SMOOTH SPACES AND ROUGH-EDGED PLACES: 
THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF PLACE

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Every body must be in a place.

Philoponus, In Aristotelis Physicorum
Libros Quinque Postiores Commentaria

If there is no place thought about, there is no thought at all—no intelligible proposition will have been entertained.

Gareth Evans, The Varieties of Reference

I

I BEGIN WITH A PUZZLE of sorts. Time is one; space is two—at least two. Time comes always already unified, one time. Thus we say “What time is it now?” and not “Which time is it now?” We do not ask, “What space is it?” Yet we might ask: “Which space are we in?” (and we certainly do ask “Which place am I in?”). Any supposed symmetry of time and space is skewed from the start.

If time is self-consolidating—constantly gathering itself together in coherent units such as years or hours or semesters or seasons—space is self-proliferating. Take, for example, the dimensionality of space. One dimension in space is represented by a point or a line, whose radically reduced format mocks the extensiveness of cosmic space. Two dimensions, as in a plane figure, also falls far short of our sense that space spreads out indefinitely far beyond the perceiving subject. Only with three dimensions do we begin to approach an adequation between the structure and the sense of space. For then the subject is surrounded by something sufficiently roomy in which to live and move. (English “room” and German Raum are distant linguistic

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Indeed, as Aristotle, Kant, and Merleau-Ponty all remark, the three-dimensionality of space directly reflects our bodily state, that is, the fact that as upright beings three perpendicular planes implicitly meet and intersect in us. Even here, proliferation abounds: our bilateral symmetry means that each dimension is doubled: one vertical plane bifurcates into “up” and “down,” the other vertical plane into “front” and “back,” and the horizontal plane into “right” and “left.” Thus subject-centered space is triple, only to be redoubled. Further, if we think of spatiality not as body-based but as locatory—as determined by landmarks and other locales in the environment—the proliferation is more striking still. There are the four cardinal directions, which themselves split easily into the thirty two points of a compass. Nor need we be so arithmetically well-rounded. Even apart from fancy mathematical models of $n$-dimensional space, and recent technological instantiations of virtual space, there is no end to the number or ways in which we can be oriented in space—in accordance with what Deleuze and Guattari call “the variability, the polyvocity of directions” by which we can move in any given spatial scene.\footnote{Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, \textit{Nomadology: The War Machine}, trans. Brian Massumi (New York: Semiotexte, 1986), 53: “The variability, the polyvocity of directions, is an essential feature of smooth spaces of the rhizome type, and it alters their cartography.”} Beyond (or rather underlying) direction, however, is place. Heidegger remarks that “space has been split up into places.”\footnote{Martin Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), 138.} The fact is that we continually find ourselves immersed in a multiplex spatial network whose nodal points are supplied by particular places. If space is infinitely large, place is indefinitely many.

This suggests that the ultimate source of spatial self-proliferation is not the body or the way the world is but the placialization of space itself. If so, the distinction between space and place is not derivative but generative. That is why I began by saying that “space is two—at least two.” Space is a doublet composed of itself (whatever that is) and place.

You may well respond: time, too, is always different, not the same as it was even a moment ago, perhaps never the same as itself, self-split at its origin (as Derrida might put it), while space abides through the before and after of time. If I pitch a tent on a mountain in northern Maine just as the sun is going down, night comes on, bringing with it an ever-changing array of nocturnal sounds and sights, the scene
never exactly alike from moment to moment. I fall asleep eventually in this evanescent world, and when I awaken in the morning I find myself reassuringly in the same circumambient landscape—the same “space.” Here space seems permanent and time fleeting. Is it not time that is the dispersive element? Time qua change “disperses subsistence,” says Aristotle in the Physics, while place in contrast is said merely to “contain” things.3

Yet even if time is thus ever self-differing, the very medium of change, this does not mean that there is more than one kind of time operative in any given circumstance. When we ask, “What is today’s date?” and (more generally), “What time is it?” we are not asking about which of several sorts of time now obtains. Aristotle himself remarks that “time is everywhere the same.”4 Even when one distinguishes between a felt or “phenomenological” time and an “objective” time—as do Bergson, James, and Husserl—one will manage, sooner or later, to reunify these times so as to obviate incoherence. We witness such reunification, for example, in Husserl’s celebrated “time diagram,” which maps objective time (as represented by successive points on a horizontal line) onto experienced or durational time, in the form of vertical and diagonal lines stemming from the first line. Even the three main modes of time we call “past,” “present,” and “future” are finally aspects of one temporal sweep, one continuous display of time, however jarring their juxtaposition may be in a given case. Every time we feel time’s passing or coming, we cannot help but think of the coming or passing as parts of one encompassing time. Doubtless this is why Kant argued in the Transcendental Aesthetic that time, not space, is the truly universal form of intuition, within which all appearances, inner and outer alike, are forcibly included. It would be altogether Kantian to say that the unio mentalis is effected by a unio temporalis. In time, as in mind, the disjuncta membra of our experience come together. The vanishing of moments in temporal succession proves thus to be only one aspect of the larger picture of time: as Kant reminds us, the schema of succession is flanked by those of


4 Aristotle, Physics 4.14.223b11; Hussey translation. Unless otherwise specified, I will use this translation as cited in the previous footnote.
permanence and coexistence, both of which are totalizing in their distinctly different ways.

Space, of course, is also totalizing—which is why Kant paired it with time in the Aesthetic (as a coordinate form of intuition) and in the Antinomies of Pure Reason (where the totalizing tendencies of both create insuperable metaphysical problems). However, we do not need Kant to tell us of the encompassingness of space: camping in Maine, I was reassuringly surrounded by the spatial spread of the open landscape at all times. Yet as I lingered in that landscape, I noticed something else happening, something that did not belong simply to the order of space as sheer extension. This was my momentary camp itself, the place I created on the modest mountain where I pitched my tent, built a fire, talked with friends, and gazed out on the landscape itself. This place was not just an aspect or part of the total space of the situation—even if it is true that it was located in that world-space. (On a topographic map, my camp would certainly have a precise position, but this position in cartographic space does not begin to capture, much less exhaust, my sense of being in a particular mountain-place.) The place was unique: I could pitch the same tent, talk with the same fellow campers, and even (perhaps) have the same thoughts, but if all this occurred on a neighboring and even quite similar mountain, the place would be quite different. Further, it would be different even if the sense of surrounding space stayed much the same. Thus we are back to the divergence between space and place, that troubled and troubling doublet.

To mark this divergence, many languages—certainly most European languages—distinguish between "place" and "space" (for example, locus versus spatium, lieu or endroit versus espace, luogo versus spazio, Platz or Ort versus Raum, and so on). These same languages do not make a comparably decisive distinction between two senses or types of time. We have to strain words to talk consistently of a difference between, say, "temporality" and "time" or "duration" and "time" (in Heidegger's and Bergson's terms, respectively). Philosophers may remark the difference, but common sense and ordinary experience are largely oblivious of it. Time insists on its own oneness, whereas space tends toward twoness in its disparity from place, its binary other.

II

The difference between space and place is one of the best-kept secrets in philosophy. Above all in modern philosophy, where the
very distinction came to be questioned and then discredited: one way of understanding modernity, as I shall suggest later on, is by its very neglect of this distinction. The ancient world, however, knew otherwise—knew better. Indeed, the premodern and the postmodern join forces in a common recognition of the importance of place as something essentially other than space, something one cannot afford to ignore in its very difference from space.

