-time' that is proclaimed alike in twentieth-century physics, philosophy and anthropology. (1996, p. 37)

Casey's placeful phenomenology beautifully compliments Simmel's formal sociology. Through both, we can see how social forms take place, how they are always *in statu nascendi*, and why we can find *all human phenomena originally arising in and from places*. It is time to recognize that history must be about those places if it aspires to recount the past.

The *Topoi* of the Past

We are now ready to understand the relationship between the past, time, and history. Every past is a place (emphatically in the present tense because the past is always present). All action and experience *takes place*, in the sense that it requires place as a prerequisite, and *makes place*, in the sense of inscription. Casey draws from Aristotle the observation that it is impossible to think of a phenomenon or event without thinking of it in some place. Even a void is a place of nothingness. Places are prior necessities of all phenomena: place 'takes precedence of all other things' (Aristotle, *Physics*, quoted in Casey 1997, p. 51). Events are places and vice versa.

I propose that we refer to the places of the past as *topoi*. The noun *topos* (place) began its long career in western discourse in the fields of rhetoric and logic. Our everyday term for any subject of study or concern, 'topic,' originates in *topos*. In Aristotle's *Topics*, the first western treatise on logic, *topoi* are the logical stratagems for defending or refuting propositions.¹⁰ Although Aristotle never explicitly defines the term, it was most likely borrowed from the widely practiced mnemonic system of using geographic locations (familiar sites along a road, or rooms within one's own house) to anchor memories. Thus, the 'argument form' necessary for a given refutation could be quickly retrieved in debate (Slomkowski 1997, pp. 43–68; Smith 1997, pp. xxiv–xxx). 'Each *topos* serves as a location at which

many arguments may be found by appropriate substitutions in the relevant form' (Smith 1997, p. xxvii).

Ernst Robert Curtius (1948) and Leo Spitzer (1948) simultaneously recast *topoi* from the classical and neoclassical traditions into a central tool of 20th-century literary criticism. Their basic idea is that the vast field of world literature recycles recognizable 'commonplaces': the same 'analogies, the same bits of doctrine... the same modes or lines of proof, the same myths,' such as 'the reference of values to the ambiguous norm of Nature; the antitheses of nature and art, the simple and the complex, the regular and the irregular, the uniform and the diverse; the notions of progress, decline, and cyclical change...' (Crane 1954, pp. 74–75). R. S. Crane's lucid explication of these recurrent concepts as '*topoi*' constitutes a cartographic method that I wish to retain in my usage: '... Wherever they occur, they represent not so much what the writers in whose treatises, essays, poems, or novels we find them are thinking *about* as much as what they are thinking *with*.' Thus, 'the more broadly learned we are, indeed, the more correspondences of this kind, linking together parts or brief passages in writings of the most diverse sorts, we shall be likely to note in the margins of our books...' (p. 75).

Topoi are recognizable because we can map them within a general topology of the known or familiar. All action, whether building pyramids, making love, writing, or reading, takes and makes place; all individuals are the creative authors of their own presence. Reading our environment is a holistic endeavor, whether in an everyday mode or with the expert methods of the historian. Each element, every sign, is only legible in relation to the entire mental map of the world carried within our crania. The cranium also serves as a referential point-coordinate (perspective). That which has been brought into legible view, such as any aspect of 'the past' (however marked as such) is by definition something that has been mapped into the network of known or familiar phenomena. Anything that cannot be mapped is beyond the event horizon of consciousness.

Topoi collapse time. I use the term *topoi* to denote the specific places of the past because it carries the useful metaphoric Aristotelian and New Criticism traditions, and also the geometric sense of its original usage, from which the metaphor was originally drawn. For Aristotle as for me, it is sometimes useful to think metaphorically of places, as places of memory.¹¹ That familiar understanding (among many others) that I share with this stranger from ancient Greece places us together in a topological relationship. Known pasts (*topoi*) are mapped onto other known *topoi*, in a process that constitutes a vast multi-perspectival atlas of world history.

