

Ethics in geography: giving moral form to the geographical imagination

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Summary *Geographers have become increasingly interested in questions of ethics. In this paper, I introduce the scope and major concerns of ethics, briefly reviewing recent literature as a means of situating geography's potential contribution. I then link ethics to the geographical imagination by developing a twofold schema representing geography's ontological project and epistemological process, an approach that unites existing professional and substantive ethical concerns among geographers. Examples of recent work by geographers in these areas are noted. I close with a set of broad questions at the interface of ethics and geography worthy of further reflection.*

Introduction

Philosophical introspection is a hallmark of much contemporary geography. Perhaps it is the discipline's sheer diversity (Buttimer 1993), or the fundamental questions that geographers pose (Unwin 1992), that leads to this reflective attitude. Clearly, some geographers are more enamoured with philosophical discussions than others; yet, taken as a whole, the discipline largely belies its common interpretation by non-geographers as more a repository of descriptive facts about the world than some deeper intellectual perspective on their meaning.

This paper is built upon recent forays by geographers into one particularly fascinating and eminently important area of philosophy: the realm of ethics, or moral philosophy. Recent reviews of interdisciplinary efforts suggest that there has been a marked increase in geographical publications attending to normative issues in general, and ethics in particular, in the last half-decade (eg Matless 1995, 396–7; Driver 1996, 101). This emphasis is not entirely new: it builds in many ways upon a broader interest in values, dating from the 1970s among geographers (Buttimer 1974), involving both the professional issue of values inherent in the practice of geography, and the substantive issue of values

inherent in the subject-matter of geography. The interest was engendered principally in response to the professed value-neutrality of the burgeoning quantitative approach in geography, with its emphasis on objectivist spatial analysis (Billinge et al 1984; Cosgrove 1989). Values, then, have been noted for some time to be as much a part of geography as facts; as a rigorous analysis of values, ethics can enrich this discussion.

Like geography to non-geographers, however, ethics to non-ethicists is often misunderstood, though the caricature painted of ethics is opposite to that of geography in many ways. Ethics is often held to be a hopelessly abstract and speculative field, one as impractical as it is incomprehensible, of interest only to scholars paid to think thoughts bearing little connection to reality outside the ivory tower. This charge is in large part false, though its status is well known among moral philosophers, who work hard to paint a different picture of ethics. Thus, Peter Singer argues in his preface to a recent multi-authored overview of the subject:

It is vital that ethics not be treated as something remote, to be studied only by scholars locked away in universities. Ethics deals with values, with good and bad, with right and wrong. We cannot avoid involvement in ethics, for what we do—and what we don't do—is always a possible subject of ethical evaluation. Anyone

who thinks about what he or she ought to do is, consciously or unconsciously, involved in ethics (Singer 1993, v).

Singer's argument is directed at people in general, and, as such, we geographers ought to listen. But what of our disciplinary concepts and practices? To what extent does ethics occupy a critical, even unavoidable place throughout geography? To what extent can geographers, in particular the diverse threads of their geographical imaginations (Gregory 1994b), contribute fruitfully to moral discourse?

I will begin with a clarification of what is meant by ethics, as considerable confusion results from the different ways in which the term has been employed, especially in the sciences. After briefly surveying contemporary work in ethics, I propose the moral form of geographical imaginations expressed in the discipline by developing a twofold schema representing geography's ontological project and epistemological process, closing with some broad questions worthy of further attention.

Background: ethics

Ethics defined

What is ethics? In science, ethics typically involves reflection upon moral questions that arise in research, publication and other professional activities. Is it wrong to bend data to support one's conclusions? To publish data gathered under some assumption of confidentiality on the part of the research subject? To publish a work based substantially on the research of one's graduate student(s) as one's own? To enter the policy arena as a scientist, where objectivity and partiality could well clash? The sheer number and complexity of these kinds of ethical issues in the conduct of science is amply evidenced in recent literature (eg Erwin *et al* 1994; Shrader-Frechette 1994; Weeks and Kinser 1994).

