

# Place and Locality in Heidegger's Late Thought

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*Abstract: A strand of contemporary philosophy has turned from the traditional focus on universality toward conceptions of "one's own," "place," and "particularity." In the recovery of "place" and "location," no attempt has been made to distinguish between these terms nor to investigate their different implications even though there is an incipient distinction between them in Heidegger's late work. This meditation on the relationship between place (Ort) and locality (Ortschaft) begins from Heidegger's texts in which the distinction was made. The second part follows the thought of location further. Third, the implication of this distinction for the task of thinking and its distinction from poetry is explored. In conclusion, some implications for the interpretation and application of Heidegger's work and for the place that a definition and defence of particularity and locality might have in contemporary philosophy are explored.*

*Résumé: Une certaine voie de la philosophie contemporaine a déplacé son attention traditionnelle portée à l'universel pour se tourner vers des conceptions du "propre," du "lieu," du "particulier." Dans la récupération des concepts de "lieu" et d'"emplacement," on n'a pas, jusqu'ici, tenté de distinguer ces termes ou d'étudier leurs implications respectives, bien qu'une distinction émerge dans l'oeuvre tardive de Heidegger. La présente méditation sur la relation entre lieu (Ort) et localité (Ortschaft) part du texte heideggérien dans lequel la distinction a été faite. La seconde partie poursuit la pensée de la localité. La troisième sonde la portée de cette distinction pour la tâche de la pensée et la façon dont elle se démarque de la poésie. En conclusion, j'explore l'incidence qu'une définition et une défense de la particularité et de la localité pourrait avoir sur l'interprétation et l'application de l'oeuvre de Heidegger en philosophie contemporaine.*

## Introduction

An important strand of contemporary philosophy, especially under the influence of environmental questions and issues of globalization, has turned from the traditional philosophical focus on, and defence of, universality toward conceptions of "one's own," "place," and "particularity." This does not necessarily involve a denial of universality as such, but does imply that heretofore existing concepts of universality have contributed to a covering-over, or distortion, of what is necessary to properly inhabit one's own place. In Edmund Husserl's work, this theme is treated through the "mathematical substruction of the life-world" originating in Galilean science that has cast a "veil of ideas" over ordinary experience and pre-interpreted it in terms deriving from scientific abstractions. (Husserl, 1972, *passim*.) Martin Heidegger's thought has arguably been the most influential in this

strand of contemporary philosophy and has been controversial, in large part, because the recovery of ordinary, pre-scientific experience often has been interpreted as a negation of universality as such.

In the recovery of “place” and “location” for which this strand of contemporary philosophy argues, no attempt has been made to distinguish between these terms or to investigate the different implications that each might have. However, there is an incipient distinction between “place” and “location” in Heidegger’s late work. Heidegger articulates a relationship between the opening that allows an event of appropriation (*Ereignis*), which defines an epoch in the history of Being, and the dwelling of mortals in place (*Ort*), or among places, in which language plays a mediating role as the way in which Being speaks mortals. The way of thought in this essay follows the relationship to place and location immanent in the dwelling of mortals and suggests that these two terms have significantly different implications for a continuation of the themes of Heidegger’s thought.<sup>1</sup> Thus, while the interpretation and continuation of Heidegger’s thought presented here stays close to the textual evidence in his work, it has larger implications, not only for the appropriation of Heidegger’s thought, but also for the place that a definition and defence of particularity and locality might have in contemporary philosophy.

We can situate this meditation within Heidegger’s late thought through a consideration of the mortal vocation of dwelling as expressed in “Building Dwelling Thinking.” Toward the end of this text, we read that “[d]welling, however, is *the basic character* of Being in keeping with which mortals exist.” (Heidegger 1975a, p. 160; cf. Heidegger 1954a, p. 35. Emphasis in original.) Only if we learn to dwell can we build, or think, as mortals who are attentive to Being. Both building and thinking construct the world of humans/mortals and, as such, both bring forth *places* in which dwelling occurs. “For building brings the fourfold *hither* into a thing, the bridge, and brings *forth* the thing as a place, out into what is already there, room for which is only now made *by* this place.” (Heidegger 1975a, p. 159; cf. Heidegger 1954a, p. 34. Emphasis in original.) The fourfold of earth, sky, divinities and mortals is manifested in a thing which is a place. A thing (not object) does not mark a place, but is itself a place, and being in place, or among places, is what characterizes mortals as such.

Speaking of a bridge, Heidegger says that this thing is a place which founds the dwelling of mortals, such that “the place is a shelter for the fourfold or, by the same token, a house. Things like such places shelter or house men’s lives. Things of this sort are housings, though not necessarily dwelling-houses in the narrower sense.” (Heidegger 1975a, p. 158; cf. Heidegger 1954a, p. 33. Emphases in original.) Through building, then, mortals construct places which house them and allow them to dwell on the earth. In this sense, the existence of mortals in keeping with Being is achieved through dwelling, and dwelling is founded through the construction of things, which are the places among which we dwell. Similarly,

though on its own path and accepting its own itinerary, thinking is oriented to place as the achievement of dwelling for mortals. “Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling.” (Heidegger 1975a, p. 160-1; cf. Heidegger 1954a, p. 36) So much is this the case that the imperative to “think for the sake of dwelling” (Heidegger 1975a, p. 161; cf. Heidegger 1954a, p. 36) orients thought to the discovery and, perhaps, construction of places. In this way, both building and thinking are oriented to places, since it is through places that we dwell and dwelling is the character of Being with which mortals exist. Place is, then, no ordinary concept—if there could be such a thing—in Heidegger’s late work. It is the orientation toward which the opening of Being is manifested in the world of humans/mortals. For this reason, it has become commonplace to refer to Heidegger’s late thinking as a topology of Being. (See, for example, Schürmann 1987, pp. 160-1 and Pöggler 1987, pp. 227-242)

