

BEING AND BELONGING

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Dedication

To Dr Julia Watkin (1944 – 2005)

An extraordinary person, teacher, mentor and friend,
whose tremendous wisdom, generosity and courage showed me
how to know and be myself a little better than before.

‘What is truth but to live for an idea?’

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Abstract

The subject of this work is the nature and significance of *belonging* and its intersection with human identity and being in the world. Its main impetus is towards addressing the question of belonging as it arises in present day Australia, where, in connection with national identity, it remains a highly politicized and contested issue. The telling of stories about Australian belongings not only provides insights into the shape and complexity of the contemporary Australian debate, but also serves to illustrate how, in the presentation of belonging as having multiple and competing manifestations, what it is to belong *per se* is rendered indistinct. This exemplifies the key problem where belonging is concerned. While belonging is invoked as an issue of crucial existential concern in public discourse and across a broad range of disciplines, there is an apparent and troubling lack of conceptual or linguistic apparatus according to which the notion can be grasped and critically analysed. The object of this work is to explore and redress this problematic situation. Clearly, consideration of belonging also involves identity and consideration of how these two concepts are articulated together in theory. This latter question is explored by surveying the theoretical and conceptual frameworks from which ‘senses’ of identity and belonging commonly articulated in Australian discourses (and elsewhere) appear to have evolved. What is discovered, however, is the inability of these models, which operate on the assumption that belonging is a product of the relation of a person, or people, *to something else* (society, history or environment) to encapsulate logic capable of supporting the key premise. If we accept that what is at stake in the question of belonging is our identity as persons (and this is also what almost all theoretical models suggest), then looking *outside* of the self *to something else* for belonging will not do. What is needed to properly articulate belonging is a model that presents a relational account of being in the world and an ontological structure that allows us to see belonging from the inside, so to speak. Although humanistic geography (what is referred to here as the ‘geographical school’ of phenomenological inquiry) promises both, it is shown how research of this genre is necessarily constrained by its methodology. There is more to being ‘inside’ a place than knowing it. The phenomenological account must be folded back in order to disclose its ontological core. It is here that the work of a small number of key figures developing a Philosophy of ‘Place’ (and the Heideggerian notions it brings with it) has been crucial. Place in these terms is understood as a primary ontological structure that gathers and holds together those things—social, historical and physical—that belong to it. By turning the ontology of place inside-out, we are able to see clearly that people are also gatherers and holders of place. The belonging relation that pertains within place is somehow also *within* the self. The belonging self can now be understood in its own terms—as an ontological structure that is capable of drawing together and unifying the different elements that belong properly to *it*. Such an ontology of the self is found in the work of Kierkegaard, and from that is drawn the theory of *belonging qua correct relation*. *Belonging qua correct relation* represents an entirely new way of understanding, in existential terms, what it is to belong (or not), not only in the Australian context, but wherever and whenever the question arises.

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Introduction

The existential dilemma of not belonging, commonly defined as human homelessness or estrangement from the world, is a recurring theme in contemporary discourse. The endeavour to understand this problem concerning human existence, and to develop strategies by which it can be overcome, is a consistent feature of literature all over the western world. Australia is no exception, and part of the study undertaken in this work examines how this condition, presumed to be a more universal human experience, has manifested in the distinctly Australian context. Indeed, the impetus of this work regards the question of belonging (or lack thereof) as it arises in Australia, where, in connection with national identity, it remains a highly politicized and contested issue. Thus, the first stories this work tells about belonging are Australian.

However, the subject of this work is not homelessness or human estrangement *per se*, but rather the nature and significance of *belonging* and its intersection with human identity and being in the world. While stories of belonging in Australia are of special interest to this work, and receive particular attention, they are by no means the only stories of belonging that are told in it. What is presented in this work is the widest possible survey of conceptualizations, theories, models and approaches pertaining to the notion of belonging wherever it appears, either implicitly or explicitly, in popular or academic discourse. Their telling not only provides insights into the complexity of the contemporary Australian debate, but also serves to illustrate how, in the presentation of belonging as having multiple and competing manifestations, what it is to belong *per se* is rendered indistinct. This exemplifies the key problem where belonging is concerned. While belonging is invoked as an issue of crucial existential concern across a broad range of disciplines and professions, there is an apparent and troubling lack of conceptual or linguistic apparatus according to which the notion can be grasped and critically analysed. The object of this work is to explore and redress this problematic situation.

In addressing these issues it is my desire to employ a practical style of philosophical reflection. Practical philosophy, however, does not preclude the possibility, indeed the necessity, of theory. Practical thinking, rightly employed, is not only directed toward understanding the concrete abstractly, but toward understanding the abstract

concretely. However, this will not be done by postulating a practical solution to the problem of belonging according to which persons have multiple modes of belonging or identity, as has been the urge of a number of other theorists. Rather, the aim of the broad ranging study of belonging conducted in this work is to produce a taxonomy concerning ways in which belonging is currently understood. By doing so, it becomes possible to discern the distinctive features of belongingness that are present in the various accounts and to lay down the groundwork for the development of a conceptual structure that unifies them.

The work is divided into three sections. Section One outlines and summarises three major streams of thought about Australian identity and belonging—the ‘traditional’, the ‘colonial’ and the ‘post-colonial’—explaining something of their origins, their development and their implications. That is to say, three stories are presented, each of which represents a particular way of thinking about issues concerning what it means to belong in and to Australia and to be Australian. What is disclosed, by mapping these different articulations of identity and belonging, is the way in which different readings of the relation between country and people have resulted in different understandings of what it is to belong. Furthermore, what comes to light from such an investigation is how these distinctive, and sometimes seemingly incompatible, logics not only collide but also intersect as they operate together to orient Australians in a contemporary landscape.

The study of how notions of belonging operate in the Australian context also exemplifies more general problems regarding the way we think of and understand belonging *per se* both in a conceptual sense and as a real-world and lived human experience. Section One identifies for the reader how particular historical, social, cultural and political contexts give rise to certain issues and problems regarding what it is to belong (or not to belong). It also demonstrates how, in the Australian context, considerations of belonging involve those concerning identity, and that it is this intersection that makes the issue so poignant. What becomes apparent is that the question of belonging and identity in Australia is vexed not only because it is articulated according to a number of different socio-cultural, historical or political contexts, or because each one of these contexts gives rise to its own logic, but because our belonging (and the sense of who and what we are that is carried with it) is calculated using different reference

criteria. When we say we belong, we are rarely explicit about what is it that we belong *to*, and even when we are there is often no logical account given as to how or why such a connection is thought to pertain.

This issue is explored in Section Two, which surveys the theoretical and conceptual frameworks from which ‘senses’ of identity and belonging commonly articulated in Australian discourses (and elsewhere) appear to have evolved. Three primary ‘senses’ of belonging and identity seem apparent—the sense of belonging and identity that refers to social connections, to a sense of connection to a particular community of people, the sense of belonging and identity that refers to historical connections, to a sense of connection to the past or to a particular tradition and a sense of belonging and identity that refers to geographical or environmental connections, to a sense of connection to a particular locality or dwelling place.

The formal examination of the theoretical structures that support these three discrete modes of belonging serves two associated purposes. We are able to identify how these three ‘senses’ of belonging, at first apparently distinct and isolated, turn out to be interconnected and mutually dependent. This being the case, belonging qua social connectedness, historical connectedness or environmental connectedness viewed independently can only ever represent partial explanations of what it is to belong. A more inclusive and dynamic conceptual apparatus is required if a more holistic structural account is to be given of what it is to belong. What is also discovered in the process, however, is the inability of these models, which operate on the assumption that identity and belonging are products of the relation of a person, or group of people, *to something else*—society, history or some place in the physical world, to encapsulate logic capable of supporting the key premise. If we accept that what is at stake in the question of belonging is our identity as persons (and this is also what almost all theoretical models suggest), then looking *outside* of the self *to something else* for belonging will not do. What is needed to articulate belonging properly is first, a model that presents a relational account of being in the world (and thus the ontological connection between belonging and identity), and second, a methodology that allows us to see belonging from the inside, so to speak.

The conclusion drawn from Section Two concerning understanding belonging as a form of connection *to something else* (whether that something be society, history or environment), is taken into account in Section Three where potential resolutions are explored, new conceptual frameworks built, and finally the foundation for a revised theory of belonging is laid. In the quest to find a more expansive and coherent model of belonging the work encounters and critically analyses accounts of belonging produced by humanistic geography. This latter work, which commonly employs *place* as its key organising concept and *phenomenology* as its methodology, is probably the most influential of any on current understandings of belonging *per se*. Basing their analysis and findings on the interpretation of place-world-experience, researchers of the ‘geographical school’ of phenomenological inquiry define *belonging to place* as an affective bond between people and the context of their life and thought—a bond that is based on, and also gives rise to, familiarity, appreciation, and attachment. According to this account, to belong to a place is to be ‘inside’ it and to identify with it. The more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place.

By approaching place from an experiential perspective, research done by the ‘geographical school’ of phenomenological inquiry has undoubtedly enriched our understanding of the significance of place (and places) in the lives of human beings. As a consequence, place and implacement have become familiar conceptual devices by which to understand a variety of associated phenomena, including identity and belonging. However, paradoxically, what is also suggested by this genre of research in its stressing the existential importance of place to human beings is that there may well be more to being ‘inside’ a place than experience alone can reliably convey. If this is the case—if *being in place* is more fundamental than our experience of it—then the only way to uncover its significance is by folding back the phenomenological account and disclosing its ontological core.

It is well recognized that the natures of individual places are shaped by human thought and activity, and that the thought and activity of human beings is influenced by the nature of the places in which they find themselves. As it turns out, our being in *place* is not a part of our being that can be separated from who and what we are—from our identities. Who and what we are and the *place* and places we inhabit are mutually

disclosing and mutually defining. People are involved fundamentally in the constitution of place, and places are involved fundamentally in the construction of persons.

It is here that philosophies of *place per se* (and the Heideggerian notions they bring with them) have been crucial. Many philosophers have acknowledged the fundamental role of place in the lives of human beings. Indeed, for some it provides the nexus of existence. Aristotle said ‘everything is somewhere and in place’, Archytus declared that ‘to be is to be in place’, and Heidegger echoes this in what sometimes appears as almost an identification of *being* and *topos*. Following in these footsteps a small number of contemporary philosophers of place have set about advancing new accounts of the nature of *place* and its significance to human existence. This work, which begins from a phenomenological perspective, but culminates in the innovative ontological claim that place precedes experience, is of the utmost importance here, allowing us to eschew many of the difficulties generated by the idiosyncrasies of the geographical school of place research while allowing us to retain the conceptual foundations upon which it is based.

The Philosophy of Place is reviewed in Section Three, and from it a particular structural account of *place* is drawn—an account according to which human modes of being, and particularly the mode of being we call *belonging*, are integral features. On the account put forward, *place*, far from being merely a backdrop for human lives, is understood as being associated with persons at the deepest of levels. According to this model, place not only provides the context for who and what we are as human beings, it is *place* that offers the conditions that enable the very possibility of personhood. Place in these terms is understood as an ontological structure gathering and holding together those things—social, historical and physical—that belong to it. In this sense place wraps around and envelops persons. However, by turning the ontology of place inside-out, we are able to see clearly that people are also gatherers and holders of place. The belonging relation that pertains within ‘place’ is somehow also *within* the self. The constitution and operation of place must then be indicative of the structural account of the constitution and operation of person or self. It follows that a self with the capacity to belong (whether it does belong or not) has to have the sort of ontological structure that is complex, dynamic and relational—constituted by a synthesis of its inherent elements. The belonging self can now be understood in its own terms—as an ontological structure that is capable of

drawing together and unifying the different elements—social, historical and physical—that belong properly to it. As we shall see the way that such a self is best articulated is through the work of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard offers not only an ontology of the self that is capable of fulfilling the requirements for belonging previously identified, but also a formal device by which both the ontology and the experience of belonging (or otherwise) might be more meaningfully understood. From such a philosophical schema is drawn the theory of *belonging qua correct relation*. *Belonging qua correct relation* represents an entirely new way of understanding, in existential terms, both who we are and what it is to belong (or not), not only in the Australian context, but wherever and whenever the question of our being in the world arises.

SECTION ONE

Australian Belongings

Introduction

In the construction of Australian identities and belongings, the land and the human relation to it are key symbols. These are represented in the narratives and iconographic images of Aboriginal and settler Australians alike. The section that follows will bring into sharper focus some of the ways in which identity and belonging in and to country can be (and have been) understood in the Australian context. It is not intended to be exhaustive on these matters. Instead what this work tries to do is to present what can be conceived as three major streams of thought about Australian identity and belonging—the ‘traditional’, the ‘colonial’ and the ‘post-colonial’¹—to explain something of their origins, their development and their implications. That is to say, each story presented synthesises a particular way of thinking about issues concerning what it means to be Australian; all are directed toward the same particular interest—how belongings to and in Australia are understood and interpreted.

The ‘traditional’ account is the story of Aboriginal identity and belonging as it has come to be understood by academia and, in less nuanced forms, by the general public. Some of the materials used to formulate this Aboriginal view of being and belonging is provided by perspectives on Aboriginal life and thought generated by nineteenth-century anthropologists along with their Aboriginal informants, however twentieth-century fieldwork research and scholarship, particularly that occurring in the latter part of the

¹ It must be recognised that the terms—‘traditional’, ‘colonial’ and ‘post-colonial’—used here to identify particular ways of thinking about issues of identity and belonging in the Australian context, are not in themselves uncontroversial, nor is the process that requires and determines demarcation between the categories they represent unproblematic. When used in conjunction to Aboriginal issues, for example, the term ‘traditional’ has attracted controversy on the grounds that it is either value-laden or redundant. It is certainly used less frequently in credible post-colonial accounts. As explained in the Introduction, the term is used here to describe what has come to be the orthodox anthropological reading of long-established and time-honoured aspects of Aboriginal life and thought. Translated into an Aboriginal context anthropologists argue that ‘traditional’ concepts still form the essential background of many Aboriginal peoples, though obviously this differs from individual to individual and from place to place.

century, has contributed much to our understandings of the complexity and diversity of Aboriginal philosophy and culture.²

For the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, mythology (a collection of cosmogonic narratives or Dreaming stories³) provides a vehicle for an organised body of beliefs about the world and the principles that govern it as a whole—how it came into being and how that being is perpetuated. It is also mythology that has traditionally informed Aboriginal peoples of their place and destination in the world.⁴ Section 1.1 ‘The “Traditional” Story’ provides an exegesis of anthropological interpretations of Dreaming mythology, disclosing understandings of identity and belonging found embedded in them.⁵ Section 1.1.1 articulates the cosmogonic origins of the coming into being of the Aboriginal world, Section 1.1.2 explores what being Aboriginal means according to that account and Section 1.1.3 demonstrates the notion of belonging to country that is intrinsic to it.

The way in which settler Australians have understood the identity and affiliation with land of their Aboriginal counterparts has impacted on the form and nature of Australian colonisation and identity politics has also played an important role in the history of Aboriginal resistance to colonisation.⁶ In connection, accounts of Aboriginal

² There is a plethora of material written about Aborigines, and no doubt, it would be possible to tell a number of very different stories about Aboriginal identity and belonging than the one told here—some more sociological, others more historical or theological or ‘cultural’. The works that inform the account given here represent, in my mind, those produced by some of the best anthropological researchers in the field. It is no co-incidence that they are also among the small number of scholars whose engagement with Aboriginal life and thought is oriented more toward the philosophical, and thankfully thus toward the philosopher.

³ ‘Dreaming’ is the English translation of a host of same-meaning words in the pantheon of Aboriginal dialects across the Australian continent all of which relate to a kind of blue-print for existence. The terms ‘dreamtime’ and ‘dreaming’ were first used by anthropologists Spencer and Gillen in 1896. In a contemporary context ‘Dreaming’ has been adopted by both western and post-colonial Aboriginal lexicons as an umbrella term for ‘traditional’ Aboriginal ontology.

⁴ I must acknowledge that there were substantial differences among the many distinct Aboriginal societies who inhabited this continent prior to colonisation, there were substantial differences. However, this should not render invalid the attempt to articulate understandings of identity and belonging that are traditionally Aboriginal. It is generally accepted that, despite regional peculiarities, certain fundamental features of life and thought hold across the entire continent. In this connection, the Dreaming complex occupies a primary position among fundamental and universal features.

⁵ Material relating to the subject of Aboriginal life and thought is so broad, so diverse, that it is only by a directed yet brutal process of elimination that any of it can be documented here. What primarily informed my selection was the need to provide Aboriginal understandings of identity and belonging that connect and intersect with the ‘colonial’ and ‘post-colonial’ accounts also under discussion.

⁶ To the extent that European conceptions of Aboriginal identity have been used as powerful instruments of domination, it has been necessary for Aboriginal people themselves to engage with these conceptions in their struggle for land rights and entitlements. To this end, Aboriginal people have employed a range of political identities. Most recently, a common identity or pan-Aboriginality has emerged based upon a

identity and belonging uncovered by those who study ‘traditional’ Aboriginal life and thought are significant to non-indigenous stories of identity and belonging across space and time. Evidence of this can be traced in ‘The “Colonial” Story’ of identity and belonging explored in Section 1.2.

The ‘colonial’ story of Australian identity and belonging is arguably still the one that is predominant in the popular non-indigenous Australian historical imagination. The motivations and objectives of the ‘colonial’ account can be traced to Australia’s colonial forebears. Its emphasis is on senses of place and person that promote the coming into being and perpetuation of the non-indigenous Australian nation and national identity. It is generally accepted that successful relocation to a supposed new homeland requires a substantial period of readjustment to lands and peoples that are usually alien and often intimidating in their strangeness. Founding myths regarding how ‘the land was won’ and the national character formed have long been central to how settler Australians view themselves and their place in Australia. Colonial constructions of identity and belonging in relation to the land are reviewed in Section 1.2.1, and colonial constructions of identity and belonging in relation to Aborigines is discussed in Section 1.2.2.

In a sense, these first two stories—the ‘traditional’ and the ‘colonial’— represent orthodoxies—both are syntheses of largely well-respected bodies of literature on the topics under discussion and also that they articulate positions that are generally accepted and approved by convention. The third—the ‘post-colonial’ story —is a different kind of essay. The advent of the ‘post-colonial’ account is more contemporary. Its views and attitudes belong far more to the academy than the ‘man in the street’, although its reach is widening. The aim of post-colonial analysis is to re-conceptualise, revitalise and renew understandings of the colonised world by deconstructing and interrogating the colonial processes that shaped it and its themes. The role of post-colonial accounting is to provide

shared experience of colonial dispossession and oppression. Even so, there remain powerful and important socio-cultural, political and economic imperatives for Aboriginal peoples to draw upon more ‘traditional’ identities based on a unique ontological connection to country. This aspect of Aboriginality has played an increasingly important and influential role in debates on the national political stage during the twentieth century, especially over the last thirty years. See Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales 1770-1972* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, & Black Books, 1996); John Chesterman & Brian Galligan ed., *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997) for texts that trace the dynamic relationship between Aboriginal identity and political necessity.

a view of historical events and processes enlightened (or otherwise) by contemporary ideologies, theories and sensibilities.

While ‘colonial’ accounts of identity and belonging are settling, post-colonial stories are distinctly unsettling. Rather than simply an exegesis of post-colonial logics regarding issues of identity and belonging, ‘The “Post-colonial” Story’ presented in Section 1.3 is far more critical. Critique, of course, is an integral part of the post-colonial endeavour. Insofar as this is the case, this account of ‘post-colonial’ settler understandings of belonging (or not belonging) might be considered uncontroversial, that is if the views expressed and beliefs according to which they are constituted, were not so uncritically received. Section 1.3.1 tells a number of unsettling stories about settler identity and belonging, Section 1.3.2 explores some developing pathologies in relation to them, and Section 1.3.3 studies the contemporary responses of two prominent thinkers, both of whom suggest, in their different ways, that reconciliation and redemption for settler Australians can only be achieved by sharing identity and belonging with Aborigines.

Although the formula chosen to structure discourses on Australian identity and belonging relies on a differentiation of accounts, it is clear that the accounts are also interconnected in significant ways. As will become evident, the three stories concerning what it means to dwell in this country act to inform each other—where they bifurcate they also act at counterpoint, along their meanderings they also come to intersections. The ‘traditional’ influences the ‘colonial’ and vice versa, and the logics of both make their impression upon ‘postcolonial’ reckonings. This section maps the articulation of connectedness to country as a model of identity and belonging in the Australian context, and particularly in cases where the claims to belonging of Aboriginal and settler Australians collide, cross and merge. In doing so, it seeks to achieve two aims: first, to provide an exposition of settler understandings of what it is to belong to and in this country, and second, by illustrating and illuminating how the notions of identity and belonging—whether they be ‘traditional’, ‘colonial’ or ‘post-colonial’—are mobilised in public and academic discourses in Australia. In doing so it is hoped that a greater insight can be gained into what people take as belonging and also what they think it takes to belong.

1.1 ‘Traditional’ Stories

What becomes apparent from even the most cursory examination of Aboriginal life and thought is that belonging to and in the landscape is perceived as an essential factor for both physical and psychological well-being. Upon closer examination it is also manifest that the relation that exists between Aboriginal peoples and their country has relevance far beyond pragmatic considerations concerning survival or health (and therefore self-interest). Aboriginal peoples are connected to place, and through place to each other, in a more fundamental and intrinsic sense. The *how*, or perhaps more aptly the *how come*, of this connection is articulated by a corpus of knowledges known popularly as Dreaming mythology or ‘Dreaming’. The Dreaming complex is both the source and foundation of cosmogonic, cosmological and ethical explanations of connectedness.

As W.E.H. Stanner states, in his influential and insightful essay ‘The Dreaming’ (1956) Dreaming mythology provides ‘a kind of narrative of things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happen; and a kind of *logos* or principle of order transcending everything significant for Aboriginal Man’. It articulates ‘a complex of meanings’ which provide ‘a poetic key to reality’.⁷ In Deborah Bird Rose’s terms, Dreaming is ‘the source which makes possible ... all life in its variety, particularity and fecundity.’⁸ According to Dianne Bell’s analysis it provides ‘the framework for the worldview.’⁹ Testimony of Aborigines related by Robert Tonkinson describe it as ‘a logically unified order in which all will be well if only they live according [ly].’¹⁰ In saying this, these anthropologists identify the intrinsic link between Dreaming and what it means, according to Aboriginal understandings, to be the archetypal model of, and for, life.

⁷ W.E.H. Stanner in W.H. Edwards ed., *Traditional Aboriginal Society*, 2nd ed. (South Yarra: Macmillan Education Australia, 1998): 228 (his emphasis).

⁸ Deborah Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human: Life and Land in an Aboriginal Australian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 44.

⁹ Dianne Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming* (Melbourne: Allen & Unwin, 1993): 91.

¹⁰ Robert Tonkinson, *Mardudjara Aborigines: Living the Dream in Australia’s Desert* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978): 14.

In what follows the Dreaming Complex, as it is understood in reputable contemporary scholarship, is unpacked, explaining how, according to current anthropological understandings, the Aboriginal world comes into being, as well as how the nature of the beings who inhabit it (including Aborigines themselves) are instituted and the web of relations between them is formed and perpetuated. As such, it provides an exegesis of the ontological milieu in which, and by which, Aboriginal identity and belonging is constituted and sustained.

1.1.1. Coming into Being

The cosmogonic aspect of Dreaming is probably the most prevalent and popular conceptualisation in the public domain. According to Aboriginal cosmogonic storylines, sometime in the distant and indeterminable past Beings traversed the earth along certain routes, tracks or ‘strings’¹¹ instituting the landscape and the flora and fauna related to it.¹² These Beings, while generally conceived as human in shape, were not bound by the substantial constraints of the life forms which they generated.¹³ By their interaction with the Earth and each other, the shape of the physical world was defined and the enduring features of landscape created.

Dreaming Beings can be conceptualised as ‘stimulators and instigators’,¹⁴ designing and defining enduring cosmic shapes, places and connections. As Maddock states, the Aboriginal theory of coming into being is one concerning the ‘definition of space and time, not of creation out of nothing.’¹⁵ The conceptual ingredients of the world are

¹¹ Bird Rose, 1992: 52.

¹² According to Walpiri tradition, the topographic dimensions of the Aboriginal world come to the creation Beings in dreams. In effect these beings visualize their journey across the land, planning and pre-empting significant transformations. While not all tribal groups are so explicit in connecting their metaphysical system to dreaming in a psychological sense, the Walpiri explanation not only adds to our understanding of the process of coming into being, but also provides some justification for the adoption of the term ‘Dreaming’ into both western and post-colonial Aboriginal lexicons. For a more detailed explanation see Nancy Munn, ‘The Transformation of Subjects into Objects in Walbiri and Pitjanjatjara Myth’ in M. Charlesworth, H. Morphy, D. Bell, & K. Maddock, *Religion in Aboriginal Australia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1984): 57-82.

¹³ Tonkinson, 1978: 15.

¹⁴ R.M. Berndt ed., *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1970): 26.

¹⁵ Kenneth Maddock, ‘World-Creative Powers’ in M. Charlesworth, R. Kimber & N. Wallace, *Ancestor Spirits: Aspects of Australian Aboriginal Life and Spirituality* (Geelong: Deacon University Press, 1990): 85.

conceived as present when the powers began their work. The Beings embodied the spatial and conceptual framework within which Aboriginal being would be understood, and according to which it would operate. They merely, but monumentally, gave reality shape and form.

Landscape is central to Aboriginal identity and belonging. The process of shaping landscape is integral to the becoming of Aboriginal reality. The Aboriginal metaphysical system holds that all things are shaped or instituted by the Beings of the creative epoch using the process of self-objectification. The methods of self-objectification employed by the Dreaming Beings ensure that landscape, once shaped, remains a vital force in determining Aboriginal being. Munn describes this process in terms of ‘subject object transformation’, maintaining that three types of transformations are prominent. 1) Metamorphosis (the body of the ancestor is changed into some material object); 2) imprinting (the ancestor leaves the impression of its body or of some tool it uses); and 3) externalisation (the ancestor takes some object out of his body.) Of the three the first two are the most common modes.¹⁶

Transformation by metamorphosis involves the projection and subsequent embodiment of the respective Dreaming Being into landscape. By this process, the subject objectifies him/herself a limitless number of times. In each operation, at the point where the Being ‘goes in’ to the land, a geographical form takes shape. Transformation by imprinting, while no less enduring, is not always accompanied by the same degree of predetermination. Mardudjara mythology provides examples of both intentional and unintentional creative action of the imprinting mode. In the myth of Wadi Gadjara when a gorge was hewn out of a rocky escarpment by the stone axe of a lizard-man, so as not to obscure his sun, or a major waterhole created in the process of the two brothers digging for water, the act of creation is deliberate. However, when the snake-man, Gunagalyu’s, track in the sand shaped a creekbed¹⁷ or a claypan was formed in the area where the Wayurdu possum-people slept¹⁸ the consequences of their actions seem unplanned and contingent. In this way, the nature of any particular landscape is a reflection of the

¹⁶ Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 57-62.

¹⁷ Tonkinson, 1978:15.

¹⁸ Tonkinson, 1978: 89.

Dreaming Beings who traversed it—the shape and character of features within that landscape determined by the freedom and necessity of those Beings who shaped it.

At the end of the creative epoch, when the infrastructural work had been done and the Aboriginal world embodied, the Dreaming Beings did not die or disembody, but instead, for the last time, metamorphosed or ‘went into’ the landscape which they had previously shaped. Some became what western thought conceptualises as inanimate objects, such as rocks, mountains or streambeds, waterholes or celestial bodies.¹⁹ Some transformed directly into plants or animals. In this way the object becomes eternally bonded to the subject and permanently identified with it. These objects, places or species are henceforth bestowed with sacred significance. The places at which the Dreaming Beings ‘went in’ and stayed hold the key to Aboriginal understandings and experience of the nature of reality. They are the ontological nexus of Aboriginal being and as such must be preserved and protected.

What is most significant is that, according to the Aboriginal cosmology indicated by Munn’s account, when the Dreaming Beings changed form *for the last time* they guaranteed perpetuity in the natural environment; human and non-human. So far as the process by which this occurs is concerned, Munn’s theory of self-objectification and its implications are not so far removed from Eliade’s notion of hierophany; the manifestation of the ‘sacred’ in material form. According to Eliade, consecrated objects are thus the embodiment of the ‘real-ly real’²⁰ and provide a referent of orientation without which nothing can be *done*.²¹ What Eliade is proposing here is that without sacred referents humankind can have no sense of a real world and thus cannot begin to live in it. This accords with the account of the becoming, or embodiment, of the world as described by Munn, according to which Aboriginal existence cannot be borne or sustained in being without its embeddedness in physical objects. The methods of self-objectification employed by the Dreaming Beings, as Munn describes them, provide ‘a bridge between a

¹⁹ Bird Rose, 1992: 13-15; Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 61.

²⁰ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Trask, 1959): 20.

²¹ Eliade, 1959 : 21-22 (his emphasis).

sentient being or subject, and the non-sentient object world', ²² whereby Dreaming Beings, as subjects, are permanently incorporated in external objects.

In fixing the physical characteristics of worldly phenomena, both animate and inanimate, the Dreaming Beings also fixed the principles governing their interaction. In this way they are believed to retain authority over all worldly phenomena. These fundamental principles of existence are a necessary consequence of the cosmogonic account. They are commonly known as Dreaming Law. Dreaming Law articulates the mode of operation and relationship of necessity between all properties of embodied reality. Landscape, to this end, provides the essential referents of the world of experience, and in doing so provides the essential referents for Dreaming Law, the director of all environmental beings, including Aboriginal being. The various and distinctive geographical features of any one territory not only serve as poignant reminders of their genesis for the Aboriginal peoples who later live among them, but as points of reference, both physical and psychological, by which they navigate the world.

Dreaming mythology explains that, by means of the self-objectification of Dreaming Beings, not only was the macrosystem established, but by virtue of the individual Dreamings, that is individual journeys and actions of specific Beings, so too were microsystems. Dreaming Beings transformed 'the original undifferentiated mother earth into specific localities', ²³ each defined by its own personal signature: landscape, flora and fauna, each with its own distinctive mode of operation. All were different, all unique and yet all linked by their integration into a larger map of The Aboriginal world designed and inscribed upon the earth during the becoming or embodiment phase. Landscape is the physical manifestation of metaphysical propositions about both the nature of being and the nature of Beings. 'If the pre-dreaming world is homogeneous and featureless, then Dreaming establishes tracks upon the trackless, places within the vast emptiness of space.' ²⁴

Each microsystem becomes the country of its human inhabitants. The Aborigine's deep reverence for his/her tribal country stems from its relationship to Dreaming. It is

²² Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 62.

²³ Bird Rose, 1992: 52.

²⁴ Geoffrey R. Lilburne, *A Sense of Place: A Christian Theology of the Land* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989): 40-41.

where one's Dreaming is literally 'grounded'.²⁵ 'Locatedness'²⁶ is fundamental to Aboriginal understandings of life, identity and agency. Locatedness, however, is not to be understood as physically fixed. It is rather a relational term. While identifiable places provide the locus of the Law by which Aboriginal being 'is' in a normative sense, place in space determines how environmental beings must react in a prescriptive sense. The spatial definition of the embodiment of the world provides the Aboriginal ground of being. According to 'traditional' understandings, belonging to country is not merely an important aspect of what it is to be Aboriginal, but the first and fundamental principle of Aboriginal ontology.

1.1.2. Being Aboriginal

By the mode of imprinting, furthermore, the Dreaming Beings provided the source of animation for plants, animals and humans. Traditional Aboriginal explanations of 'coming into being' are not physiological but spiritual.²⁷ The story, as related through Dreaming myth, is that while the Dreaming Beings traversed the earth during the creative epoch, they imprinted or left behind them, at particular locations, deposits of the life essence contained in their bodies. These deposits continue to exist in the earth, as infinite and eternal funds of power, which serve as guarantors for the continued animation of life.

In particular regard to the coming into being of people, this 'fund of power' is credited with the animation of tiny spirit children who, after a transition period, take on physical form.²⁸ While not all regional groups concur as to the process by which this was made possible, nor concerning the exact form of the transitory stage in the transformation from the spiritual realm to the physical, Tonkinson's research articulates a typical interpretation. He recorded²⁹ that, according to Mardu beliefs, these spirit children wander over their geographical estates in search of sustenance, taking on the form of some native species of flora or fauna, before ultimately (that is, any time between then and now)

²⁵ Bird Rose, 1992: 57.

²⁶ Bird Rose, 1992: 106.

²⁷ For a comprehensive study of this phenomenon see A. Montagu, *Coming into Being Among the Australian Aborigines: The Procreative Beliefs of the Australian Aborigines* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974); L.R. Hiatt, Chapter 7: 'Conception and Misconception', *Arguments About Aborigines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁸ Tonkinson, 1978: 15.

²⁹ Tonkinson, 1978: 16.

encountering their human host mother. The place of conception, and therefore the shape of the developing infant's life force in the transitory phase between the spiritual and the physical, determines his/her identity in the human phase.

This belief in 'spiritual' procreation' has profound implications. Not only does it mean that every child's ancestry can be traced back to the embodiment of the Aboriginal world itself, but also that, as a result, in temporality every human being is endowed with eternal significance. Furthermore, at some stage during their personal creation process they took the form of something else in the natural world. This 'something else' (usually plant or animal) has an intrinsic association with them and them with it. Each Aboriginal person is directly linked to a particular conception or birthplace, ancestral Being and totem. Place of birth and, consequently, totemic identity allows the individual a specific eternal and immutable link to a unique set of ontological referents provided by the Dreaming complex. This, more than their biological heritage, determines who they are in relation to the land and other environmental beings.³⁰

The relationship between an individual and his/her totem is symbolic of the unique and symbiotic union between all environmental beings—one that must be respected and revered by both parties, human and non-human. By acting in responsible and responsive ways in relation to each other, balance and harmony is maintained between them. According to Stanner, the doctrine of totemic connection provides the 'ultimate sign of unity between things and persons *unified by something else*.'³¹ Dreaming allows that *all* entities are unified by their common mode of coming into being. All entities share in being and, accordingly, are bound together in eternal relation. Each entity, in its own way, mirrors a form of that being. Each entity exists according to the individual conditions that were determined for it in Dreaming. Each, when holding to its true and authentic nature, acts in transparent (that is, self-conscious) and harmonious unison with others.

Dreaming not only defines where and how one belongs geographically, but also socially. The journeys that the Dreaming Beings made across the previously

³⁰ Montagu, 1974: 6-7.

³¹ Stanner, 1979: 127 (his emphasis). The importance of totemic connection has been given enormous attention in the past. While not meaning to diminish the symbolic importance of this aspect of Aboriginal cosmology, it is important to see totemism, not as the ultimate expression of Aboriginal being, but as one demonstration of the overarching Aboriginal metaphysical system.

undifferentiated terrain are not only significant in terms of navigating physical terrain but in navigating social terrain. 'Dreaming strings fix country and people, demarcating human and geographical identity.'³² Their connections, intersections and divisions transform space into both physical and social landscapes. Human beings have certain unbreakable bonds with particular locations, and these bonds serve to fix their social identities relative to ancestral Beings,³³ human ancestors and also human contemporaries.

According to 'traditional' Aboriginal understandings social relations are constituted as relations between kin, specific kinds of kin and sets of kin. In effect the world is divided between two categories: 'kin' and 'strangers'. The former category includes not only other human beings but also all other environmental beings—animate and inanimate.³⁴ As Bird Rose explains kin relations are determined by three basic means: one's biological, totemic and geographical connection. These three connections are represented by three basic categories of identification: Skin categories, *Ngurlu* categories and *Kuning* categories.

A person's 'skin' is determined matrilineally (by that of one's mother). At their most basic level 'Skin' systems determine 'who gives birth to whom'. At their most complex one's 'skin' determines every aspect of one's social connections, relationships and behaviours. A person's *Ngurlu* denotes their 'totemic' relationship. It is the relationship between people and one or more plant or animal. Again, as you would imagine considering 'traditional' understandings of 'spiritual procreation', this is inherited through women. A person's *Kuning* denotes a connection to certain places. 'With *Kuning* the nexus of shared being is country.' All the people who share *Kuning* are taken to be descendants of the same Dreaming being. *Kuning* is inherited through one's father. One's *Kuning* relates to one's father's country according to which one particularly identifies and has particular obligations.³⁵ While the description of Aboriginal classificatory system offered here is vastly simplified, it serves to show in summary terms how the Dreaming complex determines who belongs where, with whom or what and how.

All of these modes of identity are locative. That is to say, they locate individuals

³² Bird Rose, 1992; 53.

³³ Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 62.

³⁴ Fred Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991): 109-111; 182.

³⁵ Bird Rose, 1992, 84-86.

within groups and locate groups in relation to each other. Where one belongs in the social landscape determines how one's life is lived, the form and nature of one's social actions and relationships. However, these identity classifications are also locative in the sense that they provide individuals and groups with referents in relation to country—obligations and responsibilities commensurate with connections to place. They draw lines of connectedness between people and their country and between people and each other. However, Dreaming articulates ontological conditions that allow both relatedness *and* differentiation—collective and individual identities, natures and modes of operation. Indeed, as will be discussed below, being different from others—that is, being who and what one is as the particular thing one is—is as crucial to the unity of being (social and geographic) as being related to them. Indeed, one could even argue that in the Aboriginal cosmological system, differentiation is imperative to connectedness.³⁶

1.1.3. Belonging to Country

Dreaming is the authority for both the natural and moral spheres of The Aboriginal world. It expresses not only the 'isness' but also the 'oughts' of Aboriginal being. Dreaming mythology is the source of Aboriginal ethical systems. These stories, re-enacted in dance, represented in ritual and portrayed in art, are rich in ethical and practical information, that is, information about how one ought to behave in order to maintain a life-giving and sacred connection to country. This information is couched in the language of Dreaming Law. However, according to Aboriginal metaphysics, the Aboriginal world and all its interrelated embodiments are alive and conscious. Consciousness bestows upon the subject both freedom and responsibility. All embodied beings are moral agents and the Aboriginal world is maintained through and by their agency.³⁷

Dreaming Law generates demands on these various agents to hold the synthesis of landscape and Aboriginal being together. The principles that underpin these laws are,

³⁶ This kind of cosmological interplay between relatedness and differentiation can be considered as constituted by the same kind of 'double-movement' advanced as a conceptual metaphor by Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984 and previously discussed in the context of world creation. Myers (1991: 159-180) also explores the relation between relatedness and differentiation in terms of social ontology.

³⁷ Bird Rose, 'Exploring an Aboriginal Land Ethic' in Edwards, 1998: 289.

according to Bird Rose, ‘autonomy’, ‘balance’, ‘symmetry’ and ‘response’.³⁸ Each mode of being is responsible for maintaining its own integrity and well-being, and thus ensuring its own continuity as an autonomous unit. However, each element must balance and be balanced by the others. Balance requires symmetry or parity. To achieve parity and, therefore, equilibrium, there must be dialogue between the elements. Each must consciously respond to the others’ needs in order to achieve the greater good, and secure the harmony and continuity of the whole. It is implicit that these principles of Law relate just as much to *intra*-elemental relations as to *inter*-elemental ones. Aboriginal being, like land and nature, *is called upon* to fulfil both its personal and relational responsibilities.

The abstract proposition of upholding the principles of Dreaming Law is better understood when demonstrated using concrete examples. Aboriginal being adheres to the principles of autonomy, balance, symmetry and response in its *relationship to* country and its *partnership with* that country. Each autonomous Aboriginal group and each autonomous individual has intense moral responsibilities to locality,³⁹ both of a physical and spiritual nature. These responsibilities are assigned according to Dreaming myth. Territorial distribution is achieved by means of territorial association with particular Dreamings, and thus a revered connection between particular Dreamings, particular territories and particular Aboriginal groups and individuals, whose origins can be traced to that territory, is established. The specific responsibilities of Aboriginal being, to land and nature, are pre-established by connections determined by the location of their conception and birth. Individual responsibilities and expectations are gradually and selectively revealed to children by their elders, the custodians of Dreaming Law.⁴⁰

Custodians of the Law of specifically located country are said to ‘hold’ it.⁴¹ Unlike the western concept of ownership, which suggests a psychology of grasping or *holding on to*, to ‘hold’ country is to *hold it together* so to speak; to *hold to* the Dreaming Law which facilitates continuity of well-being for that landscape and its inhabitants. However, as

³⁸ Bird Rose, ‘Consciousness and Responsibility in an Australian Aboriginal Religion’ in Edwards, 1998: 242-243.

³⁹ Bird Rose in Edwards, 1998: 243-244.

⁴⁰ Bird Rose in Edwards, 1998: 244.

⁴¹ The notion of ‘holding’ country is commonly employed in discussions of Aboriginal custodianship of places. For explanation and discussion of the notion of ‘holding’ country see Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 70 *cf.*; Myers, 1991: 145-55.

Myer asserts, not everyone who has a birthright ‘claim’ on country may actualise his or her ‘interest’ in it.⁴² To be bestowed with the necessary knowledge and permitted to participate in the necessary ritual activity, one must be accepted as someone worthy of that responsibility. For Aboriginal individuals to ‘hold’ country others must accept the actualisation of their ‘claim’ through a process of negotiation. They must be seen by their Countrypersons as creditable in both sacred and mundane matters. In this sense then, while all ‘belong’ to country in a metaphysical sense, additional ethical requirements are placed upon those called to act out their belonging.⁴³

This brings us to an existential dimension of belonging to country—that is to say, to the perception of belonging place through Dreaming mythology. As has been discussed, in an Aboriginal context, myth communicates the symbolic statements that determine where people are placed in the world. Dreaming narratives are the voice of country—its story inscribed in the landscape by the Dreaming Beings whose agency shaped the world and Aboriginal peoples in it. However, in the same way that Nancy Munn describes the transformation of the Dreaming Beings from subjects to objects as they institute the physical world, the relationship between Dreaming narratives and landscape is likewise constituted by a kind of ‘double-movement’.⁴⁴ On the one hand, landscapes are formed by a process of separation from the originating subjects, that is, the Dreaming Being actors of cosmogonic narratives; on the other hand landscapes are constituted by a binding of Dreaming Beings and these narratives to landscape in atemporal and enduring identification. Thus, in the same relation as subject and object, from out of Dreaming narratives comes landscape and vice versa.

Dreaming narratives map the topographic contours of Dreaming, pointing to places of transformation and guiding Aboriginal peoples along the Dreaming strings or connecting routes taken by their Dreaming ancestors as they embodied and shaped the Aboriginal world. As Catherine and Ronald Berndt state in their anthology of Aboriginal myth and story:

⁴² Fred Myers, ‘Always Ask: Resource Use and Land Ownership among Pintupi Aborigines of the Australian Western Desert’ in Edwards, 1998: 41-43.

⁴³ This raises interesting questions in relation to the actualisation of belonging as an ethical task or performance.

⁴⁴ Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 61.

The whole land is full of signs: a land humanised so that it could be used and read by Aborigines who were/are intimately familiar with it, and read as clearly as if it were bristling with notice-boards. It is then the land which is really speaking—offering, to those who can understand its language, an explanatory discourse about how it came to be as it is now, which [B]eings were responsible for its becoming like that, and who is or should be responsible for it now.⁴⁵

Landscapes are thus mythscapes, and mythscapes implicate Aborigines in a profound way. They not only disclose the Aboriginal world as country but also the means or mode by which being-in-country can be perpetuated.

The Dreaming maps of Aboriginal peoples rely not only on the production but also on the reproduction of symbolic statements encoded in the mythological landscape of Dreaming.⁴⁶ If the directions are followed, country, and its constituents—landscape and Aboriginal peoples—stay healthy. Aboriginal peoples must read the metaphysical, ethical and ontological signposts in mythscape and act accordingly. By both maintaining and following the signs, Aboriginal peoples fulfil their ritual obligation to country and thus guarantee the perpetual unfolding of being.

Aboriginal peoples actually see and hear in landscape the ordered and ordering narrative of myth. Landscape is crowded and alive with noise and movement. For outsiders, Aboriginal country, that which occupies vast tracts of remote Australia, is nothing but featureless plains—an undifferentiated formless field more analogous to that which existed ‘before the Dreaming’ than ever since. Lilburne perceptively comments on this phenomenon by way of this anecdote: ‘A white Australian crossing the Nullabor Plain in a bus said to me: “Look, there is nothing there.” We saw nothing because of our prior understanding of what counts as “something”.’⁴⁷ However, Aboriginal peoples see and hear something of the most profound significance—the terrain of their being.

⁴⁵ Ronald M. Berndt & Catherine H. Berndt, *The Speaking Land: Myth and Story in Aboriginal Australia* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1989): 6. *The Speaking Land* is the first anthology of its kind, recording almost 200 myth-stories drawn from a number of different Aboriginal societies and cultures. It is a major contribution toward the development of an Aboriginal traditional literature in its own right and is strongly recommended to anyone interested in the field.

⁴⁶ I use Dreaming as well as Dreaming mythology here so as not to entirely dismiss the possibility of symbolic statements being given to Aboriginal people directly in dreams. This phenomenon is explicit in psychoanalytical and ‘new age’ readings of Aboriginal mythology, but also implicit in some of the literature relating to Australian Aboriginal religious experience. See for example, Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 61.

⁴⁷ Lilburne, 1989: 42.

According to anthropologist Peter Sutton, Queensland Aboriginal people have a saying: 'Nothing is nothing'. Bird Rose translates this phrase to mean that everything is something, that everything exists by virtue of its place in Dreaming,⁴⁸ or on the Dreaming map. She goes on to say that while it is one thing to know that nothing is nothing, it is quite another to know what any given thing is.⁴⁹ It is not enough to map landscape by locating named places and positioning them in correct geographical relation to others along physical Dreaming tracks. The meaning of a Dreaming map is not expressed unless it is understood by those who live and think according to it.

Where the non-Aboriginal eye might see nothing, Aborigines see the journey strings and resting places of Dreaming Beings. Instead of being merely physical geographers, they are visionary ones, navigating terrain by virtue of a Dreaming map. But physical terrain is not all Aboriginal peoples navigate by way of Dreaming maps. In a fundamental and highly personal sense the Dreaming map is invoked to show Aborigines that they belong. Bird Rose captures this most eloquently in the following extract in which she describes how one Aboriginal man pacifies the loss and suffering of his daughter. This story most graphically demonstrates the power and profundity that the ordered and ordering narrative of speaking mythscape has in relation to the psychological terrain of Aboriginal peoples:

Lying on the ground, with a fire burning to warn snakes away, the woman lying next to me told her father, who lay nearby, that she had decided to leave her husband after many years of brutal marriage. In the dark her voice sounded hurt and bewildered as she said, 'I don't know why, daddy. He always beat me'. Her father offered her his strongest and deepest consolation. He called placenames, verbally travelling first through his mother's country, which is where his children had grown up, calling each waterhole, each hill and creek, marking its extent and indicating the Dreamings. He spoke of places and Dreamings in his father's country, calling them by name. And he punctuated his words of comfort with this assertion: 'All that, that's all your country now.'⁵⁰

This story graphically demonstrates the intrinsic place that grounding in country has for Aboriginal life, identity, and well-being. To be well, in fact to be at all, is intimately

⁴⁸ Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, 1996): 23.

⁴⁹ Bird Rose, 1996: 31.

⁵⁰ Bird Rose, 1992: 122.

connected with the land. For Aboriginal peoples Dreaming maps of country provide not only a mode of world-disclosure but also a mode of sustaining that disclosure and thus sustaining being itself. Mapping country is thus a means of locating and orienting being.

The connection between Aboriginal peoples and country is explicit. Country is where Aboriginal peoples find their being—find themselves. Country locates Aboriginal peoples socially, morally and physically. Country provides referents to a particular and discrete identity and mode of operation—specific obligations, responsibilities and privileges. One's country is home-land, and like the places that all people call home, Aboriginal country is where its countrymen feel a sense of acceptance and being accepted and an open-ness to being who and what they are—a sense of profound belonging.

1.2 ‘Colonial’ Stories

While Aboriginal peoples have deep time connections with the continent of Australia, the occupation of settler Australians spans only a little over 200 years. Unlike the indigenous population, settler Australians are unable to trace their identity and belonging in this country back to its cosmogonic origins. While Aboriginal peoples can refer to a canon of ancient authorised philosophical explanations regarding their intrinsic affiliation with country, settler connections are not cosmogonically defined—not explicitly anyway. Rather than *being* connected to country, for settler Australians it has been a matter of *becoming* connected.

According to Anthony Smith’s comprehensive analysis of national identity, there are two, sometimes incompatible, bases of ‘national identity’—territory and ethnicity. ‘[N]ations are inconceivable without some common myths and memories.’ Myths of national identity typically refer to territory or ancestry (or both) as the basis of political community.⁵¹ In the case of countries such as Australia that were populated by Europeans as part of the expansion of the British Empire, the forging of national identity is particularly problematic.⁵² Early settler Australians were exiled from their homeland, and this exile was not merely physical. Not only were they far removed from familiar scenery, but also from familiar scenes, displaced from all those persistent and predictable features of life that, by their constant presence, produce in us the sense of being at home and of belonging. Furthermore, while Aboriginal belonging is traditionally to a particular place (or set of places) in which they live out their lives and knowledge about these places is deep and expansive, early settler Australians had little knowledge of the country in which they had arrived, and could not rely on forebears to educate them. In order for lines of connection to be drawn between identity and place, early settlers had to first come to know the country in which they found themselves, to imbue it with personal meaning. Once on foreign shores, in order to feel that sense of being at home early settler

⁵¹ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991): viii.

⁵² One might argue that in Australia’s case plantation was even more problematic because of its advent as a penal colony.

Australians were compelled to (re-)create both a landscape and a pattern of living with which they could relate.

Colonising peoples, such as settler Australians, generate their own myths and memories in order to establish identity and belonging. Historian Richard White begins his introduction to *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980* (1981) with the statement that he is writing the history of a 'national obsession'. He is referring to the 'invention' of an Australian national identity. Similar to a number of other academic books and articles written in the last decades of the twentieth century, the object of *Inventing Australia* is to look at the mythologies of Australian national identity, examining their source and function. One of those functions—maybe the primary one—is to satisfy the desire of settler Australians to establish a meaningful connection between themselves and the land they occupy.

In the preface of the 1982 edition of *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity*, John Carroll states that, in the context of colonisation, the 'psychological settling' of a country is far more difficult than the 'physical inhabiting' of it. The former, he claims is dependant upon 'a settling of the mind' achieved only after intimate bonds with the country have been established. According to Carroll, It is only through individual experience, and those common experiences, that places are defined. It is only through human engagement with places that in time those places become meaningful. 'Only then [he claims] the great restlessness, the feverish insecurity, that comes from being homeless, may start to calm.'⁵³

Most would agree that in order to feel a sense of belonging in a new country the process of *becoming connected* or, what Carroll calls *psychological settling*, must be undergone by the immigrant population. In the case of Australia, a significant amount of scholarly attention has been focused on the means by which settler Australians tried to achieve psychological connection, and the extent to which the means they chose were appropriate—either functionally or ethically. It is argued here that, in the context of the settler self, the need to assert a distinctive Australian identity and the need to establish belonging are analogous in their roles as psychological panacea.

⁵³ John Carroll ed., *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992): vii.

Section 1.2 traces the quest of settler Australians for a distinctly Australian identity—a quest motivated not only by a desire to define who they are, but how they belong. It does so by investigating the two transitions that Australia’s first European immigrant population faced in establishing themselves: firstly, the development of a identity that reconciled them with the land in which they had arrived and secondly, a sense of identity and belonging that distinguished them from those Aboriginal peoples they must take it from. The strategies they employed to achieve these aims and embed themselves in country involved domesticating the social, physical and intellectual antipodal environments—employing familiar archetypes in the process. In doing so, they succeeded in subverting alienation, affirming their identity as Australians and establishing their belonging to country.

1.2.1. Settler Identity And Belonging in Relation To Land

Negative European initial perceptions of the land and landscape are attributed to having played an instrumental role in the construction of the colonial Australian identity. In the influential essay ‘The Quest for an Australian Identity’ Manning Clark ascribes the obsession with self-definition to the fact that Europeans initially found this continent to be strange and alien—hostile to their wants and needs. He remarks:

The first Europeans who saw this country recoiled in horror. They were looking for places where they could make what they picturesquely called “uncommonly large profit”, and win souls for Christ. They found a land of flies, and sand, uncommonly large natural monsters, and exceedingly black barbarian savages.⁵⁴

This is certainly correct insofar as the early maritime explorers were concerned. The seventeenth-century Dutch mariners found nothing to commend the land and Dampier’s impressions of the land and its people, based on the potential for trade, were equally unfavourable. Cook, on the other hand, while concurring with Dampier on the issue of commercial value, gave a far more complimentary account of the continent. Unlike Dampier, Cook had an eye to scientific investigation—to natural history. For these

⁵⁴ Manning Clark, *The Quest for Australian Identity* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980): 4.

purposes the land abounded—full of exotic specimens of flora, fauna and, of course, the native peoples themselves.⁵⁵

Australian exotica, although fascinating to the early scientist, was hardly of key concern to early colonists. It is reported that when John Oxley first laid eyes on western NSW in 1817 he ‘doubted whether such barren and desolate plains could ever be put to the service of civilized man.’ Charles Sturt’s comments about central Australia in the 1840s were just as disparaging. He is said to have found it ‘so chilling and repulsive to the eye that he asked his God to make sure he never saw it again.’⁵⁶ Feelings such as these were no doubt exacerbated by the material backwardness of the early colony and the harsh conditions borne by its convict and settler population alike. Their eye was to survival, and, in this regard, the strangeness of the land all that was native to it were obstacles.

Against the backdrop just described, perceptions that the land and/or its immigrant people were either hopelessly inadequate or incompatible are perhaps understandable. However, placing emphasis on only the negative aspects of the colonial environment eschews a key point. Settler Australians did manage to overcome isolation and adversity, established themselves on the land and also grew to love it. Indeed, it is that process—the task of planting themselves in the country with the labour of their own hands—that becomes a defining feature of Australian national identity.

The promotion of the notion that settler Australians ‘won the land’ is important in the context of establishing their legitimate presence (and therefore their belonging). The implication is not only that the land was ‘won’, that is, procured from its original inhabitants—the native black—but that it was tamed or domesticated. As Henry Lawson pronounces in his famous bush ballad, ‘How the Land was Won’ (1899), the ‘wild wide land’ was ‘to be won’ to the will and the ways of the more ‘civilised’ colonising group. By bringing the supposed nature of the land in line with their own supposed natures settler belonging is established—the land belongs to them, and they belong to the land. Places form the necessary backdrops upon which the character of a person’s life gains definition. The way that we make sense of our lives, and the places and contexts in

⁵⁵ Clark, 1980: 27.

⁵⁶ Clark, 1980: 5.

which they occur, is through the construction and telling of stories. As with Aboriginal Dreaming mythology, it is the stories told by settler Australians about themselves and their experiences of place that synthesizes their identity with that of the land in which they find themselves.

The seminal story of Australian settlement appeals for its central plot on the notion that the continent was *terra nullius*—empty or belonging to no one. Of course Europeans had to be in no doubt that Aboriginal peoples had prior occupancy, however the view was popularised very early on that they did not actually own it.⁵⁷ The general consensus, but mistaken assumption, among early settlers (that is those who paused to think about it at all) was that ‘[e]ach tribe wandered about wheresoever inclination prompted, without supposing that any one place belonged to it more than another.’ And in 1849 the Supreme Court of New South Wales’ finding was that ‘[t]he lands in new territories are unoccupied and waste, until granted by the Crown, to some individual willing to reclaim them from a state of nature.’⁵⁸ In more than a legal sense then the continent of Australia was considered *terra nullius*. Early European immigrants to Australia found there a *tabula rasa* upon which it was their task, if not their duty, to write a humanised landscape into being.⁵⁹

In seeking to establish themselves, settler Australians have clung to certain preferred storylines about identity and country—those that minimize estrangement and maximize belonging. The promotion of the notion that settler Australians ‘won the land’ is important in both these respects. It is psychologically settling in the context of establishing a legitimate presence in the country and also in establishing a legitimate connection with it.

⁵⁷ Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1989): *passim*.

⁵⁸ Henry Reynolds in Richard Nile ed., *The Australian Legend and its Discontents* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000): 141.

⁵⁹ In the very recent past the validity of the doctrine of *terra nullius* has been challenged—both as a notion existing in common law and as a notion employed in revisionist history. Historian Michael Connor claims that ‘the concept of *terra nullius* was unknown to Australian colonists and was never used to justify the settlement of New Holland [Australia]. Rather, the term has more contemporary origins.’ Indeed, Connor has charged historian Henry Reynolds with fabricating the notion in the late 1970s for politico-legal ends. Heated debate concerning this issue continues to divide the Australian history community. While such a debate is interesting and important, there is no intention to wade into it here. This is not a work of History *per se*. Rather this work attempts to enunciate and examine the stories that non-indigenous Australians tell themselves about their being and belonging in this country. The doctrine of *terra nullius*, whether it be valid or fabricated, old or new, is part of that story. For more on the alleged fabrication of the doctrine see Michael Connor, ‘Error Nullius’, *The Bulletin*, 08/02/03; *The Invention of Terra Nullius* (2005).

In much of Australia's historical mythology, especially that emerging around the turn of the twentieth century, the implication is not only that the land was 'won', that is, procured from its original inhabitants—the Aborigines—but that it was conquered, tamed and domesticated. 'Opening up' 'new' land is a metaphor often used for this process. However, as historian Gillian Cowlshaw observes, this phrase is a loaded one. She says that as far as settler Australians were concerned:

The country was closed, and should be made available to men who would open it for fertilisation. They imagined it awaiting their footsteps and fences, their axes and animals, and their most visually intrusive cultural markers, their buildings. Naming new land and marking it was the achievement of the highest order, and the expression of the progressive mission of the Australian nation.⁶⁰

The necessity to win the land was entirely consistent with Enlightenment philosophy and its most powerful legacy, the idea of progress. As John Gascoigne observes, progress was most significantly and obviously linked with what was considered 'improvement' of the land. It was an agrarian revolution that had made possible its industrial namesake in Britain.⁶¹ 'The ancient continent of Australia was regarded as a piece of wasteland writ large requiring to be brought into productive use.'⁶² Scientific agriculture would be expanded with zeal to the colonies. As Gascoigne puts it:

Spurred on by the successes of the Agrarian revolution in Britain, the colonists were almost devoid of ecological humility though they were strangers in a strange land. In their minds it was a manifest good to clear the land and bring it under the plough or to render it productive by grazing animals. ... The sound of the axe was the sound of virtue, the sweat thus generated served to seal one's claim to the land. Unimproved land was indicative of sloth and mismanagement ... Former signs of human inhabitation were refashioned into forms more familiar to British eyes.⁶³

By the mid-nineteenth century colonists were able to brag to their distant friends and relatives in Britain about the improvement and the order of the colonies. Many parts of

⁶⁰ Gillian Cowlshaw, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999): 53.

⁶¹ John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 69.

⁶² Gascoigne, 2002: 70.

⁶³ Gascoigne, 2002: 71.

Australia, including most notably the midlands of Tasmania in which I was born and live, still bear the marks of this environmental reshaping—apart from the abundance of colonial architecture, the roads are guarded by avenues of oaks, elms and poplars, hawthorn hedges bound the paddocks, gorse dots the cleared hills and the skyline and spatial configuration of many of the small towns mirrors that of English villages. As intended, the ‘savage land’ was ‘won over’ (at least superficially) by the will and the ways of the more civilised colonising group and the nature of the land and that of the civilising settler brought into line.

If one of the ways in which settler peoples have sought to identify themselves as belonging involves re-shaping the land, then another that is equally significant involves re-shaping perceptions of themselves. Perceptions that the land was ‘won over’ are also influential in the generation of a national character or identity that exemplifies what it is to be ‘Australian’. In order to win, the character of settler Australians had to match that of the land with which it struggled. If the land was harsh, settlers needed to be just as harsh. If it was resilient they too had to be resilient. Thus belonging was also established by the production of a national identity or character, the features of which are believed to be derivative of the country itself and which can therefore be deemed quintessentially Australian. By producing and promoting a conventional national identity based upon so-called national character traits, adherents of this tradition are reasonably able to identify those who fit the stereotype of authentic Australian character and those who do not. In doing so, those who do belong and those who do not are easily distinguished.

In terms of the production of national character, Russel Ward’s account in *The Australian Legend* (1958) is possibly the epitome. In this work Ward reflects on Australia’s tradition and history, and by doing so traces and discloses traits that have historically been considered authentically Australian. In Ward’s view the development of the national self-image has its origin in the bushman legend—a myth developed in the nineteenth century and enshrined in the literary and popular imagination by the great Australian writers and poets.