But this prevailing sense of ethics among scientists is quite narrowly circumscribed, avoiding at least as many difficult moral questions as it asks. Indeed, the kinds of moral issues entertained in much current work on ethics in science dodge the much larger moral question of the ethics of science—whether, for instance, its current research priorities and the amount of scarce resources currently allocated to scientific research are justifiable, or whether the typically elevated status of scientific pronouncements on reality is justified, in the light of the many cogent critiques of the role of science in the econ-

omic, political and cultural development of western societies (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972; Sorell 1991; Latour 1993). These are disturbing moral questions, for they shake the very normative foundations of science; thus, it is politically understandable that they have not attracted the concerted attention paid by scientists to the lesser—though in themselves important—questions of professional practice.

Philosophical usage of the term ethics is thus broader than this prevailing scientific interpretation. Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, involves systematic intellectual reflection on morality in general—morality being, as commonly understood, the realm of significant normative concerns, often described by notions such as good or bad, right or wrong, justified or unjustified, and so forth—or specific moral concerns in particular. The former can be called theoretical ethics, and the latter applied ethics, though the two are closely related. One realm of applied ethics that has garnered considerable attention outside philosophy focuses on professional conduct; thus, the moral questions asked by scientists, as well as those in, for instance, the fields of law, medicine and business, are legitimate components of ethical enquiry.

In addition to ethics involving both theoretical and applied concerns, another useful distinction can be drawn between descriptive ethics, normative ethics and meta-ethics (though only the latter two are represented in philosophical literature). The aim of descriptive ethics is to characterize existing moral schemes; this has been an important feature of, for instance, cultural anthropology, which in so doing has raised the problem of relativism (Benedict 1934; Geertz 1989). Normative ethics are devoted to constructing a suitable moral basis for informing human conduct: contemporary examples include Rawls' theory of justice (1971) and Carol Gilligan's contrasting, feminist-inspired ethics of care (1982). Meta-ethics, in distinction, is more an examination of the characteristics of ethical reasoning, or systems of ethics. A classic meta-ethical problem, as exemplified in David Hume's is-ought dichotomy (1978), concerns the relationship between facts (descriptive statements) and values (normative statements); this problem has been a major concern of, for instance, twentieth-century social theory (O'Neill 1993).

Much work in Western ethics is derived from the way in which moral philosophy has developed. For instance, one major theme to which many

theoretical discussions—primarily normative, but also meta-ethical—have returned involves the relationship between the *right* and the *good*. The right corresponds to a particular act or intent; the good implies rather the end or justification for a particular act or intent. These terms are of primary significance in Western ethics, in that they correspond to the two major classes of moral theories: teleological theories such as utilitarianism, where the good is the primary concern, and deontological theories, where the right becomes a more paramount concern (for introductory discussion, see Davis 1993, 206ff; Goodin 1993, 241).

Contemporary work in ethics

Intellectual reflection on ethics in Western societies has existed since at least the time of Socrates, to whom Plato attributed the famous quote 'The unexamined life is not worth living' (*Apology*, 38A). Though space precludes treatment of this rich history of ethical enquiry, a brief review of the contemporary literature may suggest how geographers could participate.

Contemporary work in ethics is marked by its sheer magnitude and diversity. This review offers a snapshot, being restricted to journal articles and books published during the first half of 1996—a period of time in which over 300 English-language titles appeared. During this period, a fair amount of literature emerged in the disciplines classically concerned with ethics, namely philosophy and theology. Though some of this work examined traditional figures, running from Plato (Burke 1996) through to Hobbes (Deigh 1996), the bulk focused on contemporary theoretical and applied ethics (Fryer 1996; Parsons 1996).

One of the primary lessons revealed by an examination of publications in ethics during this period is that scholars from virtually all disciplines are contributing to the field, primarily in the context of contemporary applied concerns (though theoretical ethics still flourishes: see Gatens 1996; Hoffmann and Hornung 1996). Examples include international migration (Abernethy 1996; Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh 1996), suicide (Beauchamp 1996; Lester and Leenaars 1996), nature (Fox 1996; Herzog 1996), the US Congress (Frederick 1996; Gabaldon 1996), gay rights (Clark 1996; Thurston 1996), multiculturalism (Ibrahim 1996; Michel 1996) and war and peace (Nardin 1996; Wells 1996).