We might say that following the line of thought in the late work of Heidegger instantiates a transformation of humans into mortals insofar as dwelling in place, and among places, would overcome, or displace (*Verwindung*), the definition of humans as subjects which is rooted in metaphysics which has come to situate them in mathematical-physical space (*Raum*) and, thereby, cast them into a condition of homelessness. Dwelling is, in this sense, coming home, becoming mortal. Heidegger’s work announces and prepares for this transformation but does not complete it. The late writings follow lines of thought which open this path, but are not definitive maps since their purpose is the discovery of the way, not an orientation to a goal.

This meditation on the relationship between place (*Ort*) and locality (*Ortschaft*) begins, in the first part, from an explication of Heidegger’s texts from the last phase of his work in which a distinction between the two was made, though in a rather initial way. The second part then proceeds to a dialogue with the thought expressed in these texts in order to follow the thought of location further. Third, the implication of this distinction for the task of thinking and its distinction from poetry is explored in a tentative vein. In conclusion, some of the implications of the distinction between place and location for the interpretation and application of Heidegger’s work are briefly noted.

### **The Distinction Between Place and Locality**

There are three clues to a possible distinction and relationship between place and location in Heidegger’s late work that emerge from a close reading of three texts, or quotations from texts. I would like to draw attention to them in the temporal order in which they appear in his work which is also the coincident order of explicit attention directed toward the distinction. The fact that these two orders coincide is itself an indication that these three clues refer to an emergent distinction, perhaps

a conceptual problematic, or even an event of appropriation in Heidegger's late work.

The first text appears in the third and last lecture of Heidegger's lecture series "The Nature of Language," which was given as lectures in 1958 and published in 1959. The third lecture traces the proximity between poetry and thought that two previous lectures set out. We need to follow the way of this thinking in order to appreciate what is said about place and location toward the end of the last lecture. Tracing this "neighborhood of poetry and thinking" intends an experience of the nature of language and language, we will recall, is that by which mortals are spoken by Being. This neighborhood thus pertains to the essence of the mortality of mortals. "Neighborhood means: dwelling in nearness." (Heidegger 1982, p. 93; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 199) Saying manifests the dwelling in nearness of poetry and thinking such that "nearness and Saying would be the Same." (Heidegger 1982, p. 95; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 202) The lectures on language thus wend toward their end with the question "nearness brings about neighborhood. But what does nearness mean?" (Heidegger 1982, p. 101; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 208) Nearness itself is the "movement" that holds the regions of the fourfold "in the nearness of their distance" which is called "nighness." (Heidegger 1982, p. 104; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 211) Nighness is a face-to-face relation in the *now*, which is to say, a relation in time and space. Heidegger reminds us that this relation cannot be understood by a calculative thinking that intends a domination of the earth involving abstract concepts of space and time. The way of thinking as shown in the text has thus prepared for an experience of time and space that would define nearness itself—which is the proximity of poetry and thinking in the Saying that is language—as the Being given to mortals.

Space, in this encounter with nearness, "spaces, throws open locality and places, vacates them and at the same time gives them free for all things and receives what is simultaneous as space-time." (Heidegger 1982, p. 106; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 214) Space is an activity; space spaces. It vacates (*einräumt*), or makes room, such that locality and places become manifest. A thing, we will recall from "Building Dwelling Thinking," is a place that houses mortals. We may say that the nearness of poetry and thinking, that which puts them in the same neighborhood, that which makes room for places, is the dwelling which houses and shelters mortals.

Note that the text says, "locality and places," "*Ortschaft und Orte*." Nearness gives places for dwelling, but also locality. Is "locality" merely another way of saying "place," or of saying "place-ness in general?" It would seem not, for several reasons. If locality simply means to say "place," or "places," then it is redundant, and confusingly so, since it introduces another term which is not elsewhere used as a synonym. Also, the "and" seems to want to add something, not to say "or," which would suggest the same thing being said in another way.

What, then, might “locality” want to add to “places?” The ending “*schaft*” would normally turn the word into an abstract and universal term—in the way, for example, that *wissen* becomes *Wissenschaft* in order to change “knowing” into “knowledge” in the sense of science. But this seems inappropriate here, in the first place because Heidegger has just finished reiterating his critique of scientific-technical thinking in which such an abstract universal term would seem to be situated, and in the second place because such a term in this sentence would not seem to make sense in the context. It would not be sensible to want to say “place-ness and places.” One can make room for places, but not for place-ness. Moreover, this would not seem to add anything insofar as it would just express in general terms the same idea. It would also be odd to put this general idea before the specific term. What, then, would locality, *Ortschaft*, want to add? This is difficult to answer because the third and last lecture does not make any further reference to locality. On such scant evidence, the issue must remain unresolved, but perhaps this discussion suffices at least to provide a clue that the term “locality” *might* have, or imply, in Heidegger’s work an additional meaning not subsumable under, or reducible to, the notion of place.