According to the myth [Ward states] the ‘typical Australian’ is a practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affectation in others He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily

and often, and drinks deeply on occasion ... He is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong.⁶⁴

As is evident here, Ward emphasizes manly independence and egalitarian collectivism, two traits essential to the rubric of mateship—a defining feature that recurs as the national self-image develops. These are the characteristics widely attributed to nineteenth-century outback employees—drovers, shepherds, shearers, stockmen and station hands. They are also the characteristics that in some sectors of the popular imagination still represent the Australian native-born settler of the nineteenth century and also their contemporary descendants.

Although Ward admits to the problematics of re-enforcing accounts that drew upon constructed and romanticised versions of national character, he also felt strongly that it would be a mistake to entirely deny the legend's veracity or influence. Indeed, *The Australian Legend* is a work that sets about proving that 'the Australian legend has, perhaps, a more solid substratum of fact than most'⁶⁵, and in doing so has been instrumental in keeping the legend alive and robust. Unfortunately the flaw in Ward's work—that is, that he re-enforces the idea of a particular stereotypical view of authentic national character—is a common one, it is shared not only by those who support Ward's thesis but also by those who have reacted against it and sought to de-mythologize the character of the Australian legend. This latter group of thinkers—many of them also highly influential—have, by appealing to their own preferred historical and sociological facts, merely produced another stereotype—albeit an alternative to Ward's. Some of the accounts of national identity that are produced in the process also rely heavily on rural or pastoral tropes. John Hirst's vision of the typical Australian as a 'pioneer' is a case in point.⁶⁶

According to Hirst, it is the nationalist 'pioneer' legend that has shaped Australian self-image. This alternative model celebrates many of the same qualities as the legend of

⁶⁴ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958): 1-2.

⁶⁵ Ward, 1958:1.

⁶⁶ In *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1982) Henry Reynolds points out the irony that more Aborigines were 'pioneers' than settler Australians.

‘the bushman’—courage, hard work and independence—but instead of attributing those qualities to the working class—the drovers and shearers and stationhands—it ascribes them to the property-owning class on whose land the bushmen toiled. Hirst argues that the term pioneer was first applied to a broader range of early colonists who distinguished themselves in local communities as professionals, merchants, officials or primary producers.

The use of the notion of the pioneer and bushmen legend as those who ‘won the land’,⁶⁷ understood in terms of a quintessential Australian character, emerged as a nationalist symbol in the lead up to Federation at about the same time as identity and belonging became much pondered questions. Both were celebrated and promulgated by the same means—through the radical-nationalist narratives of bush balladeers such as Henry Lawson, ‘Banjo’ Paterson, Adam Lindsay Gordon,⁶⁸ and others as well as through the visual images of Australian artists. The Heidelberg school of painters, including artists such as Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Frederick McCubbin⁶⁹ set about re-enchanting a sense of belonging to the Australian landscape by producing images of it seen and appreciated ‘through Australian eyes’.

The need to create a national identity that drew upon stereotypical and heroic images of the bushmen and the pioneers who courageously tamed it, and according to which Australians could be proud, did not subside after Federation. Richard White reports that even into the 1930s the government continued to encourage a view of Australia in which ‘the “real” Australia was the bush, and the bushworker was still seen as ‘typically Australian’.⁷⁰ And for those skeptics who found it difficult to relate to the bush, a more home-grown, recognisable and colloquial incarnation of the national character had also become available by that time. The characteristics that inhered in the bushmen and pioneer legends of turn of the century radical nationalism were re-encharmed and reinforced in the early twentieth century by their embodiment in the heroic

⁶⁷ This term is used in reference to pioneers in Henry Lawson’s famous poem ‘How the Land was Won’ (1899). The same themes appear in A.B. Paterson’s ‘Song of the Future’ (1889) and in many other poems of the period and, for that matter, ever since.

⁶⁸ J. B. Hirst, ‘The Pioneer Legend’ in Carroll, 1992: 16.

⁶⁹ Tom Robert’s *Shearing the Rams* (1890), Arthur Streeton’s ‘The Selector’s Hut: Whelan on the Log’ (1890) and Frank McCubbin’s ‘The Pioneers’ (1904) are fine examples of this genre.

⁷⁰ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980* (Sydney, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1981): 149.

Anzac (Australian soldier or ‘digger’) on the international stage, and more domestically, by the bronzed Aussie lifesaver.⁷¹ Both these characters are selfless warriors, willing to battle adversity and risk their lives to save the lives of others. The same qualities of egalitarianism and mateship applied, as did the emphasis on overcoming extreme hardship and suffering. They were also more accessible to common folk; they could be seen at the suburban swimming pool or the local beach; during times of war, they were someone’s brother, father, cousin or friend.

1.2.2. Settler Identity And Belonging In Relation To Aborigines

Alongside the development of a sense of identity and belonging that connected the identity of settler Australians to their new environment, there grew a sense of identity and belonging that relied on social-cultural demands and imperatives. If a nation were to be developed from the colonies, then settler Australians must form a united political community. What is clear is that there is not only a socio-cultural imperative for the invention of collective subjectivities, but also a political advantage to their acceptance. Nationalism is as much a means of separation from others as it is an assertion of a distinct identity and culture for oneself.

For settler Australians, identity and belonging to country does not only come from assuming a connection with the land based on their presence in and engagement with the landscape; rather, national identity for settler Australians required their differentiation from other collectives, that which they left behind and that which they encountered in their new country. As Smith, the prominent theorist of national identity, suggests, if a truly autochthonous white Australian identity could be imagined it would have to be based upon both occupation of land and a distinctive culture *and* race.

The need for the colonial settler population to establish a stable and secure sense of identity and belonging in its new homeland was evident from the earliest period of colonisation. This need to establish a collective identity as Australians was particularly highlighted in the decades preceding Federation which occurred in 1901. Both racial and

⁷¹ For a more comprehensive look at both these national characters see Richard Nile ed., *The Australian Legend and its Discontents* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000). For a critique of Ward’s thesis see the collection of essays published in *Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, 1978.

cultural elements played a role in determining what national identity would be asserted and protected in legislation. Political philosopher Geoffrey Stokes suggests that at Federation the national identity promoted and protected in legislation was tripartite, characterised by three essential features—white-ness, British-ness and Australian-ness. The security and autonomy of the nation was given as a rationale for maintaining this model of homogeneity.⁷²

Scientific racism provided, at that time, justifications for white superiority. According to this doctrine, white-ness guaranteed the physical, intellectual and moral stamina required to civilise and protect the continent. Those of British stock deemed themselves to exemplify white qualities. However, in relation to Australian-ness, British-ness also occupied a position of ambivalence. Although there were those who spoke of colonial degradation, nationalist native-born settlers conceived of themselves as having improved upon their British counterparts. Colonial experience, they argued, had highlighted and intensified positive non-indigenous attributes.⁷³ As a consequence, the perception developed that settler Australians were ‘not only white, but whiter than white; the best people in the world at being white’.⁷⁴

One of the first Acts passed by the new Federal Government in 1901 was the *Immigration Restriction Act*—an Act designed ‘to place certain restrictions on immigration and to provide for the removal from the Commonwealth of prohibited immigrants’. Although this act was the first of many which over time would constitute the infamous ‘White Australia Policy’, its aims were not significantly different from that of previous colonial legislation. Policies endorsing the eviction and alienation of the ethnic other had also been popular and successful for much of the written history of Australia up until that time. The removal of non-white immigrants began in the mid-nineteenth century when the Chinese were evicted from the goldfields. Later the diligence of the kanakas was rewarded by their deportation from the far-northern cane fields. These policies were all designed to promote and protect white homogeneity and

⁷² Geoffrey Stokes ed., *The Politics of Identity in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 121-123.

⁷³ D. Cole, ‘The Crimson Thread of Kinship: Ethnic Ideas in Australia 1870-1914’, *Historical Studies* 14.56 (1971): 518-522.

⁷⁴ Stokes, 1997: 121.

the sense of fraternity and belonging that such a collective identity was perceived as securing.⁷⁵

From the 1890s to the 1950s, although the expression ‘White Australia Policy’ was not in official use in Australia. Nevertheless an ethos of racially restrictive immigration was enshrined in public policy and retained almost unanimous public support (, as in The United States, Canada and New Zealand).⁷⁶ Government policy effectively excluded non-British immigration until the 1940s. It took until the early 1970s for the ‘racist’ White Australia Policy to be officially replaced by the allegedly ‘non-racist’ agenda of multiculturalism. This policy promised much in terms of reversing the xenophobic trend and promoting diversity as integral to Australian national identity, something that to date had been absent from the Australian agenda.

It hasn’t only been the alien from without that white Australia has sought historically to proscribe, but the alien from within. It is notable that for the first 200 years of European settlement in Australia the absence of Aborigines in discourses on Australian identity politics was routine.⁷⁷ Nor were Aboriginal Australians considered important figures. The role of Aboriginal Australians was undervalued until the 1970s. In the 1940s and 1950s there was little or no mention of Aboriginal people in Australian national history, or in books on Australian society and identity. This too was the time of ‘the great Australian silence’ described by W.E.H. Stanner in his 1968 Boyer Lecture of that title. Indeed, one of the most prominent studies of Australia in the sixties, Donald Horne’s *The Lucky Country*⁷⁸, a book promoted as setting the guidelines for debates about the Australian way of life, devotes less than half a dozen pages in total to discussion of Aboriginal issues. In order that the British establish in perpetuity a ‘home’ on this

⁷⁵ See also Miriam Dixon, *The Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity, 1788 to the Present* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1999); and Gillian Lea Whitlock & David Carter, *Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader in Australian Studies* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992).

⁷⁶ For a history and comprehensive analysis of the white Australia policy see James Jupp & Maria Kabala, *The Politics of Australian Immigration* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993)

⁷⁷ Up until the 1970s there also remained a profound ignorance about the roles that women played in Australian history. For seminal works that brought the important role of women in Australian history to light see Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God’s Police: the Colonisation of Women in Australia* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1975) and Miriam Dixon, *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia, 1788 to 1975* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).

⁷⁸ Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country: The Classic Study of Australia in the Sixties* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

continent the indigenous race had first to be displaced. The seizure of Aboriginal homelands created spaces promptly filled by a settler presence. As the settler group wrote the indigenes out, they wrote themselves into the land.⁷⁹ When it came to the subject of nation-building people felt comfortable with the out-of-sight, out-of-mind status of Aboriginal people. Indeed, some historians still do.⁸⁰

When Captain James Cook claimed the Australian continent for Britain in 1770, it is thought that the indigenous population may have numbered 300,000 in as many as 500 groups, speaking many different languages and each group with its own distinct territory and socio-political structure.⁸¹ Nevertheless, popular notions of 'colonial' Australia were of a mono-cultural society rather than a society constituted by a plurality of racial or cultural groups. Just as it took more than 150 years before the permanent residence of other peoples 'of colour' would be officially welcomed in Australia it was a similar length of time before Aborigines were acknowledged as Australian citizens.

Despite the fact that Aborigines have historically been excluded from authorised colonial versions of the production of Australian national identity, their absence belies their influence. As Edward Said proposed in his seminal text *Orientalism* (1978)⁸² (and has now come to be widely accepted), a culture, a self, a national identity, is always produced in relation to its 'others'. The development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter-ego. In terms of the constitution of a settler identity, Bain Attwood puts it this way:

Nationality is forged only by reference to an other, which it also constructs. 'Australians' for example, are constructed in the process of constructing the Aboriginal (or Asian, British, American etc.) other. More particularly, each category is imagined in terms of characteristics which are deemed to be the opposite of the other, and those (heterogeneous) characteristics of

⁷⁹ Paul Carter expresses this idea in the following way. He holds that 'white invasion was a form of spatial writing that erased the earlier meaning. Settlement then became a question of giving back to a desolated, because depopulated, land a lost significance.' See Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York: Knopf, 1988): 165.

⁸⁰ In recent times, the debate among Australian historians concerning how the process of colonization (and the role and influence of Aboriginal peoples in the process) has re-ignited. See, for example, Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Paddington, NSW: Macleay Press, 2002) and Stuart Macintyre & Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Carlton, Vic.: University of Melbourne Press, 2003).

⁸¹ Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians* (Crow's Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994): 11.

⁸² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

‘Australians’ which are not recognized and accepted are displaced and projected onto the (Aboriginal) other, thus excluding, repressing and denying their presence within the Australians. In this process there is obviously an interdependence of the two categories—‘the Australian’ only has meaning in relation to the (Aboriginal) other. This other, while secondary and subordinate, is nonetheless central, then, to the existence of the primary and superordinate category of Australians.⁸³

As is common to most experiences of European colonial expansion, from very first contact, the indigenous peoples of Australia became objects from which non-indigenes were necessarily differentiated. The characteristics by which the Aboriginal other is distinguished become constituting factors in the self-image of the non-indigenous subject. It is the perceived differences between ‘them’ and ‘us’ that many believe have defined ‘our’ national identity.

The establishment of a penal colony on the Australian continent had its origins in the socio-economic and demographic changes occurring in England in the late-eighteenth century attributed to the first stage of the Industrial Revolution. This period produced a long series of depressing social results for the working class—urban slums and massive unemployment as well as brutal working conditions and very low wages for those who were employed. Social disruption and high rates of crime resulted. The transportation of the criminal poor to new colonies in Australia provided an urgently needed solution to social chaos.

However, expediency alone did not, and according to law could not, solely provide adequate justification for the founding of the Australian colony. Adequate justification had to be found in, or written into, international law. At the time of first settlement, according to understandings of international law, as interpreted by de Vattel, Europeans were entirely justified to establish colonies for their own surplus populations in lands that were only sparsely populated by indigenous peoples. Indeed, given the Divine command to subdue the earth, they had not only a legal, but also a moral duty to do so.⁸⁴ This was deemed particularly salient in cases where the indigenes were also hunter-gatherers.

⁸³ Bain Attwood ed., *The Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996): xxiii.

⁸⁴ Reynolds, 1989: 17.

The addendum is significant not only for pragmatic reasons—because it would supposedly be easier to dispossess a more sparsely spread indigenous population—but in terms of providing a solid ideological rationale for dispossession. It is inherent in the doctrine of *terra nullius* (discussed previously as a support for the annexation of the Australian continent) that both *the* land and any peoples that inhabited it, be in a ‘state of nature’. It is the condition that the Aboriginal population was judged as such, and that the settler group judged themselves at counterpoint, that silently informed settler perceptions of Aborigines, notions about themselves and their right to belong, and set the scene for what followed in profound ways.

Early-colonial perceptions of Australia’s Aboriginal hunter-gatherer population were distributed between two stereotypes—the ignoble savage and the noble savage. The former, Broome claims, was most prevalent among the uneducated majority and the latter among the elite, educated minority.⁸⁵ The origin of these two conceptions of Aborigines can be found in the thought of influential political philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, particularly Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Their work, and differing evaluations of what characteristics are present in a so-called ‘state of nature’ are also intimately bound to both *terra nullius* justifications for the dispossession of Aboriginal people and conceptions of socio-cultural superiority on the part of European colonisers.

The philosophers mentioned above are typical Enlightenment thinkers—very much part of that movement in Western history and philosophy that placed great emphasis on human rationality and will. One of the questions that their work and thought addresses is governance; why if human beings have both reason and free-will ought they submit themselves to the control of others? The logic of these philosophers’ response involved the postulation of a ‘state of nature’—a state in which humankind lived prior to the advent of civil society.

British philosopher Thomas Hobbes had an exceptionally negative view of the state of nature. Humans live in relative isolation, engaged in very basic activities to meet their survival, and at times coming into conflict with other human beings who are also after the same natural resource to aid their survival. Since every person is effectively in

⁸⁵ Broome, 1994: 26.

competition with every other person for limited resources, life is almost inevitably violent. Here, the only limitation to freedom is power. Hobbes' famous statement is that in the state of nature, life is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'⁸⁶. In the state of nature, there is no society, and so there exists no sovereignty, no system of governance, no laws and no civil rights. Hobbes must also share some responsibility for images of Aborigines as 'ignoble savages'. His ideas certainly contributed to eighteenth-century theories that tried to link human beings and animals in a chain of being and to find the 'missing link'.

The fore-most English philosopher of the period, John Locke, adds at least one more important feature to those supposedly inherent to Hobbes' 'state of nature'. In this state, according to Locke, there is not only a lack of social or political authority or organisation, but all goods are held in common. The right to property is earned by bestowing one's labour on it. For Locke, it is the act of human beings labouring (farming and building) that the land itself can be enclosed from the commons and become the property of individual persons or peoples.⁸⁷ According to this understanding hunter-gatherers had no capacity to own land, and therefore the land they occupy is free for the taking.

The description of 'natural man' posited by the work of French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, credited as being the first of the Romantics, turned chain-of-being theory on its head. Rousseau has a rather different conception of "nature" to the nasty, brutish and short existence depicted by Hobbes. Rather than being a brute or beast, for Rousseau, Man in the state of nature is nothing more than someone who possesses all the baseline attributes that allow him or her to be defined as human. Into this category he did not put intelligence or civilisation or culture. Rather, for Rousseau what natural Man possessed was equality, freedom, health and happiness; human beings are by nature good, and are corrupted and depraved by society. Indeed in the closing paragraph of Part I of his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755) he makes a direct comparison between the characteristics of 'primitive' populations and the inequality, misery and slavery of

⁸⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (1651; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁸⁷ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, ed. with an intro and *apparatus criticus* Peter Laslett (1690; New York: New American Library, 1965): 14, 32.

modern Europe. According to this analysis, the history of humankind can be understood not in terms of an evolution, but rather a devolution of the noble savage.

As can be seen in the work of the philosophers mentioned above, the notion of the ‘savage’ is closely connected in conception to that of the ‘primitive’. ‘Modern’ humankind has consistently sought to find its place in its differentiation from the ‘primitive’, understand the baffling complexity of its existence in juxtaposition to ‘simple’ societies and justify its projection into the future by tracking its trajectory into the past. Historically, the greater percentage of both social and ‘psychological’ anthropology can be read most accurately as studies in primitivism—efforts to map the qualities of chronologically earlier cultures onto contemporary civilisation. In terms of the non-indigenous quest to locate its other, Aboriginal Australia definitely provided early ‘scientists’ with a large body of data with which to come to conclusions. Much of it has served to re-enforce the propositions put forward by earlier social and political philosophy.

After their initial ‘discovery’ by the west, Aboriginal peoples were assigned their position as symbols of pure antiquity—noble but ‘in-themselves’ inutile. Aboriginal culture ‘in-itself’, if it was recognised as ‘culture’ at all, was assigned little value except as a reference point from which mainstream society could keep an appropriate distance—physically, psychologically and culturally. However, in order to concretise the ground between the non-indigenous population and its Aboriginal other, the category of Aboriginal or Aboriginality had to be firmly established.

As previously discussed, from the very beginning of white settlement the categorisation of Aborigines as primordial or primitive assisted in the processes of annexation of land and colonisation. Later-nineteenth-century western scientific ideas of biology and anthropology re-enforced colonial perceptions of Aborigines as representing an homogenous class of primitive people determined by their simplicity and lack of intelligence to be ill-suited to the more advanced and complex modern world of the Europeans.⁸⁸ It did not take long before ‘Aboriginal’ was read as ‘inferior’ and Euro-

⁸⁸ For a comprehensive analysis of anthropological constructions of Aborigines see Bain Attwood & John Arnold, *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines* (Bundoora, Vic.: La Trobe University Press, 1992).

Australian by contrast as ‘superior’ and therefore more befitting and deserving heirs to the Australian continent.

Although most, if not all, of the assumptions of scientific racism have long been discredited, to the extent that European ideologies about white superiority and fitness and, in contrast, the inferiority and ill-fittedness of Aboriginal peoples became institutionalised in law, they became not only powerful instruments of dominion over Aboriginal peoples, but in time an everyday and oft subliminal message to white Australians confirming the perception that they had an inherently privileged claim to life, liberty and estate—those civil rights that Locke held so dear.

The conviction that Aboriginal peoples are inferior, ill-fitted to the modern environment and undeserving of, or disqualified from, any claim to civil rights is made graphically clear when one looks, for example, to the history of contact policies in Queensland, one of the largest Australian states with one of the consistently highest populations of Aboriginal people. In 1788 it is estimated that Queensland was home to 100,000 Aboriginal people, although by 1901 that figure had fallen to less than 27,000.⁸⁹ This drastic drop in population is attributed to disease and indiscriminate killing as Aboriginal populations were forcibly removed from any land deemed suitable for European occupation. Conceptions of Aborigines as ‘savages’, allowed for this; their dehumanisation justified both atrocities committed against them and the assumption that they had no property rights over the land in which they lived justified white usurpation of it. Not only did European settlers eschew indigenous rights of belonging, but they also took their own belonging in the land for granted. In the minds of the settlers the land was already theirs; Aborigines had no right—legal or otherwise—to be there; ‘dispersal’ became a euphemism for their removal by fatal means.

By the late-nineteenth century, however, economic need and labour shortages forced white landowners to rethink this policy of dispersal. By that time also philanthropic attention had been drawn to the plight of Aborigines; ‘noble’ savage ideologies infiltrated the frontier. There was a significant missionary presence and this group saw their duty as being as much to protect Aborigines from abuse and to make the

⁸⁹ John Chesterman & Brian Galligan, *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 31.

inevitable demise of this ‘primitive’ people as smooth as possible,⁹⁰ as to civilise them. Economic and more benevolent motivations worked together informing new legislation⁹¹ that, while it protected Aborigines from indiscriminate killing, did not protect them from systematic abuse, rather it enshrined in law the imperative that they be removed to missions and reserves and that strict institutional regulations control every domain of their lives.

From the earliest days of colonisation male settlers had engaged in sexual relations with Aboriginal women, under circumstances that can variously be described as ‘prostitution, exploitation, and unambiguous rape’.⁹² As a consequence, even though the numbers of ‘full-blood Aborigines’ was decreasing, the number of Aborigines of mixed ethnicity (‘half-castes’) had swiftly risen. Broome reports one parliamentarian at the time as saying ‘we must be careful to see that the half-caste is not given the same liberties that are enjoyed by the whiteman. We do not want any further mixing of the population. We want to keep the white race white’.⁹³ When in the 1930s it became increasingly obvious that Aborigines were not going to die out and fears of miscegenation began to arise, policies began to shift again. However, the diversity of the Aboriginal population, both in biological inheritance and lifestyle, made uniform classification extremely difficult. Legislators struggled to find definitions that would suit their objectives of restriction and control.

Although it is not the proper place here to continue to trace the way in which the Australian public policy has reflected settler understandings of their relationship with the land and its indigenous custodians, the fragment above serves to demonstrate not only how legislation protected settler classifications of national identity, but how legislation and public policy served to establish and protect the pre-existing assumption that European immigrants had a more privileged claim to occupy and own the land (and therefore to belong) than the continent’s indigenous peoples. Such assumptions, enshrined in white-Australian mythology, remained protected and substantially

⁹⁰ Broome, 1994: 160.

⁹¹ The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 had two main objectives; to protect Aborigines from white violence by legally removing them to missions and reserves, and to prevent the sale of opium and alcohol to them.

⁹² Chesterman & Galligan, 1997: 35.

⁹³ Broome, 1994: 161.

unchallenged until the latter part of the twentieth century. It is the debris left in the wake of such challenges that informs the post-colonial account of Australian identity and belonging, and to which we now turn.

1.3 'Post-Colonial' Stories

So powerful was the Australian desire to distinguish itself by reference to the rural landscape that defining features of Australian urban culture were, for a long time, excluded from the catalogue of quintessential national characteristics. Australian historians and scholars of society have since recognized this manipulation and set about revising Australia's image. Donald Horne's 'Classic Study of Australia in the Sixties', *The Lucky Country*, was among the first works to take a critical look at important anomalies in conceptions of Australian national identity based on the rural myth. As Horne observed, by the 1960s it had become even more apparent that Australians were mostly a suburban people, and Australia probably the most urbanized nation in the world. This was a fact increasingly 'inconvenient to national-mythmaking', but also increasingly problematic for Australia's urban and suburban population. This group, now representing the majority, according to Horne's analysis, reacted in one of two ways, equally radical; they either felt disenfranchised and betrayed, or they went into denial, 'shut their eyes' and tried hard to imagine themselves as 'laconic country folk'.⁹⁴ What both these groups of Australians possibly shared was a deep ambivalence toward the mythical bush landscapes from which it was suggested authentic Australian national identity and belonging was derived.

In contrast to suburbanites, although Australians who actually lived in the mythical 'bush' could on the one hand more legitimately make claims to being and belonging in the country, by the 1970s their case too had begun to weaken. Not only had it become increasingly difficult and practically undesirable for them to exemplify the pioneers and bushmen of the past, but also their legitimacy as proper owners and custodians of country was increasingly under threat. This threat came in two guises. Firstly, the probity of the environmental and ecological management strategies of settler Australians were called into question, and secondly the legality of the initial settler occupation of the country, thus their right to be there in the first place, came under assault.

⁹⁴ Horne, 1964: 25-26.

Post-colonial stories of Australian identity and belonging reflect these challenges to colonial renderings of settler connections with country. In Section 1.3 the challenges themselves are explicated, contemporary responses are reviewed, and finally the rejoinders of two academics—ex-pat feminist Germaine Greer and prominent Australian historian Peter Read—are examined and critiqued. Both thinkers, in their different ways, seek reconciliation with Aborigines and re-enchantment of the identity and belonging of settler Australians by aligning them more closely with that of their Aboriginal counterparts. It would appear on their account that recognition of the injustices of colonisation requires that settler Australians automatically forsake their ‘colonial’ Australian identities and belongings and quest after more ‘traditional’ ones.

1.3.1. Unsettling Stories Concerning Settler Identity and Belonging

There can be little doubt that Europeans were initially psychologically ill-equipped to deal with their experience in the colonies. The first settlers were predominantly convicts and those sent to guard them. Those free settlers that followed also found themselves imprisoned—not by bondage, but by physical and social dislocation nevertheless. As Veronica Brady observes, ‘[m]ost of them also, like many if not most migrants even today, obliged to leave their own countries by force of circumstance, were also, in a sense, disinherited.’⁹⁵ To illustrate this Brady quotes an extract from Henry Kingsley’s *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn*, a story depicting the perils of life in the new colony of Australia published in 1859.

And then came the disturbance of the household gods and the rupture of life-old associations . . . Only those who have done so know how much effort it takes to say ‘I will go away to a land where none know me or care for me, and leave forever all that I know and love’. And few know the feeling of isolation, almost of terror, at having gone so far out of the bounds of ordinary life; the feeling of self-distrust and cowardice at being alone and friendless in the world, like a child in the dark. ⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Veronica Brady, *Caught in the Draught: On Contemporary Australian Culture and Society* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1994): 262.

⁹⁶ Brady, 1994: 262-263.

For Germaine Greer settler aversion to the land stemmed not merely from a frantic sense of personal insecurity but *mens rea* (the guilty mind). In her reckoning, the first Europeans—free settlers and convicts alike—‘were in the wrong place and they knew it.’⁹⁷ Their self-loathing manifested in a classic piece of transference.

That European colonists were psychologically unsettled is something Clark also argues, however he blames colonial resentment rather than guilt. In the eyes of colonial Australians not only was the land perceived as both useless and inferior to any other part of the world and hopelessly isolated from all vestiges of civilisation, but so were they. Their ‘convict birth stain’ and role as ‘grovellers to the British’ condemned them to ‘perpetual inferiority’. Clark’s thesis is that, confronted with a landscape and living conditions such as this, ‘our ancestors became quite queer’.⁹⁸

Other commentators hold that colonial alienation caused not only loathing and/or resentment, but also wanton destructiveness of their new environment. Their hatred of the native flora is recorded by a substantial number of twentieth-century texts.⁹⁹ Most recently, compelling argument in the works of Bill Lines and Tim Flannery has been influential in persuading popular opinion of the reckless and wilful ecological mismanagement of settler Australians. In *Taming the Great South Land: A history of the conquest of nature in Australia* (1991), Lines insists that settler orientation toward the land was purely instrumental and in *The Future Eaters: An ecological history of the Australasian lands and people* (1994), Flannery goes even further, insisting that the disassociation of colonists from the natural environment was based on arrogance, ignorance and disdain. In terms of adapting to a new home, Flannery asserts that:

Our European heritage left us appallingly equipped to survive long term in this country. For a start it left many colonial Australians unable to see the subtle beauty and biological richness of the land, and what they could not understand they strove to destroy as alien and useless. For most of the last two centuries we have believed that we could remake the continent in the image of Europe—turn the rivers inland and force the truculent soils to yield.

⁹⁷ Germaine Greer, *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood*, *Quarterly Essay*, 11, ed. Peter Craven (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2003): 4.

⁹⁸ Clark, 1980: 6.

⁹⁹ See, for example, W. K. Handcock, *Australia* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1930), Robyn Boyd, *The Australian Ugliness* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1960) and Jock Marshall, *The Great Extermination: A Guide to Anglo-Australian Cupidity, Wickedness and Waste* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1966).

We even knowingly introduced pests—foxes and rabbits—in our efforts to transform this vast Austral realm into a second England. Much of this terrible history reads as a rush towards ‘development’, which was then—and often still is—just a soft word for the destruction of Australia’s resource base. That arrogant colonial vision left a fearful legacy, for it actually made people feel virtuous while they dealt the land the most terrible blows.¹⁰⁰

Even if one finds it difficult to entertain the idea that early European settlers were driven by their sense of alienation to a queerness that manifested in systematized delusions, either persecutory or grandiose¹⁰¹, it is certainly understandable that colonising peoples in general, and settler Australians in particular, experience some degree of estrangement from environments that are not only unfamiliar to them, but very far removed from anything that is. Undoubtedly, feelings such as these are powerfully motivating and have an impact upon perceptions of the land and the self.

In ecological terms, although the landmass of the nation of Australia is enormous by European standards, only six percent of the land is arable; the soils are old and relatively infertile and the rainfall is low. Many areas of Australia are subject to soil acidification, salinity and erosion. The predominant use of land is for grazing of introduced hard-hoofed species. ‘During the early years of pastoral development stocking rates were generally unsustainable and caused major changes to vegetation and soils (15 percent) is sufficiently affected to require destocking if it is to recover.’¹⁰² Furthermore, along with deforestation and agricultural practices, non-indigenous species of flora and fauna introduced by settler Australians over the last 200 years have been responsible for wide-spread land degradation, serious damage to waterways and the destruction of sea and inland fisheries. To make matters worse, such apparent ignorance of, or disregard for, environmental ethics is increasingly thought to position settler Australians at counterpoint with the continent’s original custodians.

¹⁰⁰ Tim Flannery, ‘The Land, the Day, the People’, Australia Day Address (2002).

¹⁰¹ Ward, 1980: 6-7, states that ‘For when these men and women first began to talk about themselves they talked like human beings who resented their badge of inferiority. They behaved as people generally do in such circumstances: they became comedians, or buffoons: black comedy was the poultice they applied to their wounds. They became great boasters: they became great mockers, for mockery has always comforted people accused of a blemish or a fault for which they believed they were not guilty.’

¹⁰² Australian Government, Department of the Environment and Heritage, ‘Executive Summary’ (1996).

One aspect of Aboriginal culture that had begun to attract particular attention and positive appraisal by the 1970s, and continues to be mobilized in the debate over who properly belongs to and in Australia, is the area of environmental management—the way Aboriginal people take care of country, and how it responds by taking care of them. Unlike the alleged philosophy of domination adopted by the settler group, Aboriginal environmental ethics is taken to involve a harmonious interaction of all environmental beings. Bird Rose explains this kind of ‘Dreaming ecology’ thus:

A ‘healthy’ or ‘good’ country, is one in which all the elements do their work. They all nourish each other because there is no site, no position, from which the interest of one can be disengaged from the interests of others *in the long term*. Self interest and the interest of all of the other living components of country (the self interest of kangaroos, barramundi, eels and so on), cannot exist independently of each other *in the long term*.¹⁰³

Whereas once the hunter-gatherer was vilified for his apparent carelessness and neglect, this group is now praised for its depth of ecological knowledge.¹⁰⁴ It is often now argued that the ecological wisdom of Aboriginal worldviews has much to offer modern understandings of ‘living with the land’. In their study of Australian ecological thought Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill make the claim that ‘noticing that the indigenous people were so obviously at home in this foreign land must have made the settlers feel uncomfortable from the start’.¹⁰⁵ If their sensibilities were not aroused then, they certainly are now.

To be at home—to belong to a place—usually requires, maybe even demands, that one takes good care of it. Given the litany of ecological problems for which non-indigenous Australians could be blamed, also it is argued that, unlike indigenous

¹⁰³ Bird Rose, 1996: 10 (her emphasis).

¹⁰⁴ At counterpoint to this popular opinion (and largely ignored by it) the romanticised view of the ‘noble savage’ living in perfect harmony with nature has also come under renewed attack. In his book *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (London: Norton, 1999), Shepard Krech III shows that the relationship between indigenous North Americans and the environment is ambiguous at best. According to Jared Diamond, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Chimpanzee* (London: Vintage, 1992), the Easter Islanders, Anasazi, Creeks, Middle Easterners, Hawaiians, and sundry Polynesian societies wreaked large-scale and irreversible damage on their environments by destruction of forest, fauna, and flora. For a discussion of associated issues in the Australian context see Lesley Head, *Second Nature: The History And Implications Of Australia As Aboriginal Landscape* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁵ Martin Mulligan & Stuart Hill, *Ecological Pioneers: A Social History Of Australian Ecological Thought And Action* (Cambridge; Oakleigh, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 5.

Australians, settler Australians have failed in this fundamental duty of care. Furthermore, the land itself had long been for settler Australians emblematic as a source of all things quintessentially Australian. The question then arises that having been so irresponsible in their stewardship, have those living and working in ‘the bush’ cheated themselves and their urban countrymen of the right to claim Australian identity and belonging. According to Aboriginal understandings, the interdependence of all life within country constitutes a hard but essential lesson—those who destroy their country ultimately destroy themselves. Some Australians believe that this ontological principle has been ignored by the settler population to their peril.

If there exists a link between ecological sustainability and belonging, it is one that Europeans were not unaware of at the time of first settlement. However, as mentioned previously, it has been argued that some notion of treating the land properly was in the minds of early colonists. Indeed, it has been argued that it formed one cornerstone in their rationale to colonise. As discussed in Section 1.2, the doctrine underlying the traditional view of settlement was that prior to 1788 Australia was *terra nullius*. Reynolds argues in *The Law of the Land* (1989)¹⁰⁶ that ‘*terra nullius* has two different meanings, usually conflated. It means both a country without a sovereign recognised by European authorities and a territory where nobody owns any land at all, where no tenure of any sort existed.’¹⁰⁷ It is the second condition, that connected with land ownership that is concerned with proper treatment. At the time of first settlement, according to understandings of international law interpreted by de Vattel, the Divine command to subdue the earth justified Europeans in establishing colonies for their own surplus populations in lands that were only sparsely populated by indigenous peoples.¹⁰⁸

European settlers mistakenly detected little Aboriginal infrastructure—material or political. Accordingly, they made the presumption both that the indigenes were not yet socio-political beings, and that Aboriginal Australians did not mix their labour with the soil, and then assumed property rights themselves. Put another way, annexation and ‘improvement’ of the land was justified, and in the minds of settler Australians their

¹⁰⁶ This work challenged a more popular audience to reassess the legal and political arguments used to justify the European settlement of Australia.

¹⁰⁷ Reynolds, 1989: 12.

¹⁰⁸ Reynolds, 1989: 17.

ownership of land then bestowed belonging. The High Court's rejection of the doctrine of *terra nullius* and the acknowledgement of Aboriginal Native Title in the case of *Mabo and Others v. the State of Queensland*¹⁰⁹ was acknowledgment that a vast proportion of the country might not belong to settler Australians—certainly not in the way that it had always belonged to Aborigines. This proved psychologically shocking for a great many Australians. Suddenly, for those who had followed the debate, not only had it become uncertain whether the country belonged to settler Australians, but it was no longer obvious that they belonged to it.

It is not merely environmental concerns or the Aboriginal struggle for land rights that has precipitated non-indigenous insecurities in regard to being in and of this continent. This angst can probably be linked to increasing public awareness of Aboriginal experience, including that related to social justice (and injustice)—past and present. Paralleling the growing strength of the Aboriginal rights movement in the 1970s was the process of critical and revisionist history. Interested academics, social commentators and Aboriginal activists, critical of how Aboriginal peoples have been represented in, or omitted from, traditional accounts of 'Australian history', began to redress this omission. Since that time revisionist histories have achieved and affected much by shifting Aboriginal peoples and their experiences to the foreground of Australian historical accounts. One of the most prominent figures in Australian revisionist history is Henry Reynolds. Reynold's work in revisionist history and its contribution to both the land-rights movement and the re-education of a generation of interested Australians is well attested to in the literature. Due to his efforts, and that of many other contemporary historians, the Aboriginal past and its intersection with that of non-indigenous Australia is continually brought into new focus.

The colonial story, the orthodox account of frontier history providing the foundations on which settler Australians constructed notions of their identity and belonging, had previously marginalised Aboriginal peoples, and accepted no responsibility for their death or desolation. The official line was that Australia's indigenous peoples were already in decline at the time of first settlement and it was inevitable that they would die out completely. That the invasion of a more 'civilised'

¹⁰⁹ Hereafter referred to as *Mabo*.

group would accelerate this demise was merely part of the natural order, and thus outside the control of the settler group. It is now accepted, however, that Aborigines strongly resisted the invasion of their lands, and that conflict between Aborigines and settlers was bloody and prolonged. Over a period of approximately 60 years frontier conflict, it is estimated that Aborigines were responsible for the deaths of 1,000 to 1,500 Europeans. Using Reynolds' ratio of 10:1 Aboriginal to settler deaths due to direct conflict, it is estimated that the number of Aboriginal deaths was about 20,000.¹¹⁰

For almost 200 years this violent aspect of colonial history was denied or whitewashed, until in the late-twentieth century people began to see clearly that the myth of peaceful settlement, so embedded in their imaginings by generations of colonial historians, should at best be questioned, at worst condemned as a foul betrayal of the truth. What Aboriginal Australia had strongly suspected, was now public knowledge. As Graeme Davison observes,¹¹¹ the battle cry was swiftly taken up. The slogan of Aboriginal demonstrators at Australia's Bicentennial celebrations in 1988 was 'White Australia has a Black History'.

The Bicentennial celebrations forced settler Australians to reflect on their history, identity and belonging. While many non-indigenous Australians seized the chance to reanimate pioneer and bushman myths and to celebrate the perceived triumphs of colonial history, a growing number began to recognise that the country's black history was not only in its past, but in its present. As a consequence many settler Australians were forced to recognise that the proposal that settler Australia symbolised egalitarianism, collectivism and 'mateship' was a dubious one. Not only had settler Australians acted contrary to these values in their interactions with Aborigines in the colonial past, but also there was growing evidence that the dispossession and oppression of the indigenous population represented a thread in Australian history that could be traced into the present.

One of the most shocking indictments of contemporary white Australia concerns the over-representation of Aboriginal Australians in the criminal justice system. It had been known for many years that that Aborigines were up to 20 times more likely to be

¹¹⁰ Broome, [1994] 2001: 55.

¹¹¹ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000): 15.

imprisoned than non-Aboriginal Australians. A lesser-known fact was that they were 20 times more likely to *die* in custody.¹¹² Aboriginal individuals and organisations had been outspoken on the issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody for some time. Their incidence seemed too frequent and their explanation too equivocal to ignore. When in 1987 it became public knowledge that in just 8 months 16 more Aborigines had died, and ‘The United Nations’ voiced serious concerns, the government was compelled to act.¹¹³ Early in the Bicentennial year The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (R.C.I.A.D.I.C.) began its work.

In the next few years R.C.I.A.D.I.C. would investigate over 100 black deaths. Its findings, published in 1991, provided a revealing commentary. Although the Commission *did not* find that foul play on the part of police or prison officers was a significant factor in the ninety-nine deaths that they investigated.¹¹⁴ What it found was that police and prison officers were careless and unconcerned about the welfare of their black charges, that ‘there appeared to be little appreciation of and less dedication to the duty of care owed by custodial authorities and their officers’¹¹⁵ in cases involving the death of Aboriginal persons in custody, most of which were never seriously investigated.¹¹⁶ The Royal Commission *did not* find that Aboriginal people in custody die at a greater rate than non-Aboriginal people in custody.¹¹⁷ What it found, however, was equally alarming; more Aborigines die in custody than non-Aborigines because of their radical over-representation in custodial circumstances. The rate at which Aboriginal people are held in custody is 29 times that of non-indigenous Australians.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the Commission found that what accounts for this disturbing figure, and indeed what results from it, is the appallingly low quality of Aboriginal life measured

¹¹² Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (R.C.I.A.D.I.C.), ‘National Report Volume 1’: 1. 2. 2.

¹¹³ Broome, 1994: 219.

¹¹⁴ R.C.I.A.D.I.C.: 1. 2. 2.

¹¹⁵ R.C.I.A.D.I.C.: 1. 2.7.

¹¹⁶ As to the cause of death in those ninety-nine cases investigated, the Royal Commission’s summary was as follows: deaths by hanging 30; deaths by other trauma (head injuries, gunshot wounds and other external trauma) 23; deaths immediately associated with substance abuse 9; deaths by natural causes 37. See R.C.I.A.D.I.C.: 1. 2.7.

¹¹⁷ R.C.I.A.D.I.C.: 1.3.1.

¹¹⁸ R.C.I.A.D.I.C.: 1.3.2.

according to every socio-economic indicator.¹¹⁹ The profiles of those who died are tragic indictments.¹²⁰ The Commission placed the responsibility for this situation on oppressive and discriminatory policies adopted toward Aboriginal people by successive governments throughout the history of European occupation.

What the R.C.I.A.D.I.C. did was bring into public focus a whole range of societal and historical factors, previously unrecognised or disregarded, impacting negatively on the lives of Aboriginal people—both past and present. Shock and outrage at the revelations of the Commission and antagonism and resentment toward government policy and policy makers mounted in the public sector. Along with this there was the increased insecurity and anxiety borne out of the *Mabo* judgement, made public the year before, which acknowledged the prior ownership of the country by Aboriginal peoples and their right to claim back some of the land from which they were dispossessed under ‘Native Title’ provisions.

The then Labour Prime Minister, Paul Keating’s now famous, Redfern Park¹²¹ Speech in 1992, the Year of the World’s Indigenous People, illustrates how pressing the anxiety, and how important the issue of Aboriginal rights to country, identity and social capital had become. In talking about settler Australians, their relationship to Aboriginal Australians and the country itself, Keating claimed that there was a fundamental test to be passed:

It is a test of our self-knowledge. Of how well we know the land we live in. How well we know our history. How well we recognise the fact that, complex as our contemporary identity is, it cannot be separated from Aboriginal Australia Redfern is a good place to contemplate these things. Just a mile or two from the place where the first European settlers landed, in too many ways it tells us that their failure to bring much more than

¹¹⁹ R.C.I.A.D.I.C.: 1.2.11 – 1.2.18.

¹²⁰ The Commission found that the median age of those who died was 29. 83 were unemployed. Only 2 had completed secondary schooling. 43 experienced childhood separation from their parents through intervention from the State. 43 had been charged for an offence before the age of 15 and 74, and before 19. Finally 43 had been charged with alcohol-related offences. Their health status varied from ‘poor’ to ‘very bad’. 19 of the 30 who died from hanging had a blood alcohol level more than three times the legal driving limit. See R.C.I.A.D.I.C.: 1.2.7.

¹²¹ Redfern is an inner-city suburb of Sydney, its Aboriginal population has been historically large. The residents of Redfern suffer from high crime levels and socio-economical disadvantage. That a Prime Minister delivered a national speech in such an impoverished and troubled area is both unusual and significant.

devastation and demoralisation to Aboriginal Australia continues to be our failure It [justice] begins, I think, with an act of recognition that it was we who did the dispossession. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the disasters. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion ... we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us.¹²²

The recognition of Australia's 'black' past was something suggested by Keating as necessary in order that settler Australians begin to develop a legitimate Australian identity and sense of belonging in this land. Once we had passed the 'recognition test' Keating's vision was to begin a process of reconciliation that involved social and economic justice and self-determination for Aboriginal peoples. The creation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (C.A.R.)¹²³ and the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (A.T.S.I.C.)¹²⁴ were the first major innovations toward these goals.

In 1997 one more 'black' aspect of Australia's past was added to the litany of crimes against Aboriginal Australians that settler Australians must recognise. In that year *Bringing Them Home*, the findings of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, was released. The report brought to the attention of the public that Aboriginal children have been forcibly removed from their families and communities since the very first days of European settlement. Various rationales supported this practice, from Christian philanthropy to mercenary commercialism. The practice accelerated with legislative endorsement during the mid-twentieth century when official policy not only supported, but demanded the

¹²² Paul Keating, 'The Redfern Park Speech' in Michelle Grattan ed., *Reconciliation: Essays on Reconciliation* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2000): 60-61.

¹²³ C.A.R. was established in 1991. Its twenty-five members were divided between Aboriginal and settler Australians and its objective was to develop strategies around national unity and nation building in the ten-year lead-up to the centenary of Federation in 2001.

¹²⁴ A.T.S.I.C. was created in 1990, but began to function in 1993. It incorporated elected regional Aboriginal councils and national Aboriginal commissioners responsible for administering designated government funds. Most of A.T.S.I.C.'s budget goes to health, employment and housing and community infrastructure programs for Aboriginal peoples. The efficiency and effectiveness of A.T.S.I.C. has been widely criticized almost since its inception and during the writing of this work it was dismantled with bipartisan sanction.

total assimilation of Aboriginal people (particularly those of mixed descent) into the non-indigenous community.¹²⁵

Peter Read estimates that the number of separations is close to a mind-boggling 50,000.¹²⁶ The inquiry, itself, concluded that between 1910 and 1970 somewhere between 1 in 3 and 1 in 10 indigenous children were placed in non-Aboriginal foster care, into institutions or mission dormitories or adopted by white families where they were taught to reject Aborigines and Aboriginality.¹²⁷ In many cases, once removed from their families and communities, Aboriginal children were placed in situations of physical, psychological or emotional abuse and/or neglect; for many the separation was permanent. The inquiry showed that in terms of the health and well-being of Aboriginal individuals, families and communities the consequences of the systematic removal were disastrous. Furthermore, many Aboriginal Australians still live with its wretched legacy.

One of the terms of reference of National Inquiry was to examine policies and services facilitating the 'return home' of those Aborigines separated from their families. The guide to the findings stated that 'going home is fundamental to healing the effects of separation. Going home means finding out who you are as an Aboriginal: where you come from, who your people are, where your belonging place is, what your identity is. Going home is fundamental to the healing processes of those who were taken away as well as those who were left behind.'¹²⁸ However, the Inquiry also found that many separated children will never 'go home'; that pathways have been lost making re-union impossible. It also found that for some of those who can locate family and seek to re-establish links, the cultural and experiential gulf might be too wide to traverse; acceptance on the part of either or both parties may be lacking. In this case, and in others where there has been a disconnection from 'traditional' cultural affiliations, those of Aboriginal decent often find alternative modes of Aboriginal identification. Some identify with a pan-Aboriginality, others to their local Aboriginal community, many of whom may not be 'local' in the 'traditional' sense. Others still, forego belonging to an

¹²⁵ Broome, [1994] 2001: 174-177.

¹²⁶ Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul So Profound* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999): 26.

¹²⁷ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (H.R.E.O.C.), *Bringing Them Home: A guide to the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*, 'National Overview', 'Estimating the Numbers' (1997).

¹²⁸ H.R.E.O.C., 1997: 22.

Aboriginal community altogether, seeking and finding Aboriginality through self-identification and the recognition of such in the broader community.

It is generally recognised that the ethnic diversity produced by post-war migration to Australia forced a radical redefinition of Australian national identity, which until then had been conceived as ‘white’ and ‘British’. At the same time as Australians adjusted to membership in a multi-cultural society, they were also compelled to re-think their sense of relation to Britain. In this period, not only did Britain decline as a world power, but its power and influence over Australian national identity declined as well. In this regard Britain moved from the centre to the periphery. Within three decades of the Second World War Australians began to conceptualise themselves more in terms of their geographical location than their British ancestry.

These perceptions too fit within the framework of Australian pro-republican debates that have waxed and waned over the past few decades. Many Australians not only feel estranged from Britain, but also seek to be entirely divorced from any influence that it might retain. While Australian monarchists are less willing to cut ties with Britain completely, they also acknowledge and strongly encourage the maintenance of a uniquely Australian identity. Even for this group, there is no longer any lingering doubt about the location of the place they wish to call ‘home’. Given challenges to the legitimacy and ethics of settler occupation in Australia, and that most settler Australians acknowledge almost a complete separation from Britain in terms of their identity and belonging, they face a conundrum—if they do not belong ‘here’ and they do not belong ‘there’, where do they belong?

When Aboriginal peoples are physically disconnected from their homeland, as in cases of forced removal, it is generally recognised that they can be (and are) sustained by the notion that they can go back, and in doing so, reinstate their identity and belonging. Contemporary settler Australians are not in the same position. Their history began in a foreign country on the other side of the globe. They can go back there, and many do, searching for their ancestral roots, and that connection to ‘deep time’ that Australian environmental historian Tom Griffiths claims is necessary for legitimate belonging.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 181.

They might be successful in finding their roots, but what they also might find is that although they are not indigenous Australians, despite their genealogy, they are not really British either. As experience has taught me, and Australian ex-pat Germaine Greer points out: ‘They [Australians] exhibit neither British manners nor British values....Their gestures are too ample, their voices too loud, their approach too direct and their spontaneity too embarrassing.’¹³⁰ That those settler Australians who seek to affirm identity and belonging by returning to their ‘motherland’ see less family resemblance than perhaps they expected, only exacerbates their dilemma. While, on the one hand, it might sharpen their appreciation of Australia and Australians, on the other it re-affirms their homelessness. Somehow disaffected from those who have maintained a ‘deep time’ connection to either Britain or Australia—estranged now from both British and Aboriginal identities—many settler Australians do feel incredibly vulnerable.¹³¹

1.3.2. Developing Pathologies in Settler Identity and Belonging

Unsettling stories revealed progressively to settler Australians over the past half century have challenged much of the mythology that grounds their senses of identity and belonging. The historical events and ideological (mis)conceptions that have been disclosed deeply affect ways in which they see themselves and their Aboriginal counterparts and the way in which they calculate their right to property—life, liberty, estate *and* belonging. While revisionist histories eroded myths about the authenticity of settler claims to privileged belonging and challenged the founding myths of national identity, in terms of settler Australian conduct what these accounts revealed seriously injured the mythology surrounding national character. At the same time as the honour and egalitarian ethos of settler Australians came under threat, revisionist anthropology set about eroding myths about the socio-cultural and intellectual primitivity of Aboriginal

¹³⁰ Greer, 2003: 57.

¹³¹ For many Australians multiculturalism has failed to deliver a coherent and inclusive sense of Australian identity and belonging—a point evidenced by an increasing number of academic and popular commentaries. See, for example: Ien Eng, *On Not Speaking Chinese* (London: Routledge, 2001), Ghassan Hage, *White Nation* (Annadale, NSW: Pluto, 1998) and Ghassan Hage & Rowanne Couch ed., *The Future of Multiculturalism* (Sydney: Research Institute for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, 1999); A. Davidson, ‘Multiculturalism and Citizenship: Silencing the Migrant Voice’, *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 18.2 (1997) : 77-92 and *From Subject to Citizen: Australian Citizenship in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

peoples.

Many non-indigenous Australians were, and still are, shocked, sickened and embarrassed by the way in which the processes of colonisation have affected (or disaffected) indigenous Australians. This response is nowhere more evident than in the testimonies of those who write in Sorry Books, those books that soon after the release of the 'Bringing them Home' report began to appear in the foyers of schools and other public buildings all over Australia. During Aboriginal National Reconciliation Week, 2000, the following comments were recorded in one of those books:

I am deeply ashamed of my skin colour as a white Australian. I express deep regret for the treatment of Aboriginal people by my race.

I can't put into words how sad and sorry I am for what my ancestors did to yours. I am sometimes ashamed to be white.

It's times like these that I'm embarrassed to call myself Australian.

I am sorry about how the aboriginal people have been treated, and it makes me sick to think I could be associated with the people who have done this. Lots of love and strength to the people who truly belong to this land.¹³²

Such outpourings demonstrate the depth and character of feeling evident at that time, not only in the academy, but also among some sectors of the general settler population.

In contemporary Australia, although questions about the nature and significance of national identity are still firmly on the agenda, there is a division of thought as to the integrity of the conventional national image. Settler Australians have become profoundly unsettled. While there is undoubtedly still a cohort of Australians who hold steadfastly and passionately to this account of themselves, there is also an increasing number who deny its veracity. This latter group are not only cynical about its historical validity, but suggest that its construction was conspiratorial—designed to cloak the much more inauspicious nature of the colonial enterprise as it was played out in the Australian context. For them, instead of treating the orthodox account of Australian culture and identity with reverence it ought to be a source of guilt and shame.

¹³² These statements were copied from the 'Sorry Book' at the University of Tasmania during 'Sorry Week', May 2000.

In Paul Keating's 1991 Redfern Park speech he urged settler Australians not to be overwhelmed with guilt. 'Down the years [he stated] there has been no shortage of guilt, but it has not produced the responses we need. Guilt is not a very constructive emotion.' Instead he urged non-Aboriginal Australians to 'open our hearts a bit'.¹³³ However, he could not have anticipated the reaction of those who had come to power by the time the findings and recommendations of the national inquiry into the stolen children was made public. At that time the government was steadfast in its refusal to offer an official national apology. Its justification was that: 'Such an apology could imply that present generations are in some way accountable for the actions of earlier generations, actions that were sanctioned by law at the time, and were believed to be in the best interests of the children concerned.'¹³⁴ Many Australians were appalled by the refusal. Many others were cynical, claiming that the government's motivation was purely (and typically) financial, rather than moral; by eschewing responsibility, it avoided reparation. Others though, were steadfast in their support of the Liberal Prime Minister, John Howard. They passionately held that the current generation of settler Australians were not guilty of wrongs committed against Aborigines in the past and therefore bore no responsibility for them. That being the case there was nothing to apologise for.

Raimond Gaita makes some striking observations regarding whether remorse is the appropriate settler Australian response to historical evidence of the mistreatment of Aboriginal Australians by their settler counterparts. While Gaita holds that a collective responsibility for past wrongs committed by white Australia against Aborigines must be acknowledged, he suggests that attitudes regarding the acceptance of responsibility and the discussions influencing these attitudes are most often confused by the conflation of guilt and shame. In response to the question of who ought admit to collective responsibility, Gaita states the following:

Clearly those who are guilty by deed or omission and those sufficiently close to them in time to feel obligated to bring them to justice. Also those who are related to the guilty in such a way that they rightly feel ashamed. Finally, those that are related to the guilty in such a way that they should seek an appropriate figure—usually the head of an institution or of government—to

¹³³ Keating in Grattan, 2000: 62.

¹³⁴ Read, 1999: 186.

apologise on their behalf and to acknowledge other responsibilities, generally, the responsibility to make reparations.¹³⁵

Put simply, it is Gaita's thesis that responsibility is properly necessitated by both guilt *and* shame, but that one needs to differentiate between these two states. According to Gaita, the confusion between them lies in that the assignment of responsibility is commonly considered to be most appropriately linked with remorse. That is to say, the acceptance of guilt is most appropriate when the guilty party was able to prevent the act in question or at least protest against it, but did not. Nevertheless, Gaita argues that it is not plain that this connection is any more valid or appropriate than that which exists between responsibility and shame.¹³⁶ Gaita holds that those settler Australians who share collective responsibility for wrongs committed against Aboriginal peoples in the past are not only those sufficiently close to the deed to be guilty for it. Rather this ought be extended to all settler Australians who, in Gaita's view, are legitimately obliged to feel 'shame'. Gaita defines shame as 'the pained, humbled acknowledgements of wrongs committed'.¹³⁷ In the case of the dispossession, oppression and great suffering of Aboriginal peoples caused by political decisions made in the past, national shame is a perfectly legitimate response.

However, what of Gaita's claim that along with the obvious link between guilt and responsibility, those who are ashamed of wrongs committed also bear some form of responsibility for them? According to Gaita just as remorse is inadequate without accountability, shame is inadequate without a serious concern with reparation. On this account shame is a different, but related, notion to guilt, and concern for reparation is another aspect of responsibility, so even though contemporary settler Australians may not be guilty of crimes committed against Aboriginal people they should rightly be ashamed and feel obliged to atone for them.¹³⁸

Settler Australians may well be properly called upon to fulfil their obligations with regard to reparation. They may well have legitimate reasons to feel ashamed of historical

¹³⁵ Raimond Gaita, 'Guilt, Shame and Collective Responsibility' in Grattan, 2000: 279. This article is a revised version of 'Guilt Shame and Community' in Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity: Thinking about Love, Truth and Justice* (Melbourne, Vic.: Text Publishing, 1999): 87-106.

¹³⁶ Gaita in Grattan, 2000: 279.

¹³⁷ Gaita in Grattan, 2000: 284.

¹³⁸ Gaita in Grattan, 2000: 283-284.

attitudes toward, and treatment of the land and its indigenous peoples. However, in light of the evidence presented to them over the past few decades, it is not simply the question of whether to accept guilt or shame that settler Australians have had to consider. As the orthodox account of the origins of their culture and identity unravel, settler Australians have been forced to take a much closer look at their identity and belonging. As the Sorry Day book entries show, a proportion of settler Australians are not only ashamed of the actions of their ancestors, they are despairing of themselves—humiliated about who and what *they* are. What has become increasingly evident in the non-Aboriginal population is an intensified sense of self-consciousness, which in some cases has resulted in an insecurity reaching considerable proportion.

Although such profound insecurity about one's identity is disturbing, its detection in the settler population is not new. In the 1950s White observed that settler Australians were 'obsessive' in their quest for self-definition (and therefore for belonging) and this observation has been made regularly ever since. As suggested earlier, over the last half-century, most notably the last 30 years, a great many academics have perceived in the history of the Australian nation an unremitting angst associated with identity among the settler population. Manning Clarke's 1980 essay *The Quest for an Australian Identity* was premised on the notion that '[w]e Australians have trouble in identifying ourselves, in saying what we are and what we are coming to be.'¹³⁹ In his 1982 work devoted to the topic John Carroll described the Australian quest for identity as 'the great restlessness, the feverish insecurity, that comes from being homeless'.¹⁴⁰ In 1993 historian Graeme Davison also noted the ongoing nature of 'our fragile sense of national identity'.¹⁴¹ Veronica Brady attributes the depth of existential angst characteristically evident in Australian literature (for example, the profound sense of meaninglessness and loneliness that Patrick White calls 'the Great Australian Emptiness') to the 'drama of identity' performed by white Australians since first settlement.¹⁴²

The proposition that settler Australians suffered, and continue to suffer, degrees of estrangement is as common in contemporary analysis as it is in the historical literature.

¹³⁹ Clark, 1980: 4.

¹⁴⁰ Carroll, 1992: vii.

¹⁴¹ Edited extract from Graeme Davison, *The Unforgiving Minute: How Australians Learned to Tell the Time* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993) quoted in Dixon, 1999: 81.

¹⁴² Brady, 1994: 31-32.

Furthermore, this kind of critique seems to be accelerating rather than subsiding (a point to which I shall return in the next chapter). Miriam Dixon's observation in *The Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity—1788 to the Present* (1999) was that 'As the new century approaches, defining national identity seems to intrigue and perplex us more than at any time since the late 1920s.'¹⁴³ In the same work Dixon also states, '[by] the early 1990s, the notion that we were in some important ways "weak" in identity had come to be something of a staple of self-conceptualisation'.¹⁴⁴ Hence, after more than 200 years of European settlement it can be argued, as Tim Flannery did in his 2002 Australia Day Address, that settler Australians 'continue to live as strangers in this land'.

This preoccupation with identity has not been only an academic concern. Australian artists and writers have also engaged with this phenomenon. Poet Les Murray describes Australian identity as 'an obsession ... which cripples the spiritual energies',¹⁴⁵ and Thomas Keneally stated in an article for Australia Day (1991) that at the heart of settler Australian psychology were 'fundamental doubts about adding up to anything at all'.¹⁴⁶ In his 1997 Boyer Lecture,¹⁴⁷ David Malouf complained about Australians ceaselessly 'fretting and fussing' about who they were. Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) and *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976), Peter Carey's *Illywacker* (1985),¹⁴⁸ Sam Watson's *The Kadiatcha Sung* (1990)¹⁴⁹ and David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1993)¹⁵⁰ are, all in their different ways, dedicated to exploring how settler Australians have understood themselves as exiles in a foreign land with foreign peoples.