Let me only remind you that Plato in the Timaeus draws on the difference between chōra and topos. Conventionally translated as “land,” “area,” or “space,” chōra is the realm of Necessity, anankē, and is said to be “the Receptacle—as it were, the nurse—of all Becoming.”5 Chōra is the ultimate “in which” (en hō) for changeable and changing entities, their “seat” (hedra): “by nature it is there as a matrix (ekmageion) for everything.”6 Chōra is space-like in two ways: first, it provides “room” (that is, space to be occupied) for what becomes; second, it is homogeneous or neutral in constitution: “that which is to receive in itself all kinds must be free from all characters [of its own].”7 This last characterization may well look ahead, as Heidegger intimates, to the modern idea of a homogeneous space,8 but it also anticipates Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of a “smooth space” composed of a nonhomogeneous “space of contact, of small tactile and manual actions, . . . a field without conduits or channels”—typified in a steppe, a desert, or the open sea—a field of flux that resists the “striation” effected by parallel lines of force (especially those traced out by gravity).9 Yet the very action of chōra—its violent thrashing motion—has the effect of grouping the four elementary “kinds” or “powers” into four “regions” (chōrai) within which particular “places” (topoi) arise:

6 Plato, Timaeus 50c.
7 Plato, Timaeus 50e.
8 On chōra as an antecedent of modern notions of space, see Martin Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 66: “the transformation of the barely apprehended essence of place (topos) and of chōra into a ‘space’ defined by extension was initiated by the Platonic philosophy. . . . Might chōra not mean: that which abstracts itself from every particular, that which withdraws, and in such a way precisely admits and ‘makes place’ for something else?”
9 On “smooth space,” see Deleuze and Guattari, Nomadology, 18–23, 34–5, 38, 48. Plato explicitly invokes the quality of smoothness in comparing the situation of the receptacle to that of someone who makes impressions in “some soft substance [that] allows no shape to show itself there beforehand, but begins by making the surface as smooth and level as he can”; Timaeus 51a.
Because it was filled with powers that were neither alike nor evenly balanced, there was [at first] no equipoise in any region of it; but it was everywhere swayed unevenly and shaken by these things, and by its motion shook them in turn. And they, being thus moved, were perpetually being separated and carried in different directions; just as when things are shaken and winnowed by means of winnowing baskets and other instruments for cleaning corn, the dense and heavy things go one way, while the rare and light are carried to another place and settle there.10

“Place” in the last sentence translates *topos*, that is, the settled spot where bodies (*sōmata*) come to reside once they have been thrown together with like bodies in the same region.

What is the end of the tale for Plato—the sedate outcome of a tumultuous cosmogony—is the beginning of the story for Aristotle, who makes *topos* and not *chōra* his primary concern. In Book Four of his *Physics*, Aristotle, commenting on Plato, identifies *chōra* with *hulē*, and makes the revealing claim that in his esoteric teachings, Plato “declared that place and space were the same thing.”11 The claim reveals more about Aristotle than about Plato, since it betrays Aristotle’s own belief that *chōra* does not precede or encompass *topos*. The same claim also looks forward to the characteristically modern notion that place and space differ from each other only trivially. However, while the modernists want to dissolve place into space, Aristotle attempts to reduce space to place. What, then, does Aristotle mean by “place”?

The Stagirite defines place as “the first unchangeable limit of that which surrounds.”12 For Aristotle, the exemplary case of place is that of a stationary vessel which contains a combination of air and water: “Just as the vessel is a place which can be carried around, so place is a vessel which cannot be moved round.”13 Notice that this delimited and delimiting idea of place brings with it the supposition that place is primarily locatory and that what it locates is a physical thing: “Not ev-

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10 Plato, *Timaeus* 52e–53a.

11 The full statement is: “Plato, too, says in the *Timaeus* that matter and space are the same thing (for ‘the participative’ [to *metaleptikon*] and space [tēn *chōran*] are the same thing. Though he gave a different use to the participative in what are called his ‘unwritten doctrines’ from that in the *Timaeus*, he still declared that place and space [ton topon kai tēn *chōran*] were the same thing. While everyone says that place is something, he alone tried to say what it is.); *Physics* 4.2.209b11–17; Hussey’s italics. From this statement it is clear that the reduction of space to matter is very much Aristotle’s, not Plato’s, doing. Aristotle is not, however, dogmatic concerning the reduction of space to place; he hedges his bets by saying that “a body has a place and a space”; *Physics* 4.1.209a7–8.


13 Ibid., 4.4.212a14–16.
everything that is, is in a place, but [only] changeable body."\textsuperscript{14} Place is where a thing is—where the locative adverb "where" (\textit{pou}) has the status of a universal category. However, beyond locating (or, more exactly, \textit{as} locating) place is something \textit{surrounding}, with the result that a given place is coextensive with what it contains: its inner surface and the outer surface of the thing contained are strictly contiguous: "The limits are together with what is limited."\textsuperscript{15} Just here problems arise—problems that were to preoccupy commentators on Aristotle for at least a millennium, and still do. For example, on Aristotle's account the place of a boat moored in a river will continually change since the surface of the water in immediate contact with the boat will alter constantly as the water flows past the boat. However, if the appropriate surrounder is itself located in something "unchangeable," such as the solid bank of the river, then two boats equidistant from the same bank will occupy the \textit{same place} despite being in different locations in the water itself.\textsuperscript{16}

In my view, these problems, all of them stemming from Aristotle's constrictive sense of place as locating and (especially) surrounding, are more grave than those arising from his doctrine of "natural place," according to which "each thing moves to its own place."\textsuperscript{17} On closer inspection, it becomes clear that this controversial doctrine commits Aristotle only to a particular physicalist model of \textit{region}, not of place proper:

\begin{quote}
\ldots the locomotions of the natural simple bodies (such as fire and earth and the like) not only show that place is something but also that it has some power, since each body, if not impeded moves to its own place, some above and some below. These are the parts and kinds of place: above, below, and the rest of the six dimensions [that is, three times
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} Aristotle, \textit{Physics} 4.5.212b27–8.

\textsuperscript{15} The full statement is: "Place is thought to be some surface (\textit{epipedon}) and like a vessel (\textit{aggeion}) and surrounder (\textit{periechon}). Moreover, place is together with the object, because the limits are together with what is limited"; Aristotle, \textit{Physics} 4.4.212a18–20. The surrounder itself has to be bodily: "a body is in place if, and only if, there is a body (\textit{sōma}) which surrounds it"; Aristotle, \textit{Physics} 4.5.212a31–2. With this last statement, the prospect of an infinite regress begins to loom.

\textsuperscript{16} These conundras and others are explored in Richard Sorabji, \textit{Matter, Space, and Motion} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 186–201. Ironically, Aristotle's own example of the river might have led him to a conception of "smooth space," for which questions of exact location would be irrelevant. Instead, his concern with questions of precise "position" (\textit{thesis}) draw him ineluctably toward a commitment to striated space, concerning which the issue is always that of "simple location"—a term of Whitehead's that will become important later in this essay.

\textsuperscript{17} Aristotle, \textit{Physics} 4.5.212b29. Aristotle adds "and this is reasonable \ldots everything remains naturally in its proper place"; ibid., 4.5.212b29–30.
two] . . . in nature each is distinct and separate. ‘Above’ is not anything you like, but where fire, and what is light move [to]. Likewise, ‘below’ is not anything you like, but where heavy and earth-like things move [to].18

“Above” and “below” as just invoked are not simply places, much less positions, but whole territories to which “natural simple bodies” belong by physical birthright, as it were. This shows in turn that place “has some power” (echei tina dunamin) and is “not just relative to us.”19 Relative to us—that is, to our body as pivot—are position and direction, but Aristotle is clear that these latter do not exhaust emplacement; he says expressly that places “differ not by position alone but in power too.”20 This last observation is prescient: it foresees the difference between locatory and subject-centered spatiality with which recent work in linguistics and philosophy has been concerned.21 It is also prescient in setting the terms for the debate about place that was to ensue in Western philosophy during the next two thousand years.