In the text “Art and Space,” published in 1969, Heidegger twice again uses the two terms “place” and “locality.” In the course of thinking about the relation between sculpture and space, he associates the word “space” (*Raum*) with “clearing-away” (*Räumen*) in the sense that one clears the wilderness to bring forth an open space for human settling and dwelling. Our second clue begins from the remark that “[c]learing-away is the release of the places (*Orte*) at which a god appears, the places (*Orte*) from which the gods have disappeared, the places (*Orte*) at which the appearance of the godly tarries long. In each case, clearing-away brings forth (*erbringt*) locality (*Ortschaft*) preparing for dwelling.” (Heidegger 1973, p. 5; cf. Heidegger 1969, p. 9) This use of locality could possibly refer to places as a generality. Clearing-away releases places of various kinds and thus might be said to release place-ness in general. However, and I am skipping only one sentence, Heidegger goes on to say that “[c]learing-away is release (*ist Freigabe*) of places (*Orte*).” (Heidegger 1973, p. 5; cf. Heidegger 1969, p. 9) This is the most general statement made about the relationship between clearing-away and place. It uses not what might be a general form such as “place-ness,” or “*Ortschaft*,” but rather simply “places” in the plural. This, of course, is characteristic of Heidegger’s thought. It would be unlikely to see him resort to a general, abstract noun in making a key statement of this kind.

But, if clearing-away releases, or frees, places, what was the necessity for mentioning locality as possibly distinct from place when it was said, as quoted above, that “[i]n each case, clearing-away brings forth locality preparing for dwelling?” This difference might be attributed to the difference between the other components of the sentence. It might refer to the difference between the verbs expressed as release, or freeing (*ist Freigabe*) places, versus “bringing-forth”

(*erbringt*) locality, or it might refer to the difference between simply releasing places versus bringing them forth such that they “prepare for dwelling.” In other words, it might suggest that places might be released which do not prepare for dwelling—or do not do so adequately, thoroughly, or do so only in some restricted sense, so that the relation to dwelling is in some relevant sense curtailed. I will suggest later that both components of this suggestion are indeed relevant to interpreting the difference, but at present this indication is hardly definitive and serves only as a further clue which suggests the possibility that a deliberate and meaningful distinction was being made by Heidegger in this text.

The clearing-away (*Räumen*) that releases places is associated with making-room (*Einräumen*), such that they are asserted to be the same term, and then divided into two components in which there is, first, an admitting which “lets openness hold sway” and, second, that which “prepares for things the possibility to belong to their relevant whither and, out of this, to each other.” (Heidegger 1973, p. 6; cf. Heidegger 1969, p. 9-10) Clearing-away opens such that Being can become manifest in the things and places of human dwelling. It also allows things to bear a relationship to each other, to become an interplay of things—and things, we recall, are places. As well as opening, clearing-away makes room for the relationship of places—this from their belonging to their “relevant whither” (*jeweiliges Wohin*). Here, again, there is the suggestion that, beyond the founding of places as things, there is a further thought that has to do with the relationship of places. It also explains the fact that, while “place” is used either in the singular or the plural, “locality” is always used in the singular.

Coming to our third clue, which is developed from a text that appears only a page later in “Art and Space,” Heidegger continues by addressing the question of the relationship between places and making-room, asking first if places simply derive from making-room. He does not discuss this possibility, but turns immediately to pose an alternative—which is not quite the inverse. “Or does making-room take its special character from the reign of gathering places? If this proves right, then we would have to search for the special character of clearing-away in the grounding of locality, and we would have to meditate on locality as the interplay of places.” (Heidegger 1973, p. 6; cf. Heidegger 1969, p. 10) This formulation suggests, though it does not argue or show, that making-room, and clearing-away, are founded on places, rather than the inverse—though not exactly on places, but on “the reign of gathering places.” The reign of gathering places, which is tied to the grounding of locality, is the source for the essence of clearing-away, which was set out as the special character of space.

As far as I am aware, this is the only text in which Heidegger explicitly asserts a difference between place and locality and gives some indication of what this distinction means. It occurs at a point in the text where, as he himself indicates by the first question, it might seem as if places are grounded on making-room, which would then set clearing-away, in the sense that one clears away the

wilderness, as the ground from which places derive—and perhaps run the danger that places are misunderstood to be cut off from an appropriation of Being since they would be founded on a misunderstanding of clearing-away as arbitrary, or decisionistic, as without any foundation except the act of clearing-away itself. Without discussion, Heidegger diverts from this course in order to suggest almost the opposite relation, that making-room and clearing-away themselves derive from places such that places are, in an ontological sense, prior to making-room and clearing-away in a manner that would found human action in an appropriation of Being. Thus, in the first place, clearing-away releases places and prepares for things to belong to each other through their relation to their relevant whither. But also, clearing-away is grounded on places. In the middle of this paradox, in such a manner as might suggest its resolution, Heidegger introduces two other terms that do not seem to have the same status or weight in his thinking, but which suggest a clue to a fundamental issue.