Even though the obsession and insecurity regarding national identity and belonging is an enduring feature of the settler psyche, what could be considered different and more disturbing about the latest eruption, is its acutely self-conscious nature and its thoroughly negative posture. Whereas it could be argued that previous outbreaks of concern

¹⁴³ Dixon, 1999: 18.

¹⁴⁴ Dixon, 1999: 79.

¹⁴⁵ Les Murray, *A Working Forest: Selected Prose* (Sydney, NSW: Duffy & Snellgrove, 1997).

¹⁴⁶ Tom Keneally, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21.6.91 quoted in Dixon, 1999: 80.

¹⁴⁷ Published as David Malouf, *A Spirit of Play: The Making of Australian Consciousness* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1998): 98.

¹⁴⁸ Peter Carey's *Illywacker* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1995) exposes the lies white Australians tell about themselves in order to feel at home with the land.

¹⁴⁹ Sam Watson's *The Kadiatcha Sung* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1990) is a study of how Aboriginal Australians have tried to assert their identities against white Australians'.

¹⁵⁰ David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (Milton's Point, NSW: Chatto & Windus, 1993) highlights white perceptions and responses to Aboriginality.

regarding non-indigenous Australian identity and belonging—such as those experienced by first settlers, architects of federation, and apprentices in the process of multiculturalism—were emphasised as positive attributes in the settler group, more recent spates of the condition are accompanied by self-denigration and despondency.

Germaine Greer recently asserted not only that non-Aboriginal Australians are suffering from ‘spiritual desolation’,¹⁵¹ but also that there was little hope of a cure from this historical malaise. ‘Migration, especially to a land from which there can be no return, is invariably traumatic [she says], but the stress that followed was exacerbated for Australian settlers to become the kind of unrelenting and inadmissible psychic pain that demands escape into oblivion.’¹⁵² In short, according to Greer, settler Australians are most likely doomed to estrangement from the land and its people—‘forever alien in their own birthplace’.¹⁵³

The radical, but influential new orthodoxy about settler identity and belonging now under construction is one in which they are fallen—separated from their ground of being. It postulates the current circumstance of settler Australians as one in which their identity or selfhood is misplaced and inauthentic; one in which they simply do not belong and cannot ever belong in and to the country in which they live without substantially redefining themselves. And, most importantly, it postulates that this process of ontological redefinition requires not only the example and the assistance of Aborigines, but also their permission.

It seems that no matter where one turns, contemporary discourses on identity politics suggest—either explicitly or implicitly—that settler Australians are the victims of inveterate identity crisis. The anxieties that flow from feelings of alienation, perpetuated and exacerbated over time, are thought to have played—and continue to play— a central role in the shaping of an Australian national identity and sense of belonging. These commentators not only depict the settler quest for identity as protracted and relentless, but they take the position that settler Australians may never achieve psychological settlement, diagnosing a chronic lack of national self-confidence imputed to some underlying pathology.

¹⁵¹ Greer, 2003: 3.

¹⁵² Greer, 2003: 7.

¹⁵³ Greer, 2003: 15.

While most moderate thinkers—both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—are perplexed by challenges to their belonging, it excites much stronger feelings in others. For those at radically opposite ends of the political spectrum, conundrums over identity and belonging are at fever pitch and require a definitive response. Miriam Dixon, whose work in *The Imaginary Australian* sets out to champion the central and cohesive role of Anglo-Celtic culture in Australian society, points to the partition of thought in terms of one between ‘idealisers’ and ‘demonisers’, although she argues that analysis is overly simplistic—idealisers find too much that is noble in the orthodox account, while demonisers find too much that is ignoble. The idealisers hold that in overcoming or eliminating the barriers to their occupation of the land European settlers were able to establish connections with country capable of generating identities and belongings that are not only quintessentially Australian, but morally justifiable. The demonisers counter this claim and insist that Australians need to take a far more critical stance in regard to what and who they are and have been.¹⁵⁴ One could apply the same criticism regarding an overly simplistic partition of thought to the current ‘history war’ between ‘white blindfold’ and ‘black armband’ approaches to historical analysis. What is clear, however, is that controversial questions such as these stimulate conflicting, polarized views, and the question concerning settler Australian identity and belonging is no different. The idea that settler Australians cannot belong in the same way that Aborigines do¹⁵⁵ arouses vehement denials from one group of extreme radical nationalists and an enthusiastic reception from a certain branch of Aboriginal activists. However, it has also come to sound the ‘battle cry’ of another group of more progressive and fashionable thinkers. These different positions shall now be explored and examined.

One could argue that it was a deep sense of alienation and insecurity over settler Australian identity and belonging that provided the motivation behind the establishment

¹⁵⁴ Dixon, 1999: 1.

¹⁵⁵ This view was made explicit on national radio by Aboriginal academic Jackie Huggins at the time Peter Read’s work on settler attitudes to Australian identity and belonging, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*, was released. Huggins stated that ‘whitefellas’ can never belong in Australia, at least not in the way that Aboriginal peoples do. Her main point was perhaps uncontroversial. Non-indigenous belonging—if it were to be conceded at all—would necessarily be of a different order to that enjoyed by Aboriginal Australians. The inference—that non-indigenous belonging would necessarily be of an inferior or less authentic type—is more troublesome and provocative. It is important to note, however, that it has become common for such a view to be expressed—both in the media and the academy.

of Australia's One Nation political party. One Nation had its genesis in 1997 and rose quickly to popularity with Australians who felt disenfranchised by what they perceived as a movement away from traditional Australian values and an increasing partition in Australian society caused by institutional policies that privileged ethnic minorities and Aborigines. At the 1998 federal election the One Nation's platform included the promise that, if they won office all Aboriginal Native Title rights would be expropriated. In so doing, its candidates attracted a staggering amount of votes—over one million.¹⁵⁶

What Pauline Hanson, the leader of One Nation, claimed it represented was the voice of the 'oppressed ordinary Australian', who for too long had 'put up with the downgrading of our society'.¹⁵⁷ The kind of feeling represented is attested to in Pauline Hanson's now infamous maiden speech to Parliament, in which she stated:

I am fed up with being told "This is our land." Well, where the hell do I go? I was born here, and so were my parents and children ... I draw the line when told I must pay and continue paying for something that happened over 200 years ago. Like most Australians I worked for my land: no one gave it to me.¹⁵⁸

Here Hanson asserts the belonging of settler Australians, particularly those of Anglo-Celtic origin, as a given—bestowed either by land ownership, immediate birthright, ancestry or a sense of nationalism. I suggest that her statement affirming that the land belongs to one specific group of non-indigenous Australians and rejecting indigenous claims of ownership veils a desperate fear of illegitimacy and homelessness—a response shared by a significant number of settler Australian at that time.

Six years before, the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, had urged Australians to work toward reconciliation. He had stated that true reconciliation depended upon the recognition, by settler Australians, of the value of the integration of Aboriginal culture and knowledge into the life and identity of the nation. He was optimistic in this regard, saying:

¹⁵⁶ Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told: A Search for the Truth about our History* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1999): 220.

¹⁵⁷ Pauline Hanson, introductory words, 'Official Website of Pauline Hanson' (accessed 19 May 2004).

¹⁵⁸ Pauline Hanson was leader of the radical right political party 'Pauline Hanson's One Nation'. The agenda of the party was understood by many to be blatantly racist. Hanson's maiden speech to parliament, made on September 10, 1996, graphically demonstrates this.

We are beginning to more generally appreciate the depth and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. From their music and art and dance we are beginning to recognise how much richer our national life and identity will be for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. We are beginning to learn what the indigenous people have known for many thousands of years—how to live with our physical environment. Ever so gradually we are learning to see how Australia through Aboriginal eyes, beginning to recognise the wisdom contained in their epic story. I think that we are beginning to see how much we owe the indigenous Australians and how much we have lost by living apart.¹⁵⁹

The strong support of One Nation by ‘ordinary Australians’ less than a decade later suggests that Keating had overestimated the extent to which settler Australians were prepared to accept living together with Aboriginal peoples.

Although the party’s title, ‘One Nation’, suggests support for national unity, its policies and its supporters were frequently accused of causing divisions in the community by inciting racism. One Nation supporters strenuously denied charges of racism on the grounds that rather than asserting that different racial groups have differing characteristics that allow them to be graded as either inferior or superior, what they were suggesting was precisely the opposite—that all racial groups ought to be treated *equally*. Devotees of One Nation held that since the advent of the policy of multiculturalism, Australian society had become degraded and fragmented. Only by treating all of its citizens equally, they argued, could the harmony of society be restored. The equality that they invoke, however, is not one that is defined by, or appeals to, fairness, that is, treating like cases the same, and different cases differently. No. They would have it that everyone not only to be treated the same regardless of any differences between them, but that everyone act the same as well. That is to say, what One Nation and its followers argued was that Aborigines and those people belonging to ethnic minorities forsake any cultural differences that distinguish them from ‘ordinary Australians’—ordinary Australians understood as those judged to represent the historically dominant settler culture.

What this mode of thinking characterises *is* racism—racism of a ‘new’ type. According to Martin Barker ‘new racism’ is connected with fear aroused by a perceived

¹⁵⁹ Keating in Grattan, 2000: 63.

threat to one's way of life or culture. In this context, a 'way of life' is understood as what binds citizens together and stabilises society by providing the possibility of unity of purpose.¹⁶⁰ Thus, a connection is made between social unity or harmony and a homogenous way of life, and fear of social disintegration is justified wherever cultural heterogeneity exists.¹⁶¹ The rapid rise and high popularity of One Nation ideals can be understood as a response to a perceived threat from those considered to be outside the paradigm of dominant non-indigenous Australian culture. Furthermore, although One Nation was at its peak for only a short time during the late 1990s, the attitudes it espoused have remained influential. One might even argue that One Nation ideologies have been used expediently by the current conservative federal government ever since.¹⁶²

What is evidenced by the prevalence of these kinds of attitudes is not only fear of destabilisation of a society, culture, or way of life, but fear of dispossession from country, not only physical, but psychological. As mentioned previously the *Mabo* decision stimulated, in many settler Australians a fear that they would be physically dispossessed of their freehold land, however, after a series of challenges to so-called orthodox accounts of Australian history and identity this same group was also fearful of a loss of belonging. According to this group, what symbolised their belonging was devotion to a certain lifestyle deemed by them characteristic of a country and its people. Accordingly they held that Australian-ness is defined by a certain set of traditions, customs, beliefs and practices. Their fear was that the introduction and acceptance of different traditions, customs, beliefs and practices threatened to re-define Australian identity. In doing so, they felt that their own capacity to identify as Australians was jeopardised, and along with it the source of their belonging.

Radical nationalists of the new breed were particularly concerned with what they deemed as inappropriate institutional responses to Aboriginal activism. Whereas in previous decades Aboriginal Australians had fought for 'citizen's rights' or 'equal rights',

¹⁶⁰ Martin Barker, *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe* (London: Junction Books, 1981): 16. For a summary analysis of Barker's notion of 'new racism' see Erin Tucker, 'Old Racism, "New Racism": the Development of Racist Ideology' in A. Markus & R. Rasmussen ed., *Prejudice in the Public Arena: Racism* (Clayton, Vic.: Centre for Migrant and Intercultural Studies, Monash University, 1987).

¹⁶¹ Barker, 1981: 17.

¹⁶² Evidenced in the current Liberal government's attitude concerning the forced and prolonged detention of asylum seekers.

‘Aboriginal peoples of the 1990s want[ed] to be equal citizens *and* have the rights pertaining to their special status as “indigenous people”.’¹⁶³ That government policy seemed to endorse and accommodate this ambition led to the perception that Aboriginality, in particular, had come to be treated as more exemplary, relevant or valuable than white-settler models of Australian-ness. The followers of One Nation were deeply resentful of any ‘special’ treatment or status being afforded to Aboriginal people because they saw this as an attack on their own status, authenticity and legitimacy as Australians. This group tried desperately to assuage this assault on Australian identity, and in doing so re-assert their own belonging. They endorsed the limitation of immigration, opposed multiculturalism and urged assimilation. Arguing that differences between white Australians and other cultural groups ought not be reinforced or rewarded, this new group of radical nationalists condemned government policies that provided special consideration or benefits to ethnic others—and particularly to Aborigines.¹⁶⁴

As intimated earlier, the question of non-indigenous identity and belonging has stimulated radical and polarised reactions. For those non-indigenous Australians, on the other side of the political divide from One Nation supporters, the question of who belongs is perhaps the most complex. In the light of the treatment that Aboriginal Australians have received since the white occupation of Australia, they ask not whether Aborigines should have equal footing with non-Aborigines, but enquire in earnest whether non-indigenous Australians *deserve* equal footing with Aborigines? Have they, as non-indigenous Australians any right to consider themselves legitimate heirs of this country? Have they any right to claim that they belong here? For many the answer is no—they do not.¹⁶⁵

As outspoken Aboriginal supporters and opponents of racism, the position of this group is certainly at counterpoint with those positions expressed by the new radical nationalists discussed above. Rather than respecting and celebrating Australian national identity and belonging, members of this second group are openly sceptical about their right to a sense of belonging in this country and ambivalent about their non-indigenous status.

¹⁶³ To some extent Pauline Hanson’s One Nation argument that insidiously promoted ‘equality between all Australians’ put an abrupt end to any Aboriginal argument that superficially, at least, made the same demand.

¹⁶⁴ One Nation opposed native title legislation and called for the dissolution of A.T.S.I.C..

¹⁶⁵ For examples of this position see Read’s interviews with the aforementioned prominent non-indigenous historians, Lyndall Ryan, Heather Goodall and Tom Griffiths documented in Read, 2000: 172-197.

Among these thinkers some suggest that the existential angst and guilt felt by many non-indigenous Australians at this time is the natural consequence of a post-colonial consciousness, and further that such feelings are not only warranted, but redemptive. Others in this group go further and espouse the attitude that non-indigenous peoples, unlike Aboriginal Australians, will never have foundations on which to make authentic claims to belonging to this land. Furthermore, this kind of attitude increasingly becomes the more popular, sexy and politically correct way to think.¹⁶⁶

Sensitive to the fact that belonging has become deeply problematic for settler Australian historians such as himself, prominent Australian historian Peter Read set out to gather their testimonies regarding the question of 'belonging to country'. Among those whose thoughts he recorded are, Heather Goodall, Tom Griffiths and Lyndall Ryan.¹⁶⁷ All three of these interviewees are well-known for their significant contribution over the last several decades to debates concerning Aboriginal histories and peoples, and thus their views must be considered influential, if not typical, of interested well-educated Australians. All three express similar sentiments about their belonging (or lack thereof).

Heather Goodall is hesitant to acknowledge a sense of belonging to this land, preferring to describe her status in Aboriginal country as a 'not unwelcome guest'. Environmental historian Tom Griffiths, while expressing a most intense sense of belonging, still admits to feeling 'depressed and alienated by the cultural barriers' that torment relations to land in Australia. Griffiths' work, in a variety of ways articulates the relation between Aboriginal and environmental history and explores how understanding this relation might serve to provide settler Australians with new insights into Australian places and those who dwell in them. Nevertheless there always lurks in the background of his study, a deep uneasiness about the propriety of the non-indigenous presence and therefore a reluctance to celebrate it. In acknowledging this, Read draws the reader's attention to the quotation that seems to express Griffith's position and with which Griffiths begins one of his books.¹⁶⁸ It is a line from Australian poet Judith Wright: 'The two

¹⁶⁶ Evidence that this is the case comes not only from articles being accepted in scholarly journals, but from my own experience working in the university environment and traveling to conferences both in Australia and overseas.

¹⁶⁷ Read, 2000: 172-198.

¹⁶⁸ Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

strands—the love of land and the guilt of the invasion—have become part of me.’¹⁶⁹ For Griffiths, then, even though the love is deep and true, the right to love—and therefore to accept and be accepted as belonging—is somehow improper.

Lyndall Ryan is even more strident. Taking an even more radical position in some ways than Goodall, Ryan states that in the current clime she can never belong to country and feels that she is alienated from both indigenous and non-indigenous landscapes by a colonial history of Aboriginal dispossession. Ryan intimates that this is the predicament of all non-indigenous Australians who, by virtue of the fact that they ‘must remain forever descendants of the invaders’, will never truly belong. What Ryan offers such Australians is the same comfort that she herself feels as the result of what reads more like unbridled celebration than mere recognition, that this land is Aboriginal country and thus closed to genuine non-Aboriginal understanding.

One Australian writer who is a radical proponent of this same position is controversial feminist Germaine Greer. In her 2004 essay *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood* Greer asserts that the ‘shock, disorientation and misery’¹⁷⁰ that accompanied an apparent awareness that settler Australians were in ‘the wrong place’ supported a self-perpetuating cycle according to which their litany of crimes against the land and the Aboriginal peoples from whom it was wrested received self-justification and forgiveness. Against this background Greer paints a picture of non-indigenous Australians as emotionally paralysed and pathologically indifferent.¹⁷¹ For Greer, repressed guilt and shame continues to inform their engagements (or lack thereof) with the land and its indigenous peoples.¹⁷² Not only this, but Greer insists it stimulates and perpetuates a range of ‘displacement activities’,¹⁷³ the most obvious of which, she argues, is a (white) cultural predisposition toward chronic alcohol abuse.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, Greer suggests that ‘whitefellas’ hate the country because they know in their hearts that it is not theirs. A pathological inability to come to terms with Australian history prevents

¹⁶⁹ Read, 2000:181.

¹⁷⁰ Greer, 2003: 4.

¹⁷¹ Greer, 2003: 2.

¹⁷² Greer, 2003: 7.

¹⁷³ Greer, 2003: 12.

¹⁷⁴ Greer, 2003: 5.

them from saying “sorry” for wrongs committed in the name of colonisation.¹⁷⁵ As far as possible they continue to marginalise and therefore distance themselves from Aboriginal peoples because they cannot bring themselves to face those they have oppressed and abused.¹⁷⁶

Despite her essay receiving predominantly negative reviews from a number of academics, anecdotal evidence suggests that a great many settler Australian, and some Aboriginal readers, are sympathetic to Greer and her position. A great many others still, while less militant in their views about contemporary Australians would agree that historically they are deserving of vilification. This standpoint is diametrically opposed, and utterly rebuked by those whose national pride and sense of identity is inseparable from the legendary pioneering feats and character of their colonial Australian ancestors.

In regard to the debate about who is justified to make claims of belonging in and to Australia at this time, I mean to neither support one stance nor condemn the other. My concern is that while the position of those who feel their belonging *rivals* Aboriginal claims is summarily dismissed as racist or denounced as neo-fascism, the position of those who feel they don’t, or perhaps can never, properly belong *because* of Aboriginal claims is embraced almost completely without challenge. While troubling attitudes, as encapsulated in Pauline Hanson’s One Nation rhetoric, deserve scrutiny, we ought be equally concerned with, and attentive to, the views of those who unqualifiedly deny any hope of belonging for non-indigenous peoples. Indeed, one obvious reason for looking at the positions of both groups is that, despite their apparent antagonisms, one can also argue that they do share some basic things in common. Like the new breed of radical nationalists the group who promulgate the new orthodoxy also feel that their identity and belonging as settler Australians is in grave risk and must somehow be redeemed. And although they choose a radically different way of rescuing Australian identity and belonging than do their far more conservative counterparts, the case can be made that their need to do so arises from the same sense of alienation and homelessness. The final sub-section in this chapter illustrates and illuminates the latest wave of discursive strategies employed by settler Australians in the production of belonging. Here attention

¹⁷⁵ Greer, 2003: 7.

¹⁷⁶ Greer, 2003: 17.

is turned to the ways in which those holding to the new orthodoxy posit themselves as not-belonging in relation to country, justify the ontological premises of their position and conceive of the process by which their alienation might be ameliorated.

1.3.3. Stories Of Reconciliation—Sharing Identity And Belonging

As has been demonstrated, Australian identity politics has very often been reduced to a situation of ‘us’, characteristically non-Aboriginal Australians, and ‘them’, characteristically Aboriginal Australians. For much of Australia’s ‘black’ history white Australians have argued that ‘they’ should become like ‘us’ and have set out to insert and reinsert white cultural homogeneity into the definition of Australian national identity. More recently, an influential sector has taken Keating’s recommendations that ‘we’ begin to see Australia ‘through Aboriginal eyes’, ‘recognise the wisdom contained in their epic story’ and ‘see how much we have lost by living apart’ from them, very seriously indeed. In other words, another group of Australians has begun thinking that instead of ‘them becoming like us’, ‘we should become like them’.

The study of Australia’s Aboriginal other, zealously pursued for the past two hundred or so years, has succeeded in locating both non-indigenous and Aboriginal Australians at a range of different positions in an ever-changing socio-cultural and spatio-temporal landscape. Views about Aborigines have swung back and forth, intermingled and re-constituted according to social, political and economic milieus, and as the theory, the problem, or the need arose. Most often ideological shifts matched practical logistics. For example, when Aborigines resisted the advance of the colonial frontier, they were deemed brutal warring savages; when they were seen as conquered and their extinction inevitable, they were deemed innocent and childlike; when it was clear they would not ‘die out’ they were deemed degraded, but nevertheless capable of civilisation and education; more recently, while many in the western world perceive their own culture as ‘degraded’ aboriginal peoples are deemed to hold the ‘primitive’ knowledges capable of re-enchanting their more ‘civilised’ white counterparts. Section 1.3.3 explores attempts by settler Australians to merge their own stories about identity and belonging with those of Aboriginal Australia. In doing so they hope to achieve reconciliation—not only with the land and their Aboriginal other, but, perhaps more importantly, with themselves.

As is made most obvious in Keating's Redfern Park speech and has been articulated innumerable times in over a decade since, there are legitimate ethical reasons to follow practical steps toward reconciliation between Aboriginal and settler Australians—matters that concern social justice and the fair distribution of social goods. However, there appears that in the minds and hearts of many Australians reconciliation has a different meaning. Rather than being a matter of justice for Aboriginal people it is a matter concerning a redemption and reinvigoration of the settler Australian character and identity. The reconciliation that this group is seeking is not only both cultural and social, but also ontological. It involves notions of a unified collective, but also notions about the constitution of the individual. In significant ways, what many settler Australians seek is a process according to which they can reconcile, not only with Aborigines, but also with themselves. That is to say, what many settler Australians hope to gain out of the reconciliation process (indeed, for some what motivates their support for reconciliation) is a resolution of two disparate parts of themselves and their history, the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal (or, as Griffiths would have it, the love of land and the guilt of the invasion)—to synthesize them into a unified and integrated whole.

In the vastly changed climate of the late-twentieth century, Settler Australians have begun looking for new ways to understand their belonging to and in Australia and to define themselves as distinctly Australian. For many settler Australians concerned about race relations, social injustice and shamed by the disclosures of so-called black armband histories, *Mabo* performs a redemptive function. Not only is the judgement seen as a positive step in the elevation of the nation's Aboriginal past, but a necessary one toward the reconciliation of Aboriginal and white Australia. What is delivered to settler Australia by their acknowledgement and celebration of Australia's Aboriginality is a sense of unity and continuity, otherwise lacking in the white Australian psyche. As Attwood observes 'Aboriginality is supposed to be of benefit to "all Australians Notwithstanding the counter-narratives, the nation seems increasingly accepting of this gift, thereby extending its "authentically Australian genealogy".'¹⁷⁷ A sense of kinship can therefore be imagined between Aborigines and themselves. Perhaps they might even *become* 'Aboriginal'.

¹⁷⁷ John Morton, 'Aboriginality, Mabo and the republic: indigenising Australia' in Attwood, 1996: 123.

The appropriation of the indigenous other is considered by some as a therapeutic antidote to the malaise of modernity. What this amounts to in the Australian context is that, for some settler Australians, concerned about their legitimacy and belonging, Aboriginalisation holds the key to their redemption. This desire to become Aboriginal is easily understood if one accepts the thesis that settler Australians are pathologically alienated. That settler Australians are 'alienated' opens up a space into which new identities can flow. Andrew Lattas¹⁷⁸ argues explicitly that the appropriation of Aboriginality is caused by an identity crisis in settler Australia. Lattas claims that many settler Australians think 'Aborigines can naturalise us—make us at home in this land.' In cases such as this the adopted identity is chosen for its perceived ability to act as a curative to whatever malady besets the self. In the history of Australia 'uncivilised' and 'primitive' Aboriginality has traditionally provided a negative figure in constructions of settler identity, more and more however it has been appropriated and mobilised as a positive role model.

A substantial group of Australians has sought to establish belonging, by means of assuming indigenous modes. Just as Martin Mulligan¹⁷⁹ argues that in order to re-enchant their ecological sensibilities settler Australians need to build a kind of 'whitefella dreaming', David Tacey¹⁸⁰ and James Cowan¹⁸¹ argue, in their different ways, that Aboriginal religion might provide the panacea to the spiritual emptiness now in evidence in non-indigenous Australia.¹⁸² It has also been suggested by contemporary writers of an emerging genre that we can appreciate *our own country* more fully by examining its juxtaposition to Aboriginal being.¹⁸³ The process of internalising the other becomes the process of reclaiming a lost sacredness for the nation.

¹⁷⁸ Andrew Lattas, 'Aborigines and Contemporary Australian Nationalism: Primordality and the Cultural Politics of Otherness', *Social Analysis* 27 (April 1990): 51-57.

¹⁷⁹ Martin Mulligan, 'The Aboriginal Land Rights Movement and Ecological Literacy in Australia', *Aboriginal Studies: Self-Concept for a Nation*, collected papers of the 10th Annual Aboriginal Studies Association Conference, University of Western Sydney, Milperra, July 2000: 95.

¹⁸⁰ David Tacey, *The Edge of the Sacred: Transformation in Australia and Reenchantment: The New Australian Spirituality* (Blackburn North, Vic: HarperCollins, 1995): *passim*.

¹⁸¹ James Cowan, *The Elements of Aborigine Tradition: Messengers of the Gods and Messengers of the Gods: Tribal Elders Reveal the Ancient Wisdom of the Earth* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1992): *passim*.

¹⁸² See Mitchell Rolls, 'The Jungian Quest for the Aborigine Within', *Melbourne Journal of Politics* 25 (1998) and 'The Making of "Our Place"', *Antithesis* 10 (1999): 117-133.

¹⁸³ See for example: Eugene Stockton, *The Aboriginal Gift: Spirituality for a Nation* (Alexandria: Millenium, 1995), Robert Lawlor, *Voices of the First Day: Awakening in the Aboriginal Dreamtime* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1991), Tacey (1995) and Cowan (1992).

Andrew Lattas skillfully weaves together his thesis that in the Australian context ‘the conceptual space of alienation mediates [white] national selfhood’¹⁸⁴ and re-newed settler interest in ecological issues and indigenous spiritualities and philosophies. He states:

As foreigners in an alien landscape, white Australians are seen to be removed from that realm of indigenous truths the land can offer the nation. They emerge as figures who lack a spiritual sense of belonging to and possessing the land The loss of this spirituality is also the loss of that mythology which would allow settler Australians to be reconciled with the landscape and which would allow them to adapt and come to terms with the environment.¹⁸⁵

In opposition to settler Australians, Aborigines are understood by a growing number of Australians—both black and white—to represent the ultimate in spiritual thought and practice. Aboriginal spirituality is seen as embodying fundamental truths about identity and belonging in and to the country, and conversion to it is seen by some as a legitimate means for non-Aboriginal Australians to find their rightful place in this country.¹⁸⁶

Germaine Greer’s recent essay *Whitefella Jump Up* is perhaps the most contemporary and radical expression of this position. While non-Aboriginal Australians, receive from Greer, almost all-round condemnation, Aboriginal Australians receive a very different treatment. According to Greer, they are in practically every way a ‘superior’ group of people. Unlike white Australians, whose forefathers passed on a psychological inheritance that predisposes them to ignorance, delusion and desperation, Aboriginal Australians, on Greer’s account, are more ‘learned’, have a more meaningful understanding of country¹⁸⁷, are more rational in their aims and more disciplined in pursuing them.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, despite their ill treatment by generations of white Australians, Greer insists the generous and forgiving character of Aboriginal people

¹⁸⁴ Lattas, 1990: 51.

¹⁸⁵ Lattas, 1990: 52-53.

¹⁸⁶ For the articulation of similar themes see Griffiths, 1996; Lattas, ‘Primitivism, Nationalism, Individualism’ in Attwood & Arnold, *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines* (1992) and Ian McLean, ‘White Aborigines and Australian Nationalism,’ *Australian Humanities Review* (May 1998), among many other sources.

¹⁸⁷ Greer, 2003: 14.

¹⁸⁸ Greer, 2003: 38.

remains unchanged—essentially ‘inclusive’¹⁸⁹ and respectful of the property of others.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, the hypothesis that Greer presents is that even if positive features thought constitutive of the Australian national character, such as the capacity for ‘mateship’ and ‘egalitarianism’, are accurate they derive far more from the influence of Aborigines than any European connection.¹⁹¹ In consonance with Cowan, Tacey and other scholars of their genre, while settler Australians are presented as ethically vacuous and spiritually desolate, Aborigines (as if they too can be placed in category existing universally over time and space)¹⁹² are often bound by Greer into a way of being that bears remarkable resemblance to primitivist stereotypes. In contradiction, the real flesh and blood Aborigines whom Greer describes as her ‘countrymen’ and with whom she claims to have spent considerable time, have lives far more diverse than this stereotype allows—lives that are far more representative of contemporary Aboriginal experience—a fact that initially seems to have escaped Greer’s attention.¹⁹³

Greer is well-known for controversial commentary—a reactionism that at times has deliberately bordered on the ridiculous. Few, if any, in the academy would be astonished by the expression or content of her assertions about either settlers or Aborigines. They may be concerned about the accuracy—historical and otherwise—of some of the premises from which she draws her conclusions, but the essay does not claim to be an academic one,¹⁹⁴ and therefore in one sense is able to escape such scrutiny.¹⁹⁵ A popular readership might be more surprised by her theses regarding the character and actions of their white ancestors, but in general Greer’s observations regarding troubling aspects of Australian colonial history are hardly revelatory. They have been a prominent aspect of socio-historical research in Australia at least since the 1970s. Most Australians are no longer in any doubt that there are serious social and ethical implications to colonisation, for Aborigines and non-Aborigines alike. Nor is Greer’s hypothesis that

¹⁸⁹ Greer, 2003: 43.

¹⁹⁰ Greer, 2003: 17-18.

¹⁹¹ Greer, 2003: 56-62.

¹⁹² Greer’s conceptualisation of Aboriginal peoples as one homogenous group is reiterated in her frequent use of the term ‘the Aborigines’.

¹⁹³ Greer, 2003: 23.

¹⁹⁴ Greer, 2003: 1-2.

¹⁹⁵ Several review articles draw attention to factual inaccuracies in *Whitefella Jump Up*. See Mitchell Rolls, *JAS Book Reviews* (Nov. 2003).

Aboriginal beliefs and practices regarding country deserve to be considered in the context of contemporary social and environmental policy, *avante garde*. If it were only the case that Greer promoted Aboriginal life and thought and argued strenuously that its underlying principles deserve attention and respect, then little or no controversy would adhere. However, she goes much further than this.

Greer's self-confessed object in writing the essay is not merely to discuss the ills and injustices of colonisation or point out the predicament in which non-indigenous Australians have consequently found themselves, but to direct their way out of that predicament. It is here that her argument is not only controversial, but also extremely relevant, both to current political debates concerning Aboriginal peoples and to issues of belonging and identity more generally. What Greer proposes in order for non-indigenous Australians to release themselves from alienation from country involves a radical rethinking of the way we understand the intersection between place and identity—the country and ourselves.

While it is clear that Greer supports an ongoing process in which certain parcels of land are handed back to their original Aboriginal custodians, unlike many thinkers her arguments regarding the restoration of country are not focussed on Aboriginal landrights—at least not in the customary sense. Put simply, what she proposes as a remedy for white alienation, and therefore as a means of impeding the multitude of injustices committed because of it, is that we recognise the whole of Australia as Aboriginal country and the whole of the native born population as Aboriginal. The logic offered to support this remarkable proposal is well worth close examination.

Greer claims firstly that '[t]here is only one way to purge the taint, uncover the secret, and ease the otherwise eternal regret, and that is 'not to give the country back to the Aborigines because it isn't ours to give [but] to admit that it has been an Aboriginal country all along.'¹⁹⁶ Secondly, she urges us to recognise that the notion of 'race' as a biological category has long been contested, and is now largely discredited. As she rightly points out, 'Aboriginality' (taken as a collective social identity) does not reside in genetic inheritance alone. It is about thinking and acting in an 'Aboriginal' way. Aboriginality resides in culture at least as much as it does in biology. Based on the

¹⁹⁶ Greer, 2003: 13.

apparent soundness of these two premises, Greer concludes that it is reasonable to consider Aboriginality as a nationality rather than a biological category, and birthplace not genetic inheritance as the most obvious factor determining identification as Aboriginal.¹⁹⁷ The further condition that Greer invokes requires that one also consider nationality as a socially inherited artefact. On this account one learns to be French or Samoan or ‘Aboriginal’ not *only* by birth but also by absorption in French, Samoan or ‘Aboriginal’ culture. Thus it is accepted that people born in one country can, under the correct conditions, become nationals of another. If ‘Aborigines themselves have to learn Aboriginality’,¹⁹⁸ by implication there is nothing to stop non-Aboriginal Australians also learning to be Aboriginal—that is, once their Aboriginalisation becomes a logical possibility. Accordingly, Greer feels justified in issuing the following directive to all non-indigenous Australians: ‘[L]ook into the mirror and say “I was born in an Aboriginal country, therefore I must be considered Aboriginal.”’¹⁹⁹

While Greer concurs with those who argue that non-Aboriginal Australians are spiritually desolate there are certainly important departures that separate Tacey and Cowan’s views from her own. The former argue that the spiritual predicament of white Australia is part of a wider and more general condition of alienation experienced by Western cultures in modern times and can be cured by a return to a more fundamental—read primitive—mode of understanding reality and the universal human condition. In the case of Australians, this involves an adoption of Aboriginal spiritual systems. Greer, however, goes much further. Her hypothesis is that the alienation of white Australia is caused by much more specific conditions associated with Australian colonisation—their dispossession and oppression of Aboriginal peoples. It is this further condition that explains the malaise in which they find themselves, and which can only be ameliorated by their adoption of Aboriginal identity.

According to Greer, ‘[d]efining the Aborigine as irrevocably Other has resulted in the creation of non-viable pockets of Aboriginality’.²⁰⁰ Aboriginalising whitefellas can have only positive outcomes. We must presume that Greer is insinuating that

¹⁹⁷ Greer, 2003: 15.

¹⁹⁸ Greer, 2003: 15.

¹⁹⁹ Greer, 2003: 15.

²⁰⁰ Greer, 2003: 17.

Aboriginalisation is not only the rational thing to do (to remedy alienation), but also the ethical thing to do (to right injustices). There is also the additional implication that white Aboriginalisation would restore harmony, not only socially and politically but also metaphysically—that it would bring people and country into consonance—and that this is an additional good.

Ultimately, Greer's hypotheses raise more questions than they answer. What are the spiritual or existential implications, if any, for a colonising people? Is the mode in which first peoples are connected to country naturally superior to those that follow them? Does a commitment to Aboriginal metaphysics automatically change who and what one is? Is belonging achieved by replacing one's identity? Can Aboriginality be regarded as a national identity? If so, could Aboriginalisation—thus understood—be a cure for the alleged pathological condition suffered by non-indigenous Australians? Is this really the pathway to a shared belonging between Aboriginal and settler Australians?

Historian Peter Read is one Australian academic who, probably more than any other, has attempted to deal explicitly with these questions. In focussing for many years upon Aboriginal-Settler contact relations, both past and present, Read's work is instrumental in mapping the developing psychology behind recent increases in settler insecurity about their identity and place in the national landscape. Read observes that over the last few decades settler Australians have been compelled to make a number of significant shifts in response to those made by Aborigines. No longer do Aboriginal peoples want to be equal citizens they now claim rights pertaining to their special position as 'indigenous people'. This demand for exclusive rights, to land, to resources and to status, according to Read, has caused a number of dilemmas for non-Aborigines, not the least of which is that they have been forced 'to think more about [their] own status as non-indigenous citizens who do not belong here in the way that Aboriginal people do'.²⁰¹ Furthermore, Read acknowledges that the doubts about belonging generated by radically altered identity politics has led settler Australians to a 'painful

²⁰¹ Nicolas Peterson Peterson and Will Sanders ed., *Citizenship and Indigenous Australians: Changing Conceptions and Possibilities* (Cambridge; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 172.

intellectual and emotional impasse'. Read advises 'that to advance our thinking we'll need to break from this constricting and self-defeating moral universe.'²⁰²

For Read, the possibility of settler Australians achieving this break, and therefore having the chance to achieve a secure sense of belonging to and in the country, is reliant on the pre-supposition that there is more than one way of belonging 'here'—the way of belonging of non-indigenous Australians being different from that of the indigenes. The same proposition is interwoven through, and ultimately emerges from, his work *Belonging, Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (2000). In the introduction of *Belonging* Read invokes three potential ways of belonging, or put more aptly, ways of knowing whether or not we belong. The first is knowing in a rational sense, the second is more emotional or intuitive, the third—the Aboriginal way, and always at counterpoint—is almost primordial.²⁰³ The tension between these three modes and the author's struggle to untangle them is ever-present throughout the text.

Indeed, one of the conundrums that Read identifies almost immediately, but fails to address in any theoretical sense elsewhere, is that, according to many accepted contemporary accounts, while non-indigenous Australians have only a 'notion' of what it means to be related to landscape from which they 'derive' a sense of belonging, Aboriginal Australians 'simply understand' their 'relationship' with landscape—a relationship that is given, seemingly *a priori*. The group that Read identifies as being most in need of clarification of the question of belonging consists of those who are 'university-educated, urban, middle-class and Anglo-celtic'.²⁰⁴ For others, Read wonders whether belonging might not pose a problem at all. *Belonging* provides an interesting and insightful record of how a diverse collection of non-indigenous Australians conceptualise their belonging to the Australian landscape in light of the treatment and dispossession of its original occupants. How do they articulate their attachment to this country? How do they understand their belonging?

Belonging begins with Read talking the reader through the problem, groping toward an understanding of how Australians might come to terms with 'the painful intellectual and emotional impasse' at which they find themselves. How are they to understand their

²⁰² Read, 2000: 3.

²⁰³ Read, 2000: 4-5.

²⁰⁴ Read, 2000: 5.

attachment to places, knowing that in many cases these places have been taken by force from their Aboriginal custodians? How are they to understand their place in this country? From what ought their sense of belonging be derived?²⁰⁵ Another of Read's books *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places* (1996)²⁰⁶ plays an important role in setting the scene for these questions to be answered. In *Returning* Read examines what it means not only to lose a place, but why we return, and keep on returning, to these places so large in our memories. *Returning* establishes how important the places we live in are, and how much we grieve when we lose them.²⁰⁷ *Returning* also helps us understand a little more about the terms in which Read formulates non-indigenous struggles to belong.

Although nowhere in *Returning* does Read explicitly make the claim that peoples' sense of belonging to the places they have lost was in any way inferior prior to their exile, as compared to after it, he does emphasise the tremendous power of the experience of exile on peoples' attachment to place. Indeed, one is deeply impressed by the fact that for those people interviewed, dispossession has magnified and sharpened the experience of belonging to the places that they have been forced to leave. What begins to emerge in *Returning* is an understanding of belonging as an attachment to place that is just as closely connected with removal and return as it is with dwelling. In this sense belonging is somehow emotionally enabled by estrangement and by the longing that flows inevitably from it.

When Read likens losing a place to losing someone you love²⁰⁸ there is a further invocation—that you don't know what you've got until it's gone. What is implied is that it is something about the loss of place, or the threat of its loss, that motivates the most powerful and heartfelt expression of our attachment to it. In doing so he infers a relationship of close association—maybe even dependency—between belonging and displacement. Read describes *Returning* as 'a history of the migrations away from dying

²⁰⁵ Read, 2000: 2-3.

²⁰⁶ Peter Read, *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁰⁷ *Returning* chronicles the loss of place experienced on account of the inundation of Lake Pedder, the destruction of Darwin by Cyclone Tracy, the flooding of the town of Adaminaby, the bushfire at Macedon and the freeway built through the Sydney suburb of Beecroft. The text also documents the sentiments of those migrants, pastoralists, conservationists and others for whom attachment to place is complicated and/or contested.

²⁰⁸ Read 1996: back cover.

homes ... suburbs ... countries'.²⁰⁹ But as much as this is a book of stories about displacement, about individuals and groups who have lost places, it is also, as the title suggests, a book about the places in which they previously dwelt and their 'return journeys to the empty spaces where once [these places] were'²¹⁰; about implacement and replacement. Accordingly, Read sets up and promotes a kind of narrative catharsis according to which the re-telling of human stories of displacement wind back the process and create an opening into which belonging again can flow. The spaces are then no longer empty, the longing no longer unattended.

The devices employed here are crucial for *Belonging* to succeed in opening up a space in which non-indigenous belonging becomes a real possibility. If the premise of displacement is universally regarded, then the possibility of belonging exists for all people who have lost their place. The possibility of contemporary Aboriginal belonging is predicated upon their dispossession of land and law; non-Aboriginal belonging by continued revision to the historiography of European settlement—a dispossession, while less concrete, nevertheless which still invokes the same feelings of loss and grief.²¹¹ However, having succeeded in demonstrating the displacement of both Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians, Read must find a mechanism to *re* emplace them. He calls upon historical and biographical narrative—stories of place, both joyous and sorrowful, told both by himself and numerous others; stories about how places of deep attachment figure in peoples' lives and the working out of who they are.

In *Belonging* these themes—of displacement, re-implacement and narrative—come together and culminate in Read's final chapter which follows his journey with Aboriginal colleague Dennis Foley through country to which they are mutually attached. For both men this is a return journey to another place in their lives—both geographically and figuratively. For Foley it is the place of his birth, Gai-mariagal land, the ancestral homeland of his people, but also the country in which they were exploited and killed and

²⁰⁹ Read, 1996: vii.

²¹⁰ Read, 1996: vii.

²¹¹ In a scathing critique of *Belonging*, which he describes as 'typical contemporary Australian fantasy', Ken Gelder also draws a connection between Read's focus on 'place deprivation' and his yearning for the kind of 'deep relationship' with country often conferred upon Aboriginal peoples. See Ken Gelder, 'The imaginary Eco-(Pre-)Historian: Peter Read's *Belonging* as a Postcolonial "Symptom"', *Australian Humanities Review* 19 (2000).

from which they were later finally dispersed. For Read this country is the North Shore of Sydney, a place of happy holidays and family memories. Over the course of their journey together the two share their past and that of their respective kin.

Foley's predominant recollections of places along the way are as sites of Aboriginal displacement and mourning. His telling of them as such has the simultaneous effect of returning him to his Aboriginal place while exiling Read—albeit temporarily. In a kind of double-movement Read, now himself displaced, but armed with heightened awareness and respect for these sites, legitimately re-enters them.²¹² Read's thesis now becomes less opaque; wherever and whenever Aboriginal and non-indigenous narratives respectfully intertwine, the space of displacement can be filled—a 'shared belonging' can be established.

It is not uncommon for strategists of reconciliation to mobilise the notion of sharing. Whether the object be land, wealth, sovereignty or history, it is commonly held that for the process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians to be accomplished, the two must begin to share more harmoniously and equitably that which is Australian. However, the process of 'sharing' can be understood in two ways—as division or as merger. In the case of land, wealth and sovereignty, sharing can be understood best as sharing by division that involves the apportionment of goods between individuals. Sharing is considered in the context of *sharing the cake*. The cake is divided up and people get their own individual slice. In the case of history, though, sharing seems to rely not upon division, but upon merger. In this context, sharing is predicated upon the idea of individuals having common possession, enjoyment or use of goods. This is sharing in the same sense as one might *share a house*. The aim of the 'sharing principle' is to attain consonance rather than partition between historical accounts. This does not mean, of course, that sharing history is meant as a process that has no connection with distributive justice. Indeed the impetus of the shared history project arises in part out of the paradigm of injustice that its alternative—the colonial history model—represents.

²¹² Read's figurative return to a place of belonging occurs in the final pages of *Belonging* as he contemplates the physical and narrative journey he has shared with Dennis Foley; 'Belonging grows more intense' (218); 'I think now that I am almost ready to belong' (223); and 'My sense of the native-born has come—is coming' (223).

But how is this *simpatico* to be achieved between disparate and conflicting accounts? According to one of its proponents, The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (C.A.R.), ‘shared history’ involves both ‘non-indigenous Australians identifying with aspects of indigenous Australians’ cultures and histories [and] indigenous Australians sharing their knowledge and perspectives of history in this country’.²¹³ The integration, by non-indigenous Australians, of Aboriginal histories into their own, it is argued, shall create a narrative that is more just and unbiased in its distribution of truth than the colonial narrative that it replaces. What is implied in the notion of ‘shared history’ is that it will mark some common ground on which Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians can understand their past and therefore themselves.²¹⁴

How does ‘shared history’ facilitate non-indigenous belonging? This too is made explicit by the recommendations of C.A.R.. Taking a sympathetic view on non-indigenous responses to a sense of estrangement from this country, they state:

Any immigrant peoples will, for a time, experience a degree of historical discomfort in a ‘strange’ and ‘new’ land, and one way of coming to terms with an adopted country is to view the land through the eyes of its indigenous owners. In forging a new identity, the immigrant peoples in Australia have sought to share with, and often appropriate, indigenous symbols, motifs, phrases, and place names—defining Australia’s distinctiveness by seeking to share Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ culture and history.²¹⁵

And then: ‘By actively sharing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ history and culture, non-indigenous Australians are able to lengthen and strengthen their association with this land.’

If we are to take seriously the recommendations of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the means by which settler Australians can find a new way to articulate their belonging to this country is through closer identification with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ culture and history. However, what is troubling about these statements and much of the academic and popular commentary that follows suit, is that

²¹³ The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (C.A.R.), ‘Sharing History’, *Key Issue Paper No. 4*, 1994: 1.

²¹⁴ Perhaps the model that is being sought here is analogous to that made possible by Aboriginal cosmology—that is, the harmonious integration of differentiation and relatedness.

²¹⁵ C.A.R., 1994: 1.

read together they seem not only to endorse, but also to naturalise the practice of cultural appropriation. This practice is generally condemned because as Mitchell Rolls puts it, ‘the interest in Aboriginal culture is not so much predicated on the desire to right injustices and seek equality for those structurally disadvantaged, but arises in response to the perceived needs and ills of the dominant society and/or individual’.²¹⁶

Given that in other contexts the kind of ‘sharing’ proposed by Read is clearly regarded as the appropriation and exploitation of Aboriginal culture rather than a process of mutually enriching cultural exchange, ought the shared history model be seriously considered a positive means to reconciliation? Are non-indigenous Australians so dependent on their Aboriginal counterparts for their belonging? Are we ultimately reliant on sharing the histories and identities of ‘other’ peoples to establish our own place in the world? Read seems to think that the answer to all these questions is yes; for although he provides a plethora of examples which support the opposite view—that non-indigenous Australians can in-themselves belong—there is always a qualification. In the working out of one’s belonging, Aboriginal attachments to land must act as counterpoint; must always be consulted.

It would be wise to remain skeptical about Read’s understanding of displacement and the way it is invoked in his work as a pre-requisite of belonging. In addition, there is reason for concern about Read’s formula for belonging and its fundamental reliance on the integration—some might say appropriation—of Aboriginal narratives into the structures of non-indigenous places and identities. It is also dubious as to whether exploring the notion of a shared belonging is useful in this context, or indeed whether the concept of sharing belonging is tenable at all. However, despite these concerns—or perhaps more aptly, because of them—I do believe that *Belonging* contributes something very useful to the debate. That is to say, Read’s heart-felt and honest depiction of the problem highlights its intimately personal nature, and his quest for a ‘belonging to place’ that is shared by Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians challenges us to think more critically about the notions of implacement, displacement, belonging and the relationship between them.

²¹⁶ Rolls, 1999: 120. For examples and further discussion of non-indigenous appropriation of Aboriginal culture—both material and non-material—see also Rolls, 1998 and Lattas, 1990.

In Conclusion

This section set out to demonstrate how settler Australians have come to understand their place and destination in this country and also how these understandings contrast and intersect with apprehensions about the land, Aborigines and the connections between them. Furthermore it has sought to show for some the issue concerning their identity and belonging has become unsettling and vexatious. Whereas it is perceived that ‘traditional’ stories of identity and belonging provide Aboriginal Australians with a direct and pre-ordained ontological connection to country, the ‘colonial’ stories of their settler counterparts has no such primordial authority to which to appeal. Instead, they must overcome physical, social and psychological barriers to home-making and belonging in their own way and on their own terms. Settler Australians achieved these objectives by winning and re-shaping the land and moulding an identity to match. Well into the twentieth century ‘colonial’ stories of settlement were heartily endorsed. Until that time also, the iconic image of Australians as ‘pioneers’ or ‘bushmen’—practical, hard-working, self-reliant and heroic—held sway.

However, over the last several decades the settling stories of the origins and constitution of the nation and national identity have been brought under increasing scrutiny. During that time settler Australians have had a number of assumptions about their history, identity and belonging put to the test. Founding myths have been challenged and found wanting—colonial myths concerning the legality of initial settlement, myths concerning Aborigines and myths concerning the processes by which the land and its indigenous peoples were managed so as to facilitate the ongoing domination of the settler group. Non-indigenous Australians, faced with revisionist histories, ecologies and legalities have been compelled to re-address the legitimacy and propriety of the identity and belonging they had previously taken for granted. Feelings of loss and alienation re-emerged at that time, and settler Australians began looking for strategies to re-enchant their senses of identity and belonging and secure some sort of reconciliation, not only with the land and Aborigines, but also with themselves.

In the space permitted, various attempts made by settler Australians to appropriate their identity and belonging have been surveyed. In this regard two strategies stand out. The first involves retreat into orthodox colonial accounts, and the second a flight away from them. While both responses are significant and deserve inquiry, the latter — characterised by rationales and schemas that sanction the ‘Aboriginalisation’ of the settler group—is of specific interest and has drawn particular attention. What becomes apparent from this examination of Australian identity politics is that the question as to who does or can belong in and to Australia is still deeply problematic. What is suggested by the tacit acceptance among some sections of the academy and the general population of the position that advises and authorises deliberate slippage between settler and Aboriginal identities is that belonging is predicated upon a particular personal ontology (being a particular kind of person). Exactly what conditions and connections bestow upon the individual or group an identity commensurate with belonging remains unclear, although what does seem certain is that socio-cultural, historical and physical (or geographical) factors are significant in establishing such an identity.

As Section One has demonstrated, questions regarding the construction and deconstruction of Australian identity, belongings and not belongings, remain contentious and substantially unresolved. However, the most urgent of questions arising from this rendering of affairs does not concern whether or not settler Australians belong in this country, nor whether Aboriginal Australians have a more proper claim to Australian identity or belonging than their settler counterparts. Insofar as these questions are significant (and there is little doubt they are), their importance extends well beyond the immediate context in which they are being asked. Putting aside any spiritual, social, psychological or political benefits (or deficits), that might flow from establishing what constitutes a proper Australian identity or belonging, the dilemma that remains and that must be dealt with firstly and foremost is one of definition or conceptualisation. While there continues to be considerable disagreement as to what kind of criteria might be used to gauge belonging, there is also an absence of conceptual apparatus by which the connection between identity and belonging and ‘belonging’ itself might be understood. Section Two is devoted to the first of these tasks, in the hope that revealing the

conceptual link between who and what we are and whether or not we belong shall bring a theoretical model of belonging *per se* within our grasp.

SECTION TWO

Belonging—A Conceptual Analysis

Introduction

Section One demonstrated how notions of identity and belonging relate and inter-relate in the Australian context, how settler Australians have articulated their belonging to and in this country, how the way in which the identity of settler Australians—who and what they believe they are—has shaped and been shaped by their relationship with the land and its Aboriginal peoples. It has been explained how, in most recent times, non-indigenous Australians have come to doubt the legitimacy and propriety of both their identity and their belonging and have sought resolution to these questions, and through that resolution, reconciliation with the land, Aborigines and themselves.

As became particularly evident in the closing parts of the previous section belonging has been recognised as having currency, not only in a social, political or legal sense, but on personal and moral levels as well. But the question of who does or can belong properly in and to Australia is a problematic one not only because of its socio-political, legal or moral implications. The dilemma is also one of definition or conceptualisation. Not only is there considerable disagreement as to what kind of criteria might be used to measure belonging properly, but an absence of conceptual apparatus by which ‘belonging’ itself might be grasped. Despite the personal and institutional investment made in the notion of belonging and its prevalence in popular, academic and political discourse, there is very little attention paid to explicating or defining belonging *per se*. What is it exactly? How is it derived? From what is it constituted? For a long time now we have talked, and emoted and argued about ‘senses’ of belonging without ever needing (or feeling the need) to address these questions. ‘Belonging’ has slipped quietly and easily into our emotional repertoire, seemingly without necessity for any rigorous or objective analysis.

One thing that is indicated by the variety of opinions about belonging in the

contemporary Australian context is that who does or does not belong is not clearly ascertained by appealing to individual feelings on the matter. In the debate over belonging what is being contested is not the sincerity with which various people across space and time state convictions about their own belonging status, but rather whether these convictions—although obviously heart-felt—are nevertheless accurate. That is to say, no one doubts the fact that some people feel they belong, while others feel that they do not. What is at issue is whether or not, regardless of those feelings, they actually do or not. For this question to have any relevance at all we must first comprehend what belonging is.

One logical place to begin coming to terms with the concept of belonging, and thus to start the formal development of a philosophical theory that explains it, is with an examination of how the notion of belonging is ordinarily employed, not only in Australian discourses, but whenever the idea is brought to bear. Thus we might begin to define belonging by sketching out the various senses in which it is used in common parlance. Immediately three ‘senses’ of belonging seem apparent; first the sense of belonging that refers us to social connections, to a sense of connection to a particular community of people; second, the sense of belonging that refers us to historical connections, to a sense of connection to our past or to a particular tradition; third, a sense of belonging that refers us to physical connections, to a sense of connection to a particular locality or dwelling place. The following section investigates the theoretical foundations and conceptual frameworks from which ‘senses’ of belonging appear to have evolved.

Section 2.1 ‘Belonging as Social’ investigates belonging as it is understood as a social designation. Section 2.1.1 looks inside the social imperative to some of the features, factors and structures that enable, support and draw people into social relations. Section 2.1.2 surveys theoretical understandings that pair belonging with social identity, while Section 1.2.3 examines the overarching view that belonging is a key defining feature of what it is to be human in the first instance.

Section 2.2 ‘Belonging as Historical’ explores belonging in its historical associations. Section 2.2.1 examines evolutionary or phylogenetic arguments concerning human belonging. Section 2.2.2 follows the logic of ‘deep time’ belonging, and Section

2.2.3 studies connections made between history, and identity and belonging, with particular focus on the role that nostalgia plays in the process.

Section 2.3 ‘Belonging as Environmental’ investigates the notion of belonging as an environmental designation. Section 2.3.1 considers existential dimensions of home (and homesickness), while Section 2.2.2 looks into the ubiquitous influence of the doctrine of environmental determinism in shaping our understandings of what it is to belong in a particular environment or place.

Such an investigation serves two associated purposes. First, we are able to define and analyse various conceptualisations of belonging—their basis and rationale—and secondly we are able to begin making associations and connections between them. In doing so it is hoped that we move closer to disclosing a notional framework according to which we can begin to understand what it is to belong, not only in the many ways we sense it, but as both a concept and a mode of being *per se*.

2.1 Belonging as Social

It is probably true to say that the most common perception of belonging is as a social designation—that belonging describes a relation with and to our fellow human beings, our family, our friends, our community or society. Provisional definitions of belonging in its social designation might be: to be closely associated with others; to be accepted as part of a particular social group or to identify with others in (or as) a particular social group. Considered thus, belonging is taken to have certain positive consequences, one concerning the establishment of shared identity, and the other concerning the positive experiences derived from being so connected or identified.

This section analyses ways in which belonging as a social designation—belonging as a relation to society—is articulated in theory, and how in this connection belonging to the social sphere is understood in a range of different ways to be a necessary feature of being who we are. In this section we first attempt to look at belonging as a social designation from the inside out—from the perspectives of social psychology; the human desire for social relations, and social morphology; the nature and development of these relations and the structures they support. A summary purview of theoretical positions according to which social structures and relations provide the necessary foundation for individual and collective identities is then provided. Finally, the scope of the investigation concerning the relationship between belonging and identity is extended beyond the particular to the universal, and we explore how far belonging as a social designation defines not only who we are in an individual or collective sense, but who ‘we’ are as human beings *per se*.

2.1.1. The Social Imperative

The idea that as human beings we are dependant on affiliations with others of our kind is a prominent modern theme. Here, belonging in its social designation is considered not only as the source, but also the means, as well as the goal, of human life. Indeed, there can be few human desires outside those associated directly with biological function as evocative as the desire to be accepted by one’s fellow human beings. Almost from birth

the human being strives to attain and maintain acceptance by his or her group and to find and take his or her place in the social milieu. Evidence supports the idea that people are very much inclined to living in union with others. There are few people who live entirely solitary lives, at least not of their own choice. Indeed, being socially isolated is generally considered a most undesirable state of affairs and social isolation has been employed by human communities as a punitive device from the earliest recorded history. Furthermore, that aloneness is not seen as life affirming in descriptions of human existence is by no means isolated to modern interpretations. In the language of the Romans the words “to live” and “to be among men” (*inter homines esse*) are synonyms as is “to die” and “to cease to be among men” (*inter homines esse desinere*).²¹⁷ Accordingly, the life of the solitary individual is tantamount to death. It cannot count as a life at all, let alone one identified as human.

Most of us have experienced the loneliness that aloneness can bring at some time during our lives. Usually this is associated with feelings of sadness and loss, which, while unpleasant, are transitory. However, for some individuals the sense of solitude is accompanied by a helplessness and despair that reaches pathological proportions. Studies of isolation show that long-term separation from others can have disturbing intellectual and social outcomes. Young children deprived of physical and social contact with others often suffer irreversible intellectual and emotional damage.²¹⁸ Even in situations where social isolation is voluntary and planned the mental health effects upon individuals can be both serious and negative.²¹⁹ It is safe to say that the majority of people want to live with others, and to be understood and accepted by them, however the question of belonging should not be addressed simply in terms of the documentation of human ‘wants’ or ‘whims’. The issue seems to go much deeper than that.

Abraham Maslow is one theorist who claimed that it is not just that we *want* or *like* to belong, we *need* to. Maslow’s theoretical point of view is that human beings are motivated by a number of basic needs and that these needs are both physiological and

²¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 7-8.

²¹⁸ See J. Bowlby, *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

²¹⁹ See for instance the mental health effects of ‘wintering over’ on Antarctic base personnel in L.A. Palinkas, M. Cravalho & D. Browner, ‘Seasonal Variation of Depressive Symptoms in Antarctica’, *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 91 (1995).

psychological. Maslow organises the needs into a ‘hierarchy of relative prepotency’.²²⁰ ‘Survival needs’ form the foundation of the hierarchical triangle and the needs thought necessary for ‘self-actualisation’ are at the apex. Maslow places ‘love and belongingness needs’ somewhere in between. Accordingly, if the need to belong is met, the person achieves positive development. If not, personal development is likely to arrest. Even worse, if the experience of seeking and not achieving belonging has been sufficiently traumatic, personal development may actually regress. Maslow hypothesises that under these conditions what becomes paramount to the individual are the basic needs—security, shelter and sustenance—and that he or she typically retreats, both psychologically and physically.²²¹ This may well account for the fact that when one is socially outcast or personally rejected all one wants to do is to curl up in a warm, safe place and eat chocolate!

Maslow clearly attached profound significance to the need to belonging in the social sense. Furthermore, he argued that belonging as a social designation was necessary to self-development and to self-actualisation. However, he gives very little further information about, or attention to, the criteria for belonging *per se*. Maslow is not alone in taking the meaning of ‘belongingness’ for granted or presuming there to be no necessity to provide a further explication of its form or features, though it is perhaps a little more disappointing and surprising in his case. Although critical of the lack of conceptual analysis brought to bear by his psychological contemporaries, particularly to the notion of ‘love’²²² (which he couples with belongingness), he neither articulates concern about their lack of attention to belongingness, nor provides a precise definition or conceptual account of belongingness himself. One can only presume that he took ‘love’ and ‘belongingness’ to be sufficiently similar in quality to treat them inclusively.

Maslow held to Carl Roger’s definition of being loved as being ‘deeply understood and deeply accepted’.²²³ He also says of the ‘love need’ that it is a need to both give and receive. He states that ‘[w]e *must* understand love; we must be able to teach it, create it,

²²⁰ Frank G. Goble, *The Third Force: The Psychology of Abraham Maslow* (New York: Grossman, 1970): 39.