Regarding this debate—which stretches from Strato and the Stoics to Patrizi and Gassendi—two general remarks are in order. First, it was Aristotle’s unswerving commitment to the power of place that upheld a conversation that is surely one of the most concerted and fruitful in the history of philosophy: had place not been accorded such dunamis, it would not have been worth the effort of so much discussion concerning its exact nature. Second, despite its considerable dynamism, place gradually lost out to space in the course of the two millennia in question. For many ancient Greeks, what I like to call the Archytian Axiom was taken to be unquestionably true: to be is to be in place; conversely, to be without place is not to be.22 Plato and Aristotle alike, their differences concerning place versus space notwithstanding, both cite versions of this axiom—as do such disparate thinkers as Gorgias and Zeno. Aristotle’s endorsement is most to the point: “Everyone supposes that things that are somewhere, because

19 Ibid., 4.1.208b14.
20 Ibid., 4.1.208b21–2.
21 See, for example, Gareth Evans, The Varieties of Reference, ed. John McDowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 151–70.
22 I base this axiom on the statement attributed to Archytas by Simplicius: “All existing things [ta onta panta] are either in place [en topos] or not without place [ouk anew topou] . . . it is necessary for other things to be in place, but for place to be in nothing”; the translation is by Shmuel Sambursky, in The Concept of Place in Late Neoplatonism (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982), 37.
what is not is nowhere—where for instance is a goat-stag or a sphinx?"23 However, beginning with Philoponus, who in the sixth century A.D. posited an empty spatial extension, and continuing through Crescas and Bradwardine (both of whom insisted, seven centuries later, on the spatial infinity of God), we reach a point in the Renaissance when a quite different axiom captivated philosophical (as well as scientific and theological) minds: to be is now to be in space, where “space” means something nonlocal and nonparticular, something having little to do with close containment and everything to do with an outright infinity. Koyré has aptly described this radical transformation of thought, this triumph of space over place, as a movement “from the closed world to the infinite universe.”24

III

Before coming to the modern epoch itself, I want to dwell for a moment on a fascinating but neglected chapter of the ancient era in its Hellenistic and more particularly its Neoplatonic course. I shall single out only two figures from a galaxy of philosophers who devoted themselves to thinking about place and space after Aristotle: Iamblichus and Philoponus. Both were critics and creative transformers of Aristotle. Iamblichus (who lived in the fourth century A.D. and was an important influence on seventeenth-century views of space25) concedes the importance of the surrounding limit in the determination of place, but he refuses to conceive of this limit as a mere “surface” (epiphaneia) that is geometrically structured. Instead, place should be

23 Aristotle, *Physics* 3.8.208a29–31. Plato’s endorsement is at *Timaeus* 52b: “Anything that is must needs be in some place and occupy some room. . . what is not somewhere in earth and heaven is nothing.” Even if Plato’s and Aristotle’s citations of the axiom allude to an item of common wisdom, this only reinforces the status of this axiom as an “absolute presupposition” in Collingwood’s sense of the term. On Gorgias and Zeno, see Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology*, 192, n. 3 and 195–7.

24 See Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1957). Curiously, however, Koyré only tells the last chapters of this long tale, those that bear on the Renaissance and early modern period. For a more complete account, the reader must consult such texts as Shmuel Sambursky, *The Physical World of Late Antiquity* (New York: Basic Books, 1962) and Richard Sorabji, *Matter, Space, and Motion.*

25 “Iamblichus’s doctrine influenced the philosophy of space in modern times”; Shmuel Sambursky, introduction to *The Concept of Place*, 17. The influence appears to have come mainly through Henry More, who as the leading Platonist of his time, had a decisive impact on Newton.
conceived in terms of “boundary” (horos), which is an active power—so active that it is even said to be “the primary cause (archégos)” of bodies.26 However, for it to be such a cause, that is, a cause both as defining a body and as the source of the body’s existence,27 place qua boundary has to be more than corporeal, given Iamblichus’s premise (doubtless derived from Plotinus) that “everywhere the incorporeal reality ranks as prior to the corporeal one. Thus place, being incorporeal, is superior to the things that exist in it.”28 Precisely as incorporeal, the power of place consists in more than its encompassingness. In one of the most extraordinary statements of placial power ever made in the West, Iamblichus proclaims that this power consists in “sustaining and supporting bodies, raising up the falling ones and gathering together the scattered ones, filling them up as well as encompassing them from every side.”29

“Sustaining and supporting,” as well as “raising up,” refer to the way that a given place holds bodies in certain postures, forestalling their falling freely in space, while “gathering together” suggests that these postures are held in a single coherent pattern in relation to each other. “Filling up,” on the other hand, implies that place, far from being a mere “termination” or “last extremity” of bodies—or even their “common limit”—insinuates itself into these very bodies and acts as their dynamic indwelling agent: “Regarded thus, place will not only encompass bodies from outside, but will fill them totally with a power

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26 “One must not conceive place as a mere limit in the way that we conceive the mathematical surfaces as limits of mathematical bodies, but as the physical boundaries of physical bodies, and as the alive boundaries of ensouled living beings. . .”; Sambursky, The Concept of Place in Late Neoplatonism, 47; citing Simplicius, In Aristotelis Physicorum Libros Quattuor Pliores Commentaria, ed. Hermann Diels (Berlin: 1882). On place as “primary cause,” see ibid., 45.

27 Place “encompasses and defines [bodies] as deriving their existence from it, for which reason bodies possess Being in place as encompassed by it and as preserving their own extension in the unextended nature”; ibid., 45.

28 Ibid., 45. Another expression of the same premise is on p. 49: “We should in general always elevate the limit to being the higher cause.”

29 Ibid., 43; repeated twice for emphasis. The power of place is characterized as sómatoeidē, a term which according to Sambursky should be construed as corporeal in an “active,” not a “material, mode”; see his comment on 42, n. 1. A more complete statement of this same power is found on p. 47: “One has to conceive place not only as encompassing and establishing in itself the things existing in place, but as sustaining them by one single power. . . . And the bodies sustained by this power, falling down by their proper nature, but being raised up by the superiority of place, will thus exist in it.”
which raises them up."\textsuperscript{30} Moreover, such an indwelling and upholding power applies to nonmaterial as well as to material things—to anything that is "contained" in anything else.\textsuperscript{31} With the mention of "contained" (\textit{periechomenon}), we have come full cycle from an Aristotelian starting-point. "Containment" remains a \textit{sine qua non} for being in place; yet now it is only a minimal criterion, inasmuch as true placial power is found in actions of sustaining and upholding, gathering and filling things. Rather than things defining places—as occurs on any strict container model, since the container has to take its cue from the contained—places empower things from (and as) their boundaries.