In order to suggest that places precede clearing-away even while clearing-away releases places, Heidegger says “the reign of gathering places” gives its special character to making-room, rather than place or places themselves. At the same juncture, he says that the special character of clearing-away is to be sought in the grounding of locality. “Locality,” then, would seem to be associated closely with “the reign of gathering places.” The paradoxical relation between clearing-away and places is thus pointed toward resolution by the introduction of two other terms, which are likely two ways of saying the same thing, that refer not to places, nor straightforwardly to a simple plurality of places, but to some sort of relationship between places. At this point, turning to the subjunctive and thus indicating a yet-to-be-thought on the way of his thinking, he says that “we would have to meditate on locality as the interplay of places. We would then have to take heed that and how this play receives its reference to the belonging together of things from the region’s free expanse.” (Heidegger 1973, p. 6; cf. Heidegger 1969, p. 10)

Locality, the interplay of places, gathering places into a “reign,” the belonging together of things—which, in the next sentence, Heidegger reminds the readers of “Art and Space” (who perhaps have not read “Building Dwelling Thinking”), are places—all seem to suggest that the paradoxical relationship between clearing-away and places is to be resolved through the sort of relationship that is to be found in an interplay of places that can be named “locality.” Heidegger’s first sentence in “Art and Space” says that “[t]he remarks on art, space and their interplay remain questions, even if they are uttered in the form of assertions.” (Heidegger 1973, p. 3; cf. Heidegger 1969, p. 5) Perhaps it is not too much to suggest that, of the questions which “Art and Space” asks, the relationship between place and locality goes most centrally to the heart of Heidegger’s late thought. The brief introduction of the term “locality” at the juncture of clearing-away and place suggests that the dwelling of mortals among things in their basic

character of Being requires an inquiry into the interplay of places, the gathering of places into a reign, in order to carry forward and complete the preparation for mortals in overcoming, displacing or recovering from (*Verwindung*) the homelessness of humans in the scientific-technological world. The fact that Heidegger clearly intends a meaningful distinction between “place” and “locality” in this text validates not only the continuance of this inquiry but also the interpretation of previous, separately inconclusive, mentions of locality as clues to its direction.

### **A Meditation on Locality**

At the risk of repetition, I would like to begin by bringing together the clues that I have derived from interpretations of these short references by Heidegger in order to meditate further on the concept of locality and its distinction from place. Taking them in the order presented above, these clues can be briefly summarized as follows. 1] In nearness, which is a face-to-face relation in the now, space spaces to make room for locality and places. 2] Space as clearing-away makes room for locality, which prepares for dwelling, by allowing things to belong to their relevant whither. 3] Locality is an interplay of places, a reign of gathering places, that gives its special character to clearing-away, or making-room, such that it directs the fourfold toward the belonging-together of things.

The itinerary of a thought oriented toward bringing humans home to dwell as mortals among places requires that such places be set in relation to each other. This setting into relation of places is locality. There is no single place for mortals to be—except in relation to the earth, sky and divinities of the fourfold. Dwelling itself involves a plurality of places, a plurality of housings, one may say, bearing in mind that these do not only refers to houses in the straightforward sense. A café might be a housing in the sense that it makes a meeting-place for talk, enjoyment and relaxation. We are housed in different ways by the various activities in which we engage. Housings, places, must therefore be set in relation to each other in order for mortals to move appropriately—or, of course, inappropriately—from place to place in undertaking the multiplicity of activities interwoven in a single life. In this sense, locality refers to the interplay of places such that it prepares for dwelling by grounding this interplay in a relevant whither.

The concept of locality has a crucial role in Heidegger’s thought in its relation to the space, when space is understood as clearing-away and making-room, insofar as locality seems to resolve the paradox of the founding-founded relation between clearing-away and place. Clearing-away makes room for locality, but locality gives its special character, or essence, to space as clearing-away. Space-time, which founds nearness as a face-to-face relation in the now, is the ground of dwelling. Thus, before attempting to follow further the concept of locality, it is not too much to say that the concept of locality is crucial to mortal dwelling. Also, one

could add as an aside that, to the extent that Heidegger's late thought has been understood mainly through place as a topology of Being, to the detriment of locality—which we will explicate as a way without goal—its itinerary has been adumbrated.

We have to think locality as that which *connects* one place to another such that it forms a reign of gathering places grounded in a relevant whither. There are several inter-related thoughts here. The first thought is connection of locality to a plurality of places. “[L]ocality as the interplay of places,” Heidegger says, at the point where he comes closest to a discussion of locality. (As quoted above, Heidegger 1973, p. 6; cf. Heidegger 1969, p. 10) The second thought, the connection of locality to a “relevant whither” is not said anywhere directly by Heidegger but derives from the definition of things as places established in “Building Dwelling Thinking” and simply mentioned in “Art and Space.” Space as clearing-away “prepares for things the possibility to belong to their relevant whither and, out of this, to each other.” (As quoted above. Heidegger 1973, p. 6; cf. Heidegger 1969, p. 9-10) Once we know that places are things, the relationship between things asserted here moves into the neighbourhood of the “interplay of places” that defines locality. Locality can thus be said to require a “relevant whither.” These texts do not indicate that Heidegger ever formulated this thought himself, but an interpretation that brings together the clues in his texts can assert, on the evidence presented above, that this second thought about locality does exist in his texts even though it is not directly asserted as such. The third thought is that it is through the “reign of gathering places” that clearing-away and making-room are defined. Places are gathered together into a “reign”—if we could risk another terminology with a different history we might say “hegemony.” This reign allows the relevant whither to appear such that places are set into connection.