²²¹ Goble, 1970, ‘Chapter 4: The Theory of Basic Needs’: *passim*.

²²² Goble, 1970: 40.

²²³ Goble: 1970: 39.

to predict it, or else the world is lost to hostility and suspicion.’²²⁴ One can only suppose that he attached the same demand to belonging—that is, we must belong and in turn facilitate the belonging of others if we are to develop as human beings.²²⁵ The idea that our survival and development as human beings is dependant on our affiliation with others of our kind continues to be a prominent theme in the social sciences.

It is here that the contribution of German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies is a most important one. Although not always explicitly acknowledged, the influence of Tönnies’ theoretical sociology is ubiquitous. Tönnies was one of the first practitioners of Sociology, the study of human society that emerged in the nineteenth century in response to the changed world order (industrialisation and democracy). His most significant and enduring influence comes in the form of a social typology that is articulated in his most recognized work *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* (1887). This work provides a powerful conceptual apparatus by which the nature and significance of social entities and relations can be understood.

Tönnies is a sociological theorist who particularly emphasised the motivational aspect of social relations—the will to form social bonds. As Tönnies points out, humans

... are not connected by an external physical cord, as are, for example, two prisoners, who, with their wrists chained, are being moved together ... [rather it is] ... complexes of feelings and emotions that lead human beings to one another, and hold them together—that “bind” them to each other, and hence ‘connect’ them.²²⁶

Thus, the study of human relationships must consider not only the physical proximity and interplay of those involved, but the desires and motives that facilitate and affirm that interplay. According to Tönnies’ model, the condition of being socially bonded is characterised by the presence of certain ‘psychial’ positives or motives. In his article

²²⁴ Goble: 1970: 41, (his emphasis).

²²⁵ The connection between ‘love’ and ‘belonging’ is something that deserves further attention when considering Kierkegaard’s ontology of the self. There the principle of ‘loving thy neighbour’ is drawn in close connection with ‘becoming yourself’.

²²⁶ Ferdinand Tönnies, ‘The Nature of Sociology’ (1907) in Werner J. Cahnman & Rudolf Heberle ed., *Ferdinand Tönnies: On Sociology: Pure, Applied and Empirical* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971): 88.

‘Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft’ (1931)²²⁷ Tönnies sets down a binary four-fold model that distinguish the psychological attitudes that dispose us to form social bonds from those that prevent us from doing so.²²⁸ It is these factors, according to Tönnies that mark the distinction between *all* people and those we know, in this particular social sense of knowing. Tönnies’ four-fold model consists of acquaintanceship, sympathy, confidence and dependence.

Aquaintanceship marks the distinction between ‘knowing’ (in a social sense) and merely ‘knowing of’ (in a generic sense) another human being. Acquaintanceship is characterised by a mutual recognition. Acquaintanceship exists where both parties recognise the other as someone they ‘know’. According to Tönnies this recognition is enough to predispose the parties to mutual approval, and therefore personal interaction. While acquaintanceship is a prerequisite to social bonding and therefore provides the ground on which possible social interaction is built, the nature and persistence of the interaction is determined by the feelings and thoughts that accompany acquaintanceship. These are sympathy, confidence and dependence. While having and receiving sympathy and confidence are important, the criterion of dependence is at the crux of social bonds. That is to say, the condition of being bound is one in which the individual is subject to another’s will.²²⁹ To be bound to another person (or body of people) there must always be some degree of dependence on them, but also them on us. It is the attitudes or dispositions of acquaintanceship, sympathy, confidence and dependence (occurring in particular combination) that Tönnies insists explains the existence of social entities in the first instance. It follows that whenever and wherever these elements—acquaintanceship, sympathy, confidence and dependence—are absent so are the fundamental conditions for social bonding or belonging.

²²⁷ The ideas contained in the essay ‘Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft’ can be taken both as a revision and an extension of Tönnies’ initial thesis, published in its most recognizable form in 1931, just five years before the author’s death. This was fifty years after the first appearance of the original volume of *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* in 1887.

²²⁸ Ferdinand Tönnies, ‘Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft’ (1887), [1931] trans. Charles P. Loomis, *Community and Association* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955): 3-4.

²²⁹ Tönnies offers the example of the bond between an infant and its primary care giver as one in which dependency is extreme, the child relying almost exclusively on the volition of its caregiver for survival. Similarly, the master-slave relation is one in which the will of the one dominates that of the other. Both these relations, however, are still regarded as social bonds, for dependence is felt, either at an emotional or intellectual level.

Like Maslow, American psychologists Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary have also argued that the human ‘need to belong’ is one of the most pervasive and powerful of human motivations. Their ‘belongingness hypothesis’ is used to provide a point of departure for understanding a great deal of the existing literature about human experience and behaviour. Like Tönnies, they place emphasis on those social attitudes or orientations that produce social bonds. However, they are more explicit than Tönnies in linking these criteria to satisfaction of the belongingness need. According to their analysis, the need to belong consists of two components—one quantitative and the other qualitative. Firstly, human beings desire to have frequent interaction with others that are either pleasant or neutral in character. The need to belong is not fulfilled by aversive and/or sporadic contact. The second component involves care and reciprocity. To satisfy the need to belong, the person must believe that the other has positive feelings about him or her and cares about his or her welfare. Ideally these feelings would be reciprocated in kind. For social interactions to fulfil the belongingness need, the desire for interaction and to form and maintain caring bonds must be mutual.²³⁰ The context in which mutual-dependence arises and also the extent and nature of that dependence determines the type of bond that develops between individuals and their fellow human beings.²³¹

It has been accepted for some time that the identification and analysis of different levels or modes of social organization can provide valuable insights into the types of social bonds that constitute them. Focussing on social typology provides insights into the origins, rationale, nature and development of human affiliations and alliances *per se*, and for our current purpose sheds additional light on how belonging as a social designation is perceived as influencing the quality of human life and identity.

For what has become the orthodox typology of social organization we turn again to Tönnies. In his work *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* a distinction is made between two types of social structure—Gemeinschaft style structures or ‘communities’ and Gesellschaft style structures called ‘associations’ or ‘societies’ (depending on the translation). For Tönnies the style of the social structure has ramifications for the form of

²³⁰ Roy F. Baumeister & Mark R. Leary, ‘The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation’, *Psychological Bulletin*, 117. 3 (1995): 500-501.

²³¹ Tönnies (1907) in Cahnman & Heberle, 1971: 8.

social bonds constituting it and therefore for the ways in which individuals relate to one another.

As mentioned previously, Tönnies emphasised the role of the will in binding humans together. Tönnies insists that the study of human motivation explains the existence and endurance of social structures *per se*. According to Tönnies ‘all social relationships are to be regarded as formations of the human will.’²³² Tönnies holds that ‘[m]an is by nature inclined toward affirmation of man, and therefore to union with him’,²³³ however, what is evident in Tönnies’ approach is that not only does he emphasize the psychological aspect of human social relations, but above all and in the first instance the voluntary aspect of belonging.²³⁴ Social relations are held to exist ‘only and insofar as they are perceived, felt, imagined, thought, known, and willed’.²³⁵ A *Gemeinschaft* type social structure is characterised by a ‘natural will’ of habit and instinct. It is one in which there are close, intimate and personal face-to-face relationships based upon traditional orientations. A *Gesellschaft* type social structure is characterised by a ‘rational will’ that is instrumental in terms of its selection of means for ends.²³⁶ *Gesellschaft* type social bonds are associated with more impersonal relationships, carried out in a far less personal or intimate fashion and directed primarily toward group goals, rather than individual desires.

Where the concepts of ‘natural’ and ‘rational’ will—*Wesenwille* and *Kurwille*—are applied to social bonds they are posited as the basis, explanation or cause of that bond and also of its persistence. The two types of will are differentiated by their inner features. *Wesenwille* or natural will is differentiated from *Kurwille* or rational will: firstly in terms of consciousness, and secondly in terms of motivation. Natural will is constituted in and conditioned by a unity of ‘knowledge and ability’. It is a will that is lived rather than one that is reorganised and integrated on a conscious level. Furthermore, the knowledge that

²³² Rudolf Heberle in Barry Barnes ed., *An Introduction to the History of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): 233.

²³³ Tönnies (1907) in Cahnman & Heberle, 1971: 89.

²³⁴ In this respect Tönnies follows to some extent both the voluntarism of Arthur Schopenhauer and the natural law theorists of the seventeenth century. However there are also important points of divergence manifest in his theory concerning human volition.

²³⁵ Tönnies (1907) in Cahnman & Heberle, 1971:103.

²³⁶ The translation of Loomis is used here. Cahnman & Heberle translate *Wesenwille* and *Kurwille* as ‘essential will’ and ‘arbitrary will’.

feeds the natural will is not only that which is learned from individual experience, but also that which is inherited from one's forefathers.²³⁷ *Wesenwille* as a mode of thought and perception affirms social bonds at a basic or uncritical level. Human beings are in a sense already given over to *Wesenwille* and to the social bond (*Gemeinschaft*) that it affirms. But *Wesenwille* cannot be taken to be identical with instinct. Tönnies was clear that volition always involves reason (thought). It is just that in the case of rational will (*Kurwille*) volition is derived far more from conscious reflection. 'Volition always involves thought; but it makes a difference whether thought is in the service of vital processes or whether thought gains independence, as it were, and pursues its own ends.'²³⁸

The type of conscious reflection that Tönnies has in mind in the case of *Kurwille* is one that involves the rational separation of means and ends. Whereas *Kurwille* (rational will) is motivated by calculations concerning this separation, *Wesenwille* (natural will) is not. If we take the will as that which affirms social bonds, the distinction can be made in terms of the motive behind this affirmation. As Tönnies observes: 'The sharpest contrast ... arises if affirmation of a social entity for its own sake is distinguished from an affirmation of such an entity because of an end, or purpose, extraneous to it.'²³⁹ Affirmation of the first kind is *Wesenwillen*, and the social bond it creates *Gemeinschaftliche*; that of the second *Kurwillen*, and its social corollary *Gesellschaftliche*.²⁴⁰

What Tönnies' typology offers is two types of social organization, based on two types of social bonds, motivated by two orientations of human will, but he is not articulating two different types or styles of belonging. Rather, than generating two versions of belonging, Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* might be better understood as an attempt to synthesize opposing views of social aggregation—those in which there are close, intimate and personal face-to-face relationships based upon

²³⁷ Tönnies, [1931] 1955: 14-15.

²³⁸ Cahnman & Heberle, 1971: xii-xiii.

²³⁹ Tönnies (1907) in Cahnman & Heberle, 1971: 65.

²⁴⁰ For Tönnies' discussion of the two forms of will see Tönnies' Second Book [1931] 1955. It might be useful to reflect on the implications of reconciliation from the perspective of its motivation by these two kinds of will—one that seeks reconciliation in itself, and the other that seeks reconciliation as a means to an end, extraneous to it.

traditional orientations and those associated with more impersonal relationships, carried out in far less personal or intimate fashion and directed primarily toward group goals, rather than individual desires. Both modes of social connection are based upon acquaintanceship, sympathy, confidence and dependence between people. Tönnies thought that these two views represented different aspects of social reality rather than different realities altogether.²⁴¹ Accordingly, both forms of social connectedness—and thus social connectedness *per se*—involve more than just living alongside other human beings, but knowing them, feeling for them, trusting them and depending on them. Human beings desire, need and actively seek associations that can satisfy these criteria. If we take social connectedness to be synonymous with belonging, then it also must be the case that belongingness consists in acquaintanceship, sympathy, confidence and dependence between ourselves and others—when we experience these psychical attitudes and they are reciprocated.

This way of defining belonging certainly connects with commonsense understandings of what inspires a sense of belonging. Feelings of belonging most often arise in circumstances where this kind of knowing and investing in each other occurs. Furthermore, the notion of belonging is linked with union between those who share common understandings and commitments. It is these commonalities that, in part at least, make possible their acquaintanceship, sympathy, confidence and dependence and thus their mutual belonging together.

These commonalities provide the focus for another perspective on belonging—that is, how belonging is connected with the common identity of persons. One issue pertaining to the disposition of people to live in union with others, and therefore of prime significance to my investigation of the nature and significance of belonging regards how far human beings depend upon social interactions and connections, not merely for their survival and development of who and what they are, but for their identity in the first instance. The issue here is not merely one of psychological explanation. Nor does it relate simply to sociological explanations of human affiliation—although it may well contribute to both. The question is a far more fundamental about whether who and what we are is

²⁴¹ Jerzy Szacki, *History of Sociological Thought* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979): 343.

somehow predicated on our belonging as a social designation, about how our very *being* is implicated in being socially related.

2.1.2. Belonging *qua* Social Identity

Connections between identity and belonging as a social designation are obvious. Certainly a lot of research goes toward understanding the factors and features involved with the emergence of the self through ‘belonging’. According to much of this research the most important function that a social structure has is in providing individuals with a social identity.²⁴² According to this way of thinking—mostly done in the field of Sociology—‘self and identity are cognitive constructs that influence social interaction and perception, and are themselves influenced by society.’ ‘Knowledge of identity regulates and structures human interaction; in turn interactive and societal structures provide identities for us.’²⁴³ That is to say, knowing who one is allows one to know what one should think and do, and knowing who others are allows one to predict what they will think and do. In this way groups provide people with a consensually recognised definition and evaluation of who they are, how they ought to behave and how they ought to be treated.

Contemporary theories of the self almost always draw some kind of distinction between the individuated or *personal* self and the relational or *social* self, with the former understood in terms of aspects of the self-concept that differentiates the self from others, and the latter in terms of those aspects that reflect assimilation to others or to social groups. Furthermore, an additional distinction is made between *interpersonal* and *collective* senses of the social self. Interpersonal identities are those derived from personalised bonds of attachment with specific others, while collective identities are derived from more impersonal bonds associated with memberships in collectives or social groups and categories. It has also been suggested that interpersonal and collective

²⁴² See for example, Henri Tajfel ed., *Social Identity and Inter-group Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

²⁴³ G.M. Vaughan, & M.A. Hogg, *Introduction to Social Psychology* (3rd ed.; Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education, 2002): 82.

modes of the social self can be distinguished by the former's basis in common bonds and the latter's basis in common identity.

At the individual level personal identity is based on the characteristics, abilities and/or attitudes that are perceived as unique to the individual and different from other individuals, rather than shared with the group. At the interpersonal level, identity is derived in response to others. One's relational self-concept is defined in terms of the relationships one has with specific other people—relationships that allow comparisons and contrasts. The notion of a collective self is one associated with the idea that identity is defined in terms of attributes shared by the in-group and distinct from out-group members.²⁴⁴

The important role that others play in self-definition is now widely accepted. Scientists and philosophers now seem less interested in considering the identity and nature of persons independent of the forms of social life in which they exist. Most studies of the human self require us to know who and what we are not only in terms of how we are differentiated from others but what we share with them.²⁴⁵ The question of 'who am I?' concerns one's identity as a particular person, but it also concerns one's identity as a person who belongs to a certain family, community, race or nation. Understood in this way, the search for the self is not only to be directed inward, but outward as well.

In the area of identity the influence of the psychology of Sigmund Freud has been far-reaching. For Freud the purpose of a human life is the fulfilment of our animal nature—our biological and instinctual desire for pleasure and the equally strident desire to avoid suffering. Freud viewed identity as personal and private—something that uniquely describes the individual human being, by describing what makes him/her different from all other human beings. In *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) he claimed that the individual ego is 'autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else'²⁴⁶ and because the reality of the external world is always a potential source of suffering, it is understandable that people should choose to isolate themselves

²⁴⁴ M.B. Brewer & W. Gardner, 'Who is this "We"? Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representation', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71 (1996): 83-98.

²⁴⁵ Bernard Williams describes this problem as one relating to the juxtaposition of particulars and types. For Williams on personal identity see *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

²⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud in Albert Dickson ed., *Civilization, Society and Religion: Group Psychology, Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985): 253.

from it.²⁴⁷ Indeed, Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*, in which he sets out his personality theory in relation to society, was originally entitled 'Unhappiness in Civilization'.²⁴⁸ However, not even Freud held that self-realisation and fulfilment was a process concerning the individual alone. The desire for interpersonal contact is also paramount in Freudian psychology. It is in the experience of love that the ego is confronted with its greatest challenge, because while it is in this experience that the most intense pleasure is gained, there is also the greatest risk of suffering.²⁴⁹ Relationship with others is therefore inevitable and inherently dangerous. This is what we must come to terms with. For Freud, at least, the acknowledgment and acceptance of a distinction between the ego driven by the 'pleasure principle' and the necessary evil of the ego's unification with others who may not conform to its desire for pleasure is an integral part of becoming a self. Coming to terms with the reality of one's relation with others is decisive in the development of a healthy mature human adult.²⁵⁰

Being a member of a human community, on this account, is a rational application of the 'reality principle'. While the alternative of shunning the external world and avoiding relationships and attachments with other people—by voluntarily isolating oneself, drugging oneself or killing oneself—is an option, it is ultimately an unsatisfactory for both self and society. Belonging—identifying with others in (or as) a particular social group—is a mode of being that provides an orderly and stable platform for the achievement of the pleasure gained through the experience of love, particularly sexual love. By belonging—accepting the need for interaction with other subjects—individuals not only maximise their chances of immediate gratification, but also their chances in achieving self-realisation, becoming a self that is integrated and fully mature.²⁵¹

The idea that the self has these two manifestations that must be integrated is first suggested by William James in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). Here James distinguished between pure Ego—self as stream of consciousness, 'I'—and empirical Ego—self as object of perception, 'me'. The 'social self' is one class of the empirical

²⁴⁷ Freud in Dickson, 1985: 253-254.

²⁴⁸ Dickson, 1985: 246.

²⁴⁹ Freud in Dickson, 1985: 270-271.

²⁵⁰ Freud in Dickson, 1985: 268.

²⁵¹ Freud in Dickson, 1985: 261-273: *passim*.

self—the ‘me’ or ‘mes’ one presents to the communities to which one belongs. A person’s social self is the recognition he or she gets from others, and there are few cruelties greater than not being recognised. James holds that this recognition satisfies our innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favourably, by those with whom we come into contact.²⁵² A position of belonging puts us in the situation where we are noticed by others—they recognise us and in doing so affirm us. Without the opportunity for affirmation that belonging offers, James claims that impotent despair would overcome us. Without belonging—identifying with others in (or as) a particular social group—the self does not appear as an object of perception (‘me’ is not recognised) and without a ‘me’, there is little hope for an ‘I’.

In the 1970s scholars of society began exploring in earnest the ways in which interpersonal interactions mould an individual’s sense of self. Their research focused primarily on the formation of the self in relational mode, that is, the concept of the self as received by others. The ideas of Charles Cooley and George Mead were seminal in this sociological field. According to Cooley, the self is the conscious social identity that any individual has. It is our self-concept. Self in this context—that is, an individual self—is not something that can be defined objectively. In other words, we are who we think we are, but a good deal of who we think we are—our self-concept—derives from seeing ourselves as others see us. Cooley is suggesting that self-identity emerges from a dialogue that goes on in the mind between what one thinks of oneself and what one thinks others think of oneself. This reflected aspect of the self, Cooley calls the ‘looking glass self’. In *Human Nature and Social Order* (1973) he describes the process thus:

As we see face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another’s mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it.²⁵³

²⁵² William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1 (New York: Classics of Medicine Library, [1890] 1997): 293-296, *passim*.

²⁵³ Charles Horton Cooley in H. Abraham, *Origins and Growth of Sociology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973): 360.

The object of this mental dialogue is to reconcile these two perceptions of self—the way we perceive our self and the way we perceive others perceive us. A stable social identity—a self—emerges as this reconciliation occurs.

The notion that the conscious mind makes a separation between self as the subject and self as the object is crucial to the intellectual development of another theory of the relational self, that is, Symbolic Interactionism. This theory, of which social psychologist George Herbert Mead is the key early theorist, holds that the self arises out of social interaction that is largely symbolic. Symbolic Interactionism holds that society influences individuals through self-conception that arises through interaction among people. This process necessarily involves not only seeing oneself as a social object as well as a social subject, but on reflexive knowledge; ‘I’ can be aware of ‘me’. According to this understanding ‘[t]he ‘I’ is the reflecting and responding self, the self which undertakes action. The ‘me’ is the conception of the self that is received from others. The ‘me’ is reflected upon and directed by the ‘I’, and is the object of attentions of the ‘I’.’²⁵⁴ In other words, self-conception arises through interaction with people and by engaging with their conception of us. In this way we construct a self-concept that reflects that of people with whom we interact and in doing so, the society in which we live. The more successful we are in negotiating this process, the more integrated or balanced our self-concept is.

Identity researchers not only understand the relation between the pure ego and the empirical ego as a significant aspect of how selfhood is constituted, but also construe selfhood on a sliding scale from ‘I’ to ‘We’. Brewer and Gardner demonstrate the various degrees of inclusiveness or extension in conceptualisations of the self—the scale sliding from ‘I’ to ‘we’ as the locus of self-definition. As Brewer and Gardner put it: ‘An extended self means that the boundaries of the self are redrawn, and the content of the self-concept is focused on those characteristics that make one a ‘good’ representative of the group’.²⁵⁵ The more inclusive the self-concept becomes, the further it is grounded in affiliation and loyalty to the group and less in perceived differences, similarities or relations with other individuals. At its furthest extension, the ‘me’ is probably seen more accurately as a collective ‘me’—maybe even an ‘us’. The more inclusive the self

²⁵⁴ These key points are covered in George Herbert Mead, *On Social Psychology*, ed. A. Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964): 173-177.

²⁵⁵ Brewer & Gardner, 1996: 84.

becomes the more it belongs and the more it belongs the more stable it is perceived to be. It is argued further that group identification allows for social comparison, a process by which subjective uncertainty can be reduced and positive self-esteem secured. More contemporary sociological discourse acknowledges this point and as a consequence has refocused attention from the relational to the collective.

The shift in emphasis from understanding personal identity via inward-looking techniques to ways in which interpersonal interactions mould a person's sense of self, and finally to ways in which collective identities are mobilized, is driven by two important trends; firstly, under the influence of social and national movements, particularly in the last several decades, more attention has been given to issues of group agency and political action. There has been a vigorous quest to determine the nature of collectives, their identities and the political implications that ensue. Secondly, concerns with agency and self-determination have re-energised debates about identity politics. As a consequence there is renewed intellectual concern with how distinctions between collective identities are created, maintained and changed.²⁵⁶

We often attribute our identities—the distinctive characteristics that make us who and what we are—to the influence of the group or community of which we understand ourselves to be part. This is clearly evident in relation to the national, racial or cultural identities we assume, and also applies to identities relating to occupation, gender and religion. It is generally agreed among theorists across a range of traditions and disciplines that a proper understanding of the self requires acknowledgment that collective influences are exceptionally powerful in shaping our sense of personal identity and selfhood. Indeed, many theories hold that the mechanisms that produce unique selves are exclusively, social ones. Given this—the fact that identity is increasingly understood predominantly as a social mode of being—it is easy to see how belonging and identity have become conceptually linked.

This tendency is already clearly evident on the Australian scene, where positive self-construal is closely linked to perceptions of belonging, and in discourses on who properly belongs national, racial and cultural identities are often juxtaposed and fiercely

²⁵⁶ Karen A. Cerulo, 'Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23 (1997): 385-409.

defended. In order to judge how accurate the conjunction of the two notions might be and to understand more fully the practical implications of understanding belonging and social selfhood as conjoined, it is necessary to look more closely at what defines and supports social modes of identity and how these social modes of identity inform conceptualisations of belonging as a social designation.

The most prominent theory pertaining to the social self and group identification is that developed by Henri Tajfel. This theory, later aptly named Social Identity Theory, involves four central ideas—group categorization, group identification, group comparison and group distinctiveness.²⁵⁷ What is claimed is that, in a very similar way to that in which we categorise other things in order to understand them, in order to understand our social environment we categorise people (including ourselves). Tajfel states that:

[T]he psychological aspects and consequences of the membership of a group are capable ... of any kind of definition *only* because of their insertion into a multi-group structure. Consequently the social identity of an individual conceived as his knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of his membership can only be defined through the effects of social categorizations segmenting an individual's social environment into his own group and others.²⁵⁸

We use social categories such as blue-collar worker, Aborigine, Collingwood supporter, Australian, migrant and so on for their utility. If we can assign people to a category then that tells us things about those people. Similarly, we find out things about ourselves by knowing what categories we belong to. Then we define appropriate behaviour by reference to the norms of groups we belong to.

After categorisation, the second important idea is identification. Social Identity theorists hold that we identify with groups to which we perceive ourselves to belong. Tajfel holds that the categorisation of people causes an 'accentuation effect'; the accentuation of perceived similarities within the in-group and differences between those in the in-group and the out-group. The third idea that is involved in social identity theory

²⁵⁷ What appears below is a summary of Tajfel's discussion of social categorization and social identity in Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 254-267.

²⁵⁸ Tajfel, 1981: 258.

is the notion of social comparison. The basic idea is that a positive self-concept is a part of normal psychological functioning. Social identity theorists hold that we see ourselves in a positive light by seeing ourselves as a member of a prestigious group. Given that, on this system, social comparison is a universal phenomenon, and a process necessary to securing a positive self-concept can be secured, then prestige cannot be measured by any objective criteria.

The question as to how groups gain prestige is an interesting one. Tajfel's idea is that belonging to the most prestigious group is something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Group members compare their group with others, in order to define their group as positive, and therefore by implication, see themselves in a positive way. That is, people choose to compare their groups with other groups in ways that reflect positively on themselves. Two ideas follow from this. One is positive distinctiveness, the idea that people are motivated to see themselves and their own group as relatively better than similar (but inferior) persons and groups. The other idea is negative distinctiveness—that groups tend to minimize the differences between individuals and groups, so that they and their own group are seen favourably. This process is understood in terms of social creativity according to which the features called upon for comparisons are those seen to be superior in the first place.

Insofar as the claim being made is one depicting social reality, Social Identity Theory allows that society is hierarchically structured into different social groups that stand in status and power relations to one another. It also assumes that being identified as a group member is sufficient to produce ethnocentrism and competitive inter-group behaviour.²⁵⁹ In doing so, it presents identity as self-representation based upon in-group-out-group categorisation where inter-group comparisons necessarily lead to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination.

If this is the case, of course it makes sense that people want to identify with groups, or, put another way, privilege a collective identity over a more personal one. In doing so,

²⁵⁹ An important qualification to Social Identity Theory is that groups vary in their social orientation from individualist to collectivist and also that not all groups have an orientation toward defining themselves through comparisons with others. Some groups have a non-comparative ideology. Outgroup discrimination is highest when the orientation is collectivist and comparative. See for example, Brown *et al.*, 'Recognizing Group Diversity: Individualist-Collectivist And Autonomous-Relational Social Orientations And Their Implications For Intergroup Processes', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 31 (1992).

the more successful the integration between the 'I' (who we see ourselves as) the 'me' (how we are seen by others) and the 'us', the more inclusive the self-concept, and the more subjective uncertainty is reduced. Thus, what begins to emerge is the idea that the greater the self's extension, that is, how far it belongs—identifies with others in (or as) a particular social group—the greater its stability and well-being—perhaps even the more completely human it is (the latter is a question to which we shall return).

Collective identity is an idea that has had a number of manifestations in the history of modern thought. Articulating the we-ness of the group it is reflected in Durkheim's 'collective consciousness', Marx's 'class consciousness', and Weber's 'verstehen'. In all these contexts, however, what is stressed is the shared attributes or characteristics around which memberships of particular groups coalesce. Thus, in collective identity what is found is a single unified social experience from which all members similarly construct a sense of self.

It is assumed people have a need to obtain a relatively positive evaluation of themselves or positive self-esteem and that one of the primary ways that this need is satisfied is by social identification. However, it is not the assumption of a collective self-concept alone that achieves this end. Social identity Theory goes further than the simple assertion that the more inclusive or social the self, the more stable and happy it is. Rather, the claim is that the positive distinctiveness of our identity, achieved by making comparisons between one's own social identity and that of collective 'others', is what leads to positive self-construal. Group members compare their group with others, in order to define their group as positive, and therefore by implication, see themselves in a positive way. If the thesis is correct, the reason one engages a particular social identity is to gain self-esteem and positive self-esteem and positive self-esteem is predicated on positive distinctiveness. In other words, we are only happy when we have another group with which to compare ourselves positively. Belonging provides this opportunity.

The criteria that are used to define the groups we belong to vary significantly. Groups can be categorised according to socio-economic factors, class, gender, sexual orientation, by shared interests, political or religious beliefs or culturally. The understanding of collective identity as cultural identity is particularly relevant in the context of the colonised world where evolutionary frameworks and assumptions about a

supposed hierarchy of being were used to support the positive distinctiveness of the colonising collective. With frequent reference to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as a seminal text, it is popular among late-twentieth century cultural theorists to propose that a culture, a self, a national identity, is always produced in relation to its 'others'. According to this view, the development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter-ego. Furthermore, the construction of identity involves establishing opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the perception that they are different from (and lesser) than 'us'. As discussed in the previous section, it is argued in this way that the colonisers were able to construct identities for those they colonised against which their own positive distinctiveness was assured, and along with this assurance came a depreciation of the 'other' whose lands were colonised. In this case the condition of belonging functions as a means by which a range of individual and social goods can be secured by those that belong—identify with others in (or as) a particular social group—and the rights and freedoms of the other—those that do not identify with the group in question—can be limited.

Given this, the engagement of a collective social identity has definite utility. Not only are self-conceptions that arise through social interactions, and the reflexive knowledge that those interactions allow, more integrated and balanced than those that ensue from reflection on the 'I' alone, but because the adoption of a collective social identity reduces subjective uncertainty (in both material and psychological terms) it also enables the development of a positive self-image. Belonging as a social designation allows the subject to receive and experience those things perceived to be social goods. Again, by assuming identity as most complete as collective identity, personal identity is sacrificed and we are left with an identity that is dependant, not on who and what we are as individuals, but who and what we are in union or at counterpoint with others.

2.1.3. Belonging as Distinctly Human

It is consistently argued that the appearance of social bonds between people (and therefore social aggregates such as family, community or society) depend upon, and are therefore explained by, human disposition—how human beings are disposed, even pre-disposed—to think and act in the world. This mode of thinking and acting one might call

‘sociability’—taken not as a relative collection of skills that enhance social intercourse, but as the feature of human existence that propels individuals into social union and without which belonging, or indeed any form of social intercourse, would be impossible. We know from empirical evidence that this feature of human existence exists, but what is its status? Is sociability a necessary feature of being human, or is it simply one possibility open to those who are already leading human lives. The nature of the conceptual link between sociability, as I have defined it, and belonging is at this stage vague. The important point is that in assessing whether belonging ought to be taken as fundamental to human existence, an account must be given of how far, and in what sense, this sociability can be considered an intrinsic or ‘natural’ feature not just of human psychology, but of human being *per se*.

In the ancient Roman analogy between ‘living’ and ‘being among men’ mentioned previously, the connection is made between the ‘human’ life and the social condition. The question that arises is how far the human being and the social condition of human beings can be thought of as independent structures; how far plurality dictates who and what we are; how far, if at all, the notion of what it is to be human ought to be considered separately from what it is to belong to and with others.

Although human identity has been the subject of inquiry since earliest recordings of human thought, and most would argue that self or individual identity are fundamental parts of what it is to be human, the self as an individual entity is a fairly recent phenomenon. For most of human history what it is to be human was considered far more a matter of one’s place in the worldly order of things. That is to say, human life and identity were thought of as being prescribed in social and religious terms. The idea of an individual self with autonomy or power independent of the order of things and moral sources outside of itself was difficult to entertain and probably superfluous. Being part of something greater than oneself both defined and circumscribed human lives.

In Medieval society, for example, two ideas are predominate. The first is the fundamental importance of the small social group—the family, the gild, the church, and the village community; the second idea, connected with the first, is the centrality of personal status understood according to membership of, or belonging to, one of these small groups. ‘The reality of the separate autonomous individual was as indistinct as that

of centralized political power.’²⁶⁰ In this context, all who are included in (or belong to) the community stand in relation to that community as parts to the whole, and the identity of individuals was totally reliant on that of the group. Indeed for all practical purposes individuals were devoid of individual identity.

According to this way of thinking, belonging was a fundamental pre-requisite for any sort of life. In this environment the idea of a person acting or living according to individual will or right is simply out of place. People had few powers or capacities independent of the socio-political groups they formed. In Medieval thought the philosophy of ‘community’ dominated and corporate association took precedence over individuality in all spheres. In part, this is no doubt a matter of practical necessity, for it is hard to see how the medieval villager could survive economically without belonging to a co-operative of some sort. Furthermore, in the absence of any strong centralised authority communal self-help was necessary at the local level. A village formed a community chiefly because all its members were brought up to consent and act together as a group.

Not only because all its members were submitted to the same set of customs—because the land of every villager lay in the form of strips intermingled with those of his neighbours, because every villager followed the same traditional rotation of crops and sent his cattle to run in a common herd. A village formed a community chiefly because all its members were brought up to consent and act together as a group.²⁶¹

In the Medieval world the philosophy of ‘community’ dominated and corporate association took precedence over individuality in all spheres. The political identity of individuals was embedded in that of the group. In this environment the idea of a person acting or living according to individual will or right is simply out of place. People had few powers or capacities independent of the socio-political groups they formed.

It is clear that for these Medieval villagers, belonging *was* a fundamental pre-requisite for survival and thus, for a certain quality of life. However, is belonging in this way merely a pragmatic feature of human life, or is it more. Do we belong out of

²⁶⁰ Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969): 80.

²⁶¹ George Caspar Homans in Nisbet, 1969: 83.

practical necessity, or is belonging in the way we do a necessary consequence of being human (having a human identity in the first instance)?

One way of trying to understand the relation between self and society is according to the juxtaposition between methodological atomism and methodological holism (or communitarianism). Atomists, on the one hand, defend an image of human beings according to which they come to society with all the characteristic properties that they will ever display, while non-atomist deny this, holding that people only develop distinctive human capacities in relation with others—that is, as a consequence of belonging. According to the logic of Holism, human beings must belong; that individuals devoid of social identity necessarily have no claim to an *identity* that is human. The argument that is used to back up this latter view, in the first instance, is very simple—that since, on the available evidence, humankind has always lived in society, then living in society comes naturally to human beings. Hence, that which we are given to call the state of nature must be a social state rather than antecedent to it. In denying the existence of a pre-social condition of humankind, holists, dismiss the idea of human nature as socially fulfilled. In contrast Social Atomism affirms that societies and governments are not natural, but artificial arrangements, and that for the political and social order to be legitimate it must be founded on agreement, in the form of a tacit contract, between individuals acting freely and rationally.

What we have with the advent of Enlightenment philosophy is an atomistic turn in thinking about both self and society—the re-conceptualisation of human beings as inherently rational *and* self-sufficient and the re-conceptualisation of society as ‘an aggregate of morally autonomous, psychologically free individuals, rather than as a collection of groups.’²⁶² This purview of the human condition was almost certainly encouraged by increased European contact with indigenous peoples who, to their observers, lived a primitive kind of existence characterised by the absence of any recognisable form of social control, religious or civil. Such peoples were conceptualised as pre-political, a condition synonymous with the ‘state of nature’. Contractarian thinkers

²⁶² Nisbet, 1969: 97.

agreed that the organisation of government fashioned by means of a social contract was the proper remedy for the deficiencies of such an existence.²⁶³

This turn can largely be attributed to the thinking of Thomas Hobbes. Nevertheless, in Hobbes' work there remain traces of Greek and Roman political thought. To be a person in Greek and Roman law was to be a political subject—to fulfill a public role. Hobbes extended this definition by suggesting that the public role did not merely *signify* what it is to be a person, but that political subjectivity was a particular *representation* of what it is to be a person.²⁶⁴ A new sense of person emerged according to which personhood was associated with an intrinsic nature and not a public role.²⁶⁵

Although Hobbes did carry over the Greek way of thinking about human beings as 'naturally political', his formulation of this proposition contrasts in significant ways. On his account, the identity of human beings preceded their belonging, rather than arose as a consequence of it—belonging is a natural consequence of what it is to be a person, rather than its cause or source. This is a radical revision on both Greek and Medieval thought that considered that human beings only achieved distinctive human capacities by belonging to a village, a clan or, in the Greek case, to the *polis* as citizens.

Locke also conceived of the individual as having powers and capacities that were not dependant on the influences of (historically developed) socio-political organization. Locke's contribution to our understanding of the self emanates from his reification of human psychology. His invocation of reason necessitates a radical stance on human disengagement from the world and others in it. In Locke there comes a separation between what it is to have a human identity and what it is to be a person. For Locke human identity is associated with 'participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organised body.'²⁶⁶ In this sense the identity of human beings is no different to that of other animals. But a person is not merely a living body; for Locke a person is 'a thinking intelligent being,

²⁶³ The influence of the political philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century on perceptions of indigenous peoples is also discussed in Section 1.2.2.

²⁶⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651): I. xvi: 5.

²⁶⁵ Ross Poole, *Nation and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999): 47.

²⁶⁶ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) II. xxvii: 6.

that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself²⁶⁷ independent of other selves.

Acknowledgement of the capacity of a self to consider itself as itself is an important one in the history of thought. It is the granting of self-knowledge that gives rise to models of the self as independent and set aside from the world in which it dwells. Without such a capacity selfhood was necessarily portrayed as a mode of being dependant upon external sources for definition. In Descartes ‘the vantage point of the ‘I think’ is somehow outside the world of things we experience.’²⁶⁸ Confidence that ‘I think therefore I am’ is crucial to the Cartesian model, which articulates the notion of personhood according to an analysis that is inward-looking and understands self as independent of the world outside itself.

To some extent most theories of personal subjectivity follow a confessional-religious tradition in which salvation of the soul was what mattered and that salvation was personal. However, surprisingly, Cartesian introspection is not one of them. For Descartes the step inward is designed to provide a science of the knower in its general essence. In doing so, he is then able to construct a science of the known. Descartes found the self, but it was the self as universal rather than personal. Descartes may well have answered the question ‘What am I?’—a thinking thing—but his brief did not include answering the question ‘*Who* am I, as myself and distinct from others?’ This question—of particularity—is an entirely different one. While Cartesian thought allows radical disengagement from ordinary experience and therefore distinguishes what it is to be human from what it is to be other things, to know who we are as individuals requires an even deeper engagement in our particularity.

While disengagement of this kind is essential to notions of modern individuality in terms of understanding the universal independence of the subject, we come to this understanding by objectifying the subjective. In doing so, personal identity fails to have relevance because all subjects are in essence the same. The Cartesian self is a self because it belongs to a very particular class of beings, that is, human beings. However,

²⁶⁷ Locke, *Essay* (1690): II. xxvii: 9.

²⁶⁸ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 131.

understandings of modern individuality rely not only on understanding the inner nature of human beings, but rather on discovering it.

Despite their differences, however, there is almost unanimous agreement between holistic and atomistic thinkers that the relevant and distinctive characteristic, quality or capacity by which human beings are differentiated from other creatures is the capacity for reason. The capacity considered to be properly human, and on which both arguments spin, is rationality. Both camps argue that rationality is a distinctive human capacity. That is to say in the simplest of terms, according to holists the ability to have rational beliefs is dependant on social relationships while atomists hold that human beings possess this ability independent of social interaction.²⁶⁹ So whether rationality drives human beings to belong or whether rationality arises out of belonging, belonging is most definitely considered *the* rational way of being.

Hobbes' vision only made sense if human beings did not depend on society for their status as rational human beings and therefore as potential contractors. For Hobbes an individual's life in a 'state of nature', although pre-political,²⁷⁰ and pre-societal²⁷¹, is nevertheless fully human *qua* fully rational. Socio-political institutions owe their formation to human beings (as persons who are rational, self-interested and free). Holists, on the other hand, insist that rationality only arises in a social context. Here rationality can be taken as the capacity to act in a rational way in the pursuit of goals (rather than acting by sheer instinct).

Does this mean, however, that according to social holists rationality equates to the capacity not only to think and reason, to act with a view to rational beliefs (or otherwise to be directed toward rational ends), but to be other-directed—to take into account the effect of one's thoughts, decisions and/or desires (mental events) and actions on other human beings in the pursuit of ends?²⁷² If this is what is being argued—that rationality always takes into account the existence of other rational beings—what we have is a

²⁶⁹ For arguments relating to the exact nature (causal or non-causal) of the relationship between rationality and social relationships see Philip Pettit, *The Common Mind: An Essay on Psychology, Society and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁷⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathon* chs. 3-5.

²⁷¹ Jean Hampton in Robert Goodin & Philip Pettit ed., *A Companion to Contemporary Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993): 380.

²⁷² Bearing also in mind that on some accounts 'rational ends' would count only as those that satisfy self-interest.

circular argument; rational thought is a distinctive human capacity; rational thought counts as the ability for mental events to be other (human) directed; therefore rationality is dependant on interaction with other human beings—that is, belonging to and with a group.

A better understanding of the notion of selfhood and of the relation between the self as an individual and its social aspect is not merely of passing intellectual interest. Ever since the rapid adoption of the values and ideology of individualism in most western industrialised countries it has become an important practical problem. It is also implicated in our thinking about, some might even say our obsession with, belonging.

Most of the key ideas with which both political and/or social philosophers engage while involved in studies of self and society (that is, justice, liberty, equality, right, obligation, autonomy), are necessarily connected with certain models of how human beings think and act. (Indeed, it is hard to imagine how any philosophy at all can be conducted without the methodological support of some model of human thought and action, whether that model is explicitly expressed or not.) These models are not only descriptive, but also normative. They provide prescriptions about how human beings, both individually and as collectives, ought to conceptualise and conduct themselves in order that they might realise that which is properly human about human beings. That is to say, most of the positive key concepts of political philosophy, it is argued, ought to be valued because they describe or facilitate properly human modes of thought and action. They are thus prescriptions for the ideal human condition.

Much philosophical energy has been given over to analysis and discussion of the human condition—to the proper, fundamental or distinctive capacities that distinguish human beings from other creatures and therefore make us who and what we are. In this regard philosophical studies of self and society are no exception. As we have previously discussed models that centre on contract are inevitably predicated on the priority of the individual. The autonomous individual is put at the centre of the both the system of law and that of morality.

However, individualism—especially of the kind that is ‘atomistic’, ‘radical’ and ‘Hobbesian’ in character—also has its harsh critics. Among the most prominent is

philosopher Charles Taylor.²⁷³ Taylor insists that individualism (and its connection to classical liberal, libertarian political theory) constitutes the principal malaise of modernity. He argues that our acceptance of a system oriented toward the satisfaction of self-interest and with an over-emphasis on individual rights has led to value relativity as well as to a culture of narcissism. This point is also frequently implicit in social-political critiques of ‘modern’ living, where negative consequences of the supposed exultation of the individual are often presented in contrast to the ethics of community.²⁷⁴

Taylor takes for granted as a matter of record that most modern political theory is formulated in such a way as to assert ‘natural’ individual rights, and to give these rights primacy, but argues forcefully that the veracity of this formulation is far from self-evident. Firstly, Taylor argues that most modern political theories, institutions and policies are founded on atomistic doctrine that views human beings as self-sufficient, taking the condition of self-sufficiency from its Aristotelian antithesis. Working from this premise he points out the contradictory nature of contractarian doctrine. If human beings are self-sufficient why do they need to enter into social contracts in the first place?

If the argument follows that the reason that human beings enter into social contracts is because they reason a particular political structure as providing the best vehicle for the satisfaction of natural rights then we must accept that individual rights precede and have priority over social union. However, Taylor challenges the veracity of this conclusion by focusing more specifically on the specific nature of the bundle of human rights that social union is meant to satisfy. If we take that category of rights as that which relates to the exercise of autonomy in the basic issues of life, that is, as Taylor puts it, the ‘freedom by which men are capable of conceiving alternatives and arriving at a definition of what they really want, as well as discerning what commands their adherence or their allegiance’,²⁷⁵ then it is hard to see how individual rights can precede and have priority over social union. How can the isolated individual know what he really wants (be

²⁷³ See for example Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

²⁷⁴ My own view is that our thinking in regard to the status of the individual has become rather muddled—even contradictory. For example, on the one hand there is a groundswell movement directed toward ‘finding one (inner) self’, and on the other there is a cry to get back to community values. I part, this thesis hopes to bring these two, seemingly contradictory ideas to a crossroads.

²⁷⁵ Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 204.

self-sufficient) or conceive of various alternatives (be in a position to choose allegiances)? Surely, '[t]his kind of freedom is unavailable to one whose sympathies and horizons are so narrow that he can conceive only one way of life, for whom indeed the very notion of a way of life which is his as against everyone's has no sense.'²⁷⁶ Given the apparent soundness of this proposition and what logically follows—that the identity of the autonomous, self-determining individual possessed of rights requires a social matrix—then belonging to a community or society must precede and have priority to those rights.

The way that Taylor couches the issue is in terms of the conjuncture between atomistic theories that assert the primacy-of-rights and non-atomistic theories or theories of belonging. According to Taylor's understanding 'theories of belonging' are those in which 'men *qua* men have an obligation to belong and to sustain society'. These theories grant that 'being among men' is a natural feature of the human condition in virtue of the fact that the exercise of freedom taken as a distinctive human capacity can only occur when we belong to/in a social context. 'In primacy-of-right theories the notion is that simply by nature we are under no obligation to belong whatever; we have first to contract such an obligation.'²⁷⁷ Taylor argues that primacy-of-right theories are far from conclusive; that the principle which states 'our obligation as men to belong to or sustain society' as fundamental and unconditional—holding 'by nature'—is just as plausible as any principle which ascribes 'natural' rights to individuals.

Following Taylor's argument the free individual who affirms himself as such already has an obligation to belong. It follows then that it is only in social contexts that expressions of humanity—freedom and rationality—are really possible. Thus, Taylor returns to what might be considered the orthodox communitarian or holistic position. Arguing the case as he does, Taylor not only asserts the primacy of the obligation to belong to the human condition, but also further clarifies the notion of belonging *per se*. The definition of belonging is extended by him from that with which we started—that is, belonging as being part of a body of people with sufficient commonality and of sufficient size to warrant a distinct identity—to belonging as the completion, restoration, or

²⁷⁶ Taylor, 1985: 204.

²⁷⁷ Taylor, 1985: 188 cf.

sustenance of society, given that it is only through this kind of activity that identity is possible in the first instance.²⁷⁸ Taylor introduces belonging as a human condition that is both more fundamental and more active than is encapsulated by being part of a group—being one individual among a multitude of others.

Political theorist and philosopher Hannah Arendt, agrees with Taylor that being among men is fundamental to the human condition and that belonging involves an imperative of action, however her formulation is rather more idiosyncratic than his. Arendt is concerned—particularly in her work *The Human Condition* (1958)—with reinstating political experience at the apex of human existence. For Arendt both freedom and plurality are primary constitutive elements of a distinctly human existence. Here, freedom is defined in terms of political action—that is to say, people acting and speaking together.²⁷⁹ Plurality is *the* condition of freedom as the political which finds its only true expression in action. As Arendt puts it:

Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men ... corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world. While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically *the* condition - not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* - of all political life.²⁸⁰

In other words, for Arendt, action is a *public* category, a worldly practice that is experienced in our acting and speaking with others, and so it is a practice that ‘both presupposes and can be actualised only in a human polity’. According to Arendt’s understanding, *action*, rather than *reason* is the relevant and distinctive capacity by which human beings are who and what they are and according to which a properly human life is made possible.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Taylor, 1985: 209.

²⁷⁹ Arendt, 1998: 188-189.

²⁸⁰ Arendt, 1998: 7.

²⁸¹ One of the fundamental concerns of *The Human Condition* is with challenging Platonic traditions that privilege *lexis* (speech) above *praxis* (activity). It is not that Arendt disputes the fundamental importance of human dialogue—nothing could be further from the truth—but rather that she is critical of the influence of Greek thinking that emphasises the connection between speech and reason and in doing so gives primacy to the *vita contemplativa* (the realm of thought). Believing that this misplaced emphasis has led to a profound

On Arendt's account human action is privileged because it is only through action and speech that the human world has reality—in Arendt's words, and with echoes of Martin Heidegger, that humankind is given 'the space of appearance.'

It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the world, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.... To men the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others.²⁸²

The idea that human plurality is the basic condition of both action and speech and all that is real in terms of human existence is predicated on plurality. Neither abstract 'plurality' nor concrete 'human community', properly speaking, are, or can be, defined by encircling a multitude of people within a geographical locality. Rather plurality and community arise in the space created by people acting and speaking together, wherever or whenever that occurs.²⁸³ And whenever and wherever that occurs a public space is disclosed, a common human world is created and the possibility of belonging is actualised. According to Arendt then, the obligation to belong is an obligation to share a common human world with others. On this account belonging is not something which one is assigned (as it is suggested one is assigned a social identity), but rather, belonging is the acting out of who and what we are as inhabitant of a common world.

In addition, Arendt tells us something further about the nature of plurality and this common world—that it has a twofold character of equity and distinction. She explains:

If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or ever will be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood.²⁸⁴

misunderstanding of the nature of human polity, Arendt reasserts the *vita activa* (the realm of action) as the fundamental condition of a properly human life.

²⁸² Arendt, 1998: 198-199.

²⁸³ Arendt, 1998: 198-199.

²⁸⁴ Arendt, 1998: 175.

The obligation to belong is therefore not a commitment to equality as sameness or homogeneity, but an obligation to disclose oneself publicly and in doing so to make oneself understood as distinct.’ According to the ontology of plurality, the world relates and separates people at the same time. ‘Only the experience of sharing a common human world with others who look at it from *different perspectives* can enable us to see reality in the round and to develop a shared common sense.’²⁸⁵

In terms of understanding the relation between self and society there is resonance here with Taylor, in that for him, and other communitarian thinkers, the identity of the autonomous, self-determining individual requires a social matrix; similarly for Arendt, the condition of plurality provides the space for the appearance of a distinct identity. Additionally, Taylor’s argument, that the condition of autonomy—that is ‘freedom by which men are capable of conceiving alternatives and arriving at a definition of what they really want, as well as discerning what commands their adherence or their allegiance’—is not available to the socially isolated, is matched by Arendt. The condition of freedom is crucial to Arendt’s understanding of plurality and community; according to her analysis, the essence of freedom is participation and action. Freedom, properly speaking, can only be located in the public realm.²⁸⁶

This is doubtless for two reasons. Firstly, as with the reality of any phenomenon, the reality of freedom is predicated on it having a space of appearance. Only ‘appearance—something that is being seen and heard by others as well as ourselves — constitutes reality.’²⁸⁷ According to this understanding, publicity then is intrinsically associated with what is real in the world. Arendt makes this explicit when she identifies ‘the world itself’ as one signification of the term “public”.²⁸⁸ For Arendt, the public realm signifies the world itself in so far as it is common to us all. She says:

The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritual séance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each

²⁸⁵ Margaret Canovan in ‘Introduction’, Arendt, 1998: xiii, (my emphasis).

²⁸⁶ Arendt, 1998: 73.

²⁸⁷ Arendt, 1998: 50.

²⁸⁸ Arendt, 1998: 52.

other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible.²⁸⁹

In this state of worldlessness neither freedom nor plurality has a space of appearance—neither personal identity nor belonging (separation from, nor relation to others) is possible.²⁹⁰

Both Taylor and Arendt suggest, philosophically speaking, that somewhere along the line we got the ontological relation between self and society wrong. Taylor locates the wrong turn as that which led to a mistaken acceptance of primacy-of-right theories, and Arendt as that which led to a profound misunderstanding of the nature of human polity. Both of these philosophers attempt to halt the process by stopping the flow of orthodox political thought in its tracks, driving it back upon itself to the junction where the error was made and then heading it off in a more proper direction. In important respects they are driving toward the same point. Both challenge the ontological or metaphysical claims that atomistic/Western liberal accounts make about the social nature of the self. Both understand their work in terms of a response to what they perceive as the negative consequences of ‘modern world alienation’.²⁹¹ Both wish to re-enchant notions concerning humankind’s obligation to belong to and sustain a ‘horizon of significance’²⁹² which stretches between persons rather than being exclusive to any one of them.

They also shed some light on what ‘not belonging’ might mean. On their account, without belonging in its social designation not only do individuals have nothing against which to differentiate themselves—no background against which to stand out—but each person is driven back on their own subjective experience, a life in which only their own feelings, wants and desires have reality.²⁹³ In the absence of social belonging we find ourselves neither distinct and separated from others, nor related and unified with them. In

²⁸⁹ Arendt, 1998: 53.

²⁹⁰ Arendt’s work in relation to the twofold nature of plurality—equality and distinction—resonates with the dialectical connection between differentiation and relatedness, first discussed in Section 1.1.2. In Arendt’s case this dialectic is apparent in the notion of each individual actualising a world in common and thus the possibility of a fully human life enacted among men.

²⁹¹ This term is Arendt’s but it could just as easily apply to Taylor’s understanding of the erosion of social contexts according to which individual person’s can measure themselves.

²⁹² This term is Taylor’s but it could just as easily apply to Arendt’s understanding of the world as that which gives meaning by relating and separating people.

²⁹³ Canovan on the thought of Arendt in Arendt, 1998: xiii; Taylor, 1992: *passim*.

this condition two potential responses seem likely—either we look outward to the collective to provide us with a suitable background, or we turn in upon ourselves in a narcissistic reversal of the gaze.

It could be argued that the theories examined in the section above are all attempts, in one or another, to establish a ‘horizon of significance’ that recuperates both our sense of belonging and our sense of self. According to all of these theories, to belong is to be connected in and to a certain social configuration. The scope and character of our social horizon therefore determines who and what we are and to what extent we belong in the terrain in which we find ourselves.

2.2 Belonging as Historical

It is generally accepted that many of the things we know about ourselves we know from ‘the past’—that our understanding of ourselves, the world in which we presently live and our relation to it, is derived from an analysis of past actions, events and connections. Implicit in this process is the rationale that present experience is somehow causally linked to actions and events of the past and, as a corollary, that an examination of the past can disclose important insights into our present condition. For, example, the past is often used to evaluate the political, social and moral spheres of current lived experience—to judge whether human kind has developed or regressed. In connection, the past is also understood to explain who and what we are as individuals and as a species, and how we are placed in relation to the world and others living in it.

For Nietzsche it is precisely this historical mode of thinking, peculiar to humankind, that differentiates it from the herd of beasts. ‘The beast lives *unhistorically*; for it “goes into” the present, like a number, without leaving any curious remainder. It cannot dissimulate, it conceals nothing; at every moment it seems what it actually is, and thus can be nothing that is not honest.’²⁹⁴ Humans, on the other hand, cannot avoid remembering their past—cannot forget where and what they have been, and thus are free to continually re-create themselves. Regardless of the veracity of Nietzsche’s strong claim that remembering the past is a logical necessity of the human condition, the weaker claim, that a majority of people *choose* to remember and reflect on the past, is certainly true. In the same way that ascent to causal principles might be considered a human habit because of its stubborn refusal to quit the human psyche, so too might the human quest to know about the past and to interpret and order experience with that knowledge in mind. The human obsession with the past has a long history of its own.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Adrian Collins ([1949]; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1957): 5.

²⁹⁵ Given arguments which isolate certain groups—particularly indigenes—from ‘historical’ thinking, I am sensitive to the fact that I might be charged here with writing within an ethnocentric, and Western, cultural framework. The point I wish to make here does not rely on ‘historical thinking’ as it is narrowly understood in disciplinary terms, but addresses the more general point that the vast majority of people are at least interested in their origins, and for many of that number a flourishing and meaningful life depends, more or less, on knowing their ancestry and having a sense of the roots of their culture and the heritage of their cultural group. This fact is evident in even the earliest of ethnographic accounts.

In a contemporary context, the logic of hanging onto the historical past is in evidence across a broad spectrum of human activity: in the world of academia, speculative employment of the past is commonplace in both the Humanities and Social Sciences—central to the fields of History, Archaeology and Psychology.²⁹⁶ The idea that belonging as a social designation is related somehow to the historical development of humankind and to human history itself is also pervasive across a range of disciplines and perspectives. In many of these accounts the past is mobilised to describe and explain the nature and role of belonging.

The next section looks specifically at how the past, and the way we perceive our connection to it, impacts on our sense of belonging in the present. Explanations regarding the human need to be socially related very often look to humankind's past development and argue that belonging has an evolutionary basis. On the other hand, tracing belonging into deep time has become, for the scientific community and others, a source of both explanation and affirmation. Indeed, the past—whether it is that of an individual or a nation—is frequently employed as an explanatory device where identity and belonging are concerned.

2.2.1 The Phylogenetic Impulse

The human propensity to form communities is often discussed in phylogenetic terms. That is to say, it is not unusual to find explanations regarding why and how people belong written into the story of human development. We shall see this impulse in notions concerning environmental belonging covered in the next section, we have already seen something of it in conceptualisations of social belonging in the social and political philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it is just as evident in some streams of modern Psychology and Sociology. In the early part of the twentieth century researchers of self and society understood the pervasive desire of humans to affiliate in

²⁹⁶ In more general discourse people express the necessity and desire to know the past in order to 'find themselves' or to justify or authenticate their present experience. In current popular culture there has been a noticeable increase in genealogical research and even the more 'new-age' practice of 're-birthing'. These activities emphasize the epistemological, psychological and existential benefit that knowing about past human life and lives is considered to bestow upon the thinker.

terms of instinct or gregarious propensity—an inborn tendency to gather together,²⁹⁷ and although simplistic instinct theories fell quickly out of favour with the advent of behaviourism, an attempt to find some psycho-biological basis for social behaviour persisted. In this regard, the theoretical process of evolution provided a rich field to mine.

If evolution has instilled the desire to belong, then it follows that this desire is universal among human beings and will be present in each person without being derivative of other motives. According to evolutionary psychology, social behaviour is adaptive and helps the individual, kin and species as a whole to survive and flourish. It remains plausible then, although as yet unproven, that the need to belong is part of the human biological inheritance. When Baumeister and Leary claim that the need to belong is necessary to the human condition, for example, they indicate that the motivation to achieve belongingness is innate.²⁹⁸ Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where belonging sits amongst other so-called fundamental human needs for survival, assumes the same kind of thing. What these theorists argue is that the need for belongingness has developed in humankind as a fundamental trait.

It is a characteristic argument of evolutionary psychological theory that increasing complexity in social structure and organisation represents a positive human adaption. Evolutionary social psychologists draw attention to functional distinctions between four different social models that they claim represent hierarchical levels of social competence. According to this schema social configurations range in sophistication from dyads (two-person relationships), to teams (small face-to-face social units), to bands (small interacting communities) to tribes (large bands characterised by shared identity, but not necessarily face-to-face contact).²⁹⁹

The development of a more inclusive (extended or social) sense of self is a necessary corollary to this. Some theorists in this field suggest that the biological evolution of the human brain was itself the consequence of the need for the cognitive structuring of an extended self-concept—one that was equipped to manage the

²⁹⁷ See for example the work of W. McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology* ([1908]; London: Methuen, 1960).

²⁹⁸ Baumeister & Leary, 1995: 517.

²⁹⁹ Brewer & Gardner, 1996: 84.

increasingly complex social interactions within successful emerging social groups.³⁰⁰ The implication of this hypothesis is profound as it suggests that the development of the human brain or central nervous system is directly related to belonging to a group larger and more complex than a reproductive pair or nuclear family. In doing so, what such accounts also suggest is the simultaneous emergence of selfhood and belonging, and thus the possibility of an ontological dependence between the two.

A stable sense of self is considered in all psychological theorizing as necessary for a fully human life. Furthermore, meaningful interactions with others are deemed essential if people are to achieve a stable sense of self-identity. It is therefore no surprise that the work of some psychologists examine the role and nature of the human self-concept in the evolutionary process.³⁰¹ Given that in evolutionary psychological accounts the development of more complex social configurations is taken to be a positive adaptation, and that the development of a more inclusive sense of self is necessary for this process, the progressive development of a more inclusive conceptualisation of the self is also seen as a positive adaption. According to this account, the more complex the social organisation the more inclusive will be the sense of self experienced by its members, and the more likely they are to lead flourishing lives. Those, whose social group is small and highly differentiated, have a more exclusive sense of self and are less likely to prosper.

This theme is present as an undertone of early sociology. Much late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century sociology aimed to understand the break-up of the old order and the genesis of the new, and a significant part of their work was directed toward the typification of western social structures and systems as they changed from pre-industrial to industrial forms. The structure of human relations was subject to a polemical analysis, and the notion of phylogenetic social development quickly became one of the essential unit-ideas of sociology. The assumption of an historical transition from traditional to modern forms has been implicit in sociological thought and theory ever since.

³⁰⁰ It could be argued that this idea sits rather too comfortably with those motivating physical anthropologists in the 1800s when the practice of phrenology was employed in attempts to prove that the cognitive capacity of Australian Aborigines was less developed than their European counterparts.