If Lamblichus looks back to Aristotle—only to radically revise him—Philoponus looks forward to the modern age, parlaying Plato into the present. If Plato's conception of \textit{chôra} can be considered the precursor of modernist notions of space, this is even more true of Philoponus's treatment of the same term. Take, for instance, Philoponus's claim that "we do not maintain that extension is a body, but that it is the room of a body and [is] only empty dimensions without any substance and matter [to fill it up]."\textsuperscript{32} As the room of a body (\textit{chôra sômatos}), place or space cannot be defined, much less confined, by body alone. However, rather than being a power that connects and fills bodies—it is even said to be \textit{without} any power of its own\textsuperscript{33}—\textit{chôra} is held to be a pure dimensional entity, a matter of "only empty

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 47. The terms "termination," "last extremity," and "common limit" (\textit{telein}, \textit{eschaton}, and \textit{koinon peras}) are also found on the same page, all of them being posed in contrast with the indwelling power of place. For an alternative view of "filling," compare the remark of Dilthey: "The space which my body occupies, as given in outer perception, is progressively filled, so to speak, with inner states through accumulating experience, through practice, through the establishment of a context for the feeling of life, the exertion of the will, muscular sensations, and a variety of specifically localized feelings"; Wilhelm Dilthey, \textit{Introduction to the Historical Sciences: Selected Works}, ed. Rudolph A. Makkreel and Fritz Rodi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 1:269. It is characteristically "modern" to claim that space is filled with experiences rather than with things.

\textsuperscript{31} One must extend the whole nature of place to all things whatsoever which exist as entities contained in entities of another kind, not speaking homonymously but applying the same statement concerning the genus. For there is one relation between things encompassed and things encompassing; it is the same everywhere, but it varies according to the different degrees of reality of the participants—for the relation is different in bodies and with incorporeals"; Sambursky, \textit{The Concept of Place}, 49.


\textsuperscript{33} "It is absolutely ridiculous to say that place as such has a certain power... place has not the power to carry the bodies toward their proper places"; ibid. It follows that boundaries are also not empowering entities.
dimensions" (*diastaseis monas kenas*). Indeed, Philoponus's most
telling critique of Aristotle's surrounder view is that surface qua sur-
face is two-dimensional, while bodies in place are three-dimensional.
Thus place (*topos*) is said to be "cubic in the sense of three-dimension-
ally extended (*trichē diastaton*)."\(^{34}\)

Philoponus, the discoverer of impetus in physics, is parachronistic-
ally modern in two ways when it comes to matters of place and
space. First, *diastaseis*, the word for "dimension," is closely akin to
*diastēma*, Greek for "interval" or "extension," and in their affinity
both terms anticipate Descartes' insistence on the three-dimensional
character of *res extensa*: to be extended is to be three-dimensional
and vice versa. Second, the more Philoponus pursues the difference
between "corporeal" and "spatial" extension—that is, the extension of
a given body and that of the place or "room" in which that body is lo-
cated—the more he envisions, contra Descartes, an open space that is
at once empty and immense. Spatial extension is *empty* in the man-
ner of a void: "There exists an extension different from the bodies
which happen to be in it, a void (*kenon*) in its proper sense, and this is
also precisely place."\(^{35}\) Such a void, however, though in principle al-
ways present, is in fact always filled with bodies, resulting in a uni-
verse as plenary as Descartes and Aristotle (both fierce critics of the
void) might have wished.\(^{36}\) Spatial extension is also *immense*: Philoponus even speaks of a "cosmic extension" (*to kosmikon

\(^{34}\) Sambursky, *The Concept of Place*, 111. On Philoponus's critique of Ar-
istotle, see p. 103: "The surface (*epiphaneia*), being two-dimensional, could
not contain a three-dimensional object as such, because it could not touch
the body as a whole . . . only the boundaries (*ta perata*) of the body are in-
deed in the surface."

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 113. The two extensions in question are designated respectively
as *sōmatikon* and *topikon*, for example, at 101: "It is only possible that the
corporeal extension will be in the spatial extension, so that [the] two exten-
sions will coincide." Corporeal extension is the extension of any *given* body
and obtains for that body alone; spatial extension is the room into which any
number of different bodies, albeit all of the same volume, can fit in succe-
sion. Thus, regarded by itself, it is empty, that is, to-be-occupied. Aristotle
discusses spatial extension at *Physics* 4.4.21b15–28—designated merely as
"extension" (*diastēma*)—only to reject it as an adequate model of place. In-
deed, Philoponus asserts that "I mean the same thing whether I speak of the
void or of the three-dimensional spatial extension"; Sambursky, *The Concept
of Place*, 103. This results in Philoponus's second major critique of Aristotle:
"No absurdity results from the assertion that place is an empty extension es-
sentially differing from the bodies contained in it, as against what Aristotle
said"; ibid.

\(^{36}\) "I certainly do not maintain that this interval [spatial extension] at any
time is or can be empty of any body; this is never the case . . . always other
bodies enter it, while it itself remains immobile as a whole as well as in its
parts"; ibid., 113.
diastēma) that is "the room and the place of the universe." An extension that is coextensive with the universe (to pan)—which is what results from pushing the idea of spatial extension to its cosmological limit—is clearly heading toward the idea of a spatial infinity that knows no end. At least this is so once it is assumed that the universe itself is no closed whole (as it certainly still was for Aristotle) and has no effective limits. This idea was explored extensively by such medieval thinkers as Walter Burleigh and Richard of Middleton, and by such a Renaissance figure as Giordano Bruno, who drew out the full consequences of Philoponus’s notion of a cosmically vast spatial extension. We do not have to wait for medieval theology or for Renaissance science, however, to appreciate the increasingly powerful attraction of an unlimited, indeed an undelimited, spatiality. The attraction, one could almost say the fatal attraction, is already evident in Philoponus.

In the allure of this burgeoning infinity, there is little room left for place. The slippery slope of its eventual demise has already been broached in the sixth century A.D. It is especially telling that Philoponus lumps together the two terms chōra and topos in the indifferent hendiadys “room and place,” or “space and place,” as if to signify that the struggle to keep these terms distinct from each other is no longer worth the candle. When Philoponus adds that the universe at large “does not have in itself any differences,” this lack of differences (dia-phorai) entails that there are no intrinsic configurations within cosmical extension, thus nothing like particular places that possess an autonomy or power of their own.

IV

A thousand years later and we find ourselves in the dense imbroglio of the seventeenth century. If I leap this far ahead, it is largely due to my conviction that a late Neoplatonist such as Philoponus

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37 Ibid., 119. See also p. 113: the cosmical extension “contains the body of the whole cosmos [and cannot] be moved.”

38 The denial of intrinsic differences occurs at Sambursky, The Concept of Place, p. 119, n. 118. Sambursky comments: “Philoponus rejects qualitative differences of space (‘natural places’).”

39 For a comprehensive account of the intervening millennium, see Edward Grant, Much Ado About Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
already espoused ideas verging on a distinctively modern idea of space as absolute and infinite. This idea is decidedly premodern in origin, despite the received wisdom that it is comparatively recent: received and revived, for example, by Michel Foucault, who considers the medieval conception of space to be restricted to “the space of emplacement,” to “a hierarchic ensemble of places” without any significant sense of infinite space. Even Alexandre Koyré, otherwise such a sure-footed guide in these matters, intimates that only in the seventeenth century do we find the substitution for the conception of the world as a finite and well-ordered whole, in which the spatial structure embodied a hierarchy of perfection and value, of an indefinite or even infinite universe no longer united by natural subordination, but unified only by the identity of its ultimate and basic components and laws; and the replacement of the Aristotelian conception of space—a differentiated set of inner-worldly places—by that of Euclidean geometry—an essentially infinite and homogeneous extension—from now on considered as identical with the real space of the world.

However, all of the elements of this supposed seventeenth century revolution were already present long before “the century of Genius.” Homogeneity is suggested by the neutrality of Platonic chōra and Euclidean geometry is actively at work in the Philoponean model of three-dimensional spatial extension, while infinity is at least implied in the cosmical expansion of the same extension. In short, space in its supposedly “modern” format has been around for much longer than three centuries, and it is time to set the record straight.