Location requires a placing *in relation to* other places. Perhaps we can derive some direction from ordinary English usage at this point. If I say, “meet me at the café,” which is a place, my interlocutor might respond “*which* café?” To say, “*the* café” would suffice if we were in the café, or if there were only one café, or if we always met at the same café, or, in short, if the word “café” named a unique and therefore unmistakable place. But, if I want to locate this place—that is to say, put it into relation with other places—I might add “the café across from the train station.” This would probably suffice if there were only one train station, or if there were only one train station close that pertains to our neighbourhood. Otherwise, I might say “across from the train station *downtown*,” or “on the Drive, of course.” In each case, a specification is introduced, if necessary, in order to locate the place in relation to other places. If the place is referred to within a reign of gathering places shared by speaker and interlocutor, then it needs no further specification. If further specification is required, it is because the reign is not equally shared, or assumed, by both. In such a case, the place is located, or defined in relation to a plurality of places, by indicating the reign to which it is referred. Location thus

emerges as an issue, is resorted to, we might say, when the “reign of gathering places” is incompletely gathered, or reigns incompletely.

Thus, it is not only a matter of connection, or interplay as Heidegger explicitly says, but the connection as it emerges from and defines a specific place—which might be what is indicated by a “relevant whither.” While location retains the reference to a single place, it refers to situating this place in its relation to other places, especially those other places that have a significance for this one. To specify the café by saying “across from the station” means that the station becomes a place from which the café as a place is situated. But here the station is not meant as a place in the same sense that the café is meant as a place. The station is not so much a place as a reference to a location. The location is not the station as such, but the interplay of places in and around the station, its vicinity. The station here stands as a name for the entire location. In another example, of course—say in referring to the station *downtown*—the station might be a place defined through another location. This example brings out the key characteristic of a location. It cannot be defined except in relation to a place. While location is a certain connection between a plurality of places, it cannot be seen either as an aggregate of places nor as something standing over against place as such. We might say that location is a place caught in the act of leading elsewhere. It is a place that takes on the role of specifying a relation between places. It is a place that comes to constitute and designate the reign of gathering places. This is one advantage that the German terms “*Ort*” and “*Ortschaft*” have over the English terms “place” and “locality.” They show an etymological connection that might indicate that locality can never be defined except through the standing-forth of a place to define a reign. Thus, it is not only a matter of connection, but *the connection as it emerges from a specific place*. While location retains the reference to a single place, it refers to situating this place in its relation to other places, especially those other places that have a significance for this one. Locality constitutes the *reign that gathers* of the reign of gathering places.

This connection, whereby a place stands for the interplay between places that constitutes a location, shows the special character of the nearness of a neighbourhood. That which is face-to-face in the now is that which is near in the sense of belonging-together in the same locality. The café is near to the station because the station is a locality where one can walk easily from one side of the road to another and one can get there easily by car or bus. A café might be “objectively” in space and time nearer to the station, but not be in the same locality if it were on the other side of a highway that could not be crossed on foot, for example. The reign is constituted by a nearness that means the co-accessibility of places. Similarly, a place—such as a glass-panel factory—might be close in objective space and time to the station but not be part of the locality because we pass the station coming and going on our daily business and would not genuinely encounter a glass-panel factory in that context. Though, of course, a shoe-repair shop might

well be part of the locality because it is very convenient to pass on the way to work and then to stop at the café to chat with friends. It is the belonging-together that designates reigning in the constitution of locality.

I want now to fix more clearly on how locality is experienced as locality, what is the essence of locality, such that it retains a reference to a qualitatively experienced place but leads on and connects with other places of significance. In order for locality to lead on to another place, it must involve an experience of place that is not enclosed but opens out and also an experience of another place to which it opens out. The phenomenon of “leading-outward” requires an “opening-out” and a “there” to which the opening opens. Such a leading-outward means that one can also come back, that there is an experience of “coming-back,” or “returning-toward” the “home place,” or the place from which the neighbourhood takes its reference. Notice that, in leading-outward and in coming-back, there is a double aspect to the movement, but these aspects are not symmetrical. Let us take each movement in turn. The essence of locality is in the opening-out and returning-toward.

Leading-out addresses itself toward a place, whereas the “place” from which one is led out is not a place but a location—that is to say, a place that is standing for the neighbourhood, or vicinity—insofar as it is not the end, or goal, of situating but that which situates. The goal, a “there,” can be understood as a place since it is a destination and thus the end of movement. Place begins where movement ceases. I am heading toward the café. The movement outward moves smoothly through its location toward a point at which the movement ceases. In thus associating place with stasis, the phenomenon of locality emerges more clearly. Locality is the constituting movement prior to the definition of place, not necessarily as origin, but as orientation.