³⁰¹ See for example D. M. Buss, *Evolutionary Psychology* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999).

The definitive account is offered by Tönnies' typology of social forms, discussed from another perspective in the previous section. *Gemeinschaft* (or community) and *Gesellschaft* (or society) are often understood (or misunderstood) to support the view that less complex, older or more traditional types of social organization are in some sense inferior to new or modern types. *Gemeinschaft* is taken as representing the traditional social order, motivated by instinct (*Wesenwille* or natural will), and *Gesellschaft* as its modern replacement, motivated by reason (*Kurwille* or rational will). There is, of course some of the same phylogenetic and evolutionary orientation in descriptions of belonging provided by political philosophy, particularly in accounts relating to the notion of social contract and the advent of modern political society. Indeed, Tönnies' argument concerning and differentiating *natural* and *rational* will engages with the same questions as Hobbes and Locke in determining the nature of belonging in relation to the rationality of human beings. Here we have two alternatives—either belonging arises out of rationality or rationality arises out of belonging. Regardless, the question is still understood by contractarian thinkers in a historiosophical context, albeit that such a rendering is by virtue of thought experiment rather than any serious scientific evolutionary evaluation.

While it is the historiosophical dimension of Tönnies' work that most captured the nineteenth-century sociological imagination and is its dominant legacy, the tone of its influence is ambiguous. Tönnies' influence on humanistic Sociology³⁰² is particularly significant, and his typology became the basis of a number of other attempts to characterise the development of social organization from simple to complex types. Redfield, for example, characterised pre-industrial societies as 'folk society' and industrial societies as 'urban societies'. Parson's typology, known as the 'patterns variable, outlined the patterns according to which social structure may be expected to vary between pre-industrial and industrial societies, and Durkheim characterized the two types of society as exhibiting 'organic solidarity' and 'mechanical solidarity'.³⁰³ Tönnies' social typology also manages to permeate the theory of the ecological thinkers of the 'Chicago School' and that of orthodox anthropology. These thinkers, in their different

³⁰² Key thinkers in this field are Georg Simmel and Max Weber.

³⁰³ For a summary of how these distinctions were deployed in early sociology see Robert Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969): 71-73.

ways, provide accounts of human collectives that share Tönnies' typological orientation. Typically distinctions are made between tradition and modern types and take juxtapositional forms such as country/town, agricultural/industrial or localised/cosmopolitan. All are variations on community/society or *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* distinctions proffered by Tönnies.

While orthodox renderings of Tönnies' account emphasize the inevitability of a historical and phylogenetic transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* forms of social organisation and stimulate psychological evaluations that privilege 'inclusive' construals of the self over 'exclusive' ones, a peculiar anomaly is associated with this theoretical framework. It is paradoxical indeed that evolutionary models—designed to explain the positive development of humankind—should have such unsatisfactory conclusions. Indeed, the idea that as self and society advances, the identity and belonging of human beings is qualitatively enhanced is contradicted by the assumption, held by an increasing number of people (in the academy and the health professions), that our capacity for positive self-construal and sense of belonging has declined, particularly since the advent of the modern nation-state, industrialisation and mass urbanisation. Although evolutionary theorists suggest otherwise, the latter view expresses the idea that the more complex our cognitive capacities and social organisation becomes, the lesser is our perceived sense of self and belonging.

Caught in this predicament, many have sought to redeem a sense of identity and belonging by looking to 'less advanced' models of social organization as their guide. In connection there has been a revival of interest in *Gemeinschaft*-like social structures, 'folk' and 'primitive' societies. It is now frequently argued that it is these 'simple' forms of community that offer human beings the positive sense of identity and belonging left behind when human society entered the modern age.

2.2.2. Tracing our Belonging into the Deep Past

As is evidenced in the proliferation of evolutionary theory, tracing humanity's roots back to its origins is considered by many to have powerful symbolic value. The human need to discover and understand the origin of the world and of humankind is fundamental, as are the existential consequences that arise from its gratification. The stories we tell ourselves

about where we have come from are highly influential on the way we understand ourselves and plot our lives. Propositions about the origins of humankind are foundational to the construction of perceptions of who or what we are, our place in the world, where and how we belong and, in accordance, how we should act. When we discussed the influence of evolutionary theory on our perceptions of human belonging we focussed on belonging as a development. In this section the focus is more on the depth of belonging—how it is assumed that belonging is built up over time—the longer the better.

Tom Griffiths is one historian who believes that we need to take a longer range view of time and history. After the French historian Fernand Braudel, Griffiths champions ‘the need for historians to look beyond ‘social time’ or *l’histoire événementielle*, the history of events, in order to embrace *la longue durée*, the slower moving structures and cycles of centuries.’³⁰⁴ Braudel, so Griffiths argues ‘participated in that urgent post-war search for a history to live by, one that found human commonality beyond the categories of ‘nation’ or ‘race’, one that pushed history back into ‘prehistory’.’ He argues also that a number of Australian historians have adopted the same approach in order to ‘dramatise the cataclysmic impact of Europeans on the continent, to heighten the apocalyptic tone of his narrative, and to increase our sense of the environmental destructiveness of western industrialization and of the Enlightenment’³⁰⁵ However, Griffiths believes that deep time perspectives can also offer consolation. ‘If Aborigines made mistakes when they first arrived in Australia, if they misjudged the resources of the continent and then learnt to adapt and were able to establish an impressive, sustainable civilization there, then new settlers might, over time, learn to do the same.’³⁰⁶

Indeed, Griffiths is generally very positive about the application of ‘deep time’ notions to understandings of how we ought conduct ourselves in and on this continent, stating that:

³⁰⁴ Tom Griffiths, ‘Travelling in Deep Time: *La Longue Durée* in Australian History’, *Australian Humanities Review* (June, 2000)

<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-June-2000/griffiths4.html>, accessed December 2002.

³⁰⁵ Griffiths, 2000.

³⁰⁶ Griffiths, 2000.

The discovery of an Australian human history in ‘deep time’, this late and accelerated twentieth-century revolution, has changed how we see ourselves, and how we reconfigure our country's history. It gives us a deep perspective on contemporary debates over population, ecological purity, environmental limits, multiculturalism, and the legitimacy of modern Australian settlement. ...And it also indigenises Australian history, plumbing the depths of the continent's natural and human past, localising the Australian story.³⁰⁷

The indigenisation of Australian history is something we have discussed with some concern in Section One. This same concern does not escape Griffiths. He concludes his discussion of the utility of integrating deep-time notions into Australian historical accounts by saying ‘[b]ut non-Aboriginal Australians have to ask themselves if this is yet another act of appropriation?’³⁰⁸ It is an interesting observation given the recent inclusion of deep time perspectives in discourses on belonging in this country.

It is not only settler Australians who have sought to indigenise Australian history. Both Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians look to their Australian origins (whether these origins are in history or pre-history) in order to establish, perpetuate and re-enforce their senses of identity and belonging. When using connectedness to Australia's past as the barometer of belonging to country appeals are popularly made to the length and/or depth of connection. When judging the length and/or depth of Aboriginal and non-indigenous' connectedness to this country, time is frequently used as an instrument of measurement. Although complex relations between qualitative and quantitative considerations inevitably arise, evidence of long or deep time connection with particular places—be they national, regional or local—is often successfully deployed in debates that address the issue of belonging to and in this country.

To many, Australia is still ‘young’ —youthful chronologically, but also in terms of its burgeoning potentiality. Australia is perceived as a fresh and energetic country, not fully mature but also neither wearied by time, nor weakened by age. It is true that the history of non-indigenous dwelling in this country is exceptionally short—so short in fact that the past is still very much present and immediate. We do not necessarily need to dig very deeply to uncover the relics of early-colonial occupation. These are the artefacts that support non-indigenous belongings. However, so too does modern Australia retain

³⁰⁷ Griffiths, 2000.

³⁰⁸ Griffiths, 2000.

powerful reminders of the precedent belonging of its indigenous peoples. These reminders are not only physical—sacred places, material culture and the people themselves—but increasingly they are both psychological and political.

The work of historical archaeologists in Australia had its inception in the 1960s,³⁰⁹ about the same time as revisionist Australian histories began to emerge. Since then there has been a perceivable and growing interest in finding new contexts in which non-indigenous peoples might have been first connected with primordial or antiquarian Australian landscapes and peoples. It is not only that, in response to revisionist history and the land rights debate that Australians have become increasingly inquisitive about issues of first contact. During the past several decades, critical inquiry has been lavished upon cultural, race and identity politics, especially in the context of colonised countries. There has been a fashionable infatuation with notions of difference—of an otherness, and of the other—which frame many of these new discourses.

Alongside these studies, and in relatively disparate fields, the focus has been diametrical. The endeavour has been to disclose a shared heritage and history. In the historical field an increasing effort has been made to reveal how the history of non-indigenous and Aboriginal Australians meet and intersect.³¹⁰ What I would like to focus on here, however, is how the scientific community has been drawn into debates regarding questions of belonging in and to this country. Their contribution comes from activity in a much grander project with a much broader focus than that of the historians. Theirs is a quest to discover the ‘cradle of humanity’ and the peopling of the world on a global scale. Assumptions based upon this work are often at play in arguments regarding ancestral origins and, although scholars in the Humanities rarely mention it, appeals to anthropogenetics also have a powerful—if subterranean—influence on arguments concerning belonging.

One of the obsessions of scientists for some time now has been to trace humanity’s evolution back to common ancestry and forward into familial diversity. The commonly held theory had been, until very recently, that since people began migrating out of Africa

³⁰⁹ For an overview of the field see C. E. Orser ed., *Encyclopedia of Historical Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2002).

³¹⁰ This impulse, toward articulating a shared history as foundation for shared belongings, is discussed in some detail in Section One.

more than 1.5 million years ago, there had been a single evolving species. The Human Genome Diversity Project supports this idea. The founding story of humankind, told by archaeologists, anthropologists and geneticists, is one in which identity precedes diversity. The further that they are able to retreat into the past, the closer they come to introducing modern peoples to their ancient progenitor. What they are attempting to prove (or disprove) is that, no matter our diversity now, we nevertheless all belong together (to the one original tribe). The further back human activity can be traced within the temporal frame the more successful the pre-historians. In association, the age of specimens has become paramount. Significance is measured by dating, and this process has captured the imagination of the public. Antiquity is a precious commodity—a criterion of value—in an object, a culture and a species.

Although the quest to find the ‘cradle of humanity’ is one of global concern, the project has had a particular and idiosyncratic significance in Australia, and in this context I am inclined to agree paradoxically with Paul Gillen in his critique of Griffiths that ‘deep time has a darker side’.³¹¹ One only has to observe the publicity attracted by ‘Mungo Man’—the skeletal remains discovered in 1974 by a geomorphologist near Lake Mungo, New South Wales. Radiocarbon dating techniques soon revealed that ‘Mungo Man’ had died at least 32, 000 years ago. This was exciting enough, but in 1999 ‘Mungo Man’ hit the international headlines again. New dating methods had shown that the earlier estimation could reasonably be doubled and that this ancient ‘aboriginal’ ancestor probably lived between 56,000 and 68,000 years ago.³¹² If archaeological research proves that the ancestors of Aboriginal peoples dwelt in this country 60,000 years ago—300 times longer than any European forebear—then Aboriginal claims of belonging to this land in deeper and more profound ways than non-Aboriginal Australians do seem well founded. As Lesley Head observes ‘the Aboriginal person ... derives enhanced legitimacy in today’s Australia from a date provided by an archaeologist; the undertone here is that one hundred thousand years is better than fifty thousand. The older the better.’³¹³

³¹¹ Paul Gillen, ‘A Response to Tom Griffiths by Paul Gillen’, *Australian Humanities Review* (2000). <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/emuse/time/gillen.html> (Retrieved December 2002).

³¹² Lesley Head, 2000: 5.

³¹³ Lesley Head, 2000: 5.

The proven antiquity of ‘Mungo Man’ supports accounts that consistently place the genesis of Aboriginal peoples in deep time, however it is also used to back an even deeper claim. In the minds of some, this discovery amounts to scientific verification of the veracity of Aboriginal mythological accounts of the coming into being of Aboriginal peoples. According to these accounts Aboriginal peoples have *always* been here—Aboriginal peoples sprang originally from places in this country, by the same modes and at the same times as the landscape itself was defined. Autochthony, according to this logic, is a primordial category, and as such the ultimate signifier of belongingness.

Contrary to this, the orthodox anthropogenic account is that Australia was probably populated by successive waves of people, their arrival, by foot or sea, coinciding with massive changes in sea level. According to this way of thinking Aboriginal peoples might be descendants of one of the earlier migrant groups, possibly even the first. Aboriginal originality in any primordial sense, therefore, is only intelligible as an allegory. The notion that a range of different peoples populated the Australian continent over time has also been seized upon where identity politics and contested belongings are concerned. This theory, it is argued, substantially erodes indigenous claims to belonging based upon primordial origins and opens the space of belonging to their non-indigenous counterparts. Those who uphold this claim espouse the position that if the human history of this continent is characterised by successive waves of migrants, the belonging of none can be legitimately privileged over the other.

This position is exemplified by Peter James, a non-Aboriginal geologist who has come to identify as ‘a fellow of the Delunburra people of Fraser Island’³¹⁴ (although the basic premises of his argument are not uncommonly espoused in popular discourses). James asserts that in determining who, or what, an Aborigine is, we need to take account of the human history of this continent, ‘which apparently has always been one of accepting new immigrants, each bringing a new culture, each probably wreaking its own tragedy with the indigenous populations of the time.’³¹⁵ James holds to the position that

³¹⁴ All material pertaining to Peter James and his hypotheses, including direct quotations, are drawn from ‘The Indigenous Dilemma’ broadcast on ABC Radio National, *Ockham’s Razor*, March 4, 2001.

³¹⁵ That successive waves of immigrants to this country dispossessed and decimated, or deprived, existing populations is commonly used to support the argument that there is no necessity to ‘say sorry’ for past injustices. The rationale appears to be that such invasions, conquests and subsequent domination and mis-

an ongoing process of colonisation and displacement has occurred on the Australian continent over vast periods of time, most recently exemplified in European settlement and Aboriginal dispossession. That being so, he argues that it is fallacious to grant authentic indigeneity to any one particular group. All peoples in this continent's human history—the nomads, the refugees, the convicts and the boat people—can rightly be identified as Aboriginal. As far as James is concerned, 'an Aborigine is someone born in this land, irrespective of ancestry'.

These same arguments, and others closely associated, were used in Parliament in June 1998 by Pauline Hanson, leader of Australia's radical right-wing political party One Nation, in opposing Australia becoming a signatory to The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. In reference to archaeological evidence at one Australian site that was reported as indicating Aboriginal occupation 180,000 years ago, Hanson asserted:

It does not matter whether it is 10,000 or 180,000 years—or for that matter one million years. At some stage or another, every country in the world was held or owned by someone else—in most cases by many different peoples at different times. There is considerable evidence that even Australia experienced a number of waves of occupation by different people. So you might reasonably ask who were the first or perhaps what is the weight of the argument connected to being first. Does being first matter and therefore does being first override equality for all of today's Australians?³¹⁶

In that same speech Hanson also questioned the definition of 'indigenous people' employed in the Draft Declaration. She asserted that, contrary to the United Nation's reading, indigeneity is not the exclusive reserve of those Australians who identify as 'Aboriginal or Torres strait Islander'. She claims to draw her own definition from a rather liberal reading of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, that is, she considers 'indigenous as having been born in that country'. Then, in 'fairness', she extends the definition to include all 'those who have made this country their home'.

treatment of the Other are either a matter of course or a matter of unaltering human nature. In either regard they should be accepted as 'the way it is' and out of our control.

³¹⁶ Pauline Hanson, Parliamentary speech, June 2, 1998.

Later in 1998, at a press conference at Longreach in central western Queensland, Hanson again drew on similar sentiments to decry the potential extinguishment of non-indigenous pastoral leases and the Aboriginal annexation of the land they cover in line with Native Title legislation. Hanson was very explicit in her contrariety in regard to arguments that either appeal to the depth of connectedness to the past as an indicator of belonging or, by extension, appeal to a belonging based on deep time connectedness to indicate authentic ‘Australian-ness’ or natural rights of occupancy. She stated:

You cannot claim more attachment to a place because your ancestors were here first. You cannot claim a greater sense of belonging because your relative was here before the relative of another. You cannot claim to be more Australian than those who have lived here just as long as you have. I speak of course of the Aborigines and their much publicised right to this land because their forefathers are said to go back tens of thousands of years.³¹⁷

Hanson—although she is representative of the most extreme position—is by no means the only one struggling with the veracity of deep time ancestral belonging in its incarnation as an indicator of privileged right to occupancy. Peter Read, in his interviews of young Australians specifically about Aboriginal dispossession and their own feelings of belonging, encountered similar responses.³¹⁸

Late in 1999, there came another revelation about the deep time belonging of Australians. ‘Mungo Man’ revealed yet another secret. What testing confirmed was that that ‘Mungo Man’ did not belong to some category of archaic people, but was a fully modern *Homo sapien*. Not only did this discovery challenge the ‘out of Africa’ human evolutionary model, but also it fed more provincial debates, and it did so in startling and contradictory ways. Australian National University anthropologist Dr. Alan Thorne theorised a new and unpredicted human genetic tree that has Neanderthals splitting off first, followed by Mungo Man’s lineage, and only then the branch from which contemporary people, including Australia’s Aborigines evolved.³¹⁹ Thorne’s theory,

³¹⁷ Pauline Hanson’s speech at Longreach, September 11, 1998.

³¹⁸ Read, 2000: 57-81.

³¹⁹ All material relating to Mungo Man, Dr. Alan Thorne’s hypotheses, including direct quotes, are taken from ‘Mungo Man: The Last of his Kind?’, *The Australian*, January 9, 2001: 8.

commonly known as ‘Regional Continuity’, holds that ever since people began migrating out of Africa more than 1.5 million years ago, there has been a single evolving species. Those early humans remained on the same evolutionary path by sharing their genes through interbreeding. Ultimately, they evolved into us and colonised the globe. By this Thorne means that instead of consecutive waves of human species spreading out of Africa, each replacing the less able populations that had migrated before them, the original proto-type people ‘continued, together, down the evolutionary path to full human status...Eventually we evolved from them.’ By ‘we’, Thorne means the modern human race—Aboriginal and Western alike.

If Mungo Man’s people are proven to be part of a generic human evolutionary chain, it is then reasonable to claim that those human beings who lived and died in this country at least 60,000 years ago are as much the forebears of non-Aboriginal Australians as they are that of Aboriginal peoples. In this way of thinking non-indigenes are also connected to Australia’s deep past. And if the legitimacy of Aboriginal peoples, as Head suggests, is derived from a date provided by an archaeologist—the older the better— then White Australians can make equally legitimate claims to belonging to and in the continent of Australia.

2.2.3 History, Identity and Nostalgia

As Nietzsche said, human beings are historical animals. Not only do we derive our identity as human beings from past events spanning many millennia, but also our individual histories seem crucial to our understanding of who and what we are in the present moment of our lives. The desire to know the past is significant to us on a very personal level. The past seems indivisible from our sense of identity. As David Lowenthal observes, the ‘[a]bility to recall and identify with our own past gives existence meaning, purpose, and value.’ Citing Wyatt, he reminds us that “‘the sureness of ‘I was’ is a necessary component of ‘I am’.”³²⁰ Memory plays a crucial role here. John Locke explains in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1694) that one of the important implications of self-consciousness and thus a defining capacity of personhood is the

³²⁰ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 41.

ability of an individual human to recognize him or herself as the same self that had other experiences at other locations in space and time. In association, personhood, for Locke, relies upon the ability to recognize oneself as remaining ‘invariable and uninterrupted through a supposed variation of time.’ Even in David Hume’s account in *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), which finds no logical evidence to support a self that persists through time and insists that all we have is a ‘habit of mind’ that produces in us the ‘useful fiction’ of personal identity, personhood is dependant upon recalling the past. On this view we form a natural belief in our own identity according to our recognition that the self who remembers committing acts in the past is the same self that committed them.

No doubt it is essential to our conception of ourselves that we are able to have a sense of ourselves as having both psychological and bodily continuity over time. However, a belief in our personal identity cannot be sustained by memory alone. What is absent from an account of personal identity that is based upon psychological continuity is the role that the individual him or herself takes in the process of becoming a self. In Part II of the *Essay* Locke introduced the notion of ‘appropriation’ to indicate this aspect. However, while Locke suggested that the process of appropriating, or owning, one’s past is a necessary aspect of self-consciousness, and therefore automatic, subsequent thinkers have stressed the selective nature of the act of appropriation.³²¹ The narrative approach to the constitution of personhood recognizes not only the importance of psychological continuity, but also the centrality of the appropriative process. According to narrative understandings, personhood is characterised by the capacity to connect the past with the present and to the future through a narrative of our lives. It is through such story-making and story-telling we actively disclose ourselves as selves, and it is through such narratives that we find our place and destination in the world.³²²

It is not only the case that story-telling is a powerful device for the self to understand its own positive continuity. Traditional stories and explanations passed down in a community or country act as modes of self-disclosure also. In this case, the stories

³²¹ See William James [1890] 1997 for example.

³²² For more on narrative identity see Frank Kessel, Pamela Cole & Dale Johnson ed., *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992) and Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1981).

we hear and tell relate most keenly to our sense of ourselves as a community. If, as Anthony Smith suggests in *National Identity* (1991), nation and national identity are based upon a sense of shared history and common descent, then it is the stories that we tell about these things that will define our sense of belonging. Stories of belonging follow a number of trajectories. It is not unusual for explanations of belongingness to be rooted in ‘History’—that is, not ‘history’ as an account of experiences and events occurring in the past, but ‘History’ as the method by which we construct an intelligible account of those experiences and events. In Australia, as in most other nations, the appeal to history is conspicuous in political and popular rhetoric. Historical accounts are often proffered as evidence in gauging what or who is truly Australian and who truly belongs.

As discussed in Section One, standing alongside, and often behind, Historical accounts are more mythical ones—folklore about individuals or events that capture and embody a particular idea or aspect of the national culture. Folklore of this kind is often deployed as a romantic nationalist concept. For example, the Brothers Grimm were inspired by Herder's writings to create an idealized collection of tales, the spirit of which was labelled as quintessentially German. In Australia we have a similarly oriented collection of myths—albeit with a more colonial flavour. Myths embodied in the Anzac complex³²³ are probably the most notable. It is no accident that apart from Australia's most honoured monument, The National War Memorial in Canberra, almost every city, small town and whistle-stop in Australia is home to a comparatively imposing memorial structure erected to commemorate the sacrifice of those of their young citizens who ‘fought and fell in active service’ during World Wars I and II.³²⁴

As commemorative emblems war memorials are perhaps the most enigmatic, in that they provide both positive and negative examples and correspondingly encapsulate senses both of admiration and abhorrence. We venerate the bravery and self sacrifice of these young Australians, while simultaneously detesting the conditions in which those

³²³ During the First World War, soldiers of Australia and New Zealand fought together in the battalions of the Australia New Zealand Armed Corps (A.N.Z.A.C.). These soldiers became known as Anzacs. The heavy losses that were incurred among these troops and in particular their futile and bloody, yet courageous, stand at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli, Turkey in 1915 has made them, and this battle, icons of nation and national identity.

³²⁴ See Ken Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Carlton, Vic.: Miegunyah Press and Melbourne University Press, 1998) for a sensitive and illuminating account of the relationship between war memorials and civic culture.

qualities emerged. We are proud of our 'war record' while appalled that it must exist. As monuments to belongingness these memorials are particularly poignant, denoting not only an ambivalent relationship with England, but also the close-knitedness of Australian communities during the war period, both at home and at the front. For many Australians this time is remembered as that in which, bound together in common purpose, shared adversity, trauma and loss, Australia as a nation finally reached maturity. Whereas the pioneer and bushmen tropes for national identity had been tremendously influential in nation-building in the domestic sphere, the heroic Anzac (Australian soldier or 'digger') was recognised on the international stage. As discussed earlier, the same qualities of egalitarianism apply, as does the emphasis on overcoming extreme hardship and suffering through strong bonds of 'mateship'.

One of the objectives of national story-telling is to tell tales that are always familiar—to those who belong, at least. But familiarity, it must be noted, ought not be confused with, or replaced by, complacency and the kind of smugness that comes from always getting what one wants. The measure of a 'good yarn',³²⁵ after all, is not that it simply comforts or placates us, but that it engages, drawing readers into the path of its plots and sub-plots, and carrying them along on its narrative journey. This is one of the wonderful things about stories—especially good ones. They are not passive structures imposed upon the world, imprisoning and stultifying it in their grasp. Rather, they are dynamic modes that articulate the activity of being and by doing so open us to an infinite range of possibilities of becoming—who then we become.

Although storytelling is a powerful device for self-understanding, stories in themselves, no matter how familiar, do not contain any knowledge about the world independent of us. As Ricoeur observed: 'Reality is neither in the dictionary nor in grammar.'³²⁶ Although narrative has a kind of intelligibility at the level of first order discourse, the hermeneutic process is completed not in the text, but in the readers. More precisely, as Ricoeur states: 'the sense or significance of a narrative stems from the *intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader*. The act of reading thus

³²⁵ Australian slang for an entertaining story.

³²⁶ Paul Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative', in Wood, David ed., *Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (Routledge: London, 1991): 26.

becomes the critical moment of the entire analysis'³²⁷—the moment of revelation if you will. Narrative self-understanding is not given solely by the re-telling of 'old stories' proposed to us by our culture, but in the reinterpretation of ourselves and our collective identity in the light of those stories.³²⁸ Nor, according to narrative theory, is the project of understanding ourselves a finite one. We cannot reach a stage where we say 'OK, all our stories are told and read. I understand who we are. I don't have to work at that any more'. We never cease to re-interpret the narrative identity that constitutes us. It is this process of constantly re-interpreting 'the old stories' and, by so doing, integrating them into new narratives that gives them relevance.

During the Alfred Deakin Lecture Series (2000/2001) Rodney Hall gave a paper entitled 'Being Shaped by the Stories we Choose from our History'. He began by saying: 'Storytelling is at the heart of human understanding. Who are we? How did we come to be here?' He went on to argue how 'the old stories' by which we have conceptualised our nation and therefore ourselves have begun to fail us—not because they are necessarily incorrect, but because they are now irrelevant to our present condition.³²⁹ There are many, of course, who would disagree with Hall. Some would object to the proposition that history is relative, but many more I suspect would be averse to re-interpretation of the past on existential grounds. In a rapidly changing world it is neither uncommon, nor irrational to seek anchorage in familiar stories of the past. It is not unusual for past exemplars of shared history and common descent to support (or reject) claims of belongingness in the contemporary Australian context. Many still hold that it is the 'old stories' that *should* have a monopoly over telling us who we are and how we came to be here—that these familiar cultural narratives, in themselves and without the necessity of further interpretation, tell all that warrants telling.

However, nor is it clear for how long the legitimacy of 'traditional' concepts of the national character can hold. In Australia over the last half century issues of nation and national identity have become increasingly complex. Post World War II immigration, the official cessation of the White Australia policy and, since the 1970s, a rapid acceleration

³²⁷ Ricoeur in Wood, 1991: 26 (his emphasis).

³²⁸ Ricoeur in Wood, 1991: 32.

³²⁹ Rodney Hall, 'Being Shaped by the Stories we Choose from our History', Alfred Deakin Lecture Series (2000/2001).

in Aboriginal political activism has meant not only that Australia now consists in a multiplicity of different traditions, cultures and histories, but also that if the project of nation-building is to be pursued these differences need to be considered. No longer is it possible to think of ourselves as one homogenous mass. As Rodney Hall concluded in his Deakin Lecture, '[w]ho we are is very complex. [However] [w]ho we *think* we are is often misleadingly simple. We have to work at it.'³³⁰ No matter how begrudgingly we are to respond, our heterogeneity begs deliberation.

One mode according to which human beings try to come to terms with the present is by nostalgic recollection. In its contemporary designation nostalgia refers us to a sentimental longing for the things past. At the most specific level nostalgia refers to direct individual experience—a specific episode, person, place or event in an individual's life. In this sense nostalgia is self-referential or self-relevant. Nostalgic experience enables a sense of self-continuity. However, it is also acknowledged that nostalgia is a means of reconnecting the self with community. It has a powerful social element, memories typically involving shared experiences. One might also add that the nostalgic recollection of places and events, whether in memory these places and events are shared or not, serves to revive past connections with them and establish new ones.

Most often nostalgia involves the remembrance of ourselves in aspects that we admire and past events, people or places for which we have affection—loved ones, good times and happy places. Thus, most contemporary theorists regard nostalgia as *a prima-facie* positive emotion, as 'memory with the pain removed', 'a positively toned evocation of a lived past' or, more even more extravagantly, as an experience 'infused with imputations of past beauty, pleasure, joy, satisfaction, goodness, happiness, [and] love'.³³¹ According to these theorists, '[n]ostalgia soothes the self from existential pangs by solidifying and augmenting identity, regenerating and sustaining a sense of meaning, and buttressing and invigorating desired connectedness with the social world.'³³² Nostalgia provides an effective structure not only to bolster a positive sense of self, but a positive

³³⁰ Hall, 2001.

³³¹ These quotations are drawn from the extensive literature review of nostalgia in Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut & Denise Baden, 'Nostalgia: Conceptual Issues and Existential Functions' in Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski & Sander L. Koole ed., *Handbook of Experimental Psychology* (New York: Guildford Publications, 2004): 204.

³³² Sedikides, Wildschut & Baden, 2004: 206.

connection with the world and others in it by re-enchanting the present with a sense of association, meaning and belonging.

Apart from involving happiness or pleasure, there is, of course, another dimension to nostalgic experience. Nostalgia is also often tinged with feelings of sadness or longing. While nostalgia is *prima facie* a positive emotion linked with happiness and well being in its psychological designation, it also contains some element of felt loneliness, separateness or alienation. This aspect of the experience of remembering the past is significant and should not be overlooked or minimised. To explain the relevance of the negative emotions associated with nostalgia one must refer back to Nietzsche and his hypothesis of the inescapable necessity that humankind lives ‘historically’. For Nietzsche, living ‘historically’ is a vital component of the human mode of being. His deduction is that history is needed by humankind, and needed for three reasons: ‘in relation to his action and struggle, his conservatism and reverence, his suffering and his desire for deliverance’,³³³ and that these needs were fundamental.

Nostalgia acts to retrieve belongingness from the past by positing—and rendering continuous in memory—a discontinuity between past and present. That is to say, nostalgic experience invokes both belongingness and alienation. The tension between these positive and negative aspects of the nostalgic experience is what drives the ‘action’, ‘conservation’ and ‘deliverance’ that Nietzsche demands of historical reflection if it is to serve humankind. If nostalgia constitutes a reaction against feelings of loneliness and separation, acting to ‘soothe the self from existential pangs’ by eschewing disconnections as contemporary psychologists believe, it must have motivational implications. If nostalgia is purposeful it must have a bearing on goals and action. One of its most significant goals is to re-establish belongingness. The nostalgic sequence, at least in principle, is ultimately a redemptive one.³³⁴

Nietzsche argues that this redemptive mode of thinking about the past manifests in what he calls ‘monumental history’. This form of historical representation not only commemorates past heroes, episodes or relationships, but part of its iconographic role is to assist the solidification of the self and the re-establishment of meaningful connections

³³³ Nietzsche, [1949] 1957: 12.

³³⁴ For a brief discussion on nostalgia and redemption and contamination sequences see Sedikides, Wildschut & Baden, 2004: 205.

with persons and places. There are plenty of examples of monumental history in the Australian context that call upon the trope of past belongingness through nostalgic means. The war memorials discussed earlier are a classic example of this, and also of the way in which nostalgia is mobilised to reunite people with the past—idealised, imagined or real. However, to what extent are monuments to belongingness, such as war memorials, redemptive of the connectedness for which we yearn so deeply?

Remembering the past by re-counting its vestiges is an important part of nation building. However, history is open to both use and abuse. We need history, but as Nietzsche held, ‘we need it for life and action, not as a convenient way to avoid life and action’.³³⁵ ‘Historical study is only fruitful for the future (and might I add for the present) if it follows a powerful life-giving influence’. Nietzsche held that if monumental history is to succeed it must fulfil human needs in relation to action and struggle, and that part of its iconographic role must be to help us discriminate—to identify principles of agency and pathways of action. As Guy Rocher describes:

... [t]he collective memory is ... a very powerful agent of social solidarity. The symbols that it uses are full of meaning. The memories that are evoked by these symbols are charged with a communal emotion, and they are the source of psychological communion that is almost biological. They provide an explanation of the present situation, or at least a rationalization; they suggest lessons for the future. Thus, these symbols contribute powerfully to the solidarity of communities, to the participation of their members, and to the orientation of individual and collective action.³³⁶

If remembrance of the past is to be redemptive it must not only be able to relate to its symbols, but also be able to appreciate how that which they represent differs from that which we wish to represent in the present and future. In other words, to serve life the collective memory must stimulate in us a desire to choose action. However, while collective memory is not necessarily History as it is written by historians, there is little doubt that there is a strong relationship between the two. As with our own personal autobiographies, the memory of history (or pre-history as it is written by scientists for

³³⁵ Nietzsche, [1949] 1957: 3. Life and action in this case are taken to be synonymous.

³³⁶ Serge Gagnon, *Man and his Past: The Nature and Role of Historiography* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1982): 37.

that matter) is selective. We only remember what we choose to. We only remember what we need to.

At this moment in time we need to remember our belonging. We look back in the hope of finding it. We mobilise nostalgic experience as an existential crutch—something to soothe feelings of displacement and re-place them with feelings of communion. However, the paradoxical effect of privileging one modality of the past over a range of potential others is that it can easily induce a state of hyper-identification in which we become trapped. One feature of nostalgia is its potential to chain us to the past in such a way that we are immobilised there, unable to transport ourselves back into the present. What might ultimately occur in this case is that we end up belonging *there* rather than *here and now*. In this state we are unable to act. As Denis Huisman observes:

A psyche that is exhausted, too weakened to meet the demands of the present,' [lives in the present] as a dream, as if it was the past ... There are two ways to live the present. Either we are ready to act, turned toward the future, and we live events in the present. Or we become less attentive to life, we dream our life instead of living it, and we experience contemporary events as if they were already past.³³⁷

Discontinuity is confirmed rather than eschewed. What is affirmed is not belonging, but displacement. The charge of 'dwelling in the past' may be more serious and alienating than commonly thought.

The impetus to find our origins—to understand where we come from and how we fit in the scheme of things—is strong. The assimilation of our past into our present lives is commonly considered essential if we are to comprehend our place and destination in the world. Here, the temporal dimension of being human intersects with the spatial. Just as the then merges with the now, the when merges with the where. Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly, the way we imagine our past—whether it is personal, national or deep time ancestral—also has a profound influence on the way we imagine ourselves as selves who belong (or not) in the world we now inhabit.

³³⁷ Denis Huisman in Gagnon, 1982: 38.

2.3 Belonging as Environmental

While belonging is commonly estimated using social and historical criteria, environmental factors also figure in our discussions of belonging. There is little doubt that human beings are influenced by the environments they inhabit. We cannot deny the impact of the environment —both natural and built—upon the lives of those who dwell in them. When we say that we belong somewhere, speak of ‘home’ or ‘away’, or long to be ‘here’ or ‘there’ we do so recognising the strong existential purchase that those places have on us. We often understand this attachment to place in emotional terms, and it is certainly an intimate and highly sensual mode of identification with place that is commonly and effectively deployed in literature. However, there is also a substantial body of research that frames the question of belonging in an environmental sense in more biological terms. That is to say, in terms that refer to peoples (like other living organisms) as biologically, or functionally, proper (or improper) to a place.

Sensual and biological modes of identity and belonging often overlap. Lawrence Durrell, for example, writes in his essay ‘Landscape and Character’:

My books are always about living in places, not just rushing through them. As we get to know Europe slowly, tasting the wines, cheeses, and characters of different countries you begin to realize that the important determinant of any culture is after all—the spirit of place. Just as one particular vineyard will always give you a special wine with discernible characteristics so a Spain, an Italy, a Greece will always give you the same type of culture—will express itself through the human beings just as it does through its wild flowers.³³⁸

For Durrell, people become what they are in relation to place; human beings are, to use his phrase, ‘expressions of their landscape’.³³⁹

This section explores the notion of belonging as an environmental designation, that is to say, belonging as the strong emotional and physical attachment we have to places and environments. In this sense our home-place is usually prominent. Why and how are we attached to it? Why do we miss it when we are ‘away’? What makes us belong ‘here’

³³⁸ Lawrence Durrell, *Spirit of Place* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969): 156.

³³⁹ Durrell, 1969: 157.

rather than ‘there’? Belonging is frequently understood as a connection to a particular place or environment. Over time, the form and nature of that connection has been comprehended in a number of different ways. The following section reviews some of the ways in which the human–environment relationship has been treated, and in doing so seeks answers to these and other questions regarding our belonging to places and environments.

2.3.1 Being at Home and Being Homesick

It is taken for granted that we relate more intimately to particular landscapes than to others, and that this probably has to do with familiarity and the feeling of security that arises from it. When we are outside our familiar physical environment we tend to feel a little ‘strange’. I still reside in the place of my birth, and perhaps it is nothing more than a parochial aesthetic, but when I am away from home I am always acutely aware of being out of place. My place is on the island of Tasmania—in a town nestled in hills, surrounded by mountains, at the end of a valley where the rivers run through farmland and rocky gorge to meet a broad estuary that stretches out toward the stormy seas that separate Tasmania from the vast continent of Australia. Each morning when I draw the blinds the vista revealed is virtually the same as it has been for the past 40 odd years. The contours of the hills that enclose the city make the same patterns in my mind. I know them well—no matter from which angle they are approached. There is barely a disruption; new buildings, and new spaces are shapes added and subtracted without disturbing the overall scene (probably more good fortune, rather than good management on the part of the developers and town planners). I move within this differentiated landscape with ease; I am relaxed and comfortable; I am ‘at home’. This is in some contrast to the way I feel and operate when I am ‘away from’ home and in a place unfamiliar to me.

To illustrate the point, it is worthwhile recounting a particular experience of mine. Some years ago I travelled to Queensland in the far north-east of Australia to attend a conference. With a few days to spare, I decided to visit my nephew who was teaching at a small ‘outback’ school several hundred kilometres inland from the nearest commercial airfield. My flight arrived late in the day, and by the time I had collected my luggage it

was already dark. We drove through the night along unlit roads for many hours before reaching our destination. I sensed little of the country I was travelling through or the place at which I had arrived. When I woke in the morning I tentatively drew the blinds. The landscape that confronted me could hardly have been more alien in colour or shape. In the immediate vicinity, small uniform shacks dotted the landscape between identical lone grey gum trees. Beyond that the land was flat and red and dry as far as the eye could see. The horizon was completely flat. I felt disoriented, out of place and slightly nervous.

There is nothing particularly odd about this, you might say. We are certainly more comfortable and at ease in familiar surroundings than we are in those that are new or strange to us, and it always takes a little while to orient ourselves in new or strange surroundings. Indeed, in the scenario just given I quickly oriented myself, and went on to spend a week or so exploring the township and environs and getting to know the people who lived there. By the time I left I felt ‘quite at home’ in my surroundings. (Despite my usual existential angst I always enjoy the stimulation and wonder that exploring new places offers.) However, it is not because of the peculiarity of my experience that it deserves attention, rather its normality. That we feel a deeper sense of belonging, or more at home, in some places and environments (usually those that are aesthetically familiar to us) than we do in others is indisputable, the reason why is less clear.

We have all probably experienced some feeling of discomfort when away from familiar environments. For most of us homesickness is marked by mild and fleeting feelings of missing the places and people that we have left behind. Even on rare occasions when homesickness becomes acute, we would normally not consider missing home as a serious or chronic condition. However, as has already been alluded to in discussions of colonial Australia, anxiety caused by the degree of separation between early colonists and their homeland has been construed as having long-term influence on non-indigenous attitudes toward the continent and its native populations. While such interpretations are now fairly common in post-colonial discourses, the idea that periods of exile from one’s land of birth have serious psychiatric implications was already in circulation before Australia was colonised.

We have already discussed nostalgia in its contemporary designation as a sentimental longing for the past, but in the seventeenth century, ‘nostalgia’ (the then

medical term for homesickness) was considered as a physical or neurological disease. Coined by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer from the Greek *ostos* (return home) and *algos* (pain) nostalgia then signified ‘the pain which the sick person feels because he is not in his native land or fears never to see it again.’³⁴⁰ Recognised among the continental armies of the eighteenth century, it was understood at that time as a disease confined to Swiss mercenaries fighting in far-away lands, and therefore referred to as ‘the Swiss disease’. German physician J. J. Scheuchzer argued that nostalgia was due to ‘a sharp differential in atmospheric pressure causing excessive body pressurization, which in turn drove blood from the heart to the brain, thereby producing the observed affliction of sentiment’.³⁴¹ On the other hand, Hofer believed the cause of the disease to be ‘the quite continuous vibration of animal spirits through those fibers of the middle brain in which impressed traces of ideas of the Fatherland still cling’.³⁴² Hofer explained the process of nostalgia thus:

When one dwelled on images, such as those of one's native land, the vital spirits, which flowed through the nerve fibres in which images were stored, deepened these channels and increased the flow through this region of the brain. As a result there was a decreased flow of vital spirits in other regions of the brain. This resulted in an increased preoccupation with images of one's home, as well as an indifference towards one's immediate surroundings. The process was self-perpetuating. Vital spirits were not available to stimulate appetite or digestion, resulting in a reduction in the quality and quantity of these spirits. As the vital spirits were exhausted, bodily functions weakened and death ensued.³⁴³

This definition of nostalgia as a medical disease persisted into the nineteenth century, although the condition was no longer considered specific to the Swiss. It was still a recognised condition during the American civil war, where in the first year of conflict alone 5213 cases of nostalgia were recorded among the troops of the northern states and where amongst the military medico it was taken very seriously indeed.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ George Rosen, ‘Nostalgia: A “Forgotten” Psychological Disorder’, *Clio Medica* (1975): 30.

³⁴¹ Sedikides, Wildschut & Baden, 2004: 201.

³⁴² Hofer cited in Sedikides, Wildschut & Baden, 2004: 201.

³⁴³ Rosen, 1975: 32.

³⁴⁴ Donald Lee Anderson & Godfrey Tryggve Anderson, ‘Nostalgia and Malingering in the Military During the Civil War’, *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 28 (1984): 157.

During the American Civil War nostalgia was not only a diagnosis made by doctors but a way that soldiers thought about the mental deterioration of their comrades. In a letter describing prisoners of war one soldier, for example, wrote:

‘They became homesick and disheartened. They lost all interest in everything, and would sit in the same attitude hour after hour day after day, with their backs against the wall and their gaze fixed on the floor at my feet ... they were dying of nostalgia.’ ... [and another] ‘Homesickness, the most pitiless monster that ever hung about a human heart, killed them. It killed as many in our army as did the bullets of the enemy’.³⁴⁵

After 1900 the number of cases of homesickness among the military declined sharply. A number of explanations for the waning of this diagnosis might be suggested. One possibility is that the meaning of nostalgia changed to its contemporary designation as a sentimental longing for home. In England, it was never considered seriously as a medical disorder, and if it was conceded to be a mental disorder, it was one to which the English believed only foreigners succumbed. It was written at that time that ‘[i]n England whatever may be the partiality to our native land ... we know nothing of this passionate attachment that leads to this sort of Insanity’.³⁴⁶ Indeed, in its medical military designation, nostalgia was viewed by the English as a sign of weakness.

By the time of World War I, nostalgia was no longer a recognised medical condition among the military medical establishment, even if it remained a strong sentiment among soldiers. However, in other contexts alienation from one’s homeland was still being used as an explanation for mental illness and aberrant behaviour. In 1909 Karl Jaspers published his dissertation in Psychiatry linking nostalgia and criminal behaviour—sentiments one might argue that still linger and are manifest in assessments of treatments of immigrants, refugees and so-called ‘illegal aliens’ in detention in the contemporary Australian context. Also, as discussed previously, there are a number of historical commentators who blame home-sickness for the attitude and behaviour of early Australian settlers.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ Eric T. Dean, *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997): 129.

³⁴⁶ Ida Macalpine & Richard Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business* (London: Penguin, 1969): 499.

³⁴⁷ See the discussion of colonial belonging and identity in Section 1.3.1.

It is not only Australians of the ‘colonial’ past or the ‘post-colonial’ present who are concerned about being and feeling at home, nor is homelessness an issue confined to the populations of colonised countries. This has been identified by a number of theorists as a defining feature of the psychology of the modern age. Assertions and arguments are made that from the infancy of industrialisation human beings have grown up forgetful of their belonging, and that with the advent of globalisation that human beings have become increasingly home-less—physically, intellectually, psychologically and emotionally.³⁴⁸ Human estrangement from the world is a re-occurring theme in public discourse and across a broad range of disciplines. Arguments are mounted that humankind senses that it has ‘lost its way’ of being in the world and longs to be reunited with that which it has lost. Just as the child, who is taken from his or her parents’ house to some strange place, we are home-sick and yearn to return to the warm and loving home of our imagination. The ‘home-sickness’ associated with human-world estrangement is similar, and the quest toward remembering at-homeness and belonging, it might be argued, is manifest in a range of global activities and movements, among them; a revival of interest in personal and family histories and genealogies, new-age theory and practice, environmentalism, deep ecology and the recovery of indigenous philosophies and spiritualities. What these activities and orientations indicate is that we continue to find our home-place, despite the fact that the means by which it might be achieved are increasingly ambiguous.

2.3.2 Environmental Determinism

While we might argue about the nature of the effects that removing people from their home-place has, there is certainly a long tradition of explaining the character and behaviour of people according to the nature of their environments. Throughout history, people of all cultures have assumed that environment influences physical and psychological well-being. Aretaeus (2nd century A.D.) claimed that those suffering from laziness should be ‘laid in the light and exposed to the rays of the sun, the disease is gloom’. Posidonius (4th century B.C.) stated that ‘melancholy occurs in autumn, whereas

³⁴⁸ The quest toward remembering at-homeness and belonging, it might be argued, has reached pandemic proportions and is manifest in a range of global activities and movements, among them; a revival of interest in personal and family histories and genealogies, new-age theory and practice, environmentalism, deep ecology and the recovery of indigenous philosophies and spiritualities.

mania in summer.’ Ancient Greek wisdom held that weather and climate influenced body fluids and in turn individual disposition. Both Hippocrates and Aristotle made analogies between the four humors (or bodily fluids)—yellow bile, black bile, phlegm and blood; the four elements—fire, earth, water and air; and the four seasons—summer, autumn, winter and spring. Hippocrates claimed that it is the changes of seasons that produce diseases of both mind and body, calculating their onset in relation to climatic variations, referring to the corresponding element and bodily fluid for diagnoses and treatment.³⁴⁹

Atmospheric conditions are commonly held to elicit psychological and physiological responses. There is little doubt that there is a climatological influence on our physical and mental health and well-being. Prolonged exposure to unaccustomed levels of heat and cold, light or darkness can produce physiological and psychological symptoms, while sunshine does indeed make us happy, and, according to some research, increases altruistic behaviour. Highly increased hours of sunlight, such as experienced in the Arctic regions, has been associated with elevated suicide levels. For centuries physicians have observed that cycles of depression and mania suffered by some patients are linked to the seasons. This condition, in the guise of ‘Seasonal Affective Disorder’ is still acknowledged and treated by western medicine.³⁵⁰ Those disorders popularly known as ‘cabin fever’ (depression and/or anxiety caused by prolonged periods in which one is prevented from going outdoors) and ‘going troppo’ (wild and erratic behaviour said to be caused by long periods living in tropical climates) are versions of the same malady.

Furthermore, although little research seems to have been done on the effect of wind on human beings, plenty of anecdotal evidence from teachers suggests that on windy days school children display elevated levels of stress, inability to concentrate and behavioural management challenges. From my own experience, the direction of the wind can have an enormous impact. I once lived on a small island in the middle of Bass Strait where the prevailing winds were constantly strong and westerly. On those rare occasions when the wind was easterly in direction, many in the small community stayed home from work or

³⁴⁹ Winifred Gallagher, *The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape our Thoughts, Emotions and Actions*, New York: HarperPerennial, 1994: 12.

³⁵⁰ Paul A. Bell, Thomas C. Greene, Jeffrey, D. Fisher & Andrew Baum, *Environmental Psychology*, Belmont: Thomson Wadworth, 2001: 200-201.

school and retreated to their beds. It was common knowledge in that small community that the easterly wind caused ‘problems with the head’ that prohibited activity.

Some theorists believe not only that human beings are profoundly influenced by their environments, but also that human habitat preferences are biologically determined. In this regard it is not just that fluctuations in climatic conditions are thought to have a discernable and parallel effect on our health or temper, but that where we come from is part of our biological inheritance and plays a more fundamental role in determining our functional profile. Ibn Khaldun held that temperate climates fostered industry and technological development, such that these conditions favoured the development of superior civilisations. Khaldun believed that it was the cooling effect of the Arabian Sea that moderated and balanced the Arabian Peninsula sufficiently to produce the perfect climate for sophisticated material and intellectual culture. In the seventeenth century Robert Burton observed in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* that:

Hot countries are most troubled with ... great numbers of madmen ... They are ordinarily so choleric in their speeches, that scarce two words pass without railing or chiding in common talk, and often quarrelling in the street Cold air in the other extreme is almost as bad as hot In those northern countries, the people are therefore generally dull, heavy, and [include] many witches, which [some] ascribe to melancholy.³⁵¹

Early Romantic nationalism was strongly inspired by the ideas of Johann Gottfried von Herder, who in 1784 argued that geography formed the natural economy of a people, and that their customs and society would develop along the lines that their basic environment favoured. Furthermore, when Henry Buckle advanced the same basic theory in his *The History of Civilisation in England*, published in the mid-nineteenth century, it was received enthusiastically. Buckle held that while hot climates produced laziness and promiscuity and cold climates inhibited labour, while the temperate climates of the middle latitudes, such as that in England, led to sharpened intellects. In such climatic conditions, where land was fertile, overproduction ensued, permitting the emergence of a leisure class, which, according to Buckle, was responsible for the cultural and economic

³⁵¹ Gallagher, 1994: 13.

advancement of society.³⁵² Other theorists, like German zoologist/biologist turned biogeographer Friedrich Ratzel, influenced by the work of Charles Darwin, argued for German expansion on the geo-political grounds that states have no geographical borders, but rather that a nation's territory is determined by the bond between it and the people who draw sustenance from it.³⁵³

Ratzel is credited as the founder of Environmental Determinism, the tradition guided by the notion that human activities are controlled by the environment. The basic argument of the environmental determinists is that aspects of physical geography, particularly climate, not only influenced the psychological temperament of individual people, but also determined the form and nature of their culture and economy. It was then deemed important to trace the migrations of groups to see what environmental conditions they had evolved under. Ellen Semple brought Ratzel's thinking to prominence, theorising that human disposition, culture, religion, economy and social organization are all derived from environmental influences, and consequently that environment provides the physical basis for history. According to theorists like Churchill, the story of global expansion and human diversification is most comprehensively understood in terms that recognise the power and influence of the physical environment on human behaviour.

Environmental determinism was very popular around the turn of the century and dominated American geography until about the 1920s. One of its most influential twentieth-century exponents (and probably the cause of its coming into disrepute) was Thomas Griffith Taylor who argued that how far a nation's culture and economy can develop and progress is dependant upon its natural environment. Griffith Taylor's work is particularly salient to Australia. In his *Australia: A Study of Warm Environments and Their Effect on British Settlement* (1940) he theorised that Australia's prospects for growth would be seriously constrained by its environment. On the other hand, its companion volume *Canada: A Study of Cool Continental Environments and Their Effect on British and French Settlement* (1947) predicts a much more positive future for Canada based upon geological and climatic criteria. However, perhaps his most controversial

³⁵² Bell *et al.* (2001): 175-176.

³⁵³ Ratzel produced the foundations of biogeography in his two-volume *Anthropogeographie* (1882 and 1891). For an interpretation and analysis of this work see Ellen Semple, *Influences of the Geographic Environment* (New York: Russell, 1911).

work was *Environment and Race: A Study of the Evolution, Migration, Settlement and Status of the Races of Man* (1927) in which he lays out his theories of human evolution under the influence of environment. Ideas communicated in this work, and others like it, are easily turned into rationales for racism and imperialism.

Because of these connections, it is argued that Environmental Determinism as a movement came increasingly under fire during the 1940s, and then officially fell into disrepute. It could be argued, however, that variants of environmental determinism are still very much alive and well in contemporary research and environmental discourses. A similar orientation is found in the current work of evolutionary biologist Jared Diamond³⁵⁴ who argues that ‘geography and biogeography, not race, moulded the contrasting fates of Europeans, Asians, Native Americans, Sub-Saharan Africans and aboriginal Australians.’³⁵⁵ It is also common in the work of many contemporary geographers, environmental psychologists and other place professionals.

Most biological explanations for human responses to environmental characteristics are steeped in evolutionary theory. One aim of those who study human biology is to determine how far human evolutionary history can account for particular human behaviours. Human beings do have biological or physical responses to habitats (including positive or negative thoughts and feelings about places) and these responses must figure in their reckonings as to whether they settle in a particular place or not. That people are connected in such a way might explain why some people are attracted to particular kinds of environmental settings, while others are drawn to very different kinds of environments and places—why some people feel as if they belong here and others there.

Many contemporary environmental psychologists, for example, believe that humans behave in accordance with functional evolutionary principles. Behavioural Ecologist Gordon Oriens³⁵⁶ explains landscape preferences in terms of human evolution.

³⁵⁴ See Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: Norton, 1997) and his other works.

³⁵⁵ This is a quotation from the back jacket of Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years* (London: Vintage, 1998).

³⁵⁶ Gordon H. Oriens, ‘An Ecological and Evolutionary Approach to Landscape Aesthetics’ in Edmund Pennings-Rowse & David Lowenthal ed., *Landscape Meanings and Values* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986): 3-25.

Orians suggests that human responses to environments relate to expected survival and reproductive outcomes. ‘Good’ habitats—those deemed apposite—evoke positive responses. In this sense habitat preferences are the product of long-term natural selection—the most widely preferred environment mimicking the savannah of Tropical Africa where human beings as a species began life.³⁵⁷

Human beings, so it is argued, have a ‘genetically transmitted predisposition for the surroundings of the species’ birth and early development.’³⁵⁸ This predilection has been studied and tested from numerous researchers across a wide range of fields; Orians examines the impulse of gardeners to include (maybe even privilege) savannah prototype landscaping and vegetation; ecologist John Falk examines the general preference for images of grass-scapes over those of rainforests and deserts. His study collected responses from people of all ages and on at least three different continents, finding that savannah type environments—grassy expanses with scattered vegetation—were overall equally preferred to the participant’s native landscape, even in some cases where a grassland environment had never been seen before.³⁵⁹

Not only is it argued that human beings make similar aesthetic judgments or show a preference for particular natural environments, but that our positive reactions to natural phenomena *per se* may have a biological basis. E.O. Wilson used the term ‘biophilia’ to describe what he believed to be a human affinity for nature—a biological human need for natural surroundings and an associated ‘innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms.’³⁶⁰ Wilson argues that while complex social organization is only apparent for a tiny fraction of human history, human beings have been involved in a complex ecological organization since their genesis. ‘Earth is our home in the full, genetic sense, where humanity and its ancestors existed for all the millions of years of their evolution’.³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ See also Stephen Kaplan & Rachel Kaplan, *Cognition and Environment: Functioning in an Uncertain World* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982).

³⁵⁸ Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991): 37.

³⁵⁹ Hiss, 1991: 36-37.

³⁶⁰ E. O. Wilson, ‘Biophilia and the Conservation Ethic’ in S.R. Kellett & E.O. Wilson ed., *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (Washington: Island Press, 1993): 31.

³⁶¹ E.O. Wilson, *In Search of Nature* (London: Penguin, 1996): 190.

For the very much greater part of our history, ecological, rather than social principles, guided human life and thought. Given this, we may be biologically programmed or predisposed not only to value ‘natural’ environments, but to privilege them over ‘artificial’ ones—those that we have modified. Indeed, the biophilia hypothesis explains the restorative powers of nature in biological terms. For such theorists human beings have an innate affinity for certain landscape aesthetics and relate to these aesthetic features in a positive way in both psychological and functional terms.³⁶²

Of course, in the last few thousand years human beings have modified their environments in significant ways. How far they continue to belong in the ‘artificial’ environments that they have created is an issue of contemporary debate. Ecological psychologist J.J. Gibson asks the question: ‘Why has man changed the shapes and substances of his environment?’ and answers it in the following way:

To change what it affords him. He has made more available what benefits him and less pressing what injures him. In making life easier for himself, of course he has made life harder for most of the other animals. Over the millennia, he has made it easier for himself to get food, easier to keep warm, easier to see at night, easier to get about, and easier to train his offspring.³⁶³

According to this way of thinking, as human beings have evolved biologically and psychologically they have shaped the physical world around them so that it reflects and supports those changes. Where they have been successful they have flourished. Where they have not they have perished. Human beings have proved to be extremely adaptable and resilient creatures. If belonging is a relation to an environment that matches the form and character of human functionality then human beings have learnt to belong in a diverse range of environments—both ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’.

Insofar as urban environments are taken to be ‘unnatural’ settings for human beings, urban living is taken to be one of the most challenging and extreme human developments. Living predominantly inside air conditioned buildings and under artificial

³⁶² Bell *et al.*, 2001: 41.

³⁶³ James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986): 130.

lighting the functional profile of human beings deteriorates.³⁶⁴ The challenge for those who work in the area of environmental health is to create urban environments that allow people to live fully human lives with normal psychological and physiological functioning.

There is a substantial corpus of research into place with a scientific orientation—studies by architects, town planners, health professionals and environmental psychologists to name a few—examining the way in which physical environments influence the behaviours, health and well-being of those who engage with them. The common aim of many of these studies is to ascertain how people react to particular features in landscape (both built and natural) in order that experiences of place can be predicted, ameliorated and/or enriched. It is not only that urban living separates human beings from the natural world in the sense that their lives are spent increasingly indoors, but that the aesthetic of the cityscape itself is alien and alienating.

Some years ago a group of architects in the United States spent almost a decade studying the aspects of urban places that ‘make people feel alive and human’. They came up with 253 elements or aspects of the urban environment that have links to positive experience. These included warm colours, the presence of elderly people, open spaces and plazas and buildings no greater than four floors. Tall buildings and uniform configurations in the built landscape were among the elements they found not only unappealing, but able to actually damage people—both mentally and emotionally.³⁶⁵

A number of models have been developed over the last several decades articulating which environmental properties support and enhance human biological functioning and well-being. Most of these models are founded on the assumption that intelligibility is an important measure of environmental comfort, and therefore that predictors such as complexity and coherence underlie aesthetic judgments. The Kaplan and Kaplan Preference Model is probably the most well known and influential. This model is a preference matrix with four main components—coherence, mystery, complexity and legibility. Coherence and legibility relate to understanding, or making sense of, the environment. Mystery and complexity relate to the degree to which one is stimulated to

³⁶⁴ Gallagher, 1994: 13-14.

³⁶⁵ Christopher Alexander in Hiss, 1991: 15-16.

engage with, or explore, the environment one is in. According to the Kaplans, the more one is able to understand a place, and is stimulated to explore it, the more supportive and enriching being in that place will be.³⁶⁶ Geographer Jay Appleton³⁶⁷ recognises two more preferences in landscape—prospect and refuge.

‘Prospect’ means a long, sweeping vista—a place where viewing is unhindered and we can take in information from miles around. ‘Refuge’ means a hiding place where, from concealment, we can see without being seen, and gain information without giving away any information about ourselves.³⁶⁸

Environments in which these experiential criteria can be met are environments that maximise human functionality, and in doing so, according to the rationale favoured by environmental determinists, facilitate our being human. The environment in which one belongs, on this account, is that which maximises human functioning.

What it means to function as a human is, of course a point of debate, and how we ought live as fully human beings is equally as contentious. These issues raise ethical questions with regard to the ways in which we think and behave in relation to the environment. However, they also bring into consideration the ethical status of ‘belonging’ if what we mean by that term is a relation to the physical world that maximises human efficacy. Questions regarding the ethical implications of belonging (in its environmental designation or others) surely deserve much more thought and analysis. What can be demonstrated here, however, is the danger of slippage between understanding that the environment has a powerful influence upon the physical and psychological functioning of human beings and using environmental determinism to justify the alienation of people from their environments. We have seen how the work of Griffith Taylor was reportedly used to naturalise racism and imperialism and it was alluded that the same ideology might be used to inform attitudes toward immigrants, however one might argue that the doctrine of environmental determinism is also used to

³⁶⁶ Hiss, 1991: 40-41. See also Bell *et al.*, 2001: 42-46. The Kaplans document the results of their research into habitat preferences and the model they develop in Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982.