History is the map of the past, but that map is not merely a representation. *Topoi* touch the ground in myriad ways. They are not in time; they are in space. They can only be discovered, interpreted, and debated via the coordinates of spacetime. *Topoi* are not free-floating signifiers.

History is the map of past. Its elemental units are *topoi*. In my latest vintage of this term, *topos* signifies the intersection of (lived) place-time and (natural) spacetime.

History as Cartography

It matters that history *takes* and *makes* place because knowing the *topoi* of history is literally to map the human past. I mean to expand the meaning of ‘mapping’ very broadly, but I shall not dilute it into merely a suggestive metaphor. Maps represent the relationships among *topoi*, be they points, lines, polygons, or actions, events, experiences, and ideas. Definitions of the noun and verb form of ‘map’ range from ‘the representation of the earth’s surface or part of it on a flat surface,’ to the metaphoric ‘conceptualization or mental representation of the structure, extent, or layout of an area of experience, field of study, ideology, etc.’ (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 2005).

I can reach Cambridge from Los Angeles by consulting maps depicting the pathways now in use. I can understand the sense of ‘virtue’ current in 16th-century Cambridge by consulting a range of historical texts that track the discursive pathways both prior to that place and since. Pocock’s brilliant *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975) mapped the vast network of texts (traces of communicative action) that made ‘virtue’ a powerful keyword in early modern Europe. Cartography refers to the making of maps, of course, but there is no official definition of what a map should look like. It can be pictorial, verbal, or mathematical. The only basic requirement is that a map depict the topological relationships among *topoi*, whether ‘Cambridge’ or ‘virtue.’

Pictorial maps communicate via vocabularies of shape (points, lines, and polygons), color, tone, and iconography. Those vocabularies are organized by a syntax comprised of contiguity, scale, paths, distance, area (zones, regions, boundaries), volume, and legend. Pictorial maps are typically synchronic ‘snapshots,’ but they can be drawn and even animated to represent time, motion, and processes. Maps and mapping are today subjected to a critical discourse about the visual representation of space and place that is epitomized in the multivolume *The History of Cartography* (1987–2007), edited by J. B. Harley and David Woodward,

and the work both of these late scholars did to clarify the ideological and ideational constructedness of maps. But, as Jane Azevedo (1997) has argued, although all maps 'are constructed with interests in mind' (p. 108) their validity is not necessarily undermined by that construction because their use value inheres in enabling us to achieve objectives. Even maps of radically different construction must be 'deeply compatible' because 'a mapping relationship exists between any two maps of the same territory' (pp. 107, 144).

Cartography is not inherently flawed because of its reinvention during the imperial epoch of the European Renaissance. The critique of Eurocentric, scientific space is an instance of perspectivalism: the attribution of knowledge or understanding to the social location of the subject. Perspectivalism along with related concepts of 'subject positions' and 'positionality' (LaCapra 2004, p. 5) have been deployed extensively in the current crisis of knowledge to undermine the possibility of any objective or certain knowledge. Postcolonial scholarship has regionalized (Prakash 1999), even *provincialized* (Chakrabarty 2000) western epistemology (Blaut 1993). Perspective itself now must be subjected to critique of its grounded metaphoricality in order to understand subject positions as *topoi* that can be mapped. Mapping cartography is vital to my proposal to rethink historical interpretation as a form of mapping.

We owe to Hayden White (1973, 1985) our map of the 'tropics' of historical discourse. White influentially explicated the ways that irony, metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche supply the four basic 'tropes' by which historians arrange data about the past. He further claimed that historians arbitrarily 'emplot' these data as Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire. But we have labored too long under the shadow of White's radical skepticism about the value of the data themselves as sources of historical knowledge. Following the same faulty pathways through the linguistic turn as so many modernists and postmodernists, White failed to see that the past takes place, and that textual narrative is not the only way to present the places of the past. I propose that we move from White's 'metahistorical' tropics toward a *topology* of the past. His tropics, after all, are clear cases of *topoi* as are his own interventions. Cartography's infinitely possible figurations cannot be reduced to narrative form. Indeed, a cartographic history can escape the narrative *topoi* of White's historical epistemology.