The other major area in which publications are emerging is professional ethics. Major fields of

interest include medicine (Benn and Boyd 1996; Koch 1996), law (Alfieri 1996; Hazard 1996), business (Becker 1996; Newton and Schmidt 1996) and science (Vinogradov 1996; Zahorik 1996), as well as other professions ranging from engineering (Bowyer and Donner 1996) to journalism (Cunningham 1996).

Contemporary work in ethics is thus overwhelmingly ecumenical, involving significant contributions from many scholars outside philosophy and theology; there is certainly room for geographers to participate. In addition, though much of this work involves specific applied and professional concerns, these concerns span a broad range of issues and contexts; geographers should thus expect to find significant ethical questions arising throughout the domain of their discipline. Indeed, there are many common questions being asked in contemporary work in ethics and geography, in areas such as gender (Young 1990; Benhabib 1992; Rose 1993), development theory (Friedmann 1992; Corbridge 1993), community identity and exclusion (Walzer 1983; Sibley 1988; 1995), postmodernism (Dear 1988; Harvey 1989; Bauman 1994) and justice, universalism and difference (Tronto 1993; Smith 1994; Harvey 1996; O'Neill 1996).

A framework for ethical enquiry in geography

Geographers have published few books offering sustained attention to ethics; those in existence have been rather specifically delimited to topics such as the ethics of geographical research (Mitchell and Draper 1982), the struggle between imagination and morality in the worlds people create (Tuan 1989) and geographical dimensions of social justice (Smith 1994). Indeed, most reviews suggest that current work is not spread throughout the discipline, nor throughout the spectrum of moral philosophy, being largely confined to specific topical and theoretical clusters within human geography (Ley 1994), and focusing much more on descriptive than normative ethics, and much more on both than meta-ethics. In an upcoming review, David Smith discusses a number of geographically relevant questions related to meta-ethics, but finds few geographers to cite in this area to date; by contrast, work by geographers on 'moral geographies', what could loosely be called a form of thick descriptive ethics, is profuse (Smith, forthcoming b). There are other clusters of interest by geographers as well, including, for example, the

ethics of geographical research, the ethics of GIS, and social justice (for recent citations, see below). Within each cluster of current interest, work is proceeding fruitfully; yet there is little conversation between these existing clusters, and emerging clusters of interest are far more difficult to identify.

In short, the current literature suggests both the potentially fruitful relationship between geography and ethics, and the need to build a more concerted and systematic effort in this area, in order to touch the themes basic to the geographical imagination that can help join these rather disparate interests. Indeed, for this area to develop along more intellectually robust lines, geographers working on ethics must address the questions: how does it all hang together? what is the appropriate scope and focus of ethics in geography? what pivotal problems should geographers be posing? what are some priority areas for further work?

Ethical dimensions

There have been few theoretical frameworks proposed to date to help answer these questions. Such a framework would optimally be sensitive to both ethics and geography: that is, it should embrace the range of current work in moral philosophy and link it to ethically relevant aspects of geographical theory and practice. One framework that accomplishes the former objective is the threefold taxonomy of descriptive ethics, normative ethics and meta-ethics presented above, and it has been fruitfully employed in one upcoming review of work by geographers on ethics (Smith, forthcoming b). A particular strength of this approach is that it parses out the different objectives and levels of abstraction of ethical analysis. It is important to be clear, for instance, whether one is proposing a solution to a moral problem encountered in geographical enquiry (normative ethics), or rather, looking into the rules by which one would propose such a solution (meta-ethics); likewise, it is important to know whether one is primarily interested in providing a rich account of the ways morality interweaves with the geographies of everyday life (descriptive ethics), or whether one is rather seeking to evaluate these moral geographies as better or worse, good or bad, justified or unjustified (normative ethics).