³⁶⁷ For a comprehensive account of this aspect of Appleton’s work see Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (London: Wiley, 1975).

³⁶⁸ Hiss, 1991: 40-41

negative effect by place professionals such as architects and town planners. Here, the design of residential and employment spaces has in some cases reflected assumptions about the functional profile and value of those who will occupy them. When this occurs, what results is a troubling disparity between the accommodations of peoples at either end of the social class spectrum. Acceptance of both environmental determinism, and also this kind of disparity, is evidenced in the critical application of notions concerning 'who belongs where' to physically, literally and figuratively 'put people in their place'.

If we define human belonging as a relation to the environment in which the environment reflects and supports the functional profile of the human beings who live in it, then it matters not whether the human beings have adapted it or adapted to it. So long as the environment is such that it allows human beings to perform physical and socio-cultural practices deemed necessary for their survival then a belonging relation pertains. If the environment is such that these practices cannot be performed then belonging is logically extinguished. Put another way, if we take the physical environment to determine who and what we are (and this is certainly what a wide range of theories seem to suggest) environmental belonging is necessary for an individual or a group to retain their identity, whereas not belonging to the environment in which one is placed must destabilise one's identity—either temporarily or permanently. This explains the existential angst of those separated from their home-place for any length of time (such as has been described in my own experience, that of soldiers fighting abroad and also early settler Australians).

Fathoming the relationship between human beings and their environmental milieu has occupied thinkers over a vast period of time. As is indicated in the summary presented, many of the approaches that have been taken, appeal, in one way or another, to the notion that the form and nature of the environment determines the form and nature of human life and identity. While officially at least, most study into the human-environment relationship has been redirected over the past century to focus on, and critique, the human impact on the environment rather than the other way around, it is argued here that the doctrine of environmental determinism is still very influential. Although, it has been acknowledged that humans evolve by both adapting to *and* adapting the environments in which they find themselves, when individuals come to discuss their own belonging to particular places or environments, they continue to do so in deterministic terms. The onus

is placed upon the nature of the environment. However, if belonging in its environmental designation is constituted in the human-environment relation where there is accord between the two, then it is preserved by one of two means—either we change the environment so that it has consonance with us, or we change ourselves to accord with it. What is most striking about the question of belonging, insofar as it is a question of some concern for an increasing number of people, is that while the former means of rectification receives significant attention, there is a marked reluctance to consider the latter.

In Conclusion

Section Two began with the proposition that a logical place to commence an exploration of belonging would be with an examination of how the notion of belonging is ordinarily employed, not only in Australian discourses, but whenever it comes under discussion. Three ‘senses’ of belonging were identified and analysed: social belonging, the sense of belonging that refers us to our connection to other people or society; historical belonging, the sense of belonging that refers us to our connection to history and the past; and environmental belonging, the sense of belonging that refers us to our connection to a particular locality or physical environment. What we were able to achieve by defining and exploring the theory and logic of these three common conceptualisations of belonging was a more coherent understanding of their bases and rationales as distinct types. We had already seen in Section One how Australians have, over time, understood their belonging according to the social, historical and geographic landscapes they inhabited, and how notions of belonging and identity are articulated together in the Australian context. What became evident during the course of the survey conducted in Section Two was the typical way in which, theories involving belonging—in any one of its three guises—make strong conceptual connections between the notion of belonging and perceptions of who and what we are—with our identity as individuals, as groups and as human beings *per se*.

Regarding the connection between social belonging and identity, it has been shown how across a range of traditions and disciplines belonging is understood as a device by

which we assume our identities. Most of us would recognise that collective influences are exceptionally powerful in shaping our sense of personal identity and selfhood, however the accounts provided go further. As was also shown, many theories hold that the mechanisms that produce selves are exclusively, social ones. In addition, philosophers of a communitarian bent would argue not only that who and what we are as individuals relies on social aggregation, but that who and what we are as humans is inseparable from the social structures in which we are embedded.

Notions of identity are also aligned with historical belonging. Not only is belonging conceived as a product of the development of human beings into the kind of entities they are in a general evolutionary sense, but belonging is also considered to be rooted in the past—to have its origins there. Our identities are implicated in two ways here; first, according to the phylogenetic thesis regarding the simultaneous development of society and human identity *per se*, and second that who and what we are as humans is defined by our capacity to live *historically*—our capacity to imagine the selves we are in the present as the selves we were in the past. In a sense then, our capacity to make sense of our lives and ourselves is dependant on our capacity to recognise our present selves as belonging to our past selves and *vice versa*. We conceive of our history as a narrative, and ourselves as characters who belong in it.

Identity is also implicated in characterisations of environmental belonging. Here the physical environment is taken, in a number of different ways, as a primary determinant of who and what we are and how we function as human beings. Environmental belonging is understood as a state of biological accord with our surroundings—a state of affairs in which our functional profile is most efficient for the situation in which we are placed. When this state obtains, we are most properly related to the place or environment in which we are situated, and as such, most fully and comfortably ourselves. When removed from such an environment, we experience a deterioration in both function and well-being or, to use a common expression, we are not quite ourselves.

What has been discovered by analysing the three ‘senses’ in which belonging is most commonly employed—as a social connection, a historical connection and an environmental connection—is that neither the basic affiliation between belonging and

identity nor the relevance of the connection (and the effects on people when it is strained or broken) are confined to the Australian context. Furthermore, although many of the theories discussed investigate belonging as a collective mode of being, insofar as shared belonging is deemed relevant, it is only so because the issue is of such profound significance to the individuals involved. Indeed, the connection between identity and perceptions of belonging is perhaps its most urgent in an individual context—where personal identity and a personal sense of belonging is concerned. We seek to belong socially, historically and environmentally, because doing so delineates and affirms us as who and what we are. Belonging, it seems, is a very personal matter. That is to say, in the lives of individual human beings, questions of belonging (Am I properly related to the social, historical and physical world in which I live?") and questions of identity ("Who am I?") are intimately connected, if not inseparable.

However, herein lies the dilemma. The way that most theoretical models of belonging operate, including those under discussion in Section Two, is on the assumption that belonging is a product of the relation of a person, or group of people, *to something else*—society, history or some place in the physical world. However, if we accept that what is at stake in the question of belonging is our identity as persons—the identity of the self itself—(and this is also what almost all theoretical models suggest) then looking *outside* of the self *to something else* for belonging will not get us anywhere. Having disclosed the conceptual connection between belonging and identity and also the important role that social, historical and physical contexts play in defining who and what we are, it is not the case that we must abandon a relational account of belonging all together. Indeed, such a conceptual shift only reinforces the necessity of pursuing the matter in precisely these terms.

A relational account is not one in which influence flows in just one direction, as the analyses of the models presented in Section Two seems to suggest. In a relational account the influence of the relating entities is mutual. In metaphysical terms, where a relation pertains the relating entities are mutually defining. A relational account, therefore, does not demand that one entity is already constituted and the other not—the one determining the other while remaining unchanged in itself. In other words, we do not have to assume that the social, historical or physical worlds determine the identities of persons. Nor is it

the case that the relation between person and world is a relation between two already constituted entities. Rather, if a relation pertains at all, it must be the case that both entities are in some sense independently un-constituted; that they are mutually constitutive; that their particular nature, character or identity is only disclosed *in* their relation.

Given this, looking to something independent of the self, so to speak, for belonging—to an already constituted social structure, historical past or physical environment—is arguably not simply problematic, but illogical. This may well have been a logical place to begin the development of a philosophical theory of belonging, but logic now dictates we move in another direction. It is clear that to properly articulate an integrated account of belonging we must first have a framework of reference that is itself integrated—a framework capable of drawing together the social, historical and environmental elements into a unified living complex in which the lived and living reality of the human subject can also be embedded and through which it can be articulated. As will be demonstrated place and human implacement are conceptual vehicles that can serve this purpose. Furthermore, instead of looking outward to belonging, it is now clear that we must look instead to the belonging relation itself. One way of getting ‘inside’ what it is to belong—to the belonging relation itself—is to get inside place. The phenomenology of place allows us to study belonging from the perspective of that which belongs. This complex task exploring the existential dimension of belonging, and culminating in its revision, shall be undertaken in the next and final section.

SECTION THREE

Belonging—A Philosophical Inquiry

Introduction

What is concluded from the conceptual analysis of Section Two is that theories informing our thinking about belonging have a number of things in common; first, the treatment of belonging as a particular relation to something else, and second, a conceptual connection between the notion of belonging and that of identity. Whether these elements are passively presumed or active crafted, they are almost universally present. What is suggested by the conceptual frameworks that the theories investigated construct is the notion that belonging obtains in a particular kind of relation to society or community, history or tradition, or place or environment, and it is according to this relation that human beings assume their identity. Indeed, it is this view of belonging that is received, accepted and we find regularly employed not only in scholarly discourses, but also in common parlance. When one asks of another, questions relating either to their identity or their belonging, the answer given inevitably involves a social, historical or environmental reference.

While it is acknowledged that this view of belonging is the one taken for granted, it is argued that such a view of belonging also contains a conceptual anomaly. Belonging and identity are certainly connected, and this connection must be understood in relational terms, but if this is the case belonging cannot be understood as a correlation between a person and something already existing independently of them, such as society, history or the environment, which provides that person with his or her identity. That would not constitute a relational account at all. In short, if belonging is to be understood in relational terms, it cannot be a relation *to something*, but must be instead a relation *of something*.

What is needed then to properly articulate belonging and the ontological connection between belonging and identity is a model that recognises the mutual constitution of

person and his/her social, historical and physical environment. However, what is also needed is a model that, instead of looking outward for something that provides a belonging reference, allows us to get ‘inside’ what it is to belong—to the belonging relation itself. What is required is a model that posits belonging from the perspective of that which belongs. One way of doing that is to present belonging from the viewpoint of experience—to analyse what it is to belong by examining how it appears to us. Phenomenology provides such a model and Section 3.1 ‘The Phenomenology of Place and Belonging’ is largely devoted to an analysis of that field of inquiry.

The ultimate aim of the phenomenological mode of inquiry is to describe things as they appear in the concrete lives and experiences of human beings. Phenomenological inquiry is conducted across a broad range of disciplines, exploring just as broad a range of themes and topics. Section 3.1.1 provides a summary of the origins, rationale, conceptual basis and methodology of phenomenology. For the purposes of this work, however, it is phenomenologists of place, particularly those from what I have called the ‘geographical school’ of phenomenological inquiry, that capture attention. What researchers in this field study is the human sense of place, however when they talk of a ‘sense of place’ they are not merely referring to how places are experienced by human beings, but additionally how human beings experience themselves as being in place—or in the language of this work, how human beings are related to the belonging relation. The phenomenology of place is explored in Section 3.1.2. As one might imagine, references to belonging are ubiquitous in phenomenologically oriented studies of place (albeit that what it is to belong *per se* is seldom subjected to rigorous analysis). Section 3.1.3 is dedicated to a critical analysis of how the geographical school of phenomenological inquiry understand the experience of belonging and a range of other phenomena that they associate with it.

In recent times philosophical investigation has extended beyond the study of place-experience to an explication of place *per se*. Philosophers of place have sought to provide an account of place in its own terms—as an ontological structure that founds human experience, rather than being the object of it. Section 3.2 ‘The Ontology of Belonging Place’ explores this relatively recent scholarship on place, exploring its theoretical foundations, disclosing its rationale and explaining its relevance to questions

of identity and belonging. Section 3.2.1 clarifies the differences between phenomenological and ontological approaches to studies of the place-world, and also how these two approaches are related. Section 3.2.2 unpacks the ontological view of place. Here the work of Edward Casey and J. E. Malpas is crucial. What these scholars achieve is an explication of place as it frames the life-world of human beings. In a radical departure from orthodox and popular understandings, according to this view place precedes not only experience, but existence. Place is the structure that allows the appearance of things within it—including the appearance of ourselves. By looking inside such a framework we begin to catch a glimpse of what it is to be and belong there, and by unpacking the ontology of place Section 3.2.3 explores the position of a person in place. The question about human identity is also a question regarding the place of human beings in the world. The notion of belonging is used to define the condition of having found one's proper place in the world. Across time, space, circumstance and culture, understandings of where or how we belong have been integral to explanations of who and what we are, the strong suggestion being, that knowing one's place in the world is in some sense analogous to knowing oneself.

Understanding place in ontological terms allows us the prospect of doing both, and at the same time disclosing what it really means to be a self that belongs. Section 3.3 'The Ontology of Belonging Self', the final section of this work, deals explicitly with this question. By extrapolating on the ontology of place and with the philosophical assistance of both Martin Heidegger and Søren Kierkegaard, this section assembles an ontology of belonging—a structural account of the belonging self and the associated theory of *belonging qua correct relation*. Section 3.3.1 establishes conceptual connections between the ontology of being in place and the ontology of selfhood. Section 3.3.1 provides a detailed examination of Kierkegaard's ontology of the self in preparation for Section 3.3.2 in which the theory of *belonging qua correct relation* is formally developed and then applied to the Australian context.

3.1 The Phenomenology of Place and Belonging

Phenomenology—the study of things as they appear to us in experience—is arguably one of the most important and influential philosophical movements of the twentieth century.³⁶⁹ Since the mid-twentieth century there has been a movement away from theoretical frameworks that study human beings in isolation from their environment (in laboratory conditions) toward those that focus on transactions between individuals and the context in which they live.³⁷⁰ Rarely is the environment still treated as something ‘out there’ and beyond us. Rather, the context in which we live—the sum total of our social, historical and physical worlds—is understood as inseparable from us and our experience.

In the development of the phenomenological approach Edmund Husserl’s work concerning the *lifeworld* or *lebenswelt* is most notable,³⁷¹ as is that of his pupil, Martin Heidegger concerning *being-in-the-world*.³⁷² Indeed, these two thinkers are credited with laying the foundations upon which the phenomenological movement of the twentieth century was built. There are, of course, other thinkers who adopt phenomenological approaches very early, among them Alfred Schutz who used the method in his investigations of the social world.³⁷³

For the purposes of this work, however, it is Heidegger’s thought that stands out, not only because of his formulation of how *being-in-the-world* (and experiencing that ‘being in’) is characteristic of humans, but also his contribution to later philosophies of

³⁶⁹ For a comprehensive history of Phenomenology as a discipline and a methodology see Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement* (Hague: Nijhoff, 1982).

³⁷⁰ Ecological Psychologist, James J. Gibson is instructive on this point. He claims that the difference between the physical world and environment is that the environment is the world of experience. Therefore, the words animal and environment make an inseparable pair. Indeed he claims that the term ‘physical environment’ is oxymoronic. See James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (London: Erlbaum, 1986).

³⁷¹ A key work is Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1913; Hague: Nijhoff, 1980-1982). The work and influence of Husserl is discussed in Spiegelberg, 1982, 73-168.

³⁷² Phenomenology is the dominant methodological principle in Heidegger’s early works, particularly Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson ([1927]; New York: Harper, 1962). The work and influence of Heidegger is discussed in Spiegelberg, 1982: 271-358.

³⁷³ While not specifically discussed in this work, the phenomenological approach of Maurice Merleau-Ponty has arguably been the most influential on the psychology of perception in the twentieth century. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962). The work and influence of Merleau-Ponty is discussed in Spiegelberg, 1982, 516-563.

place.³⁷⁴ ‘Place’ is also a concept that became the focus of much research across a broad range of disciplines during the late-twentieth century—much of it from a phenomenological perspective. Phenomenologists of place do not understand ‘place’ and places themselves as merely geographical locations that provide backdrops or settings for human experience. Nor do they explain the experience of place in terms of biological or evolutionary factors, even though such factors might contribute to who and what we are as experiencing subjects. After Heidegger, they treat persons, their identities and experiences as being tied to places in a far more fundamental way. Phenomenologically oriented studies of place begin with the assumption that the experience of persons is place-bound (and the experiences of places are person-bound).

Over the past few decades the phenomenology of place, as the ‘geographical school’ of phenomenological inquiry articulates, it has become particularly influential on understandings of place and place-experience. From this school David Seamon and Edward Relph are chosen as primary exemplars, predominantly because it is these scholars who are most explicit in discussing belonging in its guise as place-experience. The question as to how far the phenomenology of place, thus presented, eschews the conceptual problems encountered by the theories discussed in Section Two is something that also deserves attention, and which is also duly addressed.

3.1.1. Introducing Phenomenology

While traditional scientific approaches drew boundaries between biology and environment, and thus settings and behaviour,³⁷⁵ what emerged during the twentieth century as a growing awareness from a broad range of disciplinary perspectives is that the influence between human beings and environments does not run in one way or the other, but in both directions. It is now commonly acknowledged, and taken seriously by an eclectic group of thinkers, that human beings and the environments in which they are

³⁷⁴ In Heidegger’s later works one sees most obviously a shift in his thought from phenomenology to ontology and to ‘the place of being’. For an investigation and analysis of the transition in Heidegger’s thinking in connections with notions of being, place and world see J. E. Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World* (forthcoming, MIT Press, 2006).

³⁷⁵ See E. T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (1959) on ‘proxemics’ (how we use space); physical distance determines the type and nature of relationships between people; Roger Barker, *Ecological Psychology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968) on environment behaviour relations as ‘ecological interdependencies’.

placed are mutually influential, and thus a certain synchrony exists between biology and environment in determining the behaviour and functional profile of human beings. According to this way of thinking, the identity of human beings and that of the environments they inhabit do not evolve independently of each other. They do not belong one *to* the other, but rather, they belong *together*.

The view that there is a symmetrical relationship between living beings and the milieu in which they are situated is replicated in contemporary life science models and has its conceptual foundations in early-twentieth-century philosophy of biology. Georges Canguilhem, French philosopher and historian of science, is one theorist interested in the biological function of living organisms and who in the 1930s challenged the false dichotomy between biology and environment. In this regard Canguilhem found that the form of life that an organism lives and the type of environment in which it lives are mutually constitutive. Living things are not indifferent to their circumstances. Life is contextual. Different environments elicit different functional profiles from an organism. The morphology of the organism and the environment exist and develop in concert.

Perhaps the most influential of Canguilhem's works in this area is *The Normal and the Pathological* which he initially wrote in 1943 and then substantially rewrote twenty years later. In this work Canguilhem set out his primary thesis—that life as a mode is normative. Any adjustment in the environment will occasion a re-calibration of the functional profile or identity of the living organism. In this sense, the living thing is engaged in a perpetual process of redefinition.

Furthermore, Canguilhem suggests that while each organism has its own unique functional profile—its own particularity—the functional profiles of living organisms and their environments are interdependent. In fact, the relationship is so intimate that it is Canguilhem's argument that what is being observed when we study an organism *in situ* is not two independent entities causing reactions in the other, but one functioning whole. On these grounds there is no objective nature to an environment, and nor is there any objective nature to an organism. What it is to be a certain organism is to exist in a certain environment and what it is to be a certain environment is to co-exist with certain other

organisms.³⁷⁶ Such a model captures both the logic and the practical implications of a relational account of belonging.³⁷⁷

Around the same time as Canguilhem was formalising his theory of life-forms, another school of scientists were studying the relationship between animals and their environments using an analogous conceptual framework. Ethology, as it came to be known, was a movement made up primarily of zoologists whose interest was the adaptive interaction of animal behaviour and environment. The focus of Ethology concerns not only different life *forms*, but also different *perspectives*. More specifically ethologists were interested in what environmental situations elicit what behaviours, and they took the role of perception to be a central determinant. One of the key theorists in this field was Jakob von Uexküll. Von Uexküll concentrated particularly on the nature of animal experience—how the world appeared to the animal under examination. There are many worlds, he argued, ‘worlds strange to us but known to other creatures, manifold and varied as the animals themselves.’ His work was directed toward disclosing ‘the world as it appears to the animal themselves’.³⁷⁸ What von Uexküll was trying to do was to disclose the world from the perspective of the thing belonging to it. In doing so, he also sought to identify what it was like for a range of different creatures to be ‘at home’ or in home territory. This approach to examining the *phenomenal world* or *self-world* of animals, he called *Umwelt* theory.³⁷⁹

Philosophers had also begun to look to the *phenomenal* or *self-world* of human beings to explain the nature of human existence. The position that the thought of Edmund Husserl occupies in relation to contemporary studies of the phenomenal world (Phenomenology) is important, but also equivocal. Husserl’s phenomenology was transcendental. In this sense he was not interested in the mundane realm of human

³⁷⁶ Francois Delaporte ed., *A Vital Rationalist: Selected Writings from Georges Canguilhem* (New York: Zone Books, 1994): 15-17.

³⁷⁷ One might say that what it is to be a certain organism or a certain environment is not only to co-exist with certain other organisms, but other entities as well.

³⁷⁸ Jakob von Uexküll, ‘A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men: A Picture Book of Invisible Worlds’ [1934] in Claire H. Schiller, trans. and ed., *Instinctive Behavior: The Development of the Modern Concept* (New York: International Universities Press, 1964): 5.

³⁷⁹ For a comprehensive explanation of this theory, including a range of illustrations of the *unwelt* of various species of animal see von Uexküll (1934) in Schiller, 1964: 5-80. Much more could be said about the influence of von Uexküll on the way we have come to understand the ‘subjective’ worlds we are assumed to occupy, but that will have to be left to a future project.

experience and behaviour. What he sought to do was to disclose that upon which human experiences, doings and practices are dependant—to disclose the world in which these things are grounded. He held that to do this, contingencies such as everyday individual experiences³⁸⁰ must be ‘bracketed’, or put aside. It was only then, Husserl argued, that the essences that provide the basis of conscious experience could be examined. For Husserl, therefore, phenomenology is the study of a world of essences, rather than the study of human experience *per se*.³⁸¹

Given this, it is hard to see how phenomenology conceived transcendently could be useful for an investigation of the world of actual lived experience, including the study of belonging. Oddly enough, geographer David Seamon redeems elements of Husserlian phenomenology and uses them as a basis in his phenomenological methodology for the investigation of place. This is a matter to which we shall return, and which connects with Husserl’s other legacy—the notion of the life-world or *lebenswelt*.

Although practically nothing was known of it during his life-time, Herbert Spiegelberg, who has written what can probably be regarded as the definitive history of Phenomenology, claims that the idea of the life-world is one of Husserl’s most influential and suggestive arguments.³⁸² Particularly in his later works, Husserl used the notion of life-world to denote ‘an oriented world with an experiencing subject at its centre’.³⁸³ As discussed earlier, at the same time a similar concept found entrance into the world of science through the work of von Uexküll.

Probably the most well-referenced and most influential thinker in the area of Phenomenology, though, is Martin Heidegger. It was he who rendered the phenomenological approach useful for the study of the real lived experience of human beings. While, it was Husserl who coined the term *Lebenswelt* or life-world, it is the Heideggerian interpretation of life-world that is brought forward into contemporary phenomenological analysis. In an early lecture on the topic Heidegger described

³⁸⁰ That which is represented in what Husserl called the ‘natural attitude’.

³⁸¹ Brian Fay, ‘Phenomenology as Social Inquiry: From Consciousness to Culture and Critique’ in Stephen P. Turner & Paul A. Roth ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003): 42-44.

³⁸² For a discussion of the role of the idea of the ‘life-world’ in Husserl’s thought see Spiegelberg, 1982: 159-162.

³⁸³ Spiegelberg, 1982: 162.

phenomenology thus: 'Phenomenology is the investigation of life in itself...In it no theories are in dispute, but only genuine insights versus the ungenuine. The genuine ones can be obtained only by an honest and unreserved immersion in life itself'.³⁸⁴ Heidegger sought to demonstrate that Husserl's theory regarding bracketing off conscious experience in order to get to the essence of things could not achieve what it set out to do. He argued that the world could not be understood independent of our experience of it, because it is in practical engagement in the world that being of any kind is realised. Thus, if we are to understand anything about the world we must turn to the concrete experiences of our *being in it*.

A major phenomenological challenge identified by Heidegger is the description of life-worlds in a way that legitimately escapes any subject-object dichotomy. Heidegger objected to the way conventional philosophy and psychology approached the study of human being on epistemological grounds, claiming that the relationship between persons and the world had previously been reduced to either an idealistic or realistic perspective. On the idealistic view, the world is a function of the person (the perceiving subject) and the realistic view assumes that the person is a function of the world. Heidegger argued that both understandings rely upon a false dichotomy between world and person.

According to Heidegger, it is impossible to ask whether person makes world or world makes person because both exist always together. Person and world exist as an undissolvable unity—a person-world whole—and can only be correctly interpreted in terms of that holistic relationship. Life-world refers to the context of experience (that which is being experienced or that which being experiences). Life-world is not an object of experience. The experience of being, is not the experience of something, nor is it an experience of a relation to something, but rather *being-in-the-world per se*. Heidegger calls the way of *being-in-the-world* that is characteristic of humans *Dasein*. A lot more can, and will, be said about Heidegger's form of existential phenomenology. Suffice to say here, that the basic premises upon which most contemporary phenomenological investigations are based, particularly those that involve notions of identity and belonging, are credited to Heideggerian thought.

³⁸⁴ Malpas, forthcoming, 2006: unpaginated manuscript.

Around the same time as Heidegger was setting down his theory of *Dasein* in *Being and Time* (1924), on another footing, sociologist Alfred Schutz was also re-developing Husserl's phenomenology. In *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (1932) Schutz employed the idea of *lebenswelt* to articulate the intersubjective nature of existence. By focussing on the way in which individual subjects construct their world in concert with others, Schutz aimed to shed light upon being in the world as a social reality. His main concern was to take up a phenomenological investigation into what Husserl termed the *natural attitude*—precisely those experiences of everyday life that form the individual point of view and which Husserl sought to bracket off. But Schutz held that the social world is as much a part of the 'natural attitude' as any other object of everyday experience. Much of his work focusses on the way in which the human point of view is constructed in a social context, holding first, that rather than being objective facts, meanings are constructed by individual subjects, and second, that these individual subjects construct these meanings within a social context. With this in mind, he set out to show how social reality, social relations and behaviours are the products of agents, who themselves are socially derived.

While Schutz emphasises the subjective meanings of a person's membership in a community and criticizes the anthropologist for ignoring what is 'personal' about belonging to a particular group, he also holds that social reality consists in a common world-view and interpretation that is relative to culture and cultural groups. As Helmut Wagner points out

... as Schutz expressed it, the in-group arrives at, and maintains, a collective self-interpretation, representing a common, inside view of the community. The members of any neighbouring cultural community, having their own relative natural conception of the world, view the first community strictly from the outside.³⁸⁵

In this way while belonging involves individual views and commitments, these only hold and persist because they are shared between the group.

³⁸⁵ Helmut R. Wagner, 'Introduction', Alfred Schutz, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations: Selected Writings*, ed. Helmut R. Wagner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): 17.

Schutz' work has led two other broadly related approaches in Sociology—Phenomenological Sociology and Ethnomethodology. Phenomenological Sociology found its most popular expression in Peter Bergmann and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1972), still a highly influential text regarding the 'sociology of knowledge', albeit with some conceptual provisos. The key premises of this work are that reality is socially constructed, and that the characteristics of things as they appear in experience—what one knows about things—depend upon the social context in which they appear. That is to say, one's 'reality' and one's 'knowledge' of that reality are a product of one's social environment. Ethnomethodology, takes Schutz' work in a slightly different direction. In *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967) its key theorist Harold Garfinkel³⁸⁶ sets out to problematise the 'natural attitude' by infusing it with the social. Ethnomethodology seeks to interrupt and unsettle social processes and practices in order to see more clearly their fundamental influence on the way we make sense of the world and our place in it.

Phenomenology can be regarded as a disciplinary field, a movement in the history of philosophy, an epistemology, an approach or a methodology. In all of these guises Phenomenology has had a pervasive influence on twentieth-century thought, however it is the phenomenological approach and methodology that has most relevance here. Phenomenology is the exploration and description of phenomena—things as they appear in our experience. Of course, conscious experience involves, but is not restricted to, how we 'sense' things—the data we receive from hearing, seeing, touching and so on. But it is acknowledged, indeed it is stressed by most advocates, that the content of experience is far more expansive than this. Experience involves how we think and feel about things, even how we think and feel about those thoughts and emotional responses. In that respect phenomenology studies not only the consciousness of experience but also the self-consciousness of that experience.

Phenomenology is descriptive and qualitative. One important aim of phenomenological research is to provide a descriptive account of phenomena—to record the sensory qualities or characteristics of things as they are experienced. In this sense, phenomenology is a qualitative inquiry. Phenomenologists seek to understand

³⁸⁶ Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

phenomena by identifying and describing their qualities. Phenomenology is also interpretative and analytic. By referring to descriptions of particular lived experiences, phenomenologists interpret phenomena. By noting commonalities between individual experiences and the contexts in which they arise, they are able to construct a more generalized definition of particular experiences. Having identified essential features of phenomena, they are then available for analysis. This process may involve a critical reflection on the conditions that enable our experiences to occur as they do—conditions that are social, historical, physical and so on. In broad outline, if we take a phenomenological approach to belonging, then we treat belonging as an experience. Accordingly, a phenomenological inquiry into belonging describes the features of that experience from the first-person perspective (that is, how belonging appears to the person who is experiencing it), and in doing so is able to construct a more generalized account of the phenomena and its enabling conditions.

What has been described above is the most basic conceptual and methodological framework in regard to phenomenological inquiry. A closer look at the methodology adopted by the geographical school of phenomenological inquiry will show more precisely how phenomenological research is conducted. Geographers David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer set out the formal blueprint for phenomenological geography thus:

A phenomenology of environment and place examines three major themes: first, the essential qualities and interconnections of human environmental experience; second, essential qualities of environment ... which promote a particular character of place and landscape; third, the larger context of societal and symbolic environments fundamental to place.³⁸⁷

Their work, and that of others I have referred to, mostly from ‘humanistic’ geography and associated fields, is premised on three basic ideas; first, that what we know of the world we know through conscious experience; second, the idea of human existence as a ‘life-world’; third, and in connection, that given there is no subject-object dichotomy neither objectivism nor subjectivism can provide genuine insights into the character of the life-world. Relph states that his own aims and objectives are:

³⁸⁷ David Seamon & Robert Mugerauer ed., *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World* (Hague: Nijhoff, 1985): 4.

... to explore place as a phenomenon of the geography of the lived-world in our everyday experiences ... my concern is with the various ways in which places manifest themselves in our experience or consciousness of the lived-world, and with the distinctive and essential components of place and placelessness as they are expressed in landscapes.³⁸⁸

He goes on to explain that the methodologies he adopts 'proceed from an acceptance both of the wholeness and indivisibility of human experience, and of the fact that meaning defined by human intentions is central to all our existence.'³⁸⁹

Although seldom articulated in anything other than the most abstract of terms, David Seamon sets this out very clearly. According to Seamon, phenomenology carries with it two core assumptions: 'Person and world are intimately part and parcel and a 'radical empiricism'.³⁹⁰ The phenomenological method is 'empirical' because all information arises through firsthand, grounded contact with the phenomena as it is experienced by the researcher, and 'radical' because it comes direct from the researcher's personal sensibility and awareness rather than from second-hand constructions.³⁹¹ By employing this method Seamon argues that the researcher remains open to the phenomenon, allowing it to show itself in its fullness and complexity.

Seamon also makes further demands on successful research: first, the researcher must facilitate for herself an intimacy with the phenomenon through prolonged, first hand exposure; second, the researcher should have no clear sense of what she will find or how discoveries will proceed; third, a certain uncertainty and spontaneity must be accepted and transformed into possibility and pattern.³⁹² According to this rationale, the researcher of phenomena must embed themselves in the world of experience they intend to document. The objective is to record the sensory qualities or characteristics of things as they are experienced, and to extrapolate from that their general character and meaning. A researcher conducting a phenomenological inquiry into belonging would therefore seek to describe the features and qualities of that experience from the first-person perspective

³⁸⁸ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976): 6-7.

³⁸⁹ Relph, 1976: 7.

³⁹⁰ David Seamon, 'Phenomenology, Place, Environment and Architecture: A Review' *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenological Newsletter* (E.A.P.N.), 2000: 6-7.

³⁹¹ Seamon, (E.A.P.N.): 6.

³⁹² Seamon, (E.A.P.N.): 7-8.

(that is, how belonging appears to the person who is experiencing it) and in doing so be able to construct an account of the phenomena and its enabling conditions.

This, in broad outline, represents the most common mode and methodology of research conducted into belonging. The quest of most belonging studies is to describe and explore the conscious experience of belonging—‘senses of belonging’—remembering of course that experience implicates more than just sensations. What is also involved in phenomenological characterizations of belonging are ways of thinking and feeling about it—associated meanings, significances and emotional responses.

3.1.2 The Phenomenology of Place

Most studies conducted into belonging have their origins in studies of place.³⁹³ Since the 1970s phenomenology has made a significant contribution to environmental thinking. The assessment made by Peter Hay in his survey of Western environmental thought is that the phenomenological approach has expanded and enriched conventional approaches to the natural environment and environmental experience. Rather than viewing the natural environment as a context for human survival, and limiting studies of how the person-world relation is experienced to those experiences related directly to the sustenance of life, a phenomenological inquiry encompasses more, concerning itself with a broader range of feelings, meanings and commitments. This shift from an adversarial approach to nature to a far more empathetic one, as Hay points out, is central to the aims of environmentalism. Not only does an empathetic attitude toward the natural environment enjoin concern for the integrity of wild places, but invokes an imperative of responsibility concerning their care.³⁹⁴

³⁹³ Some significant writers on the theme of place from across a range of disciplines include: E. V. Walter, Steven Feld and Keith Basso, Michael Jackson, Setha Low, Hugh Brody, Michael Curry, David Carter, Yi-Fu Tuan, David Seamon, Robert Mugerauer, Nicholas Entrikin, David Harvey, Simon Schama and Edward Relph and Henri Lefebvre. Works on place of most philosophical interest include: Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) and *The Fate Of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California P, 1997), Andrew Light & Jonathon Smith ed., *Philosophies of Place* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998) and J. E. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

³⁹⁴ Peter Hay, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001): 154.

This flowering of interest in the natural environment and environmental experience can be explained in part at least by other burgeoning modern phenomena connected with a perceived erosion of environmental integrity and with it a diminution of the quality of environmental experience. It is now argued consistently that industrialisation, over population, capitalism, globalisation and trans-nationalism, in their different ways, threaten the character (even the viability) of human being in the world, and force an urgent need for a radical re-conception of the relationship between human beings and their environments. A new attitude and approach is called for—a qualitative turn that can explain the human-environment relationship in more considerate terms, and thus might provide some means of possibly re-enchanting it. Phenomenology seems eminently well-suited to the task.

As one might imagine, the phenomenological approach is also generally popular in disciplines where, in one way or another, the quality of human being in the world is at question, for example in social or cultural (human) geography, cultural anthropology, environmental psychology and the place professions (architecture, town and landscape planning etc).³⁹⁵ What phenomenological studies in these fields seek to do is to explore human experiences, and in doing so to contribute to our understanding of environments (both natural and built) and our relationships with them.

In all of these disciplinary fields ‘space’ and spatial ontologies have also become powerful organising forces. One guiding premise of this movement has been that we cannot understand objects of perception unless we understand the ‘spaces’ in which they appear—the contextual whole of the social, historical and physical environment of those who perceive them. Although often conceived of as such colloquially, according to this new way of thinking, space is not a blank slate or an empty space waiting to be filled by objects of perception. Nor is it objective in the sense that it exists independent of experience. Spaces are objective and *non-experiential* only insofar as they provide a

³⁹⁵ For volumes covering a range of phenomenological inquiry across these disciplines see Steven Feld & Keith H. Basso, *Senses of Place* (Sante Fe, NM: School of American Research P, 1996); Barbara Bender, *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives* (Providence: Berg, 1993); Linda McDowell, *Undoing Place? A Geographical Reader* (1997); David Seamon & Robert Mugerauer *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World* (Hague: Nijhoff, 1985) and Winifred Gallagher, *The Power of Place: How our Surroundings Shape our Thoughts, Emotions and Actions* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994) to name but a few.

framework according to which we can make sense of our experiences and orient ourselves.³⁹⁶

Over the last decade or so philosophers, in particular, have looked again at notions of place and space as they have been employed over time in both ancient and contemporary western thought, conducting a rigorous conceptual analysis of these two notions and the relationship between them.³⁹⁷ According to this work, place and space are closely related notions, but the concept of place is not simply a derivative of the concept of space or secondary to it. Casey states that '[b]oth Archytus and Aristotle proclaimed that place is prior to space, and more recently, Bachelard and Heidegger have reembraced the conviction.'³⁹⁸ Malpas argues that as they appear in the work of Plato and Aristotle both *topos* and *choros* might be more closely related to place than space. For Aristotle, '*topos* is always the *topos* of some body (and so there must be both a body that is contained and also a body that contains)' and Plato's *chora* '(that which provides "a situation for all things that come into being") is always understood in relation to the particulars that appear or are received within it.'³⁹⁹ Malpas also makes reference to Bachelard, explaining that 'In Bachelard, the life of the mind is given form in the places and spaces in which human beings dwell and those places themselves shape and influence human memories, feelings and thoughts. In this way, the spaces of inner and outer—of mind and world—are transformed into the other as inner space is externalised and outer space is brought within.'⁴⁰⁰

In contemporary scholarship that refers to these renewed understandings, places are not merely that which is contained in a unit of space, or points of reference within units of space. Place and places are no longer understood as merely the physical surroundings in which things and people are located, or worse, the physical backdrops in front of which our lives are played out. It is not that 'place' and places do not continue to be understood as locations or as having physicality, but that what has become the crux of the

³⁹⁶ For a comprehensive discussion on the structure of space in these terms see Malpas, 1999: 44-71.

³⁹⁷ See Edward Casey, 'How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena' in Feld & Basso, 1996; for further exploration of the ideas presented by Casey see Malpas, 1999: 'Chapter 1: The Obscurity of Place'.

³⁹⁸ Casey in Feld & Basso, 1996: 16.

³⁹⁹ Malpas, 1999: 24.

⁴⁰⁰ Malpas, 1999: 5.

matter is the experiential dimension—the role that human experience plays in the constitution of place and the ways in which place locates phenomena, giving both places and experiences form and rendering both places and experiences intelligible.

Understandings that what it is to be in place (and what it is to be a place *per se*) is dynamic, rather than static, also owe a lot to Heidegger, particularly his idea of what it is to *dwell* (and therefore, what it is to be a dwelling place).⁴⁰¹ This notion, which appears predominantly in Heidegger's later works,⁴⁰² is suggestive of human activity and practice, and thus the concrete lived experience of *being in* or *inhabiting* place. Place in these terms becomes the space of *dwelling* and a mode of life and experience that is human. As one would imagine, geography, particularly humanistic geography, has enthusiastically embraced this new notion of place and some of the traces of Heidegger that go along with it. While place had previously been used by geographers to denote that which occupies particular units of space both broad and narrow—the earth itself, a region, a city, a particular building or a precise position,⁴⁰³ this understanding of place has been under increasing scrutiny for some decades. Hardly anyone thinks of a place in non-experiential terms anymore, and certainly no one who is involved in phenomenological inquiry.

It is now widely recognised and acknowledged among geographers of the humanistic school that the experience of people—individuals and communities—is integral to places and the place-making process. We come to know places through our experience of them. The way we define, understand and regard a place is contingent upon the meanings and values we attribute to it. As Steven Feld describes so eloquently ‘as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place.’⁴⁰⁴ Furthermore, the activities that people perform in a place—where they go, what they do as well as what they see, hear and smell—inform and shape the meaning that they attribute to a place and their time in it. Human beings, as living, sensing bodies and

⁴⁰¹ For more discussion on the notion of dwelling and its connection to place see Casey, 1993; Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Malpas, forthcoming 2006: unpaginated manuscript.

⁴⁰² See for example Heidegger's essay 'Building, Dwelling Thinking', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

⁴⁰³ For a discussion of the senses in which place has traditionally been used by geographers, see Relph, 1976: 3-4.

⁴⁰⁴ Stephen Feld in Feld & Basso, 1996: 91.

minds, inhabit places and are inhabited by them. This is the way places come into being, gain significance and are perpetuated over time.

Given this, it is easy to see why humanistic geography was also early in embracing phenomenological inquiry. As geographer Edward Relph indicates, '[t]he foundations of geographical knowledge lie in the direct experiences and consciousness we have of the world we live in.'⁴⁰⁵ 'We live, act and orient ourselves in a world that is richly and profoundly differentiated into places, yet at the same time we seem to have a meagre understanding of the constitution of places and the ways in which we experience them.'⁴⁰⁶ Relph's own objective was to rectify that—to find out 'what are the distinctive and essential features of place and our experiences of places, for without such knowledge it will not be possible to create and preserve the places that are significant contexts of our lives.'⁴⁰⁷ The objective Yi-Fu Tuan set out in *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (1974), one of the most often cited texts in phenomenological geography, was to explore and explain the affective bond between people and place or setting, and although this work sets out to investigate environmental perceptions, attitudes and values in general, Tuan's more precise concern is with 'the formation and nature of positive attitudes and values'⁴⁰⁸ derived from the experience of places.

According to the geographical school of phenomenological research, belonging to place is a corollary of the affective bond between people and the context of their life and thought—what Bachelard⁴⁰⁹ and Tuan, following him, call *topophilia*. For Bachelard and Tuan *topophilia* is the love of places—a sentiment that is based on, and also gives rise to, familiarity, appreciation, and attachment. 'When *topophilia* is compelling [Tuan states] we can be sure that the place or environment has become the carrier of emotionally charged events or perceived as a symbol.'⁴¹⁰ Relph understands *topophilia* in terms of being 'inside' a place. According to Relph, *existential insideness* occurs when 'a place is

⁴⁰⁵ Relph, 1976: 4.

⁴⁰⁶ Relph, 1976: 6.

⁴⁰⁷ Relph, 1976: 6.

⁴⁰⁸ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974): 4

⁴⁰⁹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

⁴¹⁰ Tuan, 1974: 93.

experienced without deliberate and self-conscious reflection yet is full of significances'.⁴¹¹ However, insideness also involves places being 'inside' persons. In Bachelard the life of the mind is given form in the places and spaces in which human beings dwell and those places themselves shape and influence human memories, feelings and thoughts. In this way, the spaces of inner and outer—of mind and world—are transformed into the other as inner space is externalised and outer space is brought within.⁴¹²

Relph⁴¹³ suggests that *existential insideness* manifests in 'at-homeness'.⁴¹⁴ That is to say, existential insideness is the experience that people have 'when they are at home...when they know the place and are known and accepted there' and 'a homeward directed sentiment, [is] one that is comfortable... without confusion'.⁴¹⁵ According to Seamon, being at home in the world is an authentic existential expression of 'the situation of people being immersed in the world'.⁴¹⁶ Home-places are therefore considered fundamental as sources of security and identity for individuals and groups. '[T]o be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place.'⁴¹⁷

Strong attachment to home-place is sometimes associated with 'parochialism'. This term is often misunderstood and mobilised in a negative and disapproving sense to signify a narrowness of interests or concerns. The word parochial is derived from the Greek *paroikiā* < *para* (near) and *oikos* (a dwelling) and relates to a parish—a district with its own church and clergyman. To be parochial then is to be part of a particular parish community, or more generally to live in, and belong to, a particular district. Parochialism is a special regard for the locality in which one dwells, the matters and concerns of one's particular home-place. Understood thus, parochialism is neither negative nor narrow-minded. Instead it encompasses the shared understandings, attachments and deep affection that locals have for a particular place, district or town.

⁴¹¹ Relph, 1976: 55

⁴¹² As described by Malpas, 1999: 5.

⁴¹³ Relph, 1976: 55

⁴¹⁴ The theme of 'home' is covered extensively in Bachelard, 1969.

⁴¹⁵ Relph cited in Seamon, 1985: 132.

⁴¹⁶ Seamon, (E.A.P.N.): 6.

⁴¹⁷ Relph, 1976: 49

Parochialism, in this sense signifies a reverence for and commitment to a locality. As such parochialism represents a force that is not only positive but also critical if a place and its people are to survive and thrive.

The importance of preserving this intimate and stabilising connection with place has become a recurrent theme in much of the phenomenological literature on place. Life-affirming attachments to place support human identity and flourishing, but phenomenologists of place argue that not all place-attachments are positive ones. At counterpoint to *topophilia* is *topophobia*—ties with place that are distasteful in some way, or induce anxiety and depression. Place-experiences are not always such that they evoke a sense of belonging. There is also a considerable body of literature exploring what the loss of a sense of belonging means in existential terms.⁴¹⁸ At counterpoint to *existential insideness* is *existential outsideness* which involves ‘an alienation from people and places, homelessness, a sense of the unreality of the world, and of not belonging’.⁴¹⁹ From this perspective, displacement is an inability to find one’s place in the world. To know one’s place is to know its particularity—the experiences, activities, significances and meanings that give it its own distinctive identity. However, according to Relph, a place’s authenticity depends upon its ability to inspire heterogeneous and distinctive place-experiences. Cultural and geographical uniformity, such as you might find in contemporary global urban and suburban environments homogenise and simplify place-experience to the extent that authenticity is threatened. To be placeless is not to belong, and the danger in not belonging is not only the loss of distinctive place identities, but the loss of distinct and authentic human identities. When one no longer belongs one no longer senses one’s place, or knows oneself.⁴²⁰ This presents a fairly standard, one might even say orthodox view of belonging (and not belonging) as it is presented by scholars employing a phenomenological approach to investigations of places.

Relph and other like-minded proponents of the geographical school of phenomenological inquiry have undoubtedly enriched our understanding of place and

⁴¹⁸ For phenomenological research into what home can mean in post-modernity, see: Casey, 1993; Robert Mugerauer, *Interpretations on Behalf of Place: Environmental Displacements and Alternative Responses* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994); David Seamon, *Dwelling, Seeing and Building: Toward a Phenomenological Ecology* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993).

⁴¹⁹ Relph, 1976: 51.

⁴²⁰ For a longer discussion see Relph, 1976: 63-78.

place-experiences by expanding the range of person-world experiences studied beyond those concerning survival imperatives or social actions and processes, drawing attention to affective bonds between people and environments. By probing place-experience and acknowledging the feelings and emotions of affection, comfort, acceptance and identification inherent to the experience of place, phenomenological approaches to place highlight the importance of place and places for human flourishing (or otherwise). They stress the relevance of place to human life and identity and in doing so the importance of the places we inhabit. These are significant and admirable achievements, in both theoretical and practical senses.

In regard to this work, however, the potential of phenomenology of place to illuminate the connections between identity and belonging, and the belonging relation *per se* lies in its promise to get us ‘inside’ the places we inhabit. If what is meant by this, however, is merely being able to provide a comprehensive description of place-experience then our task is no further advanced. Place-experience in itself is not sufficient to explain the indivisibility of the person-place relation—how we belong in the world. Place-experience can obviously be taken as a manifestation of this relation, but accounts of place-experience need to reveal much more than just their contents. They need to disclose the relation itself. The extent to which the phenomenological approach of the geographical school is able to do that requires further examination.

3.1.3 A Critical Appraisal of the Phenomenology of Place

As discussed, the general aim of phenomenology is to disclose things as they appear in the concrete lives and experiences of human beings. Most researchers of place, and certainly those connected to the geographical school of phenomenological inquiry, credit Heidegger as their inspiration. Heidegger had objected on epistemological grounds to the idea that either an idealistic perspective (taking for granted that the world is a function of the perceiving subject) or realistic perspective (assuming that the person is a function of the world) could properly articulate reality, and he sought an alternative. What Heidegger thought the phenomenological method could achieve was to uncover or disclose the

‘meaning and ground’ of entities—have them appear as the things they are.⁴²¹ Relph, among others from the geographical school⁴²², stresses both the explicit and implicit influence of these ideas upon his work.⁴²³ However, in a footnote to the statement of his own aims and objectives in adopting a phenomenological approach (in which understanding of place and the placedness of people is paramount), Relph suggests that ‘it is not the methodologies that are important here but the phenomenon’.⁴²⁴ Such an admission raises alarm, for it suggests that how we come to, and at, an experiential account of place is less important (and tells us less about place and placedness) than does the inventory of place experiences generated by such an account. Such an assertion is dubious. The methodology is crucial. Indeed, it is the methodology of phenomenological approaches, not necessarily the ideas on which they are founded, that have attracted the most scrutiny.

Before commencing an analysis of the methods employed by phenomenologists of place, it would be remiss not to bring to light another conundrum, the resolution of which could make all the difference to our findings. When discussing the competency of the phenomenology of place to articulate the insider view of belonging, we have to first ask whether this is, or ever was, part of their brief. Perhaps they have been misrepresented in this work. Actually, what researchers of place in the so-called geographical school of phenomenological inquiry appear to be attempting, with various degrees of energy and emphasis, is two different things. On the one hand they are trying to get to what places are ‘in themselves’, in their diversity and particularity. For example, Relph suggests that places have specific content and that place-experiences fashion the identity of place by configuring it into a distinctive and meaningful whole.⁴²⁵ Then, by describing and examining place-experiences places themselves can be described and examined. On the other hand, researchers of place employ a phenomenological approach in order to get to

⁴²¹ Martin Heidegger, [1927] 1962: 51.

⁴²² Seamon & Mugerauer also acknowledge the debt that geographers owe to Heidegger. Although, the first part of their edited volume *Dwelling, Place and Environment* (1985) is dedicated to the work of geographers who use Heidegger’s thought and theory explicitly, every essay in the remainder shows evidence of his influence—either in terms or concepts.

⁴²³ Edward Relph, ‘Seeing, Thinking and Describing Landscapes’ in T.F. Saarinen, D. Seamon & J.L. Sell ed., *Environmental Perception and Behavior: An Inventory and Prospect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984): 219.

⁴²⁴ Relph, 1976: 7cf.

⁴²⁵ Relph, 1976: 46-49.

what it is to be inside place (that is, to belong). Seamon and Mugerauer state that ‘phenomenology ... offers a way of thinking rigorously and of describing accurately the complex relation between person and world’,⁴²⁶ and Relph claims that ‘one phenomenological aim is to understand the immersion of people in an environment and world’.⁴²⁷

Of course, the phenomenology of place, never takes what places are ‘in themselves’ to be transphenomenal. According to this way of thinking, places are always imbued with experience. We come to know places through our experience of them. The way we define, understand and regard a place is taken to be contingent upon the meanings and values we attribute to those experiences. Furthermore, the human relationship with place is considered to be both an active and responsive one. What meanings and values are attributed to various social, historical and physical features of a place are understood to have a profound effect upon the way we engage and interact with that place, how it develops, and the subjective territorial identities it assumes over time. Whenever we make or receive changes in or to our surroundings we also make or receive changes to the way we experience those surroundings, each other and ourselves.

This kind of formulation of the person-place relationship makes it possible for the two research agendas outlined above to be run in parallel. However, they very rarely, if ever, are. What is far more common in the place research of the geographical school is that they merge and, as they do, terms and concepts become equivocal. Place is sometimes that which is experienced and at other times the experience itself. Place is sometimes something in which meaning is imbued, while at other times places evoke meaning. Place is both something people live in (like a house, or a town or a region) and something they live out (like a narrative)—only in this case the narrative consists in a chain of experience. People are sometimes the captors of place, and at other times its hostages. Despite its aim to disclose and illuminate places, in phenomenological approaches to place, the notion itself is often ambiguous or opaque. Furthermore, and in connection, the experience of being ‘placed’—being as a person-world unity—is similarly obscured. What is clear is that this is an issue that threatens the integrity of this

⁴²⁶ Seamon & Mugerauer, 1985: 1.

⁴²⁷ Relph in Seamon & Mugerauer, 1985: 21.

genre of place study and deserves much more critical attention than can be tendered here. What can be stated with confidence at this time is that the logic of this kind of research is beset by methodological problems, and it is probable that these contribute in a significant way to the issues outlined above.

Despite its intention to avoid such a problem, a constant danger for a phenomenological approach is that, in stressing the importance of first-person experiences and understandings of those experiences, it lapses into strong subjectivism. In this case, whatever the subject senses, thinks, or feels is deemed valid (for the subject at least). Such a position traps the self in its own inward subjective reality. Other people, objects, things, sensations, thoughts and feelings, if they exist, are worlds away—hidden eternally from view. This, of course, would be anathema to the phenomenological pursuit and researchers seek to eschew subjectivism by interpreting phenomena. By noting commonalities between individual experiences and the contexts in which they arise, they are able to construct a more generalized definition of particular experiences. However, generating generalisations (underlying commonalities and patterns) from a multitude of different specific experiences also has its pitfalls. While generalisations can be made about the nature of a particular phenomenon as it has presence and is understood by a particular group of like-minded people, this tells us very little about the universal features of the phenomenon identified for investigation. Thus, it is hard to imagine how this method can disclose the nature of any phenomenon *per se*, which according to my reading is what the phenomenological method claims to do. Instead, the descriptions of place and place-experience generated by phenomenological research can represent nothing more than possible interpretations among a plethora of interpretative possibilities. What this can tell us about the distinctive identity of places remains uncertain.

Of course, another way of looking at it might be that what phenomenologists of place are trying to do by studying individual place-experiences is to chart, what Tilley calls ‘a middle course between empiricist objectivism and cognitive subjectivism’.⁴²⁸ What the phenomenological researcher is attempting to do is to understand phenomena

⁴²⁸ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford: Berg, 1994): 13.

(things as they appear to the subject) objectively. Recognising this as a problem, Seamon addresses the question of objective possibility in his discussion of the first-person phenomenological method.⁴²⁹ Here he suggests that the first-person approach is the more objective one because it can provide a panacea to researcher bias. He says:

Another way in which the first-person approach can be used in phenomenology is as a starting place from which the phenomenologist can bring to awareness 'her preconceived notions and biases regarding the experience being investigated so that the researcher is less likely to impose these biases when interpreting [the phenomenon]'.⁴³⁰

However, no matter how noble the intention, given Seamon's methodological criteria that the researcher should have no clear sense of what she will find or how discoveries will proceed, and a certain uncertainty and spontaneity must be accepted and transformed into possibility and pattern,⁴³¹ it is not apparent that the research methodology or design is capable of supporting such bias-free research outcomes. Rather, according to this account the phenomenological approach consists of blindly stumbling through an *ad hoc* process, forming ideas by free association along the way. How then can the activity or products of the research be thought of as 'objective'?

This problem persists in discussions relating to the social construction of places. As mentioned previously, Relph's thesis of belonging *qua* existential insideness holds that to be inside a place is to identify with it. He holds that one experiences belonging *qua* existential insideness when one knows a place and its people and is known and accepted there, but also that identification, based on knowledge and acceptance, is a matter of degree.⁴³² The more one knows a place and its people, the more one is known and accepted there, and the stronger one's identity with a place. Having said this, however, Relph also claims that place-identification is not a matter determined by the experience of the individual alone. Places, like human beings have collective identities. Understandings of and identifications with places occur in social contexts. Place identities are born out of

⁴²⁹ Seamon, (E.A.P.N.): 9.

⁴³⁰ T. Shertock, 'Latin American Women's Experience of Feeling Able to Move Forward and Accomplish a Meaningful and Challenging Goal' in R. Valle (ed), *Phenomenological Inquiry in Psychology* (New York: Plenum, 1998): 162.

⁴³¹ Seamon, (E.A.P.N.): 7-8.

⁴³² Relph, 1976: 55.

a consensus derived from shared experience. But this is also problematic. If senses of place are socially constructed, there are significant implications for the status of senses of place experienced by the individual. Under what conditions can an individual's belonging *qua* existential insideness manifest? If authentic senses of place are consensual, and place-identification determined by the collective, the individual is left in the difficult position of fulfilling the requirements of belonging *qua* existential insideness only if their experience of place concurs with that of the group. According to this way of thinking, for experiences or senses of a certain place, to be authentic they must be homogenous. Furthermore, if places *are* psychological or experiential constructs then their appearance *must* differ not only from person to person but also according to each individual's changing psychological states and experiences. If that is the case there is little likelihood that there could be any consensus between people as to how places appear. In addition, and in contradiction, on Relph's model where homogenous place experiences (sharing the same experience of place with others) pertains, it does not lead to collective belonging, as it should, but rather to collective 'placelessness'—estrangement from both place and self *en masse*.

While Relph argues that 'existential insideness'—true identification with place—occurs with the total immersion of one's self in the place-world, *existential outsideness*, on the other hand, lies at the extreme end of Relph's continuum measuring the authenticity of place experience. Such a relation to place involves 'an alienation from people and places, homelessness, a sense of the unreality of the world, and of not belonging'.⁴³³ This being the case, "existential insideness", must necessarily involve a *sense* or *sensing* of the world's reality. However, what is indicated by such conceptualisation is the existence of a real world *per se*—not just a sense of reality (a phenomenon), but also a reality to be sensed.

Here the problem for phenomenological inquiries in the geographical school is not that they lapse into subjectivism, but the opposite—that in essentialising places that they run the risk of presenting them as objective realities. While Hay considers the contribution of phenomenology to environmental thought to be immensely valuable, he makes a rare, but insightful criticism—one with which, I have sympathy. Hay's

⁴³³ Relph, 1976: 51

interpretation of phenomenological investigation into the ‘human-in-environment relationship’, as he calls, it, is remarkably simple. In his estimation, ‘most phenomenological investigation promotes nothing more complex than seeing particular places or environments from the inside out; from the empathising perspective of a particular place itself.’⁴³⁴

Hay’s concern in relation to this point is that phenomenological approaches to place research take places to have natural or inherent qualities; qualities that constitute a place’s identity; ‘places assume a certain constancy through time ... while people and historical events come and go.’⁴³⁵ Here Hay cites Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Shultz whose phenomenological approach he uses as an exemplar. According to Hay’s rendering of Norberg-Shultz’s position the phenomenological approach to place assumes that places are ‘what they are’. They have a certain *spirit*. In other words, individual places have their own essential qualities—qualities that humans have an obligation to respect and protect. According to this view, the object of phenomenological investigations of place is to open oneself to the expression of those qualities (or to the *spirit* of place). The problem with this kind of analysis is that it leads to a paradox between phenomenological theory and practice. Phenomenology’s understanding of the person-world relation is based upon two assumptions; that person and world are a unitary structure and that we come to know about this structure via our experience of it. Both these assumptions are incongruous with the position that places are ‘what they are’ independent of human perception and authentic (or ‘inside’) experiences of place are those that recognise and respect the essential qualities that make them what they are.

The charge of essentialism against phenomenology of place is facilitated here, it must be admitted, by a selective reading of phenomenology and of phenomenologists. It might therefore be considered hasty and unsound if it were not for the fact that the incongruities presented are common in the literature of phenomenology. As has been illustrated, both Seamon and Relph, lapse at times into such characterisations. Even, Yi-Fu Tuan, a significant figure in studies of place and a key influence in the geographical school of phenomenological inquiry, is guilty of treating place as something to be

⁴³⁴ Peter Hay, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002): 156.

⁴³⁵ Hay, 2002: 156-157.

experienced, or which gives rise to experience.⁴³⁶ In all these cases it would seem that places are treated as if they possess certain essential objective qualities to which meaning is attached when accessed by subjective experience.

As has been demonstrated, the approach of the geographical school to place is prone to internal contradiction. On the one hand, there is a tendency to view place-experience, and therefore places, as subjective constructs, and on the other, researchers in this field are inclined to objectify places by essentialising them. Slippage into either of these views puts the geographical school's aim to provide authentic renderings of being in place at some risk. It also raises the general question as to whether places can ever be rendered faithfully? Given the existential fact that human experience is only ever partial and necessarily biased, how can phenomenology give a genuine, whole and unified account? What criteria can be used to establish the reliability of phenomenological descriptions and interpretations? Polkinghorne suggests that the trustworthiness of place-experience testimony should be based on four qualitative criteria: vividness, accuracy, richness and elegance.⁴³⁷ However, while the presence of these qualities might indicate that the individual has rendered their place-experience honestly or convincingly, this has little bearing on whether the subject has captured the essence of that place, nor for that matter, on whether or not places have essential qualities at all.

In connection, and of particular relevance to my own inquiry, is the orthodox view of the geographical school that belonging is a relation to place that is contingent upon 'authentic' place experiences or experiencing places authentically. Given the problems and issues outlined above, how well is the geographical school able to conceptualise and articulate the 'authenticity' of being in place? What follows is a sketch of how researchers in the geographical school consider the phenomenon of authenticity in relation to people's existential relationships with places. What again becomes clear is how these researchers link senses of place to senses of identity. This feeling of identity with places has been canvassed in the previous section, but here it takes on an added dimension.

⁴³⁶ For a brief critique of this aspect of Tuan's work, see Malpas, 1999: 30 n.33.

⁴³⁷ D. Polkinghorne, *Methodology for the Human Sciences* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983): 46.