I am even prepared to argue that Descartes, that arch-demon of early modernity, takes several steps back compared with Philoponus and his numerous medieval and Renaissance progeny. Not only does

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*Alexandre Koyré, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe, viii.*

*In my recently published book, The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (University of California Press, 1997), I demonstrate the slow but sure emergence of infinite and absolute space from Philoponus to Newton. In fact, Philoponus denies infinite space *per se*, even though the logical consequence of his notion of cosmical extension, taken to its limit, ineluctably entails such space. The idea of absolute space is implied by Philoponus’s idea of spatial extension as a stable, immovable dimensional framework that is not altered by that which occupies it.
he equivocate concerning the existence of spatial infinity (preferring to speak of the indefinite instead), but he retains a remarkably Aristotelian conception of "external place" as "the surface immediately surrounding what is in the place." As such a surface, external place encloses the "internal place" or volume of a body, delineating its exact size and shape. Thus we are taken right back to a body-based model of place. If internal place is equivalent to corporeal extension in the Philoponean sense, the "space" it occupies is tantamount to Philoponus's notion of spatial extension. Significantly, Descartes refuses to generalize such extension to the point of something "cosmic": at most, it possesses a "generic unity" that allows different bodies of the same volume to occupy it. On the familiar Cartesian formula, space is matter: there is no space without the matter that occupies it, and no matter that is not extended three-dimensionally as a volume in space. In its full characterization, however, res extensa comprehends not only the volume of particular bodies but also the positions of these bodies—which is to say, their places. For in the end Descartes ascribes position to place and volume to space:

The difference between the terms "place" and "space" is that the former designates more explicitly the position, as opposed to the size or shape [that is, the volume], while it is the size and shape that we are concentrating on when we talk of space. . . . When we say that a thing is in a given place, all we mean is that it occupies such and such a position relative to other things; but when we go on to say that it fills up a given

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43 René Descartes, Principles of Philosophy in The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1:229. Descartes specifies that such a surface does not belong, strictly speaking, to the "surrounding body" but to "the boundary between the surrounding and surrounded bodies," being in effect the "common surface"; ibid. Concerning the question of infinity, Article 26 of the same text states that "we should never enter into arguments about the infinite. Things in which we observe no limits—such as the extension of the world, the division of the parts of matter, the number of the stars, and so on—should instead be regarded as indefinite"; ibid., 1:201. As Descartes makes clear in the next article, he prefers to reserve the term "infinite" for God; but if God is coextensive with the extended universe, then surely it, too, is infinite—a controversial consequence which Descartes prudently sidesteps.

44 "In reality the extension in length, breadth, and depth which constitutes a space is exactly the same as that which constitutes a body. The difference arises as follows: in the case of a body, we regard the extension as something particular. . . but in the case of a space, we attribute to the extension only a generic unity, so that when a new body comes to occupy the space, the extension of the space is reckoned not to change but to remain one and the same"; Descartes, Principles, 1:227.
space or place, we mean in addition that it has precisely the size and shape of the space in question.45

This seemingly innocent remark—including its telltale hendiadys "space or place"—harbors momentous consequences. For in singling out position as intrinsic to place (and thus as extrinsic to space qua volume), Descartes is departing from Aristotle and Philoponus and proposing something that will preoccupy the entire early modern period. This is the notion of what Whitehead calls "simple location," construed as "the very foundation of the seventeenth century scheme of nature."46 Simple location encompasses both place and space—in whatever acceptation these terms assume during this century—just as it bridges over the celebrated differences between absolutist and relativist views of space and time. According to the doctrine of simple location, any "bit of matter"—that is, any physical body—"is where it is, in a definite region of space, and throughout a definite finite duration of time, apart from any essential reference of the relations of that bit of matter to other regions of space and to other durations of time."47

Put in the terms just discussed by Descartes, simple location is the view that position matters most in questions of place. A simple location is a position in a determinate region and thus a position relative to other occupants of that region—even if, as Whitehead stresses, that region itself is considered without reference to other regions. Others in the history of philosophy, most notably Theophrastus and Aquinas, had certainly noticed the crucial role of relative position in the determination of place. However, position as such began to become thematic, and not exceptional, only in the second half of the seventeenth century, that is, after the publication of Principles of Philosophy in 1644. Still in equipoise with volume in the Principles, it was soon to become an obsessive concern of thinkers as diverse as Locke and Newton and Leibniz.

45 Descartes, Principles, 1:229. Note also Descartes' claim that "internal place is exactly the same as space."
47 Ibid. See also p. 49 for a more elaborate alternative formulation. Whitehead remarks that "this concept of simple location is independent of the controversy between the absolutist and the relativist views of space or of time"; ibid., 58.
John Locke thinks of place and space alike in terms of measurable distance: "each different distance is a different modification of space; and each idea of any different distance, or space, is a simple mode of this idea."48 By compounding particular distances, we reach the idea of "immensity" or, more vividly put, "the undistinguishable inane of infinite space."49 Yet Locke is no more committed to infinite space than is Descartes. His concern is with finite relations of distance between discrete positions in space. Thus his concept of place is "nothing else but [the] relative position of anything."50 In comparison with relative position, the idea of volume or "capacity" is said to be "confused."51 What matters is not extension as such—a term Locke attempts to avoid52—but the measurable aspects of extension, and these aspects all depend on determinate positions. So powerful is the idea of relative position that it comes to dominate what Locke has to say about both space and place. Although officially place is said to be "but a particular limited consideration" of space, in the end the determination of each is exactly the same: "as in simple space, we consider the relation of distance between any two bodies or points; so in our idea of place, we consider the relation of distance betwixt anything, and any two or more points, which are considered as keeping the same distance one with another, and so considered as at rest."53 The difference between space and place—a difference respected, even if continually contested, for two millennia in Western thought—begins to dissolve in the acidic solution of purely relational positions. In this

48 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. A. C. Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959), 1:220. Locke italicizes "simple mode." The importance of distance follows from Locke's instrumentalist conception of place: "this modification of distance we call place, being made by men for their common use . . . men consider and determine of this place by reference to those adjacent things which best served to their present purpose"; ibid., 223.

49 Ibid., 224.

50 Ibid. Locke says expressly that "we can have no idea of the place of the universe, though we can of all the parts of it"; ibid.

51 "The word place has sometimes a more confused sense, and stands for that space which any body takes up"; ibid. Elsewhere in the Essay, Locke makes it clear that volume belongs properly to the idea of "solidity," not to space proper: see ibid., 156.

52 A brief discussion of "extension" at the beginning of chapter 13 of Book Two was dropped after the first three editions of the Essay. See Fraser's note on p. 220.

53 The first statement occurs at ibid., 225; the second is on p. 222.
important regard, Locke is more consummately modern than is Descartes.

Everyone knows that Newton considered space and time to be absolute entities, the “infinite sensoria” of God Himself. The absolutism is undoubtedly there, although it is likely to be more the mark of Gassendi and More than of Newton’s own proclivities. A close look at the text of the Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, published only shortly before Locke’s Essay, shows that, despite the rhetoric of “absolute space,” there is an undercurrent of relativism that brings the two Englishmen much closer than one might have guessed is possible. Even if Newton denies that place consists in “situation” and at least once defines place as a “a part of space which a body takes up”—the Cartesian notion of internal place so resolutely rejected by Locke—he describes “relative space” as “some movable dimension or measure of the absolute spaces; which our senses determine by its position to bodies.”