It should be very clear by this point that I am not talking about the traditional field of historical geography, although that field is certainly not irrelevant (Baker 2003). Instead, I am claiming that the incalculable volume

of historical writing on all subjects should be thought of as a map because the past can only be known by placing it, and the way of knowing places is to map them. The emplacement of all human action presumes locations in spacetime, which materializes each place. The 'landscape of history,' to return to Gaddis' phrase, proves to be far more than a useful analogy. By interrogating the temporality of history, we have revealed experience as the intersection of place and space, which is also the intersection of human and natural time. Recognizing the placefulness of pastness indicates a clear pathway around the blockades raised by the linguistic turn.

Mapping is the form of interpretation that historians practice. Their hermeneutic operation is intrinsically cartographic, or possibly choreographic, for all life is movement, despite the conceptual utility (as in Benjamin) of freezing it photographically. However daunting may seem the prospect of 'mapping' such intangible *topoi* as love, greed, faith, ambition, racism, justice (and all the various forms of cultural cognition that historians must address), the task is unavoidable given that all human actions inscribe *topoi*, and every *topos* is simultaneously locatable and meaningful.

Conclusions

What does 'placing the past' accomplish? How does this formulation amount to more than a clever new phrase, renaming what we already know? First, I hope that by adding the ingredient of spatiality to the pragmatic-hermeneutic tradition, grafted back into that tradition by way of its lost relative Georg Simmel, we can strengthen recent postpositivist work in the pragmatic tradition (Bernstein 1983; Appleby *et al.* 1994; Kloppenber 1996; Hacking 1999, 2002).

Because it pivots on the concept of grounded metaphors, the method of placing the past could be called neo-foundational. Placing the past recognizes no boundary between natural and human inquiry, because all *topoi* are placeful spacetimes, both meaningful and measurable. The knowing subject is the material world reaching back to itself. Placing the past does not depend on Cartesian dualisms, like John Searle's case for 'external reality' (Searle 1995). I propose that the coordinates of spacetime (using any generally recognized system) are a post-foundational universal, not as a natural truth, but much better: as historical institution. Placing the past anchors dialogic reason to universal, mappable criteria. Placing the past takes 'the past' out of time, locates it in materialized *topoi*, and asserts that history, in any symbolic system, is the map of these *topoi*.

Acknowledgements

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the organizers of, and participants in, four forums in which I presented the earlier formulations of this essay: Joan Neuberger and David Crew at the University of Texas, Austin (September 2003); Lourdes Roca and Fernando Aguaya at the Instituto de Investigaciones Dr José María Luis Mora ('El Mora') in Mexico City (October 2003); José María Cardesin at the Universidad de La Coruña, Spain (November 2005); and Kathleen Canning and William Rosenberg at the Institute for Historical Studies at the University of Michigan (September 2006). For their critical comments on earlier drafts, my thanks also to Richard Fox, Jason Glenn, Valerie Kivelson, James Kloppenberg, David Levitus, David Lloyd, Carol Mangione, Steve Ross, Vanessa Schwartz, Brooke Selling, Binky Walker, and an anonymous reader. A special thanks to my infinitely patient and encouraging editor, David Harlan.

Notes

- [1] Siân Reynolds' translation of this crucial passage is revealing, however. Braudel's 1949 original of the italicized phrase reads 'une histoire quasi-immobile,' which could well have been translated as 'a history somewhat fixed in place' (Braudel 1949, p. xiii).
- [2] The first universal standard established was that in 1889 by the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures, an 'artifact unit' prototype of a meter made from platinum and iridium and stored under glass in a cool, dry place in Sèvres, France. Intolerably subject nonetheless to expansion and contraction, the stately thing was replaced in 1960 and again in 1983 by the 11th and 17th Resolutions of the CGPM, respectively. See SI Brochure, Section 2.1.1.1, www.bipm.fr/, under 'metre.'
- [3] Jorge Luis Borges makes a powerful case against 'time' in this way, drawing explicitly on Bergson (and Berkeley, and himself) in his anguished and evocative essay 'A New Refutation of Time' ([1944, 1948], 1962).
- [4] Literally, 'The moment where I speak is already far from me,' but idiomatically, 'Just as I speak the moment is already far from me.'
- [5] To the asymmetry of time we might add the asymmetry of spatial and temporal metaphors: time is metaphorized as space, but never vice versa.
- [6] 'What then does *ich bin* mean? The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers, *ich bin*, *du bist* mean I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *buon*, dwelling' (Heidegger [1951] 1993, p. 349).
- [7] Edward Soja (1996) has added neologism to obscurity by enthusiastically rechristening these triads 'trialectics.'
- [8] Lefebvre never mentions Simmel in *The Production of Space* (1974); Soja (1989, p. 33) mentions him only in passing.
- [9] On Simmel's infuriating failure to use footnotes, and his failure to acknowledge Dilthey, see Frisby (1992, p. 37).