Relph is probably the most prominent theorist in the school where discourses on authenticity and inauthenticity are concerned. He holds that '[s]ense of place may be authentic and genuine, or it can be inauthentic and contrived or artificial.'⁴³⁸

An authentic attitude to place is ... a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places—not mediated and distorted through a series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor following stereotyped conventions. It comes from a full awareness of places for what they are as products of man's intentions and the meaningful settings for human activities, or from a profound and unselfconscious identity with place.⁴³⁹

As just indicated, according to Relph, authentic senses of place can be achieved either self-consciously or un-selfconsciously. 'In unselfconscious experience places are innocently accepted for what they are; in selfconscious experience they become objects of understanding and reflection'.⁴⁴⁰ For Relph at least, the former association is the deeper and the most traditional attachment. 'An authentic sense of place is above all being inside and belonging to *your* place both as an individual and as a member of a community, to know this without reflecting on it.'⁴⁴¹ The latter is more appropriate to contemporary urban environments where the process of place-making is far more intentional and thus the immersion of person in place is more superficial (the union between subject and object not so complete).⁴⁴²

Having said this, Relph is less concerned with the mode of authentic place-making than he is with the loss of authentic place-ness itself. He argues that the authenticity of places is under threat from *placelessness*. Placelessness is the result of systematic and standardised urban and industrial development such that what has been concealed is its distinctive qualities, character and identity. Relph argues that cultural and geographical uniformity is in danger of rendering the landscape placeless, in which case 'it is less and less possible to have a deeply felt sense of place or to create places authentically.'⁴⁴³ For

⁴³⁸ Relph, 1976: 63.

⁴³⁹ Relph, 1976: 64.

⁴⁴⁰ Relph, 1976: 66.

⁴⁴¹ Relph, 1976: 64.

⁴⁴² Relph, 1976: 65.

⁴⁴³ Relph, 1976: 80.

Relph, having an authentic sense of place is necessary for identification with, and belonging to, it. Given that, placelessness not only threatens the character and identity of places, but the character, identity and belonging of persons. However, what can be done to halt this scourge?

Urban designer Kimberley Dovey addresses the question of how far authenticity can be intentionally built into urban environments, therefore rendering them authentic and place-full. The prognosis, however, is not positive. Dovey argues that authenticity cannot be achieved by the manipulation of the environment because authenticity is not a property of environmental form, but rather of process and relationship. She states that as a process, it is characterized by 'appropriation and an indigenous quality', and as a relationship, it 'speaks of a depth of connectedness between people and their world'.⁴⁴⁴ What Dovey seems to be suggesting, like Relph, is that an authentic attitude to place is something that comes 'naturally'—an unselfconscious identity with place borne out of long association. On the other hand, while admitting that it should be possible to have such a relationship in an urban environment, both Relph and Dovey consider that authenticity is more problematic in this context, where the transitory nature of the association, and the reflective attitude that is its necessary corollary, is seen to militate against the development of a profound identity with place.

Just to summarise then, according to the way of thinking just outlined, belonging is defined by an authentic attitude to place allowing the most profound identity with place. Inauthentic attitude to place, resulting in a lack of identity with place, constitutes not belonging. Belonging comes unreflectively to those with indigenous deep time connections to country, however this kind of belonging is difficult to achieve in built environments because, according to Relph, the degree of conscious reflection required to establish belonging militates against it. Dovey's addendum makes urban belonging even more difficult, for she claims that authenticity cannot be achieved by environmental manipulation. Read together, what must ensue is a state of affairs in which the possibility of belonging in the modern urban world becomes very problematic indeed. What is required in these circumstances is the intentional will to belong, while the kind of

⁴⁴⁴ Kimberley Dovey in Seamon & Mugerauer, 1985: 33.

strategic environmental modification that might result from instrumental thinking of this kind is rendered incapable of producing the desired outcome.⁴⁴⁵

As has just been demonstrated, phenomenological inquiries into place such as these are prone to the charge of not being able to bridge the gap between empiricist objectivism and cognitive subjectivism, but remaining on one or other side of it. Accordingly, places are either reduced to objects of experience or become experiences that are purely subjective. This leads to a range of problems, not least of which is how we unpack ideas relating to what it is to experience places ‘authentically’. No matter which position we take, judging the authenticity of place experience is problematic. If place is a subjective construct then all place experiences are authentic. If place is an object of experience then inauthentic place experience must be due either to an individual’s incapacity to sense or experience the inherent features of a place, or the incapacity of a place to evoke in the subject perception of the inherent qualities it possesses. Neither of these scenarios are compatible with, or would be acceptable to, phenomenologists of any kind, let alone phenomenologists of place, and yet, as logical extensions of their approach and methods, they are difficult to avoid.

If, however, their logic and methodology properly incorporated the proposition that the existential condition of human beings is as *life-world* then none of these issues need (or could) arise. According to that logic, all people are already deeply connected to place insofar as what it is to be in the world is to be already belonging with it. It is antithetical then for the geographical school of phenomenological inquiry to raise issues of authenticity in connection to belonging. Not only does it raise more problems concerning the identity of places and the capacity of individuals and communities to identify with them than it solves, but it obscures rather than illuminates the issue of implacement *per se*.

⁴⁴⁵ Such a position not only concurs with the doctrine of environmental determinism, but the substitutions of place associations for social associations is reminiscent of the distinction Tönnies’ draws between *Gemeinschaft*-like and *Gesellschaft*-like structures and relations. A *Gemeinschaft* type structure is characterised by a ‘natural will’ of habit and instinct, and in this context would represent an authentic attitude to place gained through unself-conscious experience. A *Gesellschaft* type structure is characterised by a ‘rational will’ that is instrumental in terms of its selection of means for ends, and in this context would represent an inauthentic attitude to place gained through self-conscious experience.

It is understandable that humanistic geographers would be drawn to the phenomenological approach. Being able to describe the varying ways in which places and environments are experienced by individuals and groups is vitally important to their work. A deeper knowledge of place is gained by understanding which of its features (social, historical and physical) contribute to the well-being and efficacy, or otherwise, of individuals and communities. One might suppose that the very nature of their investigations dictates a focus on the meanings and values that people attribute to places and place-experiences. This is important and admirable work, however while descriptions of the experience of place provide us with useful information about how places are perceived and understood by those who are emplaced, we cannot understand what it is to belong in the world according to this method. The claim that phenomenology as it is employed by the geographical school does that, or can do that, is not merely overambitious, but also deceptive.

The advent of belonging as a phenomenon fails to provide a solution to the problems which emerged as a consequences of the conceptual analysis conducted in Section Two. Belonging is still treated as a corollary of a connection to something—to place—and place is still treated as something outside the person (something outside needing to be brought in). While the geographical school of phenomenology recognises the ontological character of the relationship between place and person, the inherent bias of their approach to place necessitates the reduction of belonging to a *sense* (and furthermore, to a sense of *something else*). In doing so it eschews the possibility of articulating what it is to belong in place.

Understanding belonging in place through the filter of place experience is problematic for a range of reasons, the simplest of which is that the filter gets in the way. We cannot see what we are looking at. We cannot see the nature, character and operation of the belonging relation itself. If belonging is a relation *in* place then belonging must pertain in some sense to the structural integrity *of* place. If we wish to see and to understand the in-ness of belonging we must put the filter of experience temporarily aside and reveal the ontological structure of the place-world *per se*. It is here that belonging belongs and where the possibility of its presence and appearance must lie. It is to this task that we now turn our attention.

3.2 The Ontology of Belonging Place

What this section intends to pursue is an alternate approach to the place-world—an approach that is primarily ontological rather than primarily phenomenological. In the context of this work, phenomenology and ontology are considered as separate, yet connected, modes of existential explanation and analysis. Their difference is best explained in terms of emphasis. Phenomenology focuses on experience. Phenomenology is concerned primarily with experiences of being, and only with forms of being in so far as the two are connected. Ontology focuses on form. Ontology is concerned primarily with forms of being, and only with experiences of being in so far as the two are connected. What is intended in this section is a focus on the form or structure of the place-world such that phenomenological explanations of being in place become salient.

While it is indisputable that our ‘sense of place’ has a significant effect on both the way that we understand places and the way we understand ourselves as being in place, what a more ontological approach to place illuminates is the bigger picture concerning whatever senses we might have. Having said this, it is crucially important that what is called ontology in the context of this work is not mistaken for a system by which we might understand what lies behind our experience of things—what things or entities are in themselves. This is certainly not the case. Nor is it the case that ontology reduces the existence of phenomena to a system. It might even be the case that existential phenomena cannot be conceptually grasped or known in that way. Nevertheless, it might be possible to discover and explain the occurrence and relation of phenomena once we are able to clarify conceptually the structure of existence that makes them possible. While phenomenology insists that actual experience holds the fundamental meaning of the concept of the place-world, ontological investigations involve the conceptual clarification of place-world as structure—a structure which, on the one hand, makes existential phenomena possible and, on the other, binds them into an explicit unity of relations. The task of the section that follows is to open out the ontology of place and in doing so to see inside, to see *being in place*—being and belonging.

3.2.1 From Phenomenology to Ontology

A more detailed explanation of the ontology of place follows shortly, however first a brief detour in order to clarify the differences between phenomenological and ontological approaches to studies of the place-world, and also to show how these two approaches are related. When Canguilhem formulated his view of life-forms he took an ontological approach. In doing so he operated according to the maxim that while concepts derived from experience, articulate knowledge concerning life, their precedence to ‘life’ as form, ought not be presupposed. For Canguilhem, ‘life’ was not simply a concept derived from, and expressed by, the knowledges articulated by experience, rather ‘life’ provides the structure in which experiences and knowledges have possibility in the first place.⁴⁴⁶ Canguilhem held unequivocally that life as form controls life as experience.⁴⁴⁷

In this respect Canguilhem’s work might be seen to run counter to the intellectual milieu in which he operated—to the both the phenomenological and existential traditions that emerged from France early in the twentieth century. This point was addressed and challenged by Michel Foucault in the introduction to Canguilhem’s *The Normal and the Pathological*. He suggested that phenomenological development had two modalities—on the one hand, as a philosophy of knowledge (rationality and concept),⁴⁴⁸ and on the other, as a philosophy of experience (sense and subject).⁴⁴⁹ In the French, the term ‘life’ can be taken to have two different meanings, dependant on whether it is used as the present or past participle. Correspondingly, there are two different ways of conceiving life as an entity for phenomenological analysis. ‘First, there is life as form, life as “the universal organization of matter” (*le vivant*), and second, there is life as the singular living being who is conscious of his or her life (*le vécu*).’⁴⁵⁰

To clarify this point, a qualification of what is meant by the term ‘existence’ made on behalf of the existential philosopher Søren Kierkegaard can also be observed. We shall focus on the ontological inquiry of Kierkegaard in the next section, where his work will prove an invaluable source in further explicating the ontology of belonging, however here

⁴⁴⁶ Michel Foucault in Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone, 1991): 20-21.k

⁴⁴⁷ Paul Rabinow in Delaporte, 1994: 18.

⁴⁴⁸ As employed by Cavailles and Bachelard.

⁴⁴⁹ As practiced by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

⁴⁵⁰ Rabinow in ‘Introduction’, Delaporte, 1994: 18.

it is useful to note how he navigated the course between being and experience. Kierkegaard uses the word *existence* of the world as the sphere of human activity. His thought concentrates on how human beings ought exist, however his reference is to a state of being rather than any type of experience or set of experiences. The distinction between the two ways of existence can be expressed in the Danish—*vaere til* and *existere*—is instructive. The verb *vaere til* expresses the fact of a person's concrete existence in the world—that which makes possible his or her being there—while the verb *existere* expresses the mode of existence, the ways in which human beings experience that existence.⁴⁵¹ While Kierkegaard is less concerned to delineate an ontological structure than he is to describe the various existential ways of being which are made possible by it, the ontological project is nevertheless central to his philosophy. Kierkegaard, like Canguilhem, was concerned with an experiential account of life, but only insofar as it arises as a derivative discourse.

The geographical school of phenomenological inquiry would have seen a similar commitment in Heidegger's phenomenology, if only it had caught their gaze. The question of being, for Heidegger, is essentially a question about being. Since the question of being already implicates human being, it cannot be treated as a question about, for instance, how existing human beings gain access to some realm of already existing entities. The question concerns, instead, the very possibility of a world in which human beings can find not only other things, but also themselves. What Heidegger draws our attention to is a more basic mode of relating to things in the world than knowing them. Knowledge is something that we might have or lack, but 'being-in' is something that we cannot be without. Furthermore, what Heidegger sought to disclose was not the meaning of such and such a life-world, but the basic structures that make any such life-world possible. Heidegger's phenomenology is the exhibition of the structures constitutive of being.

The emphasis of all three of these thinkers is emphatically formal rather than experiential. The work of the philosophers of place discussed in this section shares the same orientation. In this respect it stands out from orthodox phenomenological renderings

⁴⁵¹ Julia Watkin, *Historical Dictionary of Kierkegaard's Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001): 80.

of place, such as those presented by the geographical school, but also arguably follow more closely the structural tradition of phenomenology's founders. Although researchers belonging to the geographical school of phenomenological inquiry appeal to formal notions of the life-world to underpin their investigations, their ardent quest to catalogue place experience distracts them from its conceptual foundations, and at times even draws them into conflict with it. While not eschewing the possibility of such conflict entirely, the taking of a more ontological approach to place at least acknowledges and guards against it. Here formal and experiential explanations of the being in place find their place in one unified and unifying model—in a philosophical ontology of place itself.

3.2.2 The Ontology of Place

In explaining the ontology of place this work will focus most specifically on the scholarship of two contemporary philosophers, Edward Casey and Jeff Malpas. These two philosophers are among very few contemporary thinkers who provide a systematic account of place without reducing it to either an objective physical locality or a subjective human experience. They are both concerned with the ontology of place, and both treat place as an ontologically basic concept, although their ways of coming at it do differ. In this respect Casey is probably the more orthodox of the two, although he is also the pathfinder. It is Casey's work in extending the philosophical treatment of place that has been seminal in the field. In his own words, his aim has been to accord place 'a position of renewed respect by specifying its power to direct and stabilize us, to memorialize and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are*'.⁴⁵² He has achieved this by taking the more strongly phenomenological approach of the two—by providing a detailed and comprehensive description of phenomena and, by doing so, detecting the pervasive traits that place possesses.⁴⁵³ Malpas makes full use of Casey's exposition, while leaning more explicitly toward an ontological rendition of it. Malpas' aim is to build a theoretical framework within which a complex set of phenomenological

⁴⁵² Casey, 1993: xi, (his emphasis).

⁴⁵³ Edward S. Casey, "J. E. Malpas's *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*: Converging and Diverging In/On Place", *Philosophy and Geography*, 4. 2 (2001): 227.

understandings of place can be understood, and he does so by providing a philosophically rigorous explanation of the structure of place *per se*.

Ultimately, although these two scholars deviate somewhat in approach and emphasis their work is more convergent and complimentary than it is divergent or conflicting. Place as the *locus* of being, in Casey's words, is 'the mediatrix of [their] shared concern, as well as the source of [their] express differences.'⁴⁵⁴ In this respect, Casey agrees with Aristotle's quotation from Archytas, 'to be is to be in place'. Place should be understood as 'a central ontological structure founding human experience'. It 'serves as the *condition* of all existing things' and 'by virtue of its unencompassability by anything other than itself, is at once the limit and condition of all that exists'.⁴⁵⁵ Malpas delves deeply into this issue. Malpas describes the structure of place that is at issue in his work as 'an open and interconnected region within which other persons, things spaces and abstract locations, and even one's self can appear, be recognised, identified and interacted with.'⁴⁵⁶ Indeed for Malpas, 'the very possibility of the appearance of things—of objects, of self, and of others—is possible only within the all-embracing compass of place. It is, indeed, in and through place that the world presents itself.'⁴⁵⁷ His interest in place (unlike that of the geographical school) is not so much as something that we experience, but in the way in which place can be viewed as the very structure *within which* experience of any kind is possible. In other words, his focus on place is not as something to 'be experienced' but place as *the* structure that allows the appearance of things within it—a position that, nominally at least, supports the maxim that place *precedes experience*.⁴⁵⁸

Like the geographical school of phenomenological inquiry, much of the work that Casey and Malpas do in illuminating place and places is predicated on the work of Heidegger. It is from Heidegger that the notion of 'place' as the *locus* or site of being is

⁴⁵⁴ Casey, 2001: 227.

⁴⁵⁵ Casey, 1993: 14-15.

⁴⁵⁶ Malpas, 1999: 36.

⁴⁵⁷ Malpas, 1999: 14-15.

⁴⁵⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the intersections and divergences between the work of Malpas and that of Casey, in the words of the scholars themselves, see Casey, 2001 and Malpas, 'Comparing Topographies: Across Paths/Around Place: A Reply to Casey' *Philosophy and Geography*, 4.2 (2001). While in basic agreement with Casey on most key issues, the orientation of my own work is more closely aligned with Malpas, although an important distinction between us might be best understood in terms of our ontological focus—his on the universal structure of place, and my own on the individual structure of 'placality'.

derived. For Heidegger, being is always ‘being-there’? Being where? Being in place.⁴⁵⁹ However, as Malpas explains in his own terms, ‘place is to be understood, not as a “site” projected by being-there, but as the “taking place” of place as such, a “taking place” into which being-there is itself gathered’.⁴⁶⁰ In this sense, place provides an opening or field for the appearance of being. Place gathers *being* in.⁴⁶¹

Heidegger is explicit about this. On his account place ‘always opens a region in which it gathers the things in their belonging together’.⁴⁶² Taking his cue from Heidegger, Casey describes the power of place to *gather* things and *hold* things together in this way as one of its essential traits. Furthermore, he describes its gathering action as a type of holding, the operations of which are fourfold.

First, it is a holding *together* in a particular configuration: hence our sense of an ordered arrangement of things in a place even when those things are radically disparate and quite conflictual ... Second, the hold is a holding *in* and a holding *out*. It retains the occupants of a place within its boundaries: ... But, equally, a place holds out, beckoning to its inhabitants and, assembling them, making them manifest ... Third, the holding at issue in the gathering of a place reflects the layout of the local landscape ... Fourth, intrinsic to the holding operation of place is *keeping*. What is kept in place primarily are experiencing bodies regarded as privileged residents rather than as orchestrating forces.⁴⁶³

In a discussion of the complexity and unity of place as an ontological structure, Malpas makes similar observations about the way place operates, saying, ‘The complexity of place does not entail a dispersion of elements, but rather enables their “gathering together”—their interconnection and unification—in such a way that their multiplicity and differentiation can be both preserved and brought to light.’⁴⁶⁴ As it turns out then, the way that place is structured and operates is in the allowance of the appearance of a multiplicity of things within it, and for the interconnection and unification of those things. It is both the complexity and unity of place that allows it to appear as the place it

⁴⁵⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of this progression in Heidegger’s later thought see Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology*, (forthcoming 2006).

⁴⁶⁰ Malpas, forthcoming 2006: unpaginated manuscript.

⁴⁶¹ In this sense, the being in question connotes all features of existence—objects, selves and others.

⁴⁶² Heidegger, ‘Art and Space’, quoted in Malpas, 1999: 157.

⁴⁶³ Casey, in Basso and Feld, 1996: 25 (his emphasis).

⁴⁶⁴ Malpas, 1999: 174.

is and different from other places—that allows it to both *hold in* and *hold out*. As Malpas states, ‘Places can turn outwards to reveal other places and locations; they can turn inwards to reveal their own character or the character of the subject who identifies herself with that place.’⁴⁶⁵

Casey and Malpas both draw attention to the way in which Australian Aboriginal philosophies privilege place and also identify strongly with it.⁴⁶⁶ Aborigines do provide one of the most obvious and intriguing examples of intimacy between people and place (and also between being and belonging). However, Aboriginal thinking about place can also be seen to exemplify the ontology of place just discussed. Although looked at from another perspective in Section One, it is well worth outlining Aboriginal conceptions of place again in the current context. What soon becomes evident is the close analogy between the philosophical understandings of place that we have just reviewed and Aboriginal understandings of their place-world—what in Aboriginal English is referred to as their *country*.⁴⁶⁷

For Aboriginal peoples, the world, the structure of place, as well as the fundamental principles that govern it, exist as a cosmogonic consequence. According to Aboriginal cosmogony, ancestral beings shaped the physical world and the environmental beings that dwell in it by varied processes of transformation.⁴⁶⁸ On the one hand, the world, as instituted and permeated by creative beings, can be regarded as being composed of one kind of entity—one living stuff differentiated at the most basic level only by shape. On the other hand, it is highly differentiated, each entity existing according to the very particular conditions determined for it in the process of its coming into being. In this respect, country is both a complex and a unity.

⁴⁶⁵ Malpas, 1999: 171-172.

⁴⁶⁶ Mention is made of this in Casey, 1993 and 1997, and in Malpas, 1999.

⁴⁶⁷ Tony Swain is an Australian philosopher who has pursued this matter further, arguing that in traditional contexts ‘affirmation of place’ and ‘the uncompromising position of place’ was ubiquitous in the worldviews of Australian Aboriginal peoples, and furthermore, that their use of place as the source of ontological reference, rather than time or the body—the orthodox organising concepts of the west—had a significant affect on understandings of early contact relations. See Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁴⁶⁸ Munn in Charlesworth *et al.* 1984: 57-62 discusses this process in terms of ‘subject object transformation’, maintaining that three types of transformations are prominent. 1) metamorphosis (the body of the ancestor is changed into some material object); 2) imprinting (the ancestor leaves the impression of his body or of some tool he uses); and 3) externalisation (the ancestor takes some object out of his body.) Of the three, the first two are the most common modes.

Like place, country is multi-dimensional. Country, like place, *gathers* together topographical and environmental features, people, animals and plants. Dreaming Beings are credited with the configuration of places by determining and delineating their form and the extent and position of their features. Cosmogonic mythology explains that, by means of spiritual transformations, not only was the Aboriginal world set in place (in totality), but also by virtue of the individual character, travel route and actions of specific spirit beings, countries and places within them were established. Dreaming beings transformed ‘the original undifferentiated mother earth into specific localities’⁴⁶⁹ each defined by its own personal spiritual signature: landscape, flora and fauna, each with its own distinctive mode of operation. All were different, all unique and yet all linked by their integration into a larger map of existence designed and inscribed upon the earth during the creative epoch.

The unity of country is *held* according to a set of first principles that ensure this relation is maintained. Each, feature of place when holding to its true and authentic nature, acts in transparent (self-conscious) and harmonious unison with others. Each mode of being is responsible for maintaining its own integrity and well-being, and thus ensuring its own continuity as an autonomous unit. However, each element must balance and be balanced by the others. Balance requires symmetry or parity. To achieve parity and, therefore, equilibrium, there must be dialogue between the elements. Each must consciously respond to the others’ needs in order to achieve the greater good, and secure the harmony and continuity of the whole. In brief, it is a necessary consequence of the cosmogonic account that the relationship between all existing entities is founded on counterpoise and reciprocity.⁴⁷⁰

As Munn observes, ‘There is no single locality that focalizes all the others. Walbiri [one Aboriginal people], do not really give conceptual shape to the world as a whole in the sense of a single, centralized structure, but conceive of it in terms of networks of places linked by paths.’⁴⁷¹ These paths are the tracks along which Dreaming Beings

⁴⁶⁹ Bird Rose, 1992: 52.

⁴⁷⁰ Deborah Bird Rose, ‘Consciousness and Responsibility in an Australian Aboriginal Religion’ in Edwards, 1998: 242-243.

⁴⁷¹ Nancy Munn in Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 34.

travelled embodying the Aboriginal world. 'Each country is understood by its people to be a unique and inviolable whole. People assert that other species also understand the country this way, and indeed that the country understands itself this way.'⁴⁷² The principles of autonomy, balance, symmetry and response pertain to the relationship between countries just as they do to the relationship between things within countries. This allows for the fact that although '[e]ach whole country is surrounded by other unique and inviolable whole countries, no country is isolated, that together they make up some larger wholes—clusters of alliance networks.'⁴⁷³ Dreaming paths bound country, but they are not devices of segregation. Dreaming creativity made possible the relationships that connect by defining the differences that divide.⁴⁷⁴

In this sense, country is very much like place in Malpas' terms. Like place, country can turn inwards to reveal its own character or the character of the subject who identifies with it, and it can turn outwards to reveal other countries and other peoples. Furthermore, as if echoing Casey's reading of Heidegger, Aboriginal custodians of country are said to 'hold' it. Unlike the western concept of ownership, which suggests a psychology of grasping or *holding on to*, to 'hold' 'country' is to *hold it together* so to speak. According to 'traditional' Aboriginal cosmogonies, *being in country* is an intensely personal or existential issue—fundamental to all that one is and does. One's country is one's ontological horizon.

How do Aboriginal people traditionally acquire an understanding of the ontological structure or operation of this system? Do they proceed, as Casey does, from the experience of place to a systematic understanding of it, or does their systematic understanding of place affect appropriately Aboriginal place experiences? Such a question would no doubt elicit a range of responses, and cannot be answered here, one way or the other, with any degree of certainty. What is certain, however, is that Aboriginal peoples seem especially aware of the ontology of place, and also that it is according to this ontology of place that their being and belonging becomes manifest.

⁴⁷² Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, 1996): 12.

⁴⁷³ Bird Rose, 1996: 12-13.

⁴⁷⁴ Bird Rose, 1992: 52.

3.2.3 The Placing of Person

Even from the most summary analysis, it is clear that places and people are mutually influential and defining. Places—whether they are where we live, far away, familiar, strange or even imaginary—are profoundly affected by the life and thought of human beings. Likewise, places influence the thoughts and aspirations, identities and actions of the people who inhabit, encounter or imagine them. Although the factors affecting places, their nature and their development are many and varied—external or internal, rooted in the past or the present, beyond human control or within it—they are *never* totally unrelated to human concern. The experience and practice of place-making is also one of human self-definition. As places develop so do the people who engage with them. Few would argue that the identities we assume are related to our worldly surroundings, that the character of a subject's own self-conception and identity are tied to the places in which the subject finds him or herself.

This intimate, fundamental and reciprocal relationship between persons and places has been observed by a host of writers, both academic and literary. In discussing the profound bond between person and place such that they are 'inside' one another Relph cites Steinbeck. 'Funny thing how it is. If a man owns a little property, that property is him, it's part of him, and it's like him.'⁴⁷⁵ Malpas quotes Wordsworth and Heaney,⁴⁷⁶ and Casey refers to the work of Thoreau⁴⁷⁷. The idea that the self is be discovered through an investigation of the places it inhabits (and the ontology of place itself) is central to philosophical investigations of place. If place is the organising structure for existence, it also provides ontological framework and referents for the ontology of person. The ontology of place must provide the means by which we are able to understand any thing in the place-world, including ourselves.

Heidegger certainly thought so. As has been discussed previously, the Heideggerian 'world' is not something out there external to human being. Being human is about being *in* the world, but not as we ordinarily understand that notion—not in the world as a space. In one of his later essays, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', Heidegger states, 'When we

⁴⁷⁵ Relph, 1976: 55.

⁴⁷⁶ Malpas, 1999: 1-2.

⁴⁷⁷ Casey, 1993: 245.

speak of man and space, it sounds as though man stood on one side, space on the other. Yet space is not something that faces man. It is neither an external object nor an inner experience.⁴⁷⁸ Spaces are better understood as ‘space’ opened up by the fact that they are disclosed by human dwelling (and spaces disclosed by human dwelling are better understood as places). However, human beings do dwell in the world simply by virtue of their bodily presence in place, nor does this *in* relate to their place-experience. Rather, persons are able to sense, think and act what they do and how they do only because they are placed. The *being in* of *Dasein* (Heidegger’s term for the way of being that is characteristic of human beings) is *being there* not merely as a participant observer, but rather because our ability to either participate or observe is predicated on it.

Wilde and Klubeck in a discussion of Heidegger’s position interpret it thus:

‘Places’ places man in that dimension which reveals the revealing meaning of Being. Man is involved in ‘place’ in two dimensions, horizontal and vertical. The horizontal dimension is determined by his political relationship. Vertically, being is a dimension hiding the uniqueness of Being. ‘Place’ places man in such a way that it reveals the external bounds of his existence and at the same time the depths of his freedom and reality.⁴⁷⁹

Following in Heidegger’s wake, Casey and Malpas also stress an interpretation of place that intersects with that of human identity and agency.

While Casey spends less time on the topic than does Malpas, his frequent return to the deep and abiding bond between indigenous peoples and their place of origin indicates an implicit recognition of its ontological significance. He argues that ‘our personal identities deeply reflect our implacement’ quoting Gary Snyder who wrote, ‘Knowing where and who are intimately linked.’⁴⁸⁰ On the other hand, when Malpas states that ‘human identity is somehow tied to locality in a quite fundamental way’,⁴⁸¹ he is understating his case. The idea that ‘our identities are ... intricately and essentially place-

⁴⁷⁸ Heidegger, 1971: 358.

⁴⁷⁹ Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, trans. with an intro. J.T. Wilde & W. Klubeck, (New Haven, CT: College & University Press, 1958).

⁴⁸⁰ Casey, 1993: 307.

⁴⁸¹ Malpas, 1999: 7.

bound'⁴⁸² is a central theme in Malpas' philosophy of place. As stated previously, for Malpas, it is only in and through place that the possibility of any appearance exists. This includes the appearance of self. He states:

... the very identity of subjects, both in terms of their own self-definition and their identity as grasped by others, is inextricably bound to the particular places in which they find themselves and in which others find them, while, in a more general sense, it is only within the overarching structure of place as such that subjectivity as such is possible.⁴⁸³

It is not only that particular places have an enduring psychological impact upon individuals and groups who dwell in them, or that places identify persons and vice versa (although these also are true), but that the possibility of any such identification is a direct consequence of a more fundamental relation to place.

What is being claimed is that places and people are inextricably bound together—mutually constitutive and mutually defining. This idea is exemplified by what Malpas, calls 'Proust's Principle'. As he observes:

Proust treats the relation between persons and their locations in a manner that is particularly striking. In Proust's work, persons and places intermingle with one another in such a way that places take on the individuality of persons, while persons are themselves individuated and characterised by their relation to place.⁴⁸⁴

For Malpas, identification with place is therefore not merely an interesting but peripheral aspect of worldly life but a fundamental characteristic of what it is to be human. Places do not merely influence the way we conceive ourselves (or the ways in which others conceive of us), they are necessary to any kind of self-conception at all. It is because of place, in the first instance, that we are able to grasp ourselves as the selves we are. Place 'places' us in the world and in doing so provides us with the possibility of being who and what we are.

⁴⁸² Malpas, 1999: 177.

⁴⁸³ Malpas, 1999: 176.

⁴⁸⁴ Malpas, 1999: 5.

Again, this ontological account of the relation between person and place is nowhere more poetically expressed than in Aboriginal Dreaming stories. These mythic narratives clearly articulate the very porous existential relation that indigenous Australians have with country. In these accounts the idea that person and place profoundly influence each other can also be seen as taking this idea one step further—Aboriginal persons and their country are ontologically indivisible. The idea of ‘spiritual’ procreation has profound implications in this regard. Each Aboriginal person is directly linked to a particular conception or birthplace, ancestral being and totem. This, more than their biological heritage, determines who they are in relation to the land and other beings.

Munn explains Aboriginal identification with elements in their the physical environment in relation to the transformative powers that Walbiri and Pitjantjatjara [another Aboriginal people] Aboriginal cosmogonies attribute to Dreaming beings whom they also refer to as ancestors. She explains that ancestor beings have the power to create and re-create their own identity without limitation in both Dreamtime and ‘this’ time.⁴⁸⁵ In this time human beings are implicated in the same process. Human beings *come out of* the place that ancestral beings went into and return to the place from which the ancestral beings emerged. This is one way in which the ancestral beings perpetuate life and the principles of Dreaming. The human processes of birth and death simulate the creative powers of the ancestral beings and hold them together in perpetual identification. Munn asserts that:

[A]n individual has close associations with his (or her) birthplace and its ancestors. He may sometimes identify himself with the ancestor of his birthplace as well as his homeland (if these two differ) by referring to him as “I”. Birthplace ties are also expressed in the beliefs concerning birthmarks (called *djuguridja*, of or pertaining to the ancestors).⁴⁸⁶

An individual may be imprinted with ancestral markings from the ancestor’s own body or that into which s/he transformed. In this way a person’s own body carries the signature of both the spiritual ancestor and the place from which they have come. Munn gives this example:

⁴⁸⁵ Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 62.

⁴⁸⁶ Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 63, (her emphasis).

Pointing to various body markings such as moles, warts or skin discolorations, Pitjantjatjara would say that they were marks left by the ancestors at their birthplace. For example, one woman explained that a marking upon a particular ancestral rock at her birthplace was also on her body. The rock was the transformed body of the ancestor lying down and the marking was originally his hair. Similarly, another man claimed that a small skin marking on his body was the scar on a carpet-snake ancestor speared in a fight at his birthplace. The result of this fight was the emergence of specific topographical features (and no doubt the scar was recorded in them although my informant did not state this explicitly).⁴⁸⁷

So close is the ontological association between Aboriginal people and their Dreaming ‘ancestors’ (now embedded in landscape) that they share physical attributes.

This connection cannot be understood in terms of biological lineage or genetic inheritance, not in the normal sense in any case. Indeed, as Tony Swain points out, Aborigines do not trace an extended lineage to the Beings of Dreaming. Indeed, they do not trace their genealogies far beyond living memory. Rather the Ancestral beings of Dreaming time and human beings of ‘now’ time ‘are co-joined quite literally through place’⁴⁸⁸. The implication of the Aboriginal account is that each individual has an inherent identification with particular places and an inherent connection with those other entities that are gathered together by that place. Aboriginal peoples have a strong sense of being constituted *in place*. As Munn remarks, ‘For the human subject the country is an experiential “given”, a preordained structure which as “homeland” or “birthplace” (or both at once) provides a stabilization of “self” in object form.’⁴⁸⁹ The idea that place is that which allows persons an appearance as who and what they are is not merely an abstract idea in ‘traditional’ Aboriginal thought, but a description of how place and people identify in real concrete lived experience. In this sense, the ontology of place is not (and is not meant to be) merely allegorical. If it is to have any validity at all, it must be mirrored in, and also be able to explain, our experience of being in the world. This is certainly the case in the Aboriginal context.

⁴⁸⁷ Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 63.

⁴⁸⁸ Swain: 1993: 23.

⁴⁸⁹ Munn in Charlesworth *et al.*, 1984: 63.

While much of Heidegger's project (on which this investigation of the place-world relies) must be understood as an essentially ontological inquiry,⁴⁹⁰ in addition to the ontological project of investigating the basic structures of the life-world itself, encoded in Heidegger's work on the question of being is another task—an investigation of the being of the human being. This aspect of Heidegger's work can be taken to consist in the attempt to delineate the ontological structure of what Heidegger might have called, in the language of *Being and Time*, particular forms of 'understanding of being'—forms of understanding human being-in-the-world.

The target of such an investigation is not so far, in one sense at least, from that of our own inquiry into what it is to belong. It also seems that this is the place where our own investigation inevitably leads—to an ontology of the belonging self itself. Malpas' investigation of the ontology of place points us in this direction when he says:

The notion that there is an intimate connection between person and place, and so also between self and environing world, is thus neither a peculiar idiosyncrasy to be found in works of literature nor a left over from pre-modern societies—nor does it seem likely to be a merely contingent feature of human psychology. Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that the human relationship to place is a fundamental structure in what makes possible the sort of life that is characteristically human, while also being determining, in some way that requires clarification, of human identity.⁴⁹¹

Indeed, the work done by philosophers of place has been crucial in paving the way and laying the groundwork upon which we can begin to build a theoretical structure of belonging. By understanding place as an ontological structure gathering and holding together those things that belong to it, place reveals itself as the very structure within which experience of those things, including ourselves, is possible. In this sense place wraps around and envelops us. We see place from the inside of it. But the boundary between the conscious beings and the places they inhabit is porous. In another sense then,

⁴⁹⁰ Such an inquiry is undertaken, in one form, in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, but also, in a different fashion, in places such as Heidegger's later essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking'.

⁴⁹¹ Malpas, 1999: 13.

places are inside us. We are also the gatherers and holders of place.⁴⁹² In his own words, if Malpas' thesis is correct, then there is 'no possibility of understanding human existence—and especially human thought and experience—other than through an understanding of place.'⁴⁹³ However, it could equally be said that there is no possibility of understanding belonging *in* place without understanding human existence—the ontology of person.

This conceptual shift in fore-grounding the self might be conceived in terms of a folding back of the phenomenological account, whereby the experience of place can now be seen as the experience not of how self belongs to place, but how place belongs to self. On the other hand, it could equally be understood as turning the ontology of place inside-out. If places are to be understood as a gathering together of other things (entities, selves and places), then selves must also be constituted and understood in those terms—as a gathering and holding together of those things that properly belong to them. When we look at the situation from this perspective we are able to see very clearly that the belonging relation that is within 'place' is somehow also within the self.

More plainly than ever then, we are able to see that belonging is *of the self*—implicates or belongs to the self in a fundamental way. The common assumption is that belonging refers us to a relation that is somehow 'outside' the self. But in that case belonging cannot be *of the self* because it cannot be contingent in relation to the self. Belonging has to be a relation of the self, not only in that it belongs properly to it, but also in that belonging is, in some sense, always 'within' the self (a working out of the self in its own terms). Belonging is relational, but not in the sense that it is a relation to 'something else' or a relation of something else to the self. If belonging belongs to the self and self belongs to place, then belonging must be reflexive. That is to say, belonging is a relation of the self, where the self is relating to itself in some sense. If we take this

⁴⁹² The account of plurality presented by Arendt, and discussed in Section 1.1.3 can also be understood as comprehending our social 'place' in this way. Using the analogy of a table located between those who sit around it, Arendt describes the world to which we belong as that which 'gathers us together and yet prevents us falling over each other.' The malaise of modernity, and the existential crisis of modern man, according to her analysis, is that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and separate them. See Arendt, 1998: 52-53.

⁴⁹³ Malpas, 1999: 15-16.

line then we also have to recognise that the notion of person *in place* at issue, is itself now in question.

3.3 The Ontology of Belonging Self

We now understand place as gathering and holding together the entities and experiences that constitute it, and that these entities and experiences have social, historical and physical dimensions and significances. We understand also that we have a place in place, and its social, historical and physical dimensions are significant not only in defining *place*, but defining *person*. In this sense place is the structure in which we find ourselves, but equally so, place has a place in us. The social, historical and physical dimensions of our lives belong not only to the places in which we find ourselves, but they belong also to the self we find ourselves to be in the places we inhabit. The self that has come into view, and is now in question, is a self understood in its own terms—as an ontological structure that gathers and holds together those social, historical and physical things that belong properly to it. The belonging relation that is within ‘place’ is somehow also within the self. Indeed, the ontology of place and the ontology of person must be analogous in this sense. The ontology of self must be in itself relational, for it is only such a relational self that could be considered as ‘belonging’ either in place or in itself.

3.3.1 *Being There* and *Belonging*

Over the course of the previous section our investigation into belonging has progressed from understanding belonging in connection with the ontology of place and implacement to understanding belonging in connection to the ontology of person. This could be seen as a rather radical shift, and it is accurate to say that it is not without problems. The most significant hurdle that postulating an ontology of person that is analogous with the ontology of place faces, relates to the fact that what we seem to have set up is an ontology of belonging that is constituted in being in place—*being there*. However if *being there* can be understood as the human mode of existence, then belonging is naturalised—to *be* human is to *be in place*; is to *belong*.

Certainly, according to the ontology of place *being in place* is something that we cannot be without. In Heidegger’s words:

It is not the case that man ‘is’ and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the ‘world’—a world with which he provides himself occasionally. Dasein is never ‘proximally’ an entity which is, so to speak, free from Being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a ‘relationship’ toward the world.⁴⁹⁴

It is Heidegger’s analysis that ‘we do not find ourselves in the world through encountering the world, or the things within it, as something that stands over against us as separate and apart from us. The world is that to which we are already given over and in which we are taken up.’⁴⁹⁵ *Being in place* is not, therefore, a property which human beings sometimes have and sometimes do not. In this sense, we already belong to the world and the world to us.

We have previously agreed that if Malpas’ thesis is correct, there ‘no possibility of understanding human existence other than through an understanding of place’⁴⁹⁶, and having done so, we affirmed an internal relation between the concepts of ‘place’ and ‘person’, suggesting that the ontology of place and person are, at least in one sense, analogous. If this commits us to the position that *being in place* and belonging are analogous, then it is not only the case that our work is done—we have discovered what it is to belong—but that if this is the case then the entire question of belonging (and not belonging) is rendered moot. We belong and that’s all there is to it, and to suggest otherwise becomes a nonsense. We may not like the idea (a situation we shall return to shortly), but we are stuck with it—stuck *in place*, with *being there*.

Having said this, it occurs that, in one way or another, this has been a problem all along. We have already encountered this issue in regard to investigations into belonging by the geographical school. Here the problem arose in our critical appraisal of the phenomenology of place in relation to Relph’s conceptualisation of belonging *qua existential insideness* as the authentic expression of ‘the situation of people being immersed in the world’. If human beings are immersed in the world in the way that the geographical school of phenomenological inquiry takes for granted, then human beings must themselves be authentic expressions of place. To discuss their perceptions and

⁴⁹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (1927; New York: Harper, 1962): 84.

⁴⁹⁵ Malpas, forthcoming 2006: unpaginated manuscript.

⁴⁹⁶ Malpas, 1999: 15-16.

experiences as being otherwise makes no sense. The problem is, if we accept that all place-experience is necessarily authentic then we are accepting the doctrine of environmental determinism. Either way we naturalise belonging at least for those considered as indigenous, although what this could mean once we have accepted the doctrine of the life-world, as the geographical school does, is also unclear.

Luckily for us, however, there is a way to rescue belonging from this dilemma. In relation to the question of whether the ontological analogy between place and person commits us to the position that *being in place* and belonging are analogous, the solution is a conceptual one. While there is no doubt that an internal relation obtains between *being in place* and belonging, and that given such a relation a grasp of either necessarily requires understanding its connection with the other, it is also the case that if two concepts are internally related this does not mean that the two are necessarily conflated. We may not be able to understand one without the other, but it does not follow that one is reduced to the other. In the context of this work, as it turns out, the differentiation of *being in place* and belonging is more a matter of procedure than of conceptual dislocation.

It was suggested at the end of the last section that fore-grounding the idea of what it is to be a person as a means of accessing what it is to belong could be conceived of as either one of two kinds of operation—in phenomenological terms, as a folding back of the phenomenology of place, whereby belonging might be understood as the experience not of how self belongs to place, but how place belongs to self, or in ontological terms, as a turning inside-out of the ontology of place, whereby the belonging relation within place is also within person. Although both routes lead us to the same destination, the former, proceeds by way of *being in place*, while the latter leads to a formulation of belonging as yet unarticulated in the literature—that is an ontology of belonging.

It is toward this latter formulation of belonging that this work is directed, and having cleared the final hurdle, we find ourselves ready for the next step—the articulation of belonging in ontological terms. The commitment to such a task is an onerous one for a number of reasons, not least of which is the amount of baggage that the notion of belonging is accustomed to carrying, and which throughout its course this work has had to be progressively wrestled from it. Having done so, the challenge ahead is no less

arduous. We have, at the moment, only the barest of conceptual sketches with which to work, but at least the process of architectural design can now begin in earnest.

What we know already is that the structural account of the constitution and operation of place is indicative of the structural account of the constitution and operation of person or self. It follows that a self with the capacity to belong (whether it does belong or not) has to have the sort of ontological structure that is complex, rather than monolithic—composed of a number of different elements, active rather than passive—having the capacity to draw together and unify the different elements that are properly its own, and also relational, rather than static—constituted by a synthesis of its inherent elements. In fact, these are all ideas present in the Heideggerian notion of *being-in-the-world* as *Ereignis* or ‘Event’.

There is some disagreement among Heidegger scholars about precisely what this term should be translated to mean, however Malpas agrees with Henri Birault and Thomas Sheehan that it contains at least three components: ‘the idea of event or happening; of being proper to; and the idea of seeing or appearing’.⁴⁹⁷ The first two of these ideas are familiar to us as those suggested as necessary in a self with the capacity to belong. The idea of *Ereignis* as event is its dynamic aspect—the notion that being in the world happens or takes place. It also indicates the way in which the unity of the place-world (or person for that matter) arises through a synthesis (or dynamic relation) of the elements rather than by their mere presence. The idea of *Ereignis* as being ‘proper to’ relates to the way in which the elements gathered and held together as synthesis are proper to it or belong to it as its own. Thus, ‘what is at issue here is a certain sort of unifying of elements in which things are brought into a unity to which they already belong’. The third idea, the idea of *Ereignis* as seeing or appearing, is something that we have not encountered before. This is the element of being-in-the-world according to which *being there* is itself disclosed, when it grasps its existential situation—when it grasps itself.⁴⁹⁸

It is also worth noting that, for Heidegger, the terms Event (*Ereignis*) and place (*Ort*) overlap. One might say that for Heidegger, place is the Event of being, including of

⁴⁹⁷ Malpas, forthcoming 2006: unpaginated manuscript.

⁴⁹⁸ Malpas, forthcoming 2006: unpaginated manuscript.

course human being, (which is another reason why belonging which is essentially about self is also essentially about place). Given that place and self are structurally analogous—self inside place and place inside self—it can also be taken that self (who and what we are) is the Event of place. In the terms just described, selfhood as *Ereignis* can be understood as the working out of the self in terms of its own integrity—its own ‘ownness’, where that process itself becomes the happening of belonging. The moment of this working out then becomes the moment when the belonging self is revealed—to the world and itself. Heidegger’s notion of *Ereignis* is insightful in that it provides a useful structural outline, however, as discussed earlier, Heidegger’s ontological project diverges from our own and it is here that we must part ways. He has taken us as far as he was companionable (perhaps even a little further) and it is now time to convene with another great scholar, whose ideas will take us on the remainder of the journey.

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, like Heidegger, is a thinker who is also most concerned with the question of our being in the world, and although aficionados might disagree, as will become evident, there is more than a little common ground between them. In any case, it is the common ground upon which we will now focus. Like Heidegger, Kierkegaard is often described in the literature as an existentialist. Existentialism comes in many forms and represents a category of thinkers with a variety of different foci and agendas. Accounts given of the so-called movement are often deceptively monolithic. Insofar as Kierkegaard is classified within this category, it is for three reasons: his emphasis upon existence—and the mode of existence that is human, in particular; that he shared with existentialists the view that *existence precedes essence*, that is, the process of existing is what makes a person who and what he/she is, rather than a person having a particular essence from which his/her life results; and his accentuation of freedom and choice whereby a person is not seen to have self-identity apart from what is involved in the act of choice.

These first two themes are also plainly evident in Heidegger’s thinking about *being-in-the-world*. The third theme, that of freedom and possibility, although not highlighted thus far, is also present in the notion of *being-there*. As Malpas describes:

The situatedness at issue in Heidegger's thinking, and that is taken up in the idea of 'being-there' itself, can thus be seen to present itself as having two aspects: it is both open and indeterminate in the sense that it is constituted in terms of a set of possibilities (including the possibility of creating new possibilities—hence there is a certain essential 'freedom' that characterizes this situatedness), but it is also closed off and determined in the sense that the freeing up of possibilities itself requires that certain possibilities are also ruled out.⁴⁹⁹

Thus Heidegger holds that *being-there*, in some sense at least, requires an actualisation of one possibility or another, and belonging in the terms that have begun to be sketched here could be one of those possibilities.

Kierkegaard also thought that the human mode of being presented 'possibility', not merely in the sense of freedom to choose, but freedom to choose oneself. Indeed possibility was a vital element of Kierkegaard's ontology of the self. Openness also plays an important role for Kierkegaard in this connection. Here the indebtedness of Heidegger to Kierkegaard seems obvious. Heidegger's use of the terms *lichtung*—opening or clearing—and *aletheia*—unconcealment or disclosure—and the ideas that go with them, bear remarkable resemblance to the form and function of Kierkegaard's *transparency*. For Kierkegaard, personal *transparency* allows the individual to open him or herself up to him or herself and others.⁵⁰⁰ It is in this *transparency*—'this opening where one can see through'⁵⁰¹—that authentic being (things as they are) appears. 'Openness', on Kierkegaard's account, is clearly associated with disclosure, and particularly self-disclosure.⁵⁰² Indeed, one might even say that the question of being, for both Kierkegaard and Heidegger, is essentially a question about *transparency*—how human beings gain access to being and how beings can ever be disclosed. What is required for disclosure is

⁴⁹⁹ Malpas, forthcoming 2006: unpaginated manuscript.

⁵⁰⁰ Julia Watkin, 'The Concept "Gjennemsigthighed" in Kierkegaard's Authorship', unpublished, undated: no pagination.

⁵⁰¹ This is one of the definitions given for 'transparency' in the edition of the Christian Molbech's Danish Dictionary owned by Kierkegaard (Watkin, personal communication).

⁵⁰² In Søren Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* (Vol II, Walter Lowrie, trans. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956), for example, Judge William, the ethicist, associates personal transparency with 'a frank openness of personality' which he urged was necessary for the 'revelation of the ethical [or authentic] self'. In Søren Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety: Kierkegaard's Writing* (intro. and notes Reidar Thomte (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980)) Vigilius Haufniensis uses 'disclosure', or alternatively, transparency to signify 'the good', remembering that for Kierkegaard authentic transparency or disclosure is always related to, or calls for, a life lived in terms of ethics. Unless explicitly stated otherwise all references to *Either/Or* are to Walter Lowrie's translation cited above.

that human beings achieve an open-ness to the world so that they may be able to grasp things (including themselves) as being the things they are.

This open-ness or *transparency* is related also to *Ereignis* as the notion of appearance—the element of being-in-the-world according to which *being there* is itself disclosed, but also to the idea of *Ereignis* as being properly related. That is to say, *transparency* is related to a disclosure of the self as being in authentic relation with a world in which we already belong to the world and which already belongs to us. In Heidegger, there is also a connection here with *authenticity*—*Eigentlichkeit*. As Mulhall observes:

For Heidegger, because Dasein's Being is such that its own being is an issue for it, any given mode of its existence can be assessed in terms of what he calls *authenticity* or *inauthenticity*. We can always ask of any given individual whether the choices she makes between different possible modes of existence and the way she enacts and lives them out are ones through which she *is* most truly herself, or rather ones in which she neglects or otherwise fails to be herself.⁵⁰³

What begins to emerge is a slightly different view of human existence, a view in one sense that we already belong to the world and it to us, but also in another that by virtue of being human we can choose whether or not to be—or belong—in the world authentically.

While Heidegger saw human existence as an 'issue', Kierkegaard saw it as a 'task'. For Kierkegaard, existing meant becoming more and more authentically and individually oneself. In his view, human existence is above all something that has to be actualised. So human existence is a task—the task of becoming an authentic self. The notion of *authenticity* relates to subjective truth. The assertion 'Subjectivity is truth'⁵⁰⁴ lies at the very heart of Kierkegaard's philosophy, and also at the centre of much misinterpretation of his thought. This assertion is not, as it is often taken to be, one of general epistemological relativism. That is to say, Kierkegaard does not hold to the position such as that expressed in the aphorism "If you believe something to be true, [that you belong

⁵⁰³ Stephen Mulhall, *The Routledge Guide to Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996): 32 (my emphasis).

⁵⁰⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* edited and translated with introduction and notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) Vol. 1, Part I, Chap. II, 'Subjective Truth, Inwardness; Truth is Subjectivity': 189-251.

perhaps] then it is, in any case, true for you.” Rather, what his assertion is getting at is that truth is actualised only when it is immersed in experience. Put differently, truth is disclosed always and only through the knowing and being of the embodied subject.⁵⁰⁵

This can also be translated into Heideggerian terms to denote the idea that despite Hussurl’s insistence, the question of the individual’s own existence cannot coherently be bracketed off from the existence of the world in which he or she dwells. There can be no separation between the *being in* and *the world*. Coming to terms with this truth is *the* issue of being. However, truth is not merely something to be believed. It is something to be lived. Thus, an *authentic* human being is one who knows his or herself—has *transparency*—and lives according to subjective truth. The full significance of these ideas and this terminology will emerge later.

There is one more point of connection between Heidegger and Kierkegaard that should be made before we continue, and it relates also to the *authenticity* (or otherwise) of human being in the world. In Heidegger the happening or event that is *Ereignis* is one marked by *anxiety*. The facticity of our existence entails that our *being-in-the-world* is as a single unified whole (speaking ontologically). In the language of *Being and Time* we are *thrown* into this existence. We find ourselves *delivered over* to a world of a particular sort. That is to say, we have no choice but to find ourselves in a world that is already full of things—a world of already assigned significances. On the other hand it is precisely these things gathered and held together that constitute our being who and what we are. The object of our *anxiety* is not any of the things *per se*, but the predicament that *being-in-the-world* presents. What *Dasein* is anxious about is itself.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger describes this existential feature as one concerning *authenticity* and freedom.

Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about—its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world. Anxiety individualizes Dasein ... Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being to-wards* its own most

⁵⁰⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, (1848; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983): 13. Unless explicitly stated otherwise all references to *The Sickness Unto Death* are to this translation. For a brief discussion see Anthony Rudd, *Kierkegaard and the Limits of the Ethical* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997): 55.

potentiality-for-being—that is, its *Being-free* for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself.⁵⁰⁶

Authenticity is achieved by taking responsibility for oneself in accepting the burden of having to *be there, thrown* into this particular existence with just these things and possibilities. The way in which *anxiety* individualizes is by helping us to recognize our ‘own-ness’—that we have no choice but to choose what *form* the world and our *being in* it takes.⁵⁰⁷ We have no choice but to choose our own belonging.

The relation between *anxiety* and the human capacity (even necessity) to choose or take hold of oneself and, disclose one’s individuality is also a strong theme in Kierkegaard. According to Kierkegaard, although in a certain sense, human beings, just like other beings in the world (plants animals), are specimens of a species, what distinguishes humans from other beings is that they have the capacity for individuality. Other single beings are not individuals, but specimens. One other single beings can be confused with another, replaced by another, repeated in another. Other single beings are merely replicas created from a common stencil. On the other hand, each time a human individual is created the stencil is thrown away. Every individual is literally unrepeatable and irreplaceable—fully him or herself as him or herself. For Kierkegaard, ‘man is an individual, this single, specific person, unconfusable with all others, singular, unique, fully himself as himself ... every human being is a world apart, has never before existed and will never come into being in another. He cannot be repeated and cannot be confused with anybody’.⁵⁰⁸ While Kierkegaard refers to humankind as a ‘race’, he says that a person is ‘at once himself and the whole race’. Each person repeats the race but in his or her own individual fashion.

Individual human beings share the same ontological structure, but the ontology of human beings includes possibilities. Unlike other beings in the world, human beings are *free*, and according to Kierkegaard’s way of thinking about human existence, this means that they are free to be who and what they choose to be. Put another way, ‘what is

⁵⁰⁶ Heidegger quoted in Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation* Vol. II (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1995): 613-614.

⁵⁰⁷ Mulhall, 1996: 67.

⁵⁰⁸ Johannes Sløk, *Kierkegaard’s Universe: A New Guide to the Genius*, trans. Kenneth Tindall, (Copenhagen: The Danish Cultural Institute, 1994): 25.

individual in the person is that he [or she] in his [or her] specific singularity, must realise the universally human.⁵⁰⁹ Kierkegaard has a particular view of what is universal in humankind—a particular ontology of the human self—and as it turns out this is the capacity (or rather inherent demand) to become the individual human being you are. Indeed, for Kierkegaard it is the paradoxical *task* of every human being ‘to be and remain wholly and completely identical with himself and not with anything else.’⁵¹⁰

We have seen the same emphasis in Heidegger and the demand he places on the freedom of *Dasein* to choose or take hold of itself. Indeed, according to both Kierkegaard and Heidegger the task of becoming oneself is a challenging one. Heidegger says that ‘we have a strong tendency to ‘fall in with’ the *One—Others* or the crowd—and thus to ‘fall away from’ ourselves’⁵¹¹ that must be averted, and Kierkegaard warns us against becoming what he calls *Spidsborgers* or in the English translation philistines. ‘Such an individual lives under the illusion that she or he makes choices in life but in fact is involved in the unconscious hypocrisy of following the normative etiquette and practice of society’.⁵¹² The philistine conforms to society, becoming the perfect example of what his or her social context dictates. However, while a philistine is thoroughly and completely what his or her society, heredity and environment determines him or her to be, s/he is nothing more. Such a person exists as ‘merely a numerical member of the crowd instead of being an individual in a community.’⁵¹³ Kierkegaard maintains that, in a very real sense, individuals are free to ‘choose themselves’ and must do so if they are to become authentically human. Thus a philistine is only a human being in the most hackneyed sense of the term. The process of becoming fully human can only begin once a *philistine* realizes that s/he is free and thus becomes capable of making choices in his/her life.

As in Heidegger, it is in I’s relation to choosing individuality that *anxiety* makes its appearance in Kierkegaard’s philosophy.⁵¹⁴ *Anxiety* can be understood as a phenomenon,

⁵⁰⁹ Sløk, 1994: 27.

⁵¹⁰ Sløk, 1994: 25.

⁵¹¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, quoted in Melchart, 1995: 613-614.

⁵¹² Watkin, 2001: 193.

⁵¹³ Julia Watkin, *Kierkegaard* (New York: Geoffrey Chapman, 1997): 57.

⁵¹⁴ *The Concept of Anxiety* received little attention during Kierkegaard’s lifetime, however both Heidegger and Sartre drew on it as a work of great importance. Most likely because he wrote in Danish, rather than English, French or German, Kierkegaard’s work hardly figures in the history of psychology. Otherwise, it

but also in ontological terms. The feeling of *anxiety* alerts the individual to the fact that something is wrong—that something must change or be rectified and that s/he must act to become more fully his or herself. In an ontological sense the object of *anxiety* is a pathological *inauthenticity* or ontological *misrelation* of the self (something that will be discussed in much greater depth shortly).

We have thus explored the relation between the ontology of being in place—*being there*—and the ontology of the self—*being fully human*. It is clear that in this sense elements of being in place (strongly influenced by Heidegger's model of *being-in-the-world*) and Kierkegaard's ideas about the task of becoming fully human have a significant degree of symmetry. On the question of influence, it is clear that there is much in Heidegger's ideas of existence that is owed to the inspiration of Kierkegaard. As argued previously, the point of demarcation between the two, regards procedure rather than basic philosophical divergence. While Heidegger (and to some extent, the philosophy of place) proceeds in the direction of belonging in terms of authentic placiality—how human beings are gathered up and held in place (or not)—Kierkegaard's ontology of the self is more instructive in terms of belonging as authentic selfhood—how place is gathered up and held in human beings (or not).

There is, of course, one major point of departure, which can be thought of as explaining not only the inclination of Heidegger to avert from an analysis of human selfhood in sharp relief (preferring to study the question of human being in relation to the nature of being itself), but also the way in which the thinking of Heidegger and Kierkegaard is considered as contributing to the history of ideas. Kierkegaard, is most certainly a deeply religious thinker, an aspect most definitely an anathema to Heidegger. In this he is joined by the greater majority of popular and influential twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century thinkers, most of whom wish to free philosophy from having God as a presupposition. Given this, it stands to reason not only that Heidegger rejected the adequacy of Kierkegaard's ontological explanation, but that the attention Kierkegaard's thinking on the issue of being in the world receives from contemporary scholars is almost exclusively in the context of religious discourse.

could be argued, in terms of psychological analysis, that his work is of equal importance to Sigmund Freud's.

It not the intention of this work to secularize the philosophy of Kierkegaard, or to judge the veracity of his personal belief that the Christian world-view is the factually correct one. The object here is to show, quite independently, and without religious connection, the important contribution of his ontology of the self to our understanding of what it is to be a self that properly belongs in the world. It is to an explication of this ontology that we now turn.

3.3.2 Kierkegaard's Ontology of the Self

Kierkegaard's authorship contains countless references to the nature and permutations of human existence. The self is discussed in his *Journal at Gilleleie* (1835), in *Either/Or* (1843), in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), in *The Sickness unto Death* (1849) and in *Practice in Christianity* (1850).⁵¹⁵ However, thanks to many of his interpreters, Kierkegaard is probably best known for his descriptive account of three stages of human existence: the aesthetic stage, the ethical stage and the religious stage.⁵¹⁶ These stages are alluded to throughout the authorship, but discussed explicitly in both *Stages on Life's Way* (1845) and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846). What is considered less is the ontological accounting he provides for the three stages of existence described in these works. Not only is Kierkegaard interested in providing an exposition of human existence, but there is evidence in his authorship to suggest that he was occupied (even preoccupied) with the more fundamental question concerning what makes different modes (or stages) of existence possible in the first instance. On a number of occasions Kierkegaard suggests, without explicitly pursuing the idea, that ontology is the most significant task of those seeking answers to the nature of a fully human existence.⁵¹⁷ The most formal

⁵¹⁵ The works are authored by two different pen-names, and thus each presents the self from a different view. Vigilius Haufniensis means 'The watchman of Copenhagen'. Haufniensis is a non-Christian psychologist. Anti-Climacus is a Christian psychologist, unlike Johannes Climacus (who is not a Christian and whose name is derived from an early-church monk of the same name who wrote a book on the stages of spiritual ascent/development). Kierkegaard thought of publishing both works under his own name but changed his mind (Watkin, personal communication).