By this last phrase, Newton means the simple locations of physical bodies in relation to each other. Indeed, “all places” are said to be defined “from the positions and distances of things from any body considered as immovable.” Not only is Newton extremely close to Locke in this last claim, but he espouses place-relativism even more fiercely than his compatriot by positing that “immovable places” are “those that, from infinity to infinity, do all retain the same given position one to another.” The physical universe itself, in other words, is composed of fixed places—“primary” or “absolute” places—a significant part of whose very absolutism consists in their unchanging relation to each other. No wonder, then, that Whitehead can say that “simple location holds whether we look on a region of space-time as determined absolutely or relatively.”

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54 Isaac Newton, Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, Scholium to the Definitions, section 2; my italics. The mention of “situation” and “a part of space which a body takes up” is in section 3. In the same section, Newton also rejects, in good Philoponean fashion, the idea of place as “the external surface of the body.”
55 Ibid, section 4; my italics.
56 Ibid.
57 The terms “absolute places” and “primary places” occur at ibid., section 4.
Put otherwise, Kant's effort to contrast Newton and Leibniz as offering strictly incompatible models of space is misleading at the very least. Just as there is much more respect for placial and spatial relativism in Newton than Kant admits, so there is in Leibniz a lingering shadow of absolutism—as when Leibniz defines space as "that which comprehends all those places."\(^{50}\) Nevertheless, the shadow is only a shadow of the primary phenomenon of space conceived as "something merely (purement) relative,"\(^{60}\) words that directly echo Locke. For space is officially defined as "an order of co-existences."\(^{61}\) Such an order is interpreted as "situation or distance,"\(^{62}\) where situation is equivalent to relative position or, more exactly, to sameness of place: "place is that, which is the same in different moments to different existent things, when their relations of co-existence with certain other existents, which are supposed to continue fixed from one of those moments to the other, agree entirely together."\(^{63}\) Thus Leibniz can boast that "in order to explain what place is, I have been content to define what is the same place."\(^{64}\) In making this move, Leibniz has accomplished two things: he has reduced place to relative position (for it is

\(^{50}\) Leibniz, "Fifth Paper," in The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, ed. H. G. Alexander (University of Manchester Press, 1956), as reprinted in J. J. C. Smart, Problems of Space and Time (Macmillan, 1976), 92; my italics. See also the statement that "space is that, which results from places taken together"; ibid.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 89 (from the "Third Paper"). Leibniz adds that "space denotes, in terms of possibility, an order of things which exist at the same time, considered as existing together, without enquiring into their manner of existing."

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 89.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 91. Leibniz underlines "situation." On p. 97, Leibniz speaks of space as "an order of situations," thereby reinforcing the relativism of place by abstracting it.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 92; his italics. "Fixed existents" are "those, in which there has been no cause of any change of the order of their co-existence with others; or (which is the same thing) in which there has been no motion"; ibid. The resemblance of fixed existents to Newton's idea of "immovable places"—as well as to Locke's contention that "the parts of pure space are immovable" (Locke, Essay, 227)—is striking.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 93–4; his italics. Locke uses the same language: "When we find anything at the same distance now which it was yesterday, from any two or more points, which have not since changed their distance one with another, and with which we then compared it, we say it hath kept the same place"; Locke, Essay, 222; my italics.
into the same relative position that "different existent things" can step) and he has conflated place with space. A sign of this conflation—the same we find in Philoponus and in Locke—is found in Leibniz's casual but concerted use of the same hendiadys so revealingly employed by Descartes as well, namely, "place and space."65

V

In the remainder of this essay, I want to address two major issues: first, the effect of the triumph of the relational view of place, including the effect of assimilating place to space; second, the consequences of this assimilation for the emergence of the "modern subject." In both cases, we shall be considering the larger stakes in a story that may have struck you so far as a mere matter of curiosity. Whatever intrinsic interest this story has, you may be asking yourself: fine, but so what? Let me try to say what this what amounts to in two stages.

(1) First, to the degree that the relational view of place/space won out in the modern period the West witnessed less the apotheosis of infinite space than the demise of place as an independent and viable concept. In large part, place was absorbed into space; insofar as it survived at all, it was in the denuded form that I shall call, for lack of a better term, "site." It is my view that, contra Koyré, the advent of the infinity of space was to begin with (and perhaps most enduringly) the creation of the late Neoplatonic period of Hellenistic philosophy. The idea of such infinity was available ever since Philoponus espoused a truly "cosmical extension." In this light, later and more celebrated thinkers such as Giordano Bruno and Nicolas of Cusa only pursued the idea to its bitter end—for instance, in the extreme notion that

65 Thus Leibniz writes that "the mind not contented with an agreement, looks for an identity, for something that should be truly the same; and conceives it as being extrinsic to the subjects: and this is what we call place and space"; Smart, Problems of Space and Time, 93; his italics. It follows that the identity in question, since it can never be perfectly realized in reality (individual differences between relational terms preclude it), must be "ideal": place or space so conceived is "an ideal thing, containing a certain order, wherein the mind conceives the application of relations"; ibid.; see also p. 94: "a mere ideal thing." The ideal, in turn, is linked with the possible, and Leibniz, by stressing both, has unwittingly fallen into what Whitehead calls "the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness."
there is not just infinite space but an infinite number of worlds in such space. This latter was an idea for which Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600, suggesting that the seventeenth century opened with the effort to suppress infinite space. Leading thinkers of this century continued to dispute such space, especially insofar as it entailed the void, concerning which Locke and Newton were supportive, and Descartes and Leibniz virulent opposed—their very variance on this issue exhibiting the uncertain destiny of infinite space during the century.

At the same time, and for many of the same reasons, the idea of place was beginning to disappear from philosophical and scientific discourse. Prominent minds of the time felt compelled to consider it—to give some account of it, however convoluted such an account might be. This is exactly what we witness in Descartes, whose discussion of "internal" versus "external" place is ultimately more confusing than clarifying. Place remains on Newton's list of master predicables: "time, space, place, and motion", but his treatment of it raises more questions than it answers: above all, how is "place" finally distinct from "space" (both are ultimately immovable and static; both are homogeneous in constitution and isometric in measurability; and so on)? We have seen how both Locke and Leibniz are driven to assimilate place to space under the common heading of relative position or situation. Despite the lip service still paid to the term "place," by the end of the century (or, more exactly, by 1715–16, the date of the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence), in fact place has been indifferently merged with space and is no longer deemed worthy of separate treatment—as it still was for Gassendi and Descartes. When Pascal wrote that "the silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me," he was commenting as much on the increasing absence of place as an anchor from which to view such spaces as he was on any new cosmology or physics of space itself.

A century later, place is no longer discussed at all, much less missed, in philosophy. With the single exception of Kant's remarkable pre-Critical essay of 1768, "Concerning the Differentiation of Regions in Space," it is difficult to find any significant treatment of place from the death of Leibniz in 1716 until Bergson's Latin dissertation of 1888.
whose topic is Aristotle’s notion of place—as if Bergson realized that to take up the topic again one has to return to this most sober and thorough of ancient discussions. (The irony, of course, is that Bergson’s *Time and Free Will*, published the very next year, asserts the primacy of durational *time* in human experience, thereby reinforcing the temporocentrism that had been regnant since the publication of *The Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 and that reached an apogee in the evolutionism and historicism of the nineteenth century.)