There are problems with this rubric, however. For instance, the growing literature among geographers on moral geographies (see below) is somewhat trivialized when classified under the category of

descriptive ethics—a category generally dismissed by philosophers as unphilosophical! Additionally, work by geographers on themes of normative ethics, such as social justice, or meta-ethics, such as the possibility of universals, often approaches these questions from a grounded, contextualized and often concrete perspective, which is quite unlike the style of much philosophical literature in these two categories of ethics.

A final limitation in relying solely on this threefold rubric is that some of the areas of geographical interest noted above are related more to professional than substantive ethics, and thus do not fit well into this rubric, as they are primarily devoted to a gaze inward at the practice of the discipline versus outward at the world. The relationship between professional and substantive ethics has been less worked out for geographers; indeed, Smith's review noted above does not engage with professional ethics in geography.

One way to weave together professional and substantive ethical enquiry in geography is to recall its heritage in the recent history of interest in values by geographers, as mentioned at the outset. The rejection, in the 1970s and 1980s, of certain tenets inherent in the positivist, so-called 'value-free' approach, led to two broad coalitions of geography: those arguing for greater relevance in geographic research (Mitchell and Draper 1982), and those arguing for the use of more explicitly critical theoretical approaches (eg Peet and Thrift 1989), of which William Bunge and David Harvey, respectively, stand as early exemplars (Unwin 1992, 162–4). The net result of these movements could be a greater affinity between professional and substantive concerns among geographers. Derek Gregory, for example, argues in defence of a morally reflective geographical practice, which is sensitive to the morally differentiated character of geographical reality (Gregory 1994b, 10–14). I will expand upon the scope of 'professional' ethics below, arguing that it entails much more than proper research and publication. What will be important in joining these two areas of ethics, I believe, is that professional ethics represents the context—the process—out of which the content—the result—of substantive ethics emerges. Joining these two areas will allow geographers to be properly reflexive in the moral statements they make about the world, without getting lost in this reflexivity to the point that they cannot speak about the moral nature of this world.

Geographical dimensions

There is thus a need to retain the important distinctions of the threefold rubric of descriptive, normative and meta-ethics, yet also to be sensitive to the links between professional and substantive concerns, and situate this ethical framework within the practice and substance of the geographical imagination, as expressed by academic geographers. It is this latter task to which I now turn.

I assume that academic geography exists primarily as a knowledge-building enterprise, with two major components: its *ontological project* and its *epistemological process*. Geography's ontological project is, simply, to make sense of those aspects of reality (thus 'ontology', a term referring to being or reality) historically engaged in geographical analysis. Much of geography's ontological project is bound up in specific metaphors used to organize reality; for convenience, I will adopt the common threesome of *space*, *place* and *nature* as the overriding metaphors informing the ontological gaze of the geographical imagination (Gregory 1994a, 217). Space is the metaphor underlying a good deal of geography's ontological project, including emphases as disparate as spatial science and Marxist critique. The metaphor of place underlies more humanistic and interpretative work in geography; it speaks of a reality as lived and understood by active human subjects. The metaphor of nature underlies physical geography and geography of the society-nature tradition. Though these three metaphors are by no means comprehensive in geography, they do suggest the different ways in which geography proceeds in its project of making sense of reality.

Geography, of course, accomplishes this ontological project via an epistemological process: knowledge of space, place and nature do not arise from thin air. This is the manner in which professional and substantive ethics in geography are connected, since without process and product, context and content are not comprehensible without the other. Yet the epistemological process of geography is far broader than what is typically subsumed under the category of 'professional ethics'. Minimally, this process involves a set of *guiding concepts*, implemented via research and analytical *techniques* to generate knowledge, which has a certain form of *representation* and leads to specific social (and other) *implications*. Guiding concepts include the metaphors of reality discussed above, which play an important general role in the constitution and reconstitution of geography's identity and thus provide a delimited

range of appropriate enquiry in geographical research. Guiding concepts also include philosophical commitments as to how knowledge is to be produced and what kind of knowledge is worth producing—other important components of the constitution of geography. Research and analytical techniques are more specific, and include methods of data collection and analysis, such as qualitative interviews, field reconnaissance, GIS-based spatial modelling and so forth. Representation of research results by geographers commonly include mapping and writing, though other forms of representation are possible as well. Implications, whether intentional or unintentional, follow from the production of geographical knowledge; these may touch upon social, environmental, political, intellectual and/or other worlds.