⁵¹⁶ Often mistakenly understood as a qualitative progression of life's possibilities, the stages represent three basic modes of existence relating to the process of self-realisation or actualization. Kierkegaard holds that all human beings are currently at one of these stages, depending on the extent to which they have achieved their life-project.

⁵¹⁷ John W. Elrod, *Being and Existence in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975): 3.

ontological analysis of the self can be found in *The Concept of Anxiety* and particularly in *The Sickness unto Death* where he provides an exposition of the structure of the self in greatest detail. It is in these works, particularly the latter, that Kierkegaard outlines the ontological structures that make different modes (or stages) of existence possible.

The Sickness unto Death also contains what can be understood as a more ethical dimension. One might even say that for Kierkegaard the importance of taking an ontological view is to disclose to his readers the ontological demand of human existence—to demonstrate what it is to be fully human, which is to express that humanity by being fully oneself. Following this formula the locus of human existence is within the individual—in the self-relating to itself—rather than the self's relation to anything external to it. Nevertheless, there is an understanding that the expression of one's humanity always and necessarily occurs within a particular context—physical, historical and social. Indeed this is elegantly factored into the equation. On Kierkegaard's account, selfhood is necessarily placed because the elements of the self's place-ness are part of its constitution—inside itself. Self relates to place by properly relating to itself. In the terms that I have begun to outline, self belongs by being itself in the world.

Kierkegaard begins *The Sickness Unto Death* like this, 'A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self.'⁵¹⁸ He goes on to explain that the '*spirit*' self is a dynamic relational synthesis, and then to explore its various permutations, including 'the sickness unto death' itself—a sickness that Kierkegaard calls *despair*. Insofar as the self's status as '*spirit*' arises from its capacity to relate to itself, *despair* is an ontological condition of the self that arises as a consequence of a *misrelation* of the synthesis. What is meant by *despair* will be discussed in far greater detail later. What I am suggesting here is that belonging relates to a particular relation of self as synthesis—a relation that I shall refer to as *correct relation*.⁵¹⁹ However, before we can begin to grasp what this might mean, it is necessary to understand how Kierkegaard conceived of and presented the structure of human being in the world. The formal structure of the self as well as the

⁵¹⁸ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*: 13.

⁵¹⁹ I am obliged to say, that the term *correct relation* is not explicitly used by Kierkegaard. Rather he refers to the condition that is its opposite, that is, *misrelation*. For Kierkegaard the self is constituted by a 'synthesis that relates itself to itself'. There can be either *misrelation* or, as I put it, correct relation, in the relation of the synthesis.

modes in which it can be expressed will now be drawn out clearly in Kierkegaardian terms.

There are three key terms involved in Kierkegaard's definition of the self. In the first instance, the formal structure of the self's being is as a synthesis—a synthesis of opposites: *necessity* and *possibility* (freedom), the *body* and the *psyche* (soul), the *finite* and the *infinite*, *temporality* and *eternity*, and *reality* and *ideality* (I shall have more to say about what these terms mean and how the various syntheses operate shortly). In the second instance, the self is relational. 'The self is a relation that relates to itself.'⁵²⁰ That is to say, the self is a relation, and also a relation that relates to itself. The structure is a dynamic one—the self exists as a relation, constantly relating itself to its own self. In the third instance, a human being is *spirit*. *Spirit* is the authentic human ontological condition—a person in *correct relation*. *Spirit* is the definition of the person in question in terms of the final, perfected product. *Spirit* is thus another term for the self seen from this final perspective. However, because the self is dynamic—always in process, in terms of where the person is on the journey of life, finality and perfection are future conditions. *Spirit* then, also designates the becoming character of the self. *Spiritual* being is something that the self has necessarily, but at the same time does not necessarily have. It is only because the human self is constituted as *spirit*, that it has the possibility of being *spirit*.⁵²¹

We can conceptualise the self then as constituted in various synthetic expressions of becoming. Kierkegaard's notion of the authentic self is a self in *correct relation*, both in itself and in its relation and as itself. As mentioned briefly above, the self can also be in *incorrect relation* or in *misrelation*. Hopefully, by providing an exposition of the self's ontological content—the things that Kierkegaard conceives as constituting various basic synthetic expressions—the structure, operation and pathology will begin to become a little clearer. '

Kierkegaard's analysis of human existence is far more introspective than that of Heidegger. That is to say Kierkegaard's philosophy is far more personal in the sense that

⁵²⁰ Note: you need to strike out the 'itself' after 'relates' [relates itself] wherever it occurs in the Hong & Hong translation. The Hannay Penguin translation of this book is correct here. (Watkin, personal communication).

⁵²¹ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*: 13-14.

while he posits a universal ontology of selfhood, much of his work is directed toward having individual persons look inside themselves and understand how they are constituted. In coming to know themselves in this way, he hopes that they might be directed toward authentic being in the world or, as the subtitle of *the Sickness Unto Death* indicates, that they might be ‘upbuilt’ and ‘awakened’. The nature and condition of each synthetic relation, has an important bearing on the success of this process. In the syntheses of the self we can discern two primary categories (categories of things in relation)—the given and the freely acquired.⁵²² The category of the given (relating to the self as determined) consists of the *body*, the *finite*, *temporality*, *reality* and *necessity*. Those features of the self that Kierkegaard holds to be freely acquired (relating to the self as free) are the *psyche*, the *infinite*, *ideality*, *eternity* and *possibility*.⁵²³

The self that arrives in the world is a synthesis of *body* and *soul*. *Soul* can be translated into the modern terminology of *psyche* in that it denotes the non-physical part of the initial self that the individual starts out within life. Maintaining the dynamic character of the self, *body*, in this context, is not taken to mean any static unchangeable stuff or any extended substance, in the Cartesian sense, but rather ‘bodily event’. The *body* is also crucial to the notion of action, to having the ability to act in a certain way at the level of real life situations. By *psyche* Kierkegaard means the capacity of knowing or thinking, both imaginatively and logically, and of willing and feeling. The *psyche* or consciousness is also vitally important to human being in Kierkegaard’s terms. The capacity of the imagination provides persons with the ability to see the self’s potentiality. Reason provides a brake on the imagination so that it does not exceed possibility, and the will provides the thrust so that the possibility might be actualised. When all these things

⁵²² Kierkegaard’s view of the self assumes a belief in a type of dualism, but as we have seen in relation to the structure of the self, Kierkegaard’s dualism is not fixed and static. His view of the self is dualistic, but not in a Cartesian sense. He sees the self as relational—relational within itself, in relation to itself and in relation to that which is also outside itself. Nor is Kierkegaard’s a traditional soul-body dualism in the sense that human being is a relation between an immortal soul and a mortal body. Rather, the body of Kierkegaard’s dualism relates to action—the human capacity for agency and, in intimate connection, a concrete ethical existence. See John D. Glenn Jr., ‘The Definition of the Self and the Structure of Kierkegaard’s Work’ in Robert, L. Perkins ed., *The International Kierkegaard Commentary*, Vol. 19: *The Sickness Unto Death* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1987): 8-9. As Glenn also observes Kierkegaard’s ontological dualism in regard to the self is more akin to Heidegger’s account of ‘being-in-the-world’ as concerning ‘facticity’ and ‘existentiality’, or to Sartre’s understanding of ‘being-for-itself’ as involving ‘facticity’ and ‘transcendence’.

⁵²³ These two categories mirror, in a general sense, what Heidegger would refer to as the *thrown* and *free* natures of *being-in-the-world*.

operate in *correct relation* the person or self is able to become itself. If not the process becomes stalled.

At the most basic descriptive level the synthesis of the *finite* and the *infinite* is a synthesis in which the *finite* is the limiting factor and the *infinite* the expanding factor. The *finite* aspect of the self is thoroughly concrete. It represents the facticity of the individual human being—his or her race, sex, personal appearance, emotional stability, talents interests, abilities and weaknesses.⁵²⁴ The *finite* aspect also includes the social, political and cultural milieu in which the person dwells. Furthermore, the *finite* consists of things for which a person is not responsible and does not choose. The self does not determine the facticity of his or her own situation, but experiences him or herself as determined by it. No matter what a person may do, he or she is always accompanied by the *finite*—the concrete ‘isness’ of his or her situation. Indeed Kierkegaard identifies the *finite* with ‘the world’.⁵²⁵ The *infinite*, on the other hand, is the aspect of the self represented in its capacity for expansion. The imagination (present in the first synthesis) is the facilitator of infinity in that it opens up the self’s own horizons. ‘The imagination ranges free of the self’s facticity by positing a multiplicity of ... possibilities without regard for its finite limitations.’⁵²⁶

The self is also a synthesis of the *temporal* and the *eternal*. Kierkegaard’s investigation of the self pre-supposes the validity of the self as related to the sphere of eternity or the eternal realm in a specifically Christian way.⁵²⁷ However, we might also understand the *eternal* as representing the ultimate or universal ‘isness’ of creation (or any given situation). The extent and capacity of humankind, created as they are in the *temporal* realm—in the world of a space/time—is necessarily *finite* or limited. The relationship between the *temporal* and the *eternal* in the context of human subjectivity is ambiguous. Although time is used by Kierkegaard in the sense that we normally understand it, that is, as the succession of moments of existence, *temporality* is also understood in more abstract terms. *Temporality* is the sphere of existence characterised by *necessity* and the *finite*. Although time is what constitutes the mortality of humankind

⁵²⁴ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Vol II: 11, 220.

⁵²⁵ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Vol II: 206-207, 225.

⁵²⁶ Elrod, 1975: 34.

⁵²⁷ That is, *eternity* stands for the realm of God, absolutely transcending *temporality* and thus existing even if there were no humans. The realm of God is characterized by ethical ideals that are eternally valid.

it is also the sphere in which human kind has the possibility of moving into *correct relation* with its eternal ground—its ‘isness’. Because humankind dwells in *temporality* individuals require the opportunity to develop the initial potentiality of self as *spirit*.⁵²⁸

In the same way that the self is a synthesis of the *temporal* and the *eternal*, it is also a synthesis of the real and the ideal. For Kierkegaard the *reality* of the self is bound up with its being in the world. The real world is the world of the senses, the world of human lived experience. That is, the world of the self as it experiences itself in the world. However, as you will recall the nature of the self at any given stage or in any given condition, is as a dynamic, developing, unfolding *spirit*. The *ideal* is for Kierkegaard the destination toward which the self must project itself. In achieving *correct relation* the *spirit* self (always existing in *possibility*) is actualised.

The self, according to Kierkegaard, is also a synthesis of *necessity* and *possibility* (or freedom). When Kierkegaard posits the individual as being a combination of these two things he has in mind the interplay or relation between the *finite* aspects of a person, that is his/her heredity and environment, and the individual’s capacity to choose beyond the limitations that these things present. Kierkegaard insists that imagining and then choosing to expand beyond what *necessity* dictates is possible. He insists that although personal freedom is limited by *necessity* we are nevertheless free to act. We are not victims of predetermined forces.⁵²⁹ For purposes of convenience, from here after the syntheses of the self articulated in Kierkegaard’s ontology shall be referred to as that between *necessity* and *possibility*. This is only proper, of course, on the proviso that the category of *necessity* is taken to include that of *body, finitude, temporality and reality* as they have been defined here, and that of *possibility* is treated conditionally to contain that

⁵²⁸ This involves an ethical imperative. According to Kierkegaard, it is achieved by living according to ethical values that transcend cultural contexts—by making the correct ethical-religious choices, that is, by living a properly Christian life. The realm of the eternal is one of altruism and self-sacrifice and thus the proper Christian life has these same perfections as its goal. In comparison a life focussed on the temporal aspect, is considered by Kierkegaard ego-centric (both self-satisfying in a negative sense and self-satisfying in that it is only concerned with actualising the temporal aspect of itself).

⁵²⁹ Indeed Judge William, one of the central characters in *Either/Or* describes the exercise of authentic personal freedom as the process of ‘choosing oneself’. Those in Danish society whom Kierkegaard observes as being Christian as a matter of course—those he condemned as ‘philistines’ or *spidsborgers*—could be regarded as selves in *misrelation*. They never exercise real choice, but are so absorbed in the necessities of life that they are oblivious to the fact that there could be anything more. They have allowed the necessity of their situation—the fact that in Denmark at that time being a citizen was synonymous with being a Christian—to dictate the persons that they have become.

of *psyche, infinitude, eternity and ideality*, for in other words, sets of opposites can be taken to represent the categories of that which is *necessary* and that which is *possible*.

As mentioned previously, Kierkegaard held that the authentic self is a self in *correct relation*, both in itself and in its relation and as itself. In this respect there must be correct relation between *necessity* and *possibility*—that which one cannot change and that which one can. Kierkegaard does not give specific content to these categories (indeed for him to do so would entirely erode his thesis concerning individuality), but it is clear that what he has in mind for *necessity* is one's heredity and environment, including one's social, historical and physical setting, wherever and whenever one is. What is possible for one to be and do is again a completely individual matter. The important thing to note is that to become fully human one must choose a *possibility* that is in some sense *correctly related* with *necessity*. The 'sickness' referred to in *The Sickness Unto Death* is a pathology, not of mortal body, but of *spirit*. It is a *misrelation* of the self and it is associated with both ontological and psychological *despair*.

It is clear that Kierkegaard is interested in the psychological aspect of human existence. The sub-titles of a number of his writings identify them explicitly as psychological works. Indeed, both Vigilius Haufniensis and Anti-Climacus the pseudonymous authors of *The Concept Of Anxiety* and *The Sickness Unto Death*, works on *anxiety* and *despair* respectively, are both psychologists—the former a non-Christian and the latter a Christian.⁵³⁰ While Kierkegaard's conception of psychology does relate to the study of human experience *per se*, it is nonetheless clinical psychology. Its starting point is sickness, its goal diagnosis and healing. It is 'theory for the sake of therapy.'⁵³¹ Throughout Kierkegaard's authorship he reminds us over and over again that his intention is to edify. He addresses his books to the existing individual in order to help him or her come to terms with his or her own existence.

⁵³⁰ *The Concept of Anxiety* is described in the subtitle as: 'a simple psychologically orienting deliberation on the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin'. Vigilius Haufniensis discusses the problems presented by various strands of the Christian tradition dealing with how the Fall took place and what the consequences were. He finds the notions to be inadequate, but considers the doctrine from a psychological perspective relevant to his own observations. Anti-Climacus in *The Sickness unto Death* undertakes 'a Christian psychological exposition for edification and awakening'.

⁵³¹ Merold Westphal, 'Kierkegaard's Psychology and Unconscious Despair' in Perkins, 1987: 40.

Kierkegaard held that the process of discovering and appropriating one's being is fundamental to human existence. His ontology of the self provides the structural principle by which this process occurs. Second, Kierkegaard regards sickness and health as modes of activity—'not something that happens to us but something that we do.'⁵³² Sickness and health are reflections of how we live our lives. A properly lived life is one in which individuals do not merely live according to the ideal in an abstract sense but concretely and in reality. Third, Kierkegaard's psychology presupposes a particular kind of *inwardness*.⁵³³ *Inwardness* is the word that Kierkegaard uses to describe the individual's experience of themselves as *spirit*. As Watkin puts it, *inwardness* can be understood as 'the spiritual potentiality of the human soul ... experienced from the inside (as opposed to conceptual definition of the structure of the self).'534

The point here is absolutely crucial. The psychological or *inward* aspect of being human—that is to say how one's existence is experienced—represents just one aspect of the issue. The categorical structure of the self is another matter. While *Despair* can be understood as a *misrelation* between the constituents of the self as synthesis, Kierkegaard makes a distinction between one's psychological state and one's ontological condition. Hence, he is able to articulate such intuitively contradictory modes of being as *unconscious despair*. The self in *unconscious despair* may well be 'happy',⁵³⁵ while at the same time be suffering from the ontological condition of *despair*. While those employing 'ontological phenomenology' attempt, in various ways, to make the world and human existence intelligible through a philosophical analysis of human experience, Kierkegaard resisted this approach, opting instead to construct an ontology of the self that explains human experience rather than being predicated upon it.⁵³⁶

In *The Sickness Unto Death* the two modes of *misrelation* or *despair*—the ontological and the psychological—are described in fine detail. In an ontological sense, *despair* is the state of affairs in which the self is in *misrelation* with itself. One might also

⁵³² Westphal in Perkins, 1987: 41. For this reason Westphal regards Kierkegaard's view of health as Aristotelian.

⁵³³ See Westphal in Perkins, 1987: 42-44 for a longer discussion of Kierkegaard's definition of 'inwardness' and its relation to Cartesian and Hegelian thought.

⁵³⁴ Watkin, 2001: 131.

⁵³⁵ As in the case of the unreflective aesthete in *Either/Or*.

⁵³⁶ Also, as Westphal in Perkins, 1987: 40 points out, 'Kierkegaard includes the (to us) theological assumption of God as the self's creator on the psychological or phenomenological side of the ledger.'

understand this as ‘objective’ *despair*—a *misrelation* of the self that exists independent of the subject being aware of it. *Despair* understood as a psychological condition is one that affects the individual, but not necessarily one that the individual is consciously aware of. It manifests in experience, although the individual might or might not be aware of its origin. This can be understood as ‘subjective’ *despair*—the *despair* that exists in the experience of the subject.⁵³⁷ In other words, one can be ontologically *despairing* with or without being consciously aware of it

All individuals are prone to *misrelation*. When in *misrelation* a corresponding mode of *despair* results. The mode of *despair* that most pertains to the subject under discussion is that regarding and defined by a *misrelation* of *necessity* and *possibility*—where *necessity* involves one’s heredity and environment and *possibility* involves one’s freedom to choose and actualise oneself in a manner appropriate to that necessity. This entails being and acting in the world in proper relation to our given heredity and environment. According to Kierkegaard, a self lacking *possibility* is in the state of *despair* (*Necessity’s Despair*), but so is the self without *necessity* (*Possibility’s Despair*). A closer look at these two modes of *misrelation* between *possibility* and *necessity* helps to illuminate what exactly he means by this.

Possibility’s Despair arises when *possibility* does not stay in a proper balance with the individual’s *necessity*. The self runs away from itself in possibility. Contact with necessity is lost, and thus the person is in the *despair* of possibility. A person flounders about in abstract possibilities that have no connection with the *reality* of the self. There is thus no movement in terms of development of the self to become the self, the person doesn’t get anywhere. The possibilities are abstract mental possibilities unrelated to the actual person as real possibilities. A person in the *despair* of possibility gets lost more and more in the contemplation of possibilities and thus uses up time needed for action. Thus the more intensive the contemplation of possibilities, the less intensive the actuality, in that nothing in the end gets actualized of even a piece of a *possibility*. In the end the person gets to think everything is possible and becomes a mirage rather than a self. We

⁵³⁷ Note: Caution needs to be exercised with the use of ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’. I use these terms here so that you might begin to make a distinction. The distinction is by no means that simple, as I hope will come to light when we discuss the situation in more depth.

say of such a person that s/he is out of touch with *reality*, out of touch with the everyday world.

Kierkegaard sees people as getting lost in *possibility* in two main ways—that of a desiring or longing (hope) or that of the melancholic-fantastic (fear or *anxiety*). In hope a person keeps chasing the possibility but never succeeds in relating a bit of it to the *necessity* of his actual situation. That person gets far away from himself. Perhaps here the person is chasing the *possibility* in his mind and thus never getting to select, and starting to actualize, a realistic possibility. In fear, a person is lost in relation to a *possibility* he or she dreads, cannot help chasing after it, and in the end either drowns in the *anxiety* or perishes in what he was in dread of perishing in. This latter situation would seem to be one where a person is paralysed from acting in relation to his or her *necessity* and lets contemplation of the *possibility* overwhelm him or her.

Necessity's Despair is a life without *possibility*. The usual way of looking at things is to think that when one is young one has all one's hopes and possibilities before one. Thus, a middle-aged person would be viewed as having less of both. The kind of hope and *despair* associated with having and not having hope or *despair*, Kierkegaard rejects as not being true hope or *despair*. This is because these kinds of hopes or *despairs* are related to worldly temporal objectives and possibilities. The idea of *possibility* is also intrinsically bound up with the notion of the self as freedom. For the self to develop there is need for freedom, but if there is no *possibility*, there is no freedom, because there can be no choice.⁵³⁸

The psychology or experience of *despair* is a different matter. As has been discussed, there is a qualitative difference between *conscious* and *unconscious despair* when one looks at *despair* manifestations. For the one looking at *despair* from a conceptual standpoint, as an outsider, this distinction vanishes, since all *despair* sufferers are classified as being in *despair*, whether we are aware of the *despair* or not. However, even though (from the point of view of category description) a person can be classified as in *despair*, this does not mean that person is conscious of it. Awareness of one's *despair* or *misrelation* unfolds only gradually, usually beginning with a sense of *anxiety*. In *The*

⁵³⁸ Despair, as defined by possibility/necessity is outlined by Kierkegaard in *The Sickness Unto Death*: 35-37.

Concept of Anxiety anxiety is presented most fundamentally as a trigger or presupposition for action. The feeling of *anxiety* alerts the individual to the fact that something is wrong—that something must change or be rectified, that s/he must act. In an ontological sense the object of *anxiety* is *spiritual misrelation*. Thus, in an ontological sense, *anxiety* is predicated on *despair*. In a psychological sense *anxiety* is the forerunner of *conscious despair*. The individual experiences *anxiety* as an ill-defined something that simultaneously attracts and repels them—an uneasy feeling that things are not as they should be.⁵³⁹ The phenomenon of *anxiety* develops into that of *conscious despair* in accordance with growing self-consciousness—a growing awareness of the *misrelation* of the self. Once one becomes conscious of *misrelation* Kierkegaard thought that there are several options from which a person can choose. One can *in despair not will to be oneself*.⁵⁴⁰ This *despair* indicates a consciousness of *misrelation* prompting action to escape and replace the self with another. The other option is to *in despair to will to be oneself*. This *despair* indicates a consciousness of *misrelation* which prompts a desperate retreat into the self in *misrelation*. Here, while one infinitely fantasizes the self one wants to be, no definite action is taken to become it.

Consciousness is the decisive factor in the situation for the one in the *despair* situation. Consciousness, that is self-consciousness, is the decisive factor where the self is concerned. Kierkegaard says that the more consciousness there is, the more self there is, and also the more will a person has, and the more will, the more self. With humans, the factor of self-consciousness is important in the amount of self a person has. The greater the self-consciousness a person has, the more awareness there is about the condition of the self and about its possibilities. The more self-consciousness in this direction, the more will a person has to realize possibilities. Without will, freedom cannot be exercised. Someone without will would be one passively remaining in the immediately-given initial state of the synthesis, thus, only in the state of its *necessity*.⁵⁴¹ While such a state might constitute being in the world and being human in a nominal sense, it would not constitute a self that belongs.

⁵³⁹ In *The Sickness Unto Death*, Part 1, Section B Kierkegaard uses dizziness as an analogy.

⁵⁴⁰ Originally Kierkegaard thought of calling this ‘in despair to want to get rid of oneself’ (Watkin, personal communication).

⁵⁴¹ For Kierkegaard’s exposition of the relation between consciousness and selfhood see *The Sickness Unto Death*: 29.

3.3.3 Belonging *qua* correct relation

The thesis presented here is that what constitutes a self that belongs is one in which the self is constituted in *correct* relation—both within the world and within itself. We are now in a position to outline belonging *qua* correct relation, to show how it relates to common understandings of belonging, and also where it deviates. In doing so, the following section provides an entirely new perspective not only on *what* it is to belong, but also on *who* it is.

One of the things that has been suggested consistently throughout this work is that both our identity and our belonging relate somehow to our social, historical and environmental context. The relation that is implied in orthodox accounts is one in which a connection is conceived to pertain, in one sense or another, between person as subject and society, history or the environment as object. The connection that is implied by the ontological approach taken here is not merely one in which the subject stands in some relation to its object, but rather what is at issue here is a particular kind of relation; the sort of relation in which we ourselves are implicated—the sort of relation in which *who* and *what* we are is at issue. According to this thinking, belonging is a state of being constituted in relation that is fitting, right or correct. This being the case, a minimum conception of belonging might be understood as *standing in correct relation to one's community, one's history and one's locality*.

We have established belonging as an ontological matter—that is, belonging as a particular mode of self-being. But it must be noted that the self does not exist independently of the life it lives or of the world it lives in. That is to say, the living self belongs in and to the world in which it is located. Indeed what it is to be a self that belongs is to be a self which is *correctly related* to the world in which it arises and dwells. We can consider such a self as a self constituted in *correct relation* with its *necessity*. The necessary aspect of a person is given to them by virtue of their concrete worldly existence; such things as those that are genetically inherited like sex, race and personal appearance. But this also includes talents, dispositions and inclinations and also weaknesses and vices, things that are not only determined by genetic heritage, but by the cultural, political and social milieu in which a person is immersed.

On the other hand, a self that belongs is a self constituted in *correct relation* with its *possibility*. This free aspect of the self is not merely given to us by the facts of our lives, so to speak. Rather, *possibility* represents the freedom to actualise an ideal. An ideal situation for the self is one in which it is able to be its most functional, shine its brightest, overcome its flaws and curb its vices. When the self is in *correct relation* there is full integration between itself and its environment allowing maximum self-efficacy.

The ideal self of *correct relation* is a self in *correct relation* with itself—a self fully integrated with itself and in proper command of its own-ness. In short, it is a self with *integrity*. *Integrity*, on this account, can be taken to mean several different things; first self-integrity is a matter of persons integrating various parts of themselves into a harmonious, intact whole; second to act as a self with integrity is to act in a way that accurately reflects your sense of who you are; to act from motives, interests and commitments that are most deeply your own;⁵⁴² third, self-integrity is taken to have a moral purpose.⁵⁴³ That is, those who have integrity are taken to live in more ethical relation to themselves and others. The ideal self of *correct relation* is a self that lives properly in the world.

The definition of *belonging qua correct relation* that I have just outlined is consistent with the way we normally think about the notion of belonging. When we say we belong, what we are naming is a sense of ease or accord with who we are *in ourselves*—that is true. But also what we are expressing by reference to the notion *belonging* is a sense of accord with the various physical and social contexts in which our lives are lived out. *Belonging* is to be in accord with who we are *in ourselves* as well as who we are *in the world*. Accordingly, the articulated senses of belonging I first sketched out refer us forward to objects that are in some sense external to us (community, history and locality). Nevertheless, it is also true—and clear to us when we say we belong in any of these senses—that each also refers us back to ourselves as subjects (as the selves we are in relation to the aspect of our living reality that is nominated). We are in relation with these elements of ourselves, and that relation is a particular one.

⁵⁴² For a comprehensive account of the identity view of integrity see Bernard Williams, 'Integrity,' in J.J.C. Smart & Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973): 108-117.

⁵⁴³ See Mark Halfon, *Integrity: A Philosophical Inquiry*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1989): *passim*.

Belonging *qua* correct relation involves *transparency* and *authenticity*. As discussed previously *transparency* denotes a certain clarity creating the possibility of seeing into something and thus a conscious awareness of it. Furthermore, *transparency* is both an attitude *toward* being, and an attitude *of* being. *Transparency* is self-knowledge. The notion of *authenticity* relates to this self-awareness or subjective truth. Indeed, to be *transparent* to anything at all, involves firstly knowing *oneself*. Both *transparency* and *authenticity* are, in one sense, pre-conditions of *correct relation*, and in another consequences/products of it. That is to say, both *transparency* and *authenticity* are necessary features of being *correctly related*, but it is also the case that in achieving correct relation *transparency* and *authenticity* are also achieved.

An *authentic* human being is one who knows himself or herself—has *transparency*—and lives according to subjective truth. To be such a person is to be in *correct relation* and thus to belong. On the other hand, *misrelation* is both predicated on and precipitated by a lack of *transparency* and *authenticity*. A person who is not correctly related, is in *misrelation* and therefore does not belong. *Not-belonging* is both psychological and ontological. That is to say, *not-belonging* is a state in which one is not fully integrated with one's environment and one's self (is not fully oneself) and has lowered self-efficacy (a lack of well-being). Such a state is always accompanied by a degree of *anxiety*. However, where *transparency* and *authenticity* are absent this *anxiety* does not properly find its object, which is not something outside the self, but rather its *misrelation*—its *not-belongingness*.

According to the doctrine of *belonging qua correct relation*, *not-belonging* is a state of pathological *misrelation* within the self. In this state we are anxious. We look to external conditions to explain that *anxiety*—to the social, historical or physical situation in which we are placed. We appeal to these conditions as sources of belonging and seek to reduce our *anxiety* by grasping at them. However, in doing so the *not-belonging* is only perpetuated. It is only when we recognise that we do not *belong to* anything in this way, but rather that belonging resides within us this that we can truly *belong*. *Belonging qua correct relation* is portable and individual. *Belonging* is not predicated on being *anywhere* or *anyone* at all, but rather on *being there*—being in the world—and being *correctly related*—being oneself.

Having spent some time developing the theory of *belonging qua correct relation* in abstract terms, it is now time to apply this thesis to the issue at hand—the belonging of non-indigenous Australians. It is to this—our—belonging that I shall now return. How far can it be said that non-indigenous Australians are justified in claiming that they belong? According to the account that I have just given the fundamental prerequisite for *belonging* is *transparency*. That is, persons are able to see themselves as they really are and where they come from (know the *necessary* aspects of themselves). For it is only then that *authenticity*, and by extension, *belonging*, becomes a *possibility*. Any investigation into the condition of *belonging* must therefore begin by determining how far settler Australians fulfil the criteria of *transparency* with themselves and their worldly inheritance.

The intention of this work is not to provide a detailed or comprehensive survey regarding the *transparency* of non-Aboriginal Australians. Nor do I think that such a survey is necessary to persuade the reader that there is probably due cause to question claims by settler Australians that they *belong*. That is to say, it could be legitimately argued that a significant proportion of non-indigenous Australians do not belong, at least not in the sense that I have attributed to the notion.⁵⁴⁴ One indicator of this is the fact that although popular access to a revised socio-historical account provides the opportunity for most Australians to develop *transparency* with more honest accounts of their being in this land, the identity that many settler Australians have appropriated pays little regard to this kind of post-colonial accounting. They either do not recognise themselves as the selves disclosed in revisionist accounts or have failed to act in the light of that knowledge. In other words, they have failed to seize the opportunity to come into *correct relation*; to become who and what they ideally are; to *belong*.

There appears to be enough evidence to support the case for the pathology of self in Australian being. That is to say, there is enough evidence to support the fact that it is likely that many Australians may be suffering from the existential condition of *misrelation*, the opposite of *correct relation*—the opposite of *belonging*. In this pathological state of being we find ourselves not properly connected to either ourselves

⁵⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that it is possible, using the same conceptual schema, to investigate the belonging of Aboriginal Australians. That question, however, must be left to subsequent analysis.

or others. We have failed to be ourselves or to achieve a sense of identity that has *authenticity*. In these terms, the *anxiety* so many feel in regard to their identity and belonging is not merely a psychological state or feeling that can be attributed to post-colonial sensibilities, it indicates a deeper malaise. What it points to is the ontological condition of *not-belonging*.

This work argues that an increasing proportion of non-indigenous Australians are in *conscious despair*. That is, an increasing number of those born and raised in settler culture have begun to suffer from an awareness of *misrelation*. It argues further that this Australian angst arises out of the increasing degree of transparency achieved by the promulgation of revisionist accounts of colonial processes. I think it can also be said that in the light of this new and sometimes shocking information about themselves non-indigenous Australians are attempting to reconstruct what they perceive as a new and more authentic identity.⁵⁴⁵

Kierkegaard's ontology anticipates such a reaction, and so does mine. Once a person is awakened to existential *misrelation* their response is to *despair* over themselves; they want to get rid of that misrelated self. This is the formula for all *not-belonging*—not wanting to be who one is. Paradoxically though, to not want to be yourself in *misrelation* is also to want to be yourself in some other state. Thus not willing to be oneself and willing to be oneself are just two sides of the same coin.⁵⁴⁶ I think that there is evidence of both these *despair* responses in the Australian context. However, there is one specific manifestation of *despair* that particularly draws my attention and which, in my observation, is increasingly prevalent among non-indigenous Australians—especially the 'well-educated'.⁵⁴⁷

As has been discussed previously, since the 1970s the majority of Australians have developed a growing awareness of 'how Aboriginal peoples belong to the land'. They are now familiar with such notions as encompassed by the Dreaming complex, that is, Aboriginal understandings of community, country and Law. They are cognizant of the fundamental principles and mechanisms by which Aboriginal peoples belong, even

⁵⁴⁵ Rudd, 1997: 81.

⁵⁴⁶ A full account of these two modes of being is given in Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death* Part I. It is important to note that neither of these responses have the effect of ameliorating the pathological state that they are seeking to escape.

⁵⁴⁷ See Read's claim in this regard in Read, 2000: 5.

though they may not be familiar with the details of that mode of existence. Indeed ‘traditional’, if not contemporary, Aboriginal life and thought has become for Australians, not only a source of national pride and admiration, but in some quarters the source of national *envy*.

As a consequence, a not insubstantial group of Australians have sought to establish belonging, by means of assuming *indigenous* modes. Some seek to re-enchant the ecological sensibilities of settler Australians by urging them to adopt traditional land management practices based upon Aboriginal cosmologies,⁵⁴⁸ while others recommend conversion to Aboriginal spirituality.⁵⁴⁹ Germaine Greer promulgates both approaches, while producing what is probably the most strident, if not extreme, response in a scholarly publication to date. The solution to both Aboriginal dispossession and oppression, as far as Greer is concerned, resides in the capacity and will of white Australians to start thinking and acting in an ‘Aboriginal’ way—to become Aborigines themselves.

Yet another author who pays homage to these notions is Peter Read. Known for his part in bringing Aboriginal history to national attention, Read has more recently focused his intellection on the impact of revisionist history on non-Aboriginal Australians. Read’s research, and very personal quest for a sense of belonging, leads him to the conclusion that non-indigenous Australians can belong, but that this can only be achieved by ‘sharing’ the history and belonging of their Aboriginal counterparts⁵⁵⁰ in a very intimate fashion. In his latest work⁵⁵¹ Read finds his own sense of the ‘native-born’ by means of a journey through country with his own Aboriginal ‘shadow brother’ Dennis Foley.⁵⁵²

Although varying in style and focus, the work of the aforementioned authors is similar in their suggestion that non-indigenous Australia form a closer alliance with the life and thought of Aboriginal peoples, and that in doing so their sense of alienation and

⁵⁴⁸ Mulligan, 2000; Mulligan & Hill, 2001.

⁵⁴⁹ Tacey, 1995 and Cowan, 1992.

⁵⁵⁰ The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (C.A.R.) also hold that the means by which settler Australians might find belonging to this country is through closer identification with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ culture and history. For a transcript of their recommendations in regard to ‘Sharing History’ see Indigenous Law Resources (1993)

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/1993/4/index.html> (retrieved September 12, 2001).

⁵⁵¹ Read, 2000.

⁵⁵² See particularly Read, 1999: *passim*.

estrangement in this land will be ameliorated. Such advice, however, ought be viewed critically and with extreme caution. Not only does it bear remarkable resemblance to a more negative form of cultural appropriation, that which plunders Aboriginal material culture for the advancement of unscrupulous operators, examples of which receive all round condemnation,⁵⁵³ but according to the imperatives of *belonging qua correct relation* it is also a mis-placed exercise. Given that the key principle employed by this philosophical anthropology is that individuals know *themselves*, any identity that relies upon appropriation of an ‘other’ in order to achieve self-authentication is by reference structurally flawed. That such a prescription is offered merely confirms a *misrelation*. That is, it is indicative of *despair* of the type that results in *not willing to be oneself*. Rather than the means by which settler Australians might find their own-ness—their proper identity and belonging in this country—the call to non-indigenous Australia to ‘Aboriginalise’ in order to establish *belonging*, can be regarded not only as *symptomatic* of our *not-belonging*, but *re-affirming* of that *misrelation*.

As it turns out belonging is not something that can be achieved *en masse*. Nor is it something we can take for granted. *Belonging qua correct relation* is a very personal and individualised matter. This, however, is what makes it such a difficult task. Although, in *despair* we look for them, there is no exemplar to which we can appeal. No one will make us what we are apart from ourselves. The responsibility of belonging falls to each and every one of us, and the possibility of *belonging qua correct relation* must be actualised by each and every one of us according to our own-ness.

⁵⁵³ Rolls, 1999: 117.

Conclusion

In a global sense, it is not only Australians who are concerned about their status in relation to *belonging*, nor that the question of belongingness arises only in the context of colonised countries. The issue of belonging, or its existential nemesis *estrangement*, is commonly identified as a defining feature of the psychology of the modern age. It is observed that the rational tradition of western thought has led us to an impasse and that in response modern consciousness is in a continual, restless and excruciating state of angst. In the epilogue of his book, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (1991), the philosopher/psychologist Richard Tarnas states that contemporary humankind now lives in cosmological, ontological and epistemological estrangement from the world—a threefold mutually-enforced prison of modern alienation. In this age of radical uncertainty, questions regarding our place and destination in the world seem particularly poignant. Who are we? Where are we? Where are we going? What is the meaning of all this? Where do we look for answers? According to Tarnas, we cannot look to the philosophers, for we have the philosophers to blame. He invokes Gregory Bateson's double-bind scenario to describe the existential predicament that he argues philosophers have presented us with. That is, our ontological relationship with the world is one of vital dependency, epistemologically we are unable to achieve direct access to it, but existentially we are unable to turn away.⁵⁵⁴

What he says is true in the respect that, on the one hand, we have come to understand ourselves and our being in the world as defined and determined by our social, historical and physical context, while, on the other, we feel estranged and disconnected from the social, historical and physical conditions that pertain. As obvious as it sounds, he is also correct in saying that, however we conceive of it, our being in the world is something we cannot back away from. We are 'unable to leave the field'.⁵⁵⁵ Questions concerning our *belonging* are at the heart of this existential dilemma. Indeed, one characterisation of the history of philosophy might be as a record of the manifold ways in

⁵⁵⁴ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that have Shaped our World View* (London: Pimlico, 1991): 419-420.

⁵⁵⁵ Bateson in Tarnas, 1991: 420.

which we have tried to understand and resolve this issue. Furthermore, despite Tarnas' pessimism regarding our capacity to reach a successful resolution to the question of our being in the world, it remains of the most vital importance that we continue pursuing one, more so now than ever.

In seeking answers to the question of human existence, this work follows a well-trodden human path as well as a lengthy philosophical tradition. It is evident that the notion of *belonging qua correct relation* owes a great debt to those who have contemplated this question before me. These include the Australians whose stories are told in Section One, the sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, architects and geographers etc. whose work is reviewed in Section Two, as well as Heidegger and the philosophers of place who figure so prominently in Section Three. Then there is the profound influence of Kierkegaard, who at first seems like such an unlikely candidate to figure in a project of this kind. However, while his ontology of the self is his most conspicuous contribution, as it turns out, Kierkegaard's work and the project undertaken here have more in common than that.

Unlike many of his forebears and contemporaries (and perhaps in a reaction against them),⁵⁵⁶ Kierkegaard was not so interested in the historical development of humankind, nor was his explicit concern to construct an alternative philosophical system, metaphysics or ontology (although he does so despite himself). Instead, Kierkegaard started from concrete problems of real people and the actual concrete human life lived by them. He stressed that a person 'must not be confused with an abstract concept' and must always be thought of as 'concrete, a single specific individual' who exists in a real world.⁵⁵⁷ Therefore, he begins by literally having a look at his age, looking at how people actually live, what their problems are, and what existential difficulties they get caught in.

The particular context in which Kierkegaard's concrete problem begins is Denmark's "Golden Age" which covers the period 1800-1870. During this time, although there was political disturbance in Europe, and also national disasters for Denmark, the country retained sufficient political stability and economic prosperity for there to be a

⁵⁵⁶ In a number of ways, more of which will become evident later, Kierkegaard's work is situated at counterpoint to G.W.F. Hegel's historically minded philosophy which starts from the beginning or the ground up.

⁵⁵⁷ Slok, 1994: 24-25.

dramatic flowering of the arts and sciences. Although Kierkegaard himself was a beneficiary of Danish prosperity, he was at the same time deeply critical of contemporary Danish society, convinced that it was plagued by complacency, hypocrisy and self-deception. Kierkegaard's main criticism is directed toward the prevailing attitude of the Danish Church community. In Golden Age Denmark it was incredibly easy to identify and be accepted as a Christian merely because one was a citizen. In this respect Kierkegaard was as much social critic as philosopher. Although worlds apart, my own project shares something of the same impetus. It begins with a concrete problem in the immediate lived experience of contemporary Australians—the issue of *belonging* as it arises and is articulated in social, political and personal contexts in Australia today, where *belonging* is frequently taken to be synonymous with citizenship. Also, in Australia, *belonging* is connected with *authenticity*—of being, of national identity and what is increasingly seen as legitimate national spirituality.

To date, current discourses on identities and *belongings* in Australia have taken one of two primary trajectories—pluralist or essentialist. Both rationales in their cultural form mobilize difference as a key interpretative tool in defining and designating the identity and *belonging* of individuals and groups. Both focus on content—those features, factors or characteristics (predominantly cultural) that constitute one's identity or *belonging*. But, in privileging difference over commonality and the content of particular identities and *belongings* over what constitutes these things in the first instance, neither cultural pluralism nor cultural essentialism succeeds in providing a satisfactory answer to the question of identity and *belonging* in a way that ameliorates the problem at hand. That is to say, neither approach provides a useful resolution to the question of what it means to be who or what one is, or what it means to *belong*. Indeed, given the assumption in contemporary discourse that both identity and *belonging* are cultural phenomena and the idea, inherent in both cultural pluralism and cultural essentialism, that cultural phenomena are relative to the socio-historical context in which they occur, following either of these trajectories is almost entirely futile. The best answer one can get is that who one is and whether one *belongs* is relative to how far one conforms to certain historically placed, socio-culturally defined criteria. If this truly were accepted as the case, the logic of both identity and *belonging* would be entirely self-supporting. Appeals

to the context in which one is embedded would answer the question, and simultaneously close the debate whether we liked it or not. It is the fact that we cannot accept such a solution that the question still has such poignancy.

The impetus that led Kierkegaard's ontological project was a deeply personal, intensely private one. He sought to find out what his own lived reality means—how he ought to live and who he really was. My own work on *belonging* could also be construed as similarly oriented. I am (as a non-indigenous Australian) in a sense, like Kierkegaard, at the centre of a paradox. Insofar as this is the case, the question of my own *belonging* is not merely of intellectual interest to me, but a significant influence in and to, my immediate lived experience. A more ontological conception of what it is to *belong* provides a fresh approach to the question of *belonging* as it manifests in my own life, and as a concrete problem in the immediate lived experience of other contemporary Australians. However, this is not because it provides new insights into how different groups *belong* differently, but because an ontology of the self provides us with a mechanism by which we can come to understand how we *belong* as individuals. It adds to the scholarship on *belonging* by providing an ontology of *belonging*, and in doing so deepens our understanding of *belonging* as a way of being toward which we all aspire.

What is indicated by the division of opinion about who properly *belongs* in a contemporary Australian context is that who does or does not *belong* is not clearly ascertained by appealing to individual feelings on the matter. In the debate over *belonging* what is being contested is not the sincerity with which various commentators state convictions about their own *belonging* status, but rather whether these convictions—although obviously heart-felt—are nevertheless accurate. That is to say, no one doubts the fact that some people feel they *belong*, while others feel that they do not. What is at issue here is whether or not, regardless of those feelings, they actually do or do not.

What can be taken from this initial observation is twofold—first, that what it is to *belong* is not merely to have a *sense* or *feeling* of *belonging* and second, and in connection, that what it is to *belong* is a state of being, in some sense independent of those feelings. It is taken to be the case that *belonging* is something much deeper than what pure emotion can be trusted to plumb; that it has to be something rather more ontological—something more fundamental to who and what we are. That does not mean,

however, that *belonging* must be regarded as some *additional* criteria pertaining to who and what we are. Rather, it might be stated that *belonging* is in some way part of what *constitutes* our identity whether we are explicitly aware of it or not.

In Section Two we were able to identify and examine what is taken as *belonging*, and what it is to *belong*, according to a wide array of diverse understandings. These were divided into three categories corresponding with three primary ‘senses’ of *belonging* apparent in popular and academic discourse—the sense of *belonging* that refers to social connections, to a sense of connection to a particular community of people, the sense of *belonging* that refers to historical connections, to a sense of connection to the past or to a particular tradition and a sense of *belonging* that refers to geographical or environmental connections, to a sense of connection to a particular locality or dwelling place. Thus, each model of *belonging* analysed understood *belonging* as a relation *to something else*—society, history or the physical environment.

What was disclosed by identifying the conceptual foundations of these models of *belonging* was how closely they linked notions of *belonging* and identity. In all these cases it was presumed that by understanding the way we *belong* in our social, historical or physical environment we are better able to locate ourselves as the particular selves we are—better able to ascertain our identities. However, what was also discovered was a number of problems in conceiving of our identity and *belonging* as connected in this way. One recurrent problem in our investigation of social, historical and environmental senses of *belonging* concerned the extent to which the doctrine of determinism infiltrated the theories on which they depended. In this case, who one is and whether one *belongs* (or not) was seen as a connection that is predetermined (often, in one way or another, phylogenetically). Another issue brought to light by the conceptual analysis conducted in Section Two concerned understanding *belonging* as a connection *to something else* in the first instance. If *belonging* and identity were to be conceptually linked (and it was apparent this was the case) then *belonging* had to be relational, that is, the *belonging* self and that to which it *belonged* has to be *in relation*—mutually constitutive. Thus *belonging* cannot be understood as a relation *to something* outside the self and already constituted as the thing it is. In Section Three we set out to resolve this misconception.

One way out of this conceptual cul-de-sac was to appeal to phenomenological

inquiry. Phenomenologists of place, particularly those from what I have called the ‘geographical school’ of phenomenological inquiry, captured attention in this respect. Their view of *belonging* in its connection with place and place-experiences seemed particularly promising in eschewing the problems encountered in more reductionist accounts. However, while researchers of this genre certainly contribute substantially to our understanding of the significance of places and the meanings we attach to them, contradictions between the theory on which their inquiry is based and the methodology they employ to carry it out erodes their capacity to provide a meaningful account of *belonging per se*. Most significantly, while the geographical school of phenomenology recognises the intimate character of the relationship between place and person, it too falls victim to the reduction of *belonging* to a *sense* and the reduction of *place* to *something else*, existing, in a sense, outside the self. What was required to disclose the *belonging* relation itself was a more consistently ontological approach to the notion of place and emplacement.

Here assistance was sought from two contemporary philosophers who, inspired by Heidegger, treat place as an ontologically basic concept and provide a systematic account of place without reducing it to either an objective physical locality or a subjective human experience. According to their understanding human identity is tied to locality in a quite fundamental way. Places and people are mutually influential and mutually defining. Just as persons *belong* to place, place *belongs* to persons. From this perspective we are able to see very clearly that the *belonging* relation that is within ‘place’ is somehow also within the self, and with the assistance of the ontology of place we are able to get inside the place-world to locate the self who dwells within.

What is also found in this philosophy of place is an internal relation between the concepts of ‘place’ and ‘person’, suggesting that the ontology of place and person are analogous. It follows then that a self with the capacity to *belong* (whether it does *belong* or not) has to have an ontological structure that is complex, dynamic and relational. Such a self is found in the thinking of Kierkegaard, as are the conceptual tools to formulate the theory of *belonging qua correct relation*, a way of understanding *belonging* as an ontological matter (that is, in terms of the constitution of the individual, rather than its relation to anything else outside itself). According to this understanding, *belonging* is a

particular mode of self-being in which there is a *correct relation* between the self's *necessity* and its *possibility*—heredity and environment, and the individual's capacity to choose beyond the limitations that these things present. Such a relation involves *integrity*, which entails *transparency*—knowing oneself—and *authenticity*—being oneself. To be oneself is to be in *correct relation*—to exist in accord with who we are *in ourselves*, but also in accord with who we are *in the world*.

So, what are the implications of the philosophical line I have taken? The aim of this work was not only to provide a coherent framework by which the notion of *belonging* might be more meaningfully understood, but also in doing so, to provide ontological grounds on which the *belonging* of settler Australians could be more meaningfully assessed. By mobilising the notion of *belonging* qua *correct relation* I believe that I have come some way in achieving both of these objectives. According to my thesis *belonging* is not a feeling of wellbeing—although such feelings may be associated with it. Nor is it something given to us by right or privilege—although in some sense it is understandable that we regard it as any one of these. Insofar as we do, it is because *belonging*, as I have defined it, it is a mode or state of being that represents the *ideal* condition in which a human can exist. On this account, *belonging* is about a certain kind of comportment in the world, a way of being ideally related to community, history and locality, and thus to be who and what we are. Thus, the struggle for *belonging* can be understood as the task of becoming selves that have both *transparency* and *authenticity* in regard to where we come from and who we are. Being *correctly related* like this is not something that just happens. It is something we must create for ourselves.

Even though *belonging* is a deeply personal matter, the talk of 'we' and 'our' that pervades this work is not to be taken as an accident. The use of this pronoun and its possessive form is both important and unavoidable, not merely because of the universality of the topic under discussion (at least the possibility of *belonging* as something we might all potentially possess ought not to be overlooked), but also because it is the 'we' and the 'us' that are fundamentally at stake here. What concerns me is what it means to *belong*—and that means what it means for any of us, any of us for whom this can arise as a question (whether 'we' be 'me', the scholarly community or any other stakeholder). That question also involves what the meaning of 'we' and 'us' might be,

since to use these pronouns is already to assume an identity and a *belonging*. Such an assumption cannot be avoided, but it can be questioned, interrogated and explored.

If we take seriously the philosophical theory of *belonging qua correct relation* it is apparent that Australians have due casueto question their *belonging*. Indeed, I argue that among Australians (whether they are of settler origins or not) existential *misrelation* is common, whether they are aware of it or not. Among those documented in this work who *have* become aware of their condition, and experience the anxiety that ensues, one particular response has drawn my attention. Although consciousness of one's *misrelation* can be a positive thing—an opportunity to develop authentically—a certain group of Australians have chosen another route. Somewhat paradoxically, these are the same people who most would think best situated to take the opportunity to become fully themselves. They are generally well-educated, well-informed and thoughtful in matters pertaining to national history and identity. However, by attempting to integrate the life histories and identities of Aboriginal Australians into their own, this particular group has embraced, rather than ameliorated, their *not-belonging*. According to that formula of *belonging qua correct relation* it is no good for Australians—those from either settler indigenous origins—to settle for the outcomes of Australia's colonial past. Nor can the legacy of past relations be overcome by willing themselves away—becoming something or someone else. *Belonging* is only achieved by embracing oneself as who and what one properly is. For settler Australians, this means looking *inward* and attending to the selves that we are by virtue of our own particular heredity, history or locality, but also pursuing a commitment to self-integrity and authenticity. If we are able to accomplish this, only then shall we properly *belong*—not only in the contemporary Australian context under discussion here, but wherever and whenever we dwell.

While this work has paid particular attention to the situation concerning belonging in Australia, and was in part, motivated to find a resolution to the vexed question of belonging as it arises in that context, the notion of *belonging qua correct relation* and the philosophical schema from which it is drawn has much wider application and implications. The suggestion that *belonging* is both individual and portable, for example, opens new vistas according to which we can view a range of other related existential issues. One issue that was raised at the start was that of 'homelessness'. It is not

surprising that the notion of home and homelessness has become one of increasing interest to scholars in any number of fields, but particularly those working in the social sciences. Ours is an era in which fewer and fewer people remain in their homeland or live out their lives in the midst of their original community or tradition. It is commonly argued that what ensues from such geographic and socio-cultural mobility is a condition of homelessness in which experiences of displacement and estrangement predominate over those of at-homeness or belonging (which is taken to be analogous). At such a time, in such a world, what can it mean to be at 'home'?

The way in which home is most commonly treated in the literature is as a *base*—a particular physical place—whether that be a particular house, town or country around which our daily lives are organised. It is the place where we live, or perhaps more commonly in this era, where we have lived during our childhood or some other significant period of our lives. In addition, most works, quite rightly, also demonstrate that home has psychological and social dimensions as well as physical ones. One's home is a concrete location in which one is comfortable and secure—an asylum from the possibly hostile world outside its boundaries. Even in cases where the notion of home is problematised—interpreted (critically assessed rather than assumed) as a site of instability and restriction rather than safety and flourishing, particularly for women and children⁵⁵⁸—it is the connotations of a 'bad' home environment, rather than home *per se*, that are considered unfavourable. There is an irony in this kind of notional treatment, which serves, I think, to reinforce, rather than overthrow, more positive appraisals of home. By their accounts of less-than-ideal home environments, these studies make clear what home is ideally perceived to be—what it ought be in the correct order of things. In that sense home is a place in which we have positive experiences—are accepted as ourselves, protected, nurtured and supported.

⁵⁵⁸ I am thinking here of recent studies in feminist geography in particular, but also Susan Moller Okin, 'Women And The Making Of The Sentimental Family', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 11.1 (1982). Carole Pateman (*The Sexual Contract*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988) is someone who has written a lot on women and the private/public distinction, arguing that the home, or the domestic sphere has been oppressive for women. Two centuries earlier Mary Wollstonecraft argued in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792; London: Gregg, 1970), among other works, that the traditional family undermined the moral characters of men and women.

Furthermore, and in connection, on most accounts, the importance of homes, and therefore the significance of their loss, lies in their role as bases from and by which our understanding of the social world and our identity in it are built and supported. Given this latter feature, it is easy to see how, according to this model, home bases are crucial for the social and psychological stability of individuals, and that therefore any separation from one's home base is bound to cause some degree of alienation or despair. What even the most pessimistic studies indicate is that we continue to crave this ideal home place, despite the fact that the means by which it might be achieved are increasingly ambiguous.

Following the thesis that has been presented in this work, however, this common definition of home as a specific concrete location in which one's experiences are positive is not only inadequate, but inaccurate. That is not to say, however, that concrete locatedness, or positive experiences are not fundamental features of being at home. Indeed they are, but only insofar as these physical and psychological conditions can be accounted for in reference to an even more fundamental ontological condition. That is to say, what it is to be at home is not to being in a particular place or having particular experiences (most of which are positive)—although it is both these things.

The fundamental difference between the thesis presented in this work and that offered by most scholars in the social sciences is that while they define and discuss home and person as clearly separate entities—albeit mutually influential—this work employs a conceptual schema that involves no such bifurcation. That is to say, it postulates an even more fundamental ontological relationship between home-place and person. As it turns out, according to this approach, home, like any other place, is not a place that can be separated from us at all.

Furthermore, while it is agreed that *being at home* is linked in fundamental ways to psychological and social stability and that consequently, *being at home*, when correctly defined, is a most positive place to be. What I have suggested is a model in which *being at home* refers to a condition of person rather than a condition of place. Rather than the self residing in a home, home resides in the self. *Being at home* is a mode of being according to which we are at ease with the world and those around us. In corollary we are never fully *at home* where and when our being that kind of self is compromised (such as

in places where we are unwanted, unsafe or restricted). In this context, the antithesis of *being at home* is not being without a place to *belong*, but being without a self that *belongs*.

The question of what it is to be at home is taken up as a central theme in Robert Dessaix's novel *Corfu* (2001). Dessaix explores this notion through the preoccupations of a number of his key characters—ex-pat Australians living on the Greek island of Corfu. Some, like Greta have found 'home', but for others, like the narrator, the quest for home is pursued with strained ambivalence. For the latter, while Corfu rests precariously on the verge of *becoming home*, the possibility of *going home* remains ominously at counterpoint. Home and exile merge and separate. 'Have you ever thought of going home, Greta? ... Do you believe in roots? ... No, I don't give much thought to roots any more. I'm a snail, not a daisy—I carry everything with me. Which are you?'⁵⁵⁹

Greta's horticultural metaphor for home as something that we are forced to leave behind—albeit temporarily—whenever we pull up roots and go—is the understanding of home taken for granted in most popular and academic discourse. Such renderings both give rise to and reinforce the mistaken assumption that homelessness is not only an ontological possibility, but, in this world at this time, a probability to which we must resign ourselves to. On the other hand, as Greta points out when using the image of the mollusc, home can be understood as something we can carry with us. This is the more accurate metaphor. We are not doomed to existential homelessness. The possibility of *going home* is always there, not because *being at home* is a certain mode of being actualized by and in a certain location, but rather, because *being at home* is a certain mode of being which is actualized in and for oneself wherever that self is situated. On this account, *being at home* is *belonging qua correct relation* and *coming home* is *becoming ourselves* wherever we are situated.

The shift that a revision in our understanding of what it is to *be at home* or *belong* represents has powerful implications in respect to how we regard ourselves and others. It offers us, for example, new ways of thinking about issues of national political and social importance such as national identity and patriotism, race relations as well as multiculturalism and the position and comportment of immigrants. It also urges us to look

⁵⁵⁹ Robert Dessaix, *Corfu: A Novel* (Sydney: Picador, 2001): 290-291.

again to ourselves and our own conduct in domestic spheres and workplaces. Are we *at home*? How far do we *belong* in these contexts? Also, and of special significance, is the extent to which these new conceptualisations of *home* and *belonging* might impact on perceptions of the place and destination of Aborigines and Aboriginalities in this country at this time. Furthermore, while the focus of this work militated against the application of the theory of *belonging qua correct relation* to Aboriginal people, it would be interesting to see what insights such an exercise might offer. More generally, an investigation of how the philosophical schema developed in this work influences our interpretation of indigeneity *per se* seems well worthwhile.

In addressing these questions, and many others that have been posed concerning *belonging* throughout this work, the conclusions reached are necessarily preliminary and far from complete. In terms of the production of a new conceptual framework within which we can all occupy a place that is appropriately ours, and the development of a refined and unified philosophical theory of *belonging* that demonstrates precisely how this can be achieved, there is still a way to go. There is still the matter, for example, of what it means in the concrete lives of human beings to occupy a place that is appropriately their own. How does one who belongs *act*?

While the work argues that a self that belongs is a self living its subjective truth, by this it does not mean living as *whatever* self one chooses to be, but rather living as *oneself* truly or authentically. On this account, authenticity (and thus the belonging of a self) relies on self-integrity. *Integrity* here can be taken to mean a number of different things. It denotes persons gathering and integrating the various elements that belong to them and persons being and acting in a way that is true to who and what they are, however it also denotes an ethical imperative. As can be seen, the integrity of which I speak operates at both intra and inter-subjective levels. That is, integrity as I define it has just as much to do with the self's ease or accord with others as it has to do with ease or accord within the self. This fits well with the common experience of what it is to belong. When we say we *belong*, what we are naming is a sense of ease or accord with who we are *in-ourselves*—that is true. But what we are expressing by reference to the notion of *belonging* is also a sense of accord with the various physical and social contexts in which our lives are lived out. *Belonging* is to be in *correct relation* with who we are *in ourselves* as well as who

we are *in-the-world*. Self-integrity must be demonstrated not only in the unity and wholeness of our identity, but also in our being in the world—the ways in which we comport ourselves in the everyday contexts in which we are placed. Those who *belong* are taken to live in more ethical relation with themselves and others. *Correct relation* invokes an ethical imperative that cannot be ignored, however the ethics of *belonging qua correct relation* have barely been addressed in this work. The development of this aspect of the philosophical schema, while recognised as vital to both its logic and application, is left to be dealt with at another time.

Having said this, much territory has been covered in the work at hand and a substantial amount of ground gained in the quest to disclose new understandings of the nature and significance of what it is to *belong*. Most appreciably, the groundwork has been laid and the foundations set down for an *ontology of belonging* constituted by a properly human mode of emplaced being. The idea that *belonging* is an existential possibility wherever or whenever we dwell, rather than a necessary consequence of social, historical or geographical imperatives, has profound implications. So, too, does the prospect that *belonging* is a mode of being that represents what it is to be a self with integrity—a self authentically itself. It is highly significant, in both instances, that the responsibility of *belonging* resides with the individual, and in both instances the task of *belonging* is one that concerns human beings at the most fundamental and personal ontological level. This alone signifies a conceptual breakthrough, and perhaps even more importantly, issues a challenge, not only to those who feel alienated and displaced, but also to those who might quite mistakenly take their *belonging* for granted.

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