- [10] The lengthy list of these *topoi* begins in Book 2. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge translates *topoi* as ‘commonplace rules’ throughout the translation included by Jonathan Barnes in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Aristotle 1984, vol. 1, pp. 167–277).
- [11] ‘Aristotle’ is no longer a man, nor even merely a text. ‘Aristotle’ is a plural institution, a vast array of *topoi* in popular, religious, and expert discourses.

References

- Agnew, J.A. and Duncan, J.S. (1989) *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, MA.
- Aguessy, H., Ashish, M., Askin, Y.F., Boubou Hama, Gadamer, H.-G., Gardet, L., Hasnaoui, A., Honderlich, T., Jeannière, A., Karsz, S., Ohe, S., Ricoeur, P., Toynebee, A.J. and Witt-Hansen, J. (1977) *Time and the Philosophies: At the Crossroads of Cultures*, UNESCO, Paris.
- Appleby, J., Hunt, L. and Jacob, M. (1994) *Telling the Truth About History*, Norton, New York.
- Aristotle (1984) *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. J. Barnes, 2 vols, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Azevedo, J. (1997) *Mapping Reality: An Evolutionary Realist Methodology for the Natural and Social Sciences*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY.
- Bachelard, G. ([1958] 1964) *The Poetics of Space*, trans. M. Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston, MA.
- Baker, A.R.H. (2003) *Geography and History: Bridging the Divide*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Becker, C.L. ([1931] 1966) *Everyman His Own Historian: Essays on History and Politics*, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, IL.
- Bergson, H. ([1890] 1960) *Time and Free Will*, trans. F.L. Pogson, Harper and Row, New York.
- Bergson, H. ([1896] 1991) *Matter and Memory*, trans N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer, Zone Books, New York.
- Bergson, H. ([1907] 1983) *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell, University Press of America, Lanham, MD.
- Bergson, H. ([1922] 2002) *Duration and Simultaneity, With Reference to Einstein's Theory*, trans L. Jacobson and M. Lewis, in *Key Writings*, eds K.A. Pearson and J. Mullarkey, Continuum, New York.
- Bernstein, R.J. (1983) *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*, University of Philadelphia Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Blaut, J.M. (1993) *The Colonizers Model of the World: Geographic Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*, The Guilford Press, New York.
- Bloch, M. (1953) *The Historian's Craft*, trans. P. Putnam, Vintage Books, New York.
- Borges, J.L. ([1944, 1948] 1962) ‘A new refutation of time’ in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, New Directions Publishing, New York.
- Braudel, F. (1949) *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II*, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris.
- Braudel, F. (1980) *On History*, trans. S. Matthews, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