The movement of leading-outward is paired with an asymmetrical movement of returning-toward since it is in the coincidence of these two that the essence of locality resides. While leading-outward is “smooth,” in the sense that it encounters no interruptions in its movement toward there, returning-toward experiences a border, or a line that is permeable, that interrupts the smoothness of movement. In the moment of return, the line is constituted as location congeals into a place. As location becomes place, the return is constituted as a movement between places, from there to here, which are divided by a line that separates them as distinct places. Returning home is a way that crosses this line. The station that defines a neighbourhood—which is thus not taken as a station, but reigns through its orientation toward a goal—becomes a place, a station. The here is defined as here in the movement of return from there. It is the line that creates the border between here and there. This line is created by the shrinking from location to place in which the inter-ness of the interplay disappears. The movement of return is a kind of shrinking in which the original orientation defining a vicinity becomes a place such that distance between here and there appears. Thus, the “original” here,

which is first defined as a place in the movement of return when it becomes a goal, is first defined as a “there”—though a there which is recognized as already-having-been a here. Here appears from there in the movement of coming back. One must think the crossing of the line in the moment of its crossing to think location as returning-back. The border is inherently capable of being crossed since it appears with the already-having-been of the here which is now a there. The border is not a place but rather a line between places. In order to define the essence of locality as returning-back, the border must be understood as the line which appears as it is crossed. Crossing is a movement, thus it is a kind of movement that is the origin of the border.

The essence of locality is movement, traversal, interplay. It is made up of two kinds of movement that are constituted by their asymmetrical co-dependence. Movement outward is smooth, borderless and without interruption, whereas movement back discovers a border when it re-iterates location as a place, a destination “there” which already-has-been here. Here and there can never be treated as coordinates on the same level. This description shows why, in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” Heidegger said that “a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*.” (Heidegger 1975a, p. 154; cf. Heidegger 1954a, p. 29. Emphasis in original) However, in the same text, he says “spaces (*Räume*) receive their being from places (*Orten*) and not from ‘space’ (*Raum*).” (Heidegger 1975a, p. 154; cf. Heidegger 1954a, p. 29. Translation altered) It has already been noted above that in this text Heidegger had neither introduced nor used the distinction between place and location. In order to include the insight developed in the present meditation, we would have to alter this sentence to read: spaces receive their being from location (*Ortschaft*) and not from “space.” Also, noticing that the line, or boundary, appears in the interrupted movement of return and not (yet) in the smooth movement outward, we may say that while something begins its presencing from the boundary, something can only begin its presencing in the movement which is a *recovery* of here, the return toward home.

At this point we can return to the paradox inserted into the text “Art and Space” by Heidegger to turn away from the possibility that places are decisionistically grounded on making-room and clearing-away. He suggests there the yet-to-be-thought that making-room and clearing-away are grounded on the reign of gathering places in such a way that it takes its special character from locality. It remains for us to consider whether locality has now been thought sufficiently well and thoroughly that it can show the special character of making-room and clearing-away. This can perhaps most directly be formulated by making a distinction between these two terms that Heidegger treats as equivalent. Space as clearing-away is constituted by the movement outward of locality, in the movement toward there. Space as making-room is constituted by the movement back, in the discovery of the here. Spacing is grounded on location as not only the non-

coincidence of here and there, but as their asymmetry. A there appears in a smooth movement outward, whereas here appears “later” in the interrupted movement of return. The interruption, the border, makes room out of the space cleared away. It seems, then, that Heidegger was right to describe human being in *Being and Time* as *Da-sein*, being-there, but he neglected to add the always-already-present “later” relation *Hier-sein*, being-here, the movement of return without which the otherness of the other could not begin its presencing. Location requires these two, an opening-out and returning-toward, because movement as movement contains the possibility of return—even though the two are not ever entirely symmetrical. A rapids that can be shot one way requires a portage on return.

### Thought as Home-coming versus Thought as a Way

In *Discourse on Thinking*, which was published in 1959, Heidegger defined thought as “the coming-into-the-nearness of distance,” (Heidegger 1966, p. 68; cf. Heidegger 1959b, p. 43) which would mean, “bringing the distant into a face-to-face relation in the now,” into the neighbourhood where dwelling occurs. However, in “Language” (also published in 1959), he also spoke of poetry as bringing the distant near (Heidegger 1975b, p. 198; cf. Heidegger 1959a, p. 21), so this characterization refers not to what would differentiate poetry and thought, “the farthest divergence of their Saying,” (Heidegger 1982, p. 90; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 195) but to their proximity. In “The Nature of Language,” thought is described as a way—the *Tao*, “the way that gives all ways” (Heidegger 1982, p. 92; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 198)—that “lets us reach what reaches out for us by touching us, by being our concern.” (Heidegger 1982, p. 91; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 197) Nowhere does Heidegger speak of poetry as a way. Meditative thinking (*sinnende Denken*), which requires the meditative use of language (*besinnlichen Sprachgebrauch*), “must be guided by the hidden riches that language has in store for us, so that these riches may summon us for the saying of language.” (Heidegger 1982, p. 91; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 197. Translation altered) The way that gives all ways in meditative thinking diverges from the Saying of poetry in its allowing our concern to draw near and touch us insofar as it is a way.