Ethics and geography's ontological project: space, place, nature

The metaphor of space provides perhaps the most familiar entry of geographers into substantive questions of ethics. Indeed, one of the strongest areas of attention among geographers has concerned spatial dimensions of social justice (Harvey 1973; 1993; Smith 1994; Gleeson 1996). This work builds on geographical analyses of spatial exclusion and control (Ogborn and Philo 1994; Sibley 1995), and considers questions such as: geographical perspectives on some of its major philosophical figures (Clark 1986); professional and personal responsibilities to distant others spatially (Corbridge 1993); immigration and social justice (Black 1996); and territorial justice (Boyne and Powell 1991).

Work by geographers on social justice is not, however, limited to its spatial dimensions. Geographers are, for instance, devoting increasing attention to environmental racism and justice, bridging the social justice paradigm to the metaphor of nature. Though contributions by geographers are barely evident in recent anthologies (eg Bryant 1995; Westra and Wenz 1995), an upswing of book-length publications (Pulido 1996), articles in mainstream journals (Bowen *et al* 1995) and, indeed, whole issues of geographical journals (see, for instance, *Antipode* 28(2) and *Urban Geography* 17(5)), attest to its burgeoning significance.

As another example, David Smith has recently posed the question, 'How far should we care?' (forthcoming a), in an effort to work through the dual perspectives of ethics as spatial justice (where principles of indifference and universality are

prioritized), and ethics as care, a relationally based ethics (where one's families, communities and other social groups of relational significance are the primary emphasis, where ethics and partiality, morality and passion are not polar opposites). Smith's question clearly considers on the plane of ethics what many others have considered on the plane of epistemology: the tension between the objectivist, rationalistic metaphor of space, and the explicitly perspectival, embodied metaphor of place (Tuan 1977; Buttner and Seamon 1980; Entrikin 1991; Sack 1992).

Place is, of course, already a significant category in the works of Sibley and others noted above. It is perhaps best exemplified, however, in work on 'moral geographies,' which could loosely be translated as thick descriptions of the moral features of place. To call this work 'descriptive ethics' is missing something, however, since place-based ethical enquiry may be closer to the mark of understanding human morality than its placeless equivalents, which are common in more abstract normative and meta-ethical enquiry (Walzer 1994; O'Neill 1996, 68). Indeed, though geographical work in moral geographies and other questions of ethics has shied away from an explicitly normative and/or meta-ethical focus, the fact that there has been some attention given by geographers to questions such as universalist versus particularist ethics suggests the relative ease with which place-based geographical analysis lends itself to addressing these more abstract issues (Corbridge 1993; see also 1997 special issue of *Society and Space* 15).

The concept of place itself has been invoked by geographers in order to reflect critically on the problematic objectification of subjective community or regional values (Entrikin 1991, 60–83), as well as to ground the moral context of production and consumption in advanced industrial societies (Sack 1992, 177–205). Indeed, the moral realm is deeply implicated in the work of many humanist geographers on place—of which the example of Yi-Fu Tuan is perhaps most prominent (Tuan 1974; 1993). But the sheer range of recent work on moral geographies makes the important collective point that the diverse places geographers study are inescapably normative, that normativity is not so much something to be added onto place as to be teased out of it. Recent instances of this work include the explorations of Jackson and others on moral order in the city (Jackson 1984; Driver 1988), 'moral locations' of nineteenth-century Portsmouth (Ogborn and Philo

1994), the moral geography of reformatories (Ploszajska 1994), the moral geography of the Norfolk Broadlands (Matless 1994) and the moral discourse of climate (Livingstone 1991). Though the term has had some use outside of geography (eg Shapiro 1994; Slater 1997), it would be a gross overstatement to suggest that, by means of moral geographies, geographers have made their indelible mark on how ethics ought to be encountered.