- Braudel, F. (1972) *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. S. Reynolds, Harper and Row, New York.
- Carr, D. (1986) *Time, Narrative, and History*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN.
- Carr, E.H. (1961) *What is History?*, Vintage, New York.
- Casey, E.S. (1996) 'How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: phenomenological prolegomena' in *Senses of Place*, eds S. Feld and K.H. Basso, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe, NM.
- Casey, E.S. (1997) *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000) *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Confino, A. (1997) 'Collective memory and cultural history: problems of method', *American Historical Review*, December, pp. 1386–1403.
- Crane, R.S. (1954) 'Literature, philosophy, and the history of ideas,' *Modern Philology*, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 73–83.
- Cresswell, T. (2004) *Place: A Short Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden, MA.
- Curtius, E.R. ([1948] 1953) *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. W.R. Trask, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Diddams, S.A., Berquist, J.C., Jefferts, S.R. and Oates, C.W. (2004) Standards of time and frequency at the outset of the 21st century, *Science*, 306, pp. 1318–1324.
- Dilthey, W. (2002) *Selected Works, Vol. 3: The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, eds R.A. Makkreel and F. Rodi, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Dimendberg, E. (1998) 'Henri Lefebvre on abstract space' in *Philosophy and Geography II: The Production of Public Space*, eds A. Light and J.M. Smith, Rowman and Littlefield, Boston, MA, pp. 17–48.
- Dostal, R.J. (1993) 'Time and phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger' in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. C. Guignon, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Elden, S. (2001) 'Politics, philosophy and geography: Henri Lefebvre in recent Anglo-American scholarship', *Antipode*, vol. 33, no. 5, pp. 809–825.
- Ethington, P.J. (1997) 'The intellectual construction of "social distance": toward a recovery of Georg Simmel's social geometry' *Cybergeog*, electronic edition of *European Journal of Geography*, article 30, Available at: <http://www.cybergeog.presse.fr/essoct/texte/socdis.htm>
- Ethington, P.J. (2005) 'Georg Simmel y a cuestión de la espacialidad', *Trayectorias: Revista de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León*, vol. 7, no. 19, pp. 46–58.
- Feld, S. and Basso, K.H. (1996) *Senses of Place*, School of American Research Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Feynman, R.P. (1965) *The Character of Physical Law*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Fischer, D.H. (1970) *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, Harper & Row, New York.
- Flood, R. and Lockwood, M. (eds) (1986) *The Nature of Time*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Focillon, H. ([1934] 1992) *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans C.B. Hogan and G. Kubler, Zone Books, New York.
- Foucault, M. (1998) 'Different spaces' in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. J.D. Faubion, trans. R. Hurley et al., vol. 2 of Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984, ed. P. Rabinow, The New Press, New York, pp. 175–186.

- Fraser, J.T. (1981) *The Voices of Time: A Cooperative Survey of Man's Views of Time as Expressed by the Sciences and the Humanities*, 2nd edn, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA.
- Frisby, D. (1986) *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Frisby, D. (1987) 'The ambiguity of modernity: Georg Simmel and Max Weber' in *Max Weber and his Contemporaries*, eds W.J. Mommsen and J. Osterhammel, Unwin Hyman, London.
- Frisby, D. (ed.) (1990) 'Preface' and 'Introduction' to Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans and eds T. Bottomore and D. Frisby, 2nd edn, Routledge, London.
- Frisby, D. (1992) *Simmel and Since: Essays on Georg Simmel's Social Theory*, Routledge, London.
- Gaddis, J.L. (2002) *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Gieryn, T.F. (2000) 'A space for place in sociology', *Annual Reviews in Sociology*, vol. 26, pp. 463–496.
- Grünbaum, A. (1963) *Philosophical Problems of Space and Time*, Knopf, New York.
- Guignon, C. (ed.) (1993) *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Hacking, I. (1999) *The Social Construction of What?*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Hacking, I. (2002) *Historical Ontology*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory*, trans. L.A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Haraven, T. (1991) 'Synchronizing individual time, family time, and historical time' in *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*, eds J. Bender and D.E. Wellbery, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.
- Harley, J.B. and Woodward, D. (eds) (1987–2007) *The History of Cartography*, vols 1–4, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Harvey, D. (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Heidegger, M. ([1924] 1992) *Concept of Time*, trans. W. McNeill, Blackwell, Cambridge, MA.
- Heidegger, M. ([1927] 1962) *Being and Time*, trans J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, Harper and Row, New York.
- Heidegger, M. ([1951] 1993) 'Building dwelling thinking' in *Basic Writings*, ed. D. Farrell Krell, HarperCollins, New York.
- Heidegger, M. (2002) *On Time and Being*, trans. J. Stambaugh, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Hubbard, P., Kitchen, R. and Valentine, G. (2004) *Key Thinkers of Space and Place*, Sage Publications, London.
- James, W. ([1890] 1983) *The Principles of Psychology*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Kansteiner, W. (2002) 'Finding meaning in memory: a methodological critique of collective memory studies', *History and Theory*, vol. 41, May, pp. 179–197.
- Kern, S. (1983) *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Klein, K. (2000) 'On the emergence of memory in historical discourse', *Representations*, no. 69, Winter, pp. 127–150.