It seems to be of the nature of a way that it leads somewhere. Heidegger says of the way of meditative thought that “it leads us only to where we already are. The ‘only’ here does not mean a limitation, but rather points to this way’s pure simplicity.” (Heidegger 1982, p. 93; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 199) Here is the difference of this way, that it leads us, or lets us reach, “only” where we are. Its goal is the nearness of here. The step back—Heidegger’s continuation and transformation of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenological reduction—that initiates meditative thought turns backward toward where we already are. “We must first turn, turn back to where we are in reality already staying.” (Heidegger

1982, p. 85; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 190) Meditative thought has its end in the place where we already are “in reality.”

Thought is, in this sense, intimate with the second movement of locality that was distinguished above, the return movement in which there is no goal but only an interrupted movement of coming-back. I have suggested, however, that the distinction between place and location, even though it is opened up in Heidegger’s work, was not followed through sufficiently to permeate his thought and, especially, it does not influence his description of the way of thinking itself. In the second movement of return, location is turned into place such that it can become a goal of the movement, of the way. Heidegger’s way of thought thus moves towards a goal and ignores the transformation of location into place. There are two consequences of this partial description of thought. First, he does not reckon with a thought that does not have a goal. Second, his way of thought moves toward a termination in place. Thought is a preparation for setting-into-place which, were it to be accomplished, would put an end to thought. In other words, thought has an end in both senses for Heidegger: its movement toward a goal lends it the purpose of finishing with the process of thought. Thus, Heidegger revokes his earlier definition of questioning in “The Question Concerning Technology” (published in 1954) as “the piety of thought” (Heidegger 1977, p. 35; cf. Heidegger 1954b, p. 36) in order to turn the way of questioning toward the goal of setting-into-place in which thinking serves dwelling such that “the proper bearing of the thinking which is needed now is to listen to the grant, not to ask questions.” (Heidegger 1982, p. 75; cf. Heidegger 1959c, p. 180) Heidegger’s way of thinking would terminate in a just-Saying, bereft of the movement of questioning, that is indistinguishable from poetry. Let me risk a thought grounded in the present meditation that carries further the distinction between place and locality: If it is language that knits dwelling to Being, and the two modes of Saying, thought and poetry, are situated in the way, it is thought that abides in the way as way, while it is poetry that takes us home to dwell. Heidegger could not (yet) think this divergence between thought and poetry and continually returned to their nearness.

Heidegger has always said that his thought is a preparation, a way, that leads toward home-coming. In that sense, it resides with location and not in place, but it sees its preparation as a task whose ending would be a setting-in-place. What I am suggesting here is closer to the reverse—that the goal of setting-into-place is preparatory toward location, which is without goal. It is not the exact reverse, however, since we can glimpse here two concepts of location—one which would terminate in the place into which dwelling, and thought, become set, and another for whom places are preparatory for locating and which therefore does not terminate in a goal but rather inhabits a traversal. The latter is location as such.

The task we are left with is to describe, at least in an initial manner, a way of thinking that corresponds to locality rather than place. There are three components to be taken into account: the smooth movement outward toward a

place there (which is a movement of discovery and encounter); the interrupted movement of return from there toward a place here (which is where Heidegger's conception of thought is focused); and the smooth movement away from a location, that is not a place—which I am suggesting we discover the true *Tao* and the phenomenological step back. I will focus here only on the latter of these in order to show the aspect of thinking which Heidegger overlooks.

There is movement that remains within a place, movement toward a place, and movement within a location. Movement within location is *movement as such*. It is movement as such because it moves without goal. It is traversal itself, the being-on-the-way of all ways. This movement defines location, without which the here and there of places would not appear. What is the thinking that resides within movement as such?

It is helpful to use location in its verbal rather than substantive form—as the activity of locating, not as *a* location. Thinking location in this sense attempts what might be called “locative thinking.” Thinking in the locative case is a thinking which is permeated by the awareness of its own place, that will not abandon itself to abstract space, but neither can be restrained within a given place and defines itself in its relation to other places of significance. Locative thinking is a thinking that does not simply occur somewhere, but whose location is integral to the meaning of what is thought. Locative thinking dwells in the moment of traversal, from which connection is made to other places beginning from the there/here movement. It is the nigh-ness of the reign of gathering places which constitutes a neighbourhood while continuing on its way.

Thinking in, and of, location is characterized by a look back opposite to the direction of traversal. Only thus does one experience location as the interplay of places in which a place manifests a location. In the look back, place as such does not appear—neither as goal nor as origin. Nor does origin as such appear at all. What appears is the distance under traversal insofar as it has been traversed (which is the origin of the notion of philosophy as the owl of Minerva). It traces back not to a distinct place, or origin, but to a vicinity which is undergoing extension through the traversal. To return to our example, it looks back to the station as location, not as place. The look back shows movement as such precisely because it does not become fixed on a place. Neither in movement outward, nor in the movement of return, does location appear as such, but only in its reduction to place, as a movement between places.

What I have provisionally called here the “look back” corresponds in some fashion to what Heidegger called the “step back,” but his metaphor will not bear the weight of the further meditation on the difference between place and location undertaken here since it implies a movement away from a place in an unseen direction, whereas the current meditation would imply something closer to the opposite. This meditation thus calls for a further one on the nature of meditative thinking as some sort of retrospective glance, a reflection that would attempt to

insert what has been advanced here through the distinction between place and location into the history and essence of the phenomenology of thought.