My interpretation of this extraordinary circumstance—in which one of the indispensable topics of ancient, medieval, and even early modern philosophy came to be so deeply neglected—is twofold. First, “place” was dissolved into “space” as the dominant term of Eurocentric discourse; compared with the unbounded extent and even distribution of space, place came to seem merely parochial, a matter indeed of “particular limited consideration.” The increasing ease with which the very word “place” became exchangeable with “space” is a leading symptom of this absorptive hegemony of the spatial world. Second, a progressive disenchantment with the idea of spatial infinity set in after the intoxication—and the terror—of late Renaissance and early modern vistas of “the undistinguishable inane of infinite space.” If place was taken up into space (becoming merely “a part of space” in Newton’s phrase again), its ghostly remnant was transmuted into *site*. By this latter term, I mean the levelled-down, emptied-out planiform residuum of place deprived of its actual and virtual “powers” (the very powers on which Aristotle and Iamblichus laid such eloquent stress).

The result is “striated space,” defined by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* as “the relative global: it is limited in *its parts*, which are assigned constant directions, are oriented in *relation to one another*, divisible by boundaries, and can be fit together.”68 I take Leibniz (influenced decisively by Locke) to be the primary culprit in this dire development: his notion of space as “something merely relational,” led him to propose a new discipline of “site analysis” (*analysis situs*, a rigorous analytic-geometric discipline). If space and place are both utterly relational, a sheer *order* of coexisting points, then they will not retain any of the inherent properties ascribed to place by ancient and early modern philosophers: properties of encompassing, holding, sustaining, gathering, situating (“situation” in Leibniz does

68 Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology*, 54; my italics.
not situate at all; it merely positions in a nexus of relations). So as not to incriminate Leibniz unduly, let me simply say that he brought to its logical term the full implications of the stranglehold of simple location in which so many of his immediate predecessors were also ensnared. As Whitehead points out, the direct result of simple location in philosophy as in physics is the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. For our purposes, this means a loss of the concrete particularity of place as well as the abstract absoluteness of infinite space—and the dissolution of both in the emptiness of sites.

The supremacy of site is the great theme of Foucault’s examination of eighteenth century disciplinary and institutional spaces. At the beginning of The Birth of the Clinic, he speaks of “the flat surface of perpetual simultaneity”\(^{69}\) that characterizes medical perception and practice in the century of Enlightenment. This surface, traversed by the gaze of the examining physician, is at once homogeneous and segmented: homogeneous as the sheer display of a given medical syndrome, segmented as located in the actual physical body of a patient. The first is the basis for what Foucault calls the “configuration” of knowledge, the second for the “localization” of that same knowledge, these two terms being suggestive remnants of space and place respectively. However, they are no more than relics of a previous discourse now overtaken by the discourse of site—the site, the exact location, of a disease in a particular part of the afflicted body. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault extends this analysis situs—no longer geometric but fully historical and political in his deft hands—to entire institutional settings, including the architecture of these settings. Now the surface of simultaneity (notice the presence of the Leibnizian criterion of coexistence surviving in Foucault’s locution) is embodied in the structure of prisons, hospitals, factories, barracks, reformatories, asylums, and so on. Both in architectural plan and in disciplinary regime, each of these institutions combines seriality with carcerality. In their built reality, each is in effect a line of cells, a set of segmented but contiguous and isomorphic subsites within the major site of the institution itself.

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The result is a "space of domination" in which surveillance prevails at every possible panoptical point and in which space and place alike (assuming these terms are still somehow distinguishable) are fixed: "it is a segmented, immobile, frozen space. Each individual is fixed in his place." Everything in site-space is "constantly located." What was a matter of simple location in seventeenth century physics and philosophy has become the constant location of the "disciplinary individual," of "calculable man," in the course of the eighteenth century. The act of "elementary location or partitioning" is tantamount to the suppression of active place and space—not to mention time, now strictly regulated by chronometric means in the work-place. "The rule of functional sites" has taken over space, time, and place in a veritable "laboratory of power" whose aim is to bring about a rigid "location of bodies in space." Thanks to the micro-practices of disciplinary power, such bodies become "docile bodies" in Foucault's memorable term—bodies which exist only in sites and as a function of sites. These bodies are disembodied precisely to the extent that they have become disemplaced.

(2) A second thing that matters is the fate of the human subject in all this. If Foucault is right in claiming that the very idea of "Man," as homo universalis, is the creation of the eighteenth century, we can

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71 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 195. The phrase "fixing in space" occurs at p. 291.

72 Ibid., 197. The full statement is: "this enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead—all these constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism."

73 "Calculable man," that is, the subject of the newly emerging human sciences, appears at ibid., 193. "Disciplinary individual" is found at on p. 227.

74 On time-regulation, see ibid., 220 as well as the celebrated studies of E. P. Thompson concerning time-tables in eighteenth century England. The phrase "elementary location or partitioning" is at ibid., 143 (his italics).

75 The phrase "laboratory of power" occurs at ibid., 204; "the rule of functional sites" is on p. 243 (his italics); and the last phrase in this sentence is at 205.

76 On docile bodies, see ibid., 135-69.

also say that, long before twentieth century deconstructions of the gen-
erically human, the plight of the subject was becoming extreme. Lit-
erally so: as Hannah Arendt remarks, alienation in the modern world
consists in a "twofold flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self."78 The modern subject finds himself caught be-
tween the extremes of universe and self—which is to say, between the in-
finite exteriority of the spatial universe and the infinitesimal interi-
ority of the Cartesian cogito. "Nothing," says Pascal, "can fix the finite
between the two infinites which enclose it and which escape its grasp."79 In between is a vacuum, one of whose main expressions is a lack of the "public realm," to use Arendt's term for the primary priva-
tion of modernity. I would prefer to call this dearth of the public realm a lack of public place—an absence of concrete, perceptible lo-
cales that allow for bodily ingestion as well as for collective historic-
ity.

One absolute, entirely external, rejoins the other, wholly internal,
calling for a place of certainty—which is to say, calling for place it-
self—in the face of the abyss opened up by the absence of place. Pas-
cal's anguish issues from the lack of any such place-certai-
ty. The anguish, felt as intolerable, cannot last for long. This is
doubtless why site (qua relative position) quickly emerged to paper
over the abyss of no-place. The very attributes of sites—their homo-
genity, isotropism, isomertism, unidirectionality, and monolinear-
ity—conspired to act as tranquilizing forces in the generation of
empty, planiform surfaces of simultaneity. Yet these same attributes
can scarcely hide the fact that site, though the successor to place, is
also its antithesis, its antidote, indeed its pharmakon—the remedy
that is the undoing. If infinite space can still be considered as place in extremis (that is, as the place of the universe as a whole: which is why
Newton, concerned with just such a super-place, cannot dispense with
the language of place altogether and can even call it "absolute"), site is
no longer placelike in any significant respect. Further, if infinite space
can be considered as place taken to its limit, site is the dismantling
of place itself, its de-limitation. Site is anti-place dancing on the abyss of
no-place.

It is emblematic that Kant, who brings modernity to its most rig-
orous and systematic point, finally has no room for place in his

78 Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chi-
79 Pascal, Pensées, no. 72.
conception of the human subject. By this I mean not just that the very term "place" drops out of his discourse regarding the subject (it remains only as "position" [Stelle] in his discussion of physical movement), but that the phenomenal self, the only self we can know, is radically unplaced. The only effective unity of this self is the unity of consciousness, the "I think" that accompanies cognition. Beyond this frail and formal unity there is nothing more lasting to grasp—nothing substantial, nothing simple, nothing of the nature of an abiding self. Even "in inner intuition," says Kant, "there is nothing permanent, for the 'I' is merely the consciousness of my thought." As the Paralogisms of Pure Reason make clear, we cannot know the human subject as a subject: "we do not have, and cannot have, any knowledge whatsoever of any such subject." Of course, for Kant there is a deep subject, the noumenal self, but this "subject of our thoughts" and of moral action is not the object of any possible knowledge. Nor is this transphenomenal subject situated in space or time—nor, a fortiori, in place. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the phenomenal self itself is so situated. In his discussion of the Paralogisms, Kant says that "neither space nor time, however, is to be found save in us." If so, it would follow that the phenomenal subject is not in space and time (since they are in the subject) and thus that this same subject is also not in place.