- Kloppenber, J.T. (1989) 'Objectivity and historicism: a century of American historical writing', *American Historical Review*, 94, pp. 1011–1030.
- Kloppenber, J.T. (1996) 'Pragmatism: an old name for some new ways of thinking?', *Journal of American History*, vol. 83, no. 1, pp. 100–138.
- Kracauer, S. (1969) *History: The Last Things Before the Last*. Completed after the death of the author by P. O. Kristeller, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Krell, D.F. (1995) *Architecture: Ecstasies of Space, Time, and the Human Body*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY. (NB Krell's spelling 'Architecture' is intentional.)
- Kubler, G. (1962) *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN.
- LaCapra, D. (2004) *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1999) *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, Basic Books, New York.
- Landes, D.S. (2000) *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World*, revised and enlarged edition, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Lefebvre, H. (1974) *La Production de l'Espace*, Anthropos, Paris.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell Publishing, Cambridge, MA.
- Levine, D.N. (1991) 'Simmel and Parsons reconsidered', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 96, no. 5, pp. 1097–1116.
- Low, S.M. and Lawrence-Zúñiga, D. (2003) *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA.
- Lowenthal, D. (1985) *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- McTaggart, J.E. (1908) 'The unreality of time', *Mind*, vol. 17, no. 68, pp. 457–474.
- Megill, A. (1989) 'Recounting the past: "description," explanation, and narrative in historiography', *American Historical Review*, vol. 94, no. 3, pp. 627–653.
- Munslow, A. (2000) *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies*, Routledge, London.
- Nora, P. (ed.) (1996) *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. Vol. I: Conflicts and Divisions*, trans. A. Goldhammer, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Novick, P. (1988) *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <http://dictionary.oed.com>, accessed 2003, 2005, 2007.
- Pocock, J.G.A. (1975) *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Pocock, J.G.A. (1989) *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Prakash, G. (1999) *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Reichenbach, H. (1956) *The Direction of Time*, ed. M. Reichenbach, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Ricoeur, P. (1981) *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. R. Czerny, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

- Ricoeur, P. (1984–1988) *Time and Narrative*, trans K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer, 3 vols, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Savitt, S.F. (1990) 'Epistemological time asymmetry', *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*. Volume One: Contributed Papers, pp. 317–324.
- Schwartz, V.R. (2001) 'Walter Benjamin for historians', *American Historical Review*, vol. 106, no. 5, pp. 1721–1743.
- Scott, J.W. (1988) *Gender and the Politics of History*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Searle, J. (1995) *The Construction of Social Reality*, The Free Press, New York.
- Sherover, C.M. (1975) *The Human Experience of Time: The Development of its Philosophic Meaning*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL.
- Simmel, G. (1908 [1971]) 'The stranger', trans. D. N. Levine, in *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. D.N. Levine, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Simmel, G. (1971) *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. D.N. Levine, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Simmel, G. (1997) *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, eds D. Frisby and M. Featherstone, Sage Publications, London.
- Sklar, L. (1974) *Space, Time, and Spacetime*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Slomkowski, P. (1997) *Aristotle's Topics*, Brill, Leiden.
- Smith, R. (1997) *Aristotle Topics Books I and VIII*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Soja, E.W. (1989) *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Verso, London.
- Soja, E.W. (1996) *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Blackwell, Cambridge, MA.
- Spitzer, L. (1948) *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Tuan, Y.-F. (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- White, H. (1973) *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.
- White, H. (1985) *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.