Locative thinking cannot do without places. Its special character is to begin from places to enter into the movement as such from which places emerge. As such, thought thinks against the current of movement to set loose the places whose relation has been fixed in order to release the phenomenon of “interplay,” of “setting-into-connection” itself. Instead of preparing for a homecoming, thought asks “where would be the home to which I might return?” For this, it cannot give up the piety of its questioning—though it can abandon interrogation, the forcing of answers. Any Saying in which thinking might temporarily reside will suggest another question. Its proximity to poetry is intact, though also its distinction.

### Implications of Locative Thought

In conclusion, I want to mention briefly some of the possible lines of thought that would be implied if the preceding investigation were thought to be sufficiently sustained to warrant its continuation. Important as it is for the philosophical self-consciousness of the twentieth century, Heidegger’s thought has become the lightning-rod for controversies in the philosophy of history, politics, foundationalism, the “end of metaphysics,” etc. Even though it is impossible to enter these controversies in the conclusion to this paper, it may be clarifying to indicate how a rigorous phenomenological distinction between place and locality would have implications for these controversies. This yet-to-be-thought in Heidegger’s late thought might well shift the appropriation of Heidegger’s thought and the controversies that have surrounded it. The following notes indicate in brief fashion how the interpretation of Heidegger, and the direction of a Heidegger-influenced philosophy, might benefit from a turn away from “place” and toward “locality.”

1] The possible arbitrariness—we might say, decisionism—of founding place on clearing-away and making-room is rejected by Heidegger in order to found clearing-away on location. Clearing-away is dependent on the relation between places. Thus, one might expect a difference between a clearing-away and making-room that operates within the movement outward and one that inhabits the movement of return. The movement outward, knowing no boundary, finds its place nameless and thus calls it wilderness. The “decisionistic” domination of nature in the New World, and its difference from any autochthonic founding might usefully be clarified with the distinctions inherent in the description of location.

2] The residual pre-modern romanticism in Heidegger’s thought that remains, despite his denials, as an implication of the examples he uses to contrast with the age of the world-view, would be overcome (*Verwindung*) by a thinking that dis-places the emphasis on place with location. The notion that, prior to modern objectification, there was a simple dwelling at home, or, alternatively, that

we might arrive as mortals after our homelessness to such a simple dwelling (so that the task of thinking would be to wait for the gods) would be re-described as a goal that is overcome by thought without a goal. This, of course, would have implications for the debate concerning the relation between Heidegger's thought and his involvement with the Nazi party and with thinkers of the extreme Right. There are those who love the path and thank it for where it leads, and for them the best path leads one home. Those who live with the walking ask from the path that it orient their next day's journey. They love the path no less, but for the way rather than its destination, so that they love the journey more. The distinction between thought and poetry, their "farthest divergence," would aid here also. It may be that we are called to appropriate a homecoming in poetry that would not satisfy thinking. They diverge as two lovers diverge, for home and for the journey.

3] The appropriation of Heidegger's thought within environmental philosophy and ethics would have to do away with its persistent implication that the relation between humans and nature, even mortals and the earth, could be entirely seamless and without the possibility of disruption. Wilderness, here, in addition to being the name for that which is cleared-away, might also become a name for the Other which motivates the movement of return and thus a border between humanity and nature.

4] The recovery of particularity, nearness, that is key to phenomenology—and is carried much further by Heidegger than Husserl—would be able to account for an emergent concept of universalization through the distinction between place and location. Heidegger's thought seems defined by its turn away from universality, by its recoil from the definition of universality in scientific-technical terms. The focus on place would seem to reinforce this recoil. Locality, in contrast, insofar as it is defined by a relation between places, implies an emergent concept of universalization, rather than a subsumption of a particularity under a universal. The "reign of gathering places" motivates meditative thinking toward what gathers in the gathering. Such a new concept of universalization would legitimate a conception of public philosophy that allows a place for intersubjectivity and democratic debate—the between-us of the Saying—that is essentially lacking in Heidegger's overcoming of philosophy.

5] If the event of appropriation of Being in our time turns us essentially toward place, and thus risks a romanticism of roots in a milieu of homelessness, the thinking that abides in the way of locating might propose another articulation of the epoch defined through this event. Insofar as our time struggles to pass beyond place to location, *human action* may be released in a complementary freeing as thought discovers the way always on the way. A persistent shadow of Heidegger's thought has thrown human action into darkness. Insofar as place orients thinking to Being as dwelling, location may open a way back to doing.

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**Notes**

I. A note on the translation: The translations of the works on which I will primarily rely, "The Nature of Language" and "Art and Space," consistently translate *Ort* by "place" and *Ortschaft* by "location." I follow this translation, and consistently use these as corresponding terms, because the distinction is crucial to the meditation underway here. The only problem with this translation is that it erases the

etymological relation between the two terms. The English translation of “Building Dwelling Thinking” by Albert Hofstadter, to which I also refer, translates *Ort* as “location,” which confuses the point being made here. Despite appearances to the contrary due to the translation, there is no reference to “location” in the sense of *Ortschaft* in “Building Dwelling Thinking.” It appears to be a distinction that was made after the publication of this essay in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* in 1954. I have thus modified the translation, translating *Ort* with “place” as in the other texts, for clarification. I have included references to the German texts to facilitate their comparison. Also, when terms are used in English which are meant as equivalents of German terms, I have included the German term in brackets.