With Kant, then, we reach an extremity that was already nascent in Descartes: the modern subject is a placeless subject. This subject, living only in the flattened-out sites it itself projects or constructs, cannot count on any abiding place in the world. The Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness brings in its train the Fallacy of a Displaced

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80 Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, (hereafter, "CPR") trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), B413. Kant adds: "all that I really have in thought is simply the unity of consciousness, on which, as the mere form of knowledge, all determination is based"; B427. Any further unity, like the "absolute unity" implied by the Cartesian cogito, is a transcendental illusion, and thus a paralogism of pure reason; see Kant, CPR, A405.

81 CPR, A350. Kant's skepticism of self-knowledge is so extreme that he even says that "I represent myself to myself neither as I am nor as I appear to myself"; B 429; my italics. The underlined words indicate the extremity of Kant's skepticism concerning the knowability of the self.

82 CPR, A373. See also A375: "space itself, with all its appearances . . . is, indeed, only in me" (my italics); and A378: "space itself, however, is nothing but an inner mode of representation in which certain perceptions are connected with one another."

83 CPR, A373; his italics.
Self—a purely phenomenal Self displaced into merely epiphenomenal Sites. The simple location of things ends in the positioning of human beings in a succession of sheer sites, thereby inculcating docile bodies to occupy these sites. These bodies and sites are indifferent to one another and to the placeless selves they are supposed to subserve.

VI

We do not have to agree with Arendt that the primary kind of place lacking in modernity is the public scene of open political debate, the place of the agora and the agon.\textsuperscript{84} Nevertheless it is difficult to deny some significant connection between the demise of place as a viable philosophical category and the rise of the alienated modern subject. The alienation first articulated by Pascal and then codified and rationalized by Kant is, I would suggest, an alienation from place at least as much as it is an alienation from abiding metaphysical and religious ideas and ideals. The turn to the "juridical" subject of human rights in the latter part of the eighteenth century was not accidentally inspired by John Locke's liberalism—the abstractness and universality of these rights are consonant with, indeed reflective of, the lack of concrete emplacement for subjects who lived in the wake of Cromwell (and, more than a century later in France, of the Revolution). Just as Foucault argues that the putatively free individual of modern liberal society is a product of the disciplinary technology of power—"the 'Enlightenment,' which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines"\textsuperscript{85}—so I would argue that the same individual is a creature of lack of location. The modern subject is radically dislocated, someone who does not know the difference between place and space, or

\textsuperscript{84} For this thesis, see Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}, 51–8. Beyond the two factors cited earlier, Arendt attributes the loss of the "public sphere" to the encroachment of "the social" on the community at large. Foucault strikingly agrees with this assessment: "In a society in which the principal elements are no longer the community and public life, but on the one hand, private individuals and, on the other, the state, relations can be regulated only in a form that is the exact reverse of the [ancient] spectacle"; Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 216.

\textsuperscript{85} Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 222. See also Foucault's statement that "the real, corporeal disciplines constituted the foundation of the formal, juridical liberties"; ibid. See also p. 194: "The [modern] individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline.'"
even the difference between either of these and the sites to which he or she is confined in the pseudo-voluntarism that thinks that such a subject can go any place. However this global nomadism is a delusion, since to be able to go anywhere is to be located nowhere.

In place of the false “global absolute” that is the proper realm of infinite, homogeneous, and striated space, we need to rediscover the “local absolute” that is the domain of true nomadism. The latter absolute is “an absolute that is manifested locally, and [it is] engendered in a series of local operations of varying orientations.” Local operations are actions taken in particular places, that is to say, in “smooth spaces,” about which Deleuze and Guattari have this to say:

Smooth space is precisely the space of the smallest deviation: therefore it has no homogeneity, except between infinitely proximate points, and the linking of proximities is effected independently of any determined path. It is a space of contact, of small tactile or manual actions of contact, rather than a visual space like Euclid’s striated space. Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: non-metric, acentered, rhizomatic multiplicities which occupy space without ‘counting’ it and [which] can ‘only be explored by legwork.”

Such a distinctively postmodern space may offer a way of getting back into place—a place where the human subject can pursue once again a vita activa that has become smothered in the toils of an unemplaced modernity, and thereby regain an anchor in the known world. The names for such a renewed sense of place are various: “region” in late-Heideggerian thought, “enclave” in Lyotard’s work, “earth” in the case of ecology, and so on. Of course, these names are also ancient: “region” translates χώρα “enclave” carries forward χώριον and χώριδιον (still other variations on Platonic χώρα), and “earth” is central to Aristotle’s cosmology as well as to Iamblichus’s imaginative extension of that cosmology.

In this way, we might begin to realize that “topoanalysis” which Bachelard sketched in The Poetics of Space—and to which Heidegger’s equally sketchy “Topology of Being” seems strangely to corre-

86 Deleuze and Guattari, Nomadology, 54.
87 Ibid., 44.
88 “The place of all the land animals is the earth and the air, namely, this part of the earth and the air, and furthermore rather that immediately encompassing place which both Aristotle and Archytas have explained”; Iamblichus, as cited in Sambursky, The Concept of Place in Late Neoplatonism, 51.
spond.89 We might also start to reinstate place itself within our lives, philosophical and otherwise, and to take these lives beyond liberties and disciplines, cells and series, docile bodies and equally docile minds. The untethered subject might begin to repossess itself in and around particular places. At the very least, to smooth spaces we need to add rough-edged places if the postmodern subject is to be reattached to the concrete life-world (or perhaps we should now say: "place-world"). To do so would be to reconnect place and space themselves as members of a new indefinite dyad that challenges the all too definite monads of time and site. It would be to tell a new tale of two cities—of place and space, neither of these being beholden to site or tied to time.

In starting, I said that time is one and space is two. We have seen, if mostly by indirection, how this is so—how time, for example, tends toward the hegemonic and monistic (most evidently in nineteenth-century thought) or simply the self-unified (in the transcendental subject, or even in the sense that in reading this essay you have been immersed in one continuous stretch of time). Space, on the other hand, is two—at least two, though not merely because there are in fact several sorts of space, such as hyperspaces or virtual spaces (these being the concern of the topologically minded mathematician). Rather, space forms a twosome, an uneven doublet, with place, its odd and incongruous other. The twoness is not that of two things, of even of two of a kind, but instead that of two quite variant kinds—which nevertheless coexist in all their disparity and cannot seem to do otherwise. Hence the ongoing saga of the uneasy alliances, the ambivalent togethernesses, of place and space.

Aristotle proclaimed that "the minimum number, strictly speaking, is two."90 I have focussed on the minimal dyad of place and space. If we were to find ourselves in a more generous mood, however, we might imagine an indefinite tetrad in which new notions of place, space, site, and time could reengage philosophical thought. From this


90 Aristotle, Physics 4.12.220a27. I here modify Hussey’s translation: "The least number, without qualification, is the two."
tetrad would emerge differing (but not altogether different) ideas of what it means to be in a place, how it is to be encompassed by endless space, by what means sites can be reinstated in nondebilitating ways, and how time may appear otherwise. The sardonic unsettling effected by the postmodern period might thereby give way to the rethinking of terms whose continuing importance will be reaffirmed but whose effective significance will, at the same time, be radically altered in direction and force.

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