The metaphor of nature is evident in much of what was presented above, but as a primary focus of ethical interest among geographers, it has not enjoyed such diffuse attention as social justice and moral geographies. One important reason is that the vast majority of work by geographers under this metaphorical trajectory is largely physical and life science-based, and, as such, rarely if ever entertains questions of human ethics. Is this lack of attention by physical geographers to ethics justified? At the level of their immediate topics of interest, perhaps: fluvial geomorphology and microclimatology involve processes that have important human impacts and arise in part from human drivers, but in and of themselves, there is arguably little ground for ethical reflection. Yet, the historical process by which science is decoupled from explicit attention to morality is well rehearsed elsewhere, and as such suggests that this immediate detachment of physical geography from ethics is as much a particular historical result as some inevitable corollary of its subject matter.

Nonetheless, there has been a rising interest among geographers in environmental ethics. In addition to the entire issues of geographical journals (cited above) that were devoted to environmental racism and justice, there is ample supplementary evidence of this interest. The inaugural issue of *Philosophy and Geography*, for instance, was devoted to environmental ethics (Light and Smith 1997). Whole books are now arising that engage with questions of nature and morality in significant ways (Simmons 1993; Harvey 1996).

Work in this area is predictably diffuse, though not at all limited to the recent past, as suggested, for instance, in the writings of Reclus (Clark 1997). Some geographers have situated questions of environmental ethics in the context of culturally based ideas of nature (Simmons 1993), while others have discussed the spatial scale dependency of optimal formulations of environmental ethics (Reed and Slaymaker 1993), and still others have critically reviewed the values underlying environmental movements (O'Riordan 1981; Lewis 1992), at times

rejecting them in favour of less socio-politically naive alternatives (Pepper 1993). Some have looked at environmental ethics from a cross-cultural perspective (Wescoat 1997), while others have engaged with the modernist and anti-modernist underpinnings of Western environmental thought (Gandy 1997). Indeed, the diverse linkages that geographers have drawn between social theory and environmental ideology and ethics (Proctor 1995; Gandy 1996) are broadly suggestive of the important contributions geographers can make.

As suggested above, perhaps the most interesting substantive work by geographers on ethics transcends the boundaries between the metaphors of space, place and nature. Indeed, the key contribution geographers have to make arises from the diverse metaphors of reality they entertain; hence, as mentioned earlier, the tension between universals and difference, justice and care, can be entertained thoughtfully by geographers, given the solid establishment of the discipline upon the metaphors of space and place. This strength in metaphorical diversity is also evident in the contribution that geographers can make to environmental ethics: here, for instance, the problem of how to resolve conflicts between social and natural goods can be entertained meaningfully, as geographers have a solid foot planted in both nature and culture. The diversity of geographical imaginations cast upon this world thus offers a strong beginning point from which geographers may make a real contribution to moral discourse

Ethics and geography's epistemological process

Geographical knowledge does not arise in a vacuum. The statements that geographers make about space, place and nature come out of a particular process, of which four sequential steps were noted above. The first step—guiding concepts—draws upon the metaphors that inform geography's ontological project, as well as intrinsic or extrinsic epistemological rules (eg universalizability, or the lack thereof), which govern the application of these metaphors to knowledge-building. This discussion is well rehearsed in the literature: the critique of positivism over the last several decades, for instance, is in large a part a critique of how particular ontological and epistemological assumptions associated with positivism have constrained the kinds and implications of knowledge arising from geographical research (Gregory 1979; Billinge *et al* 1984). Though this critical literature does not go by the self-ascription of 'ethics', none-

theless its reasoned normative pronouncements are of similar intent. Further enquiry is needed into the ways in which basic ontological and epistemological assumptions shape geographical research in ethically significant ways.

One of the most familiar areas of ethical enquiry in geography involves research and analytical techniques, ranging from cartography (Harley 1991; Monmonier 1991; Rundstrom 1993) to remote sensing and geographic information systems (Wasowski 1991; Lake 1993; Curry 1994; Crampton 1995). The act of research itself, and the consideration of the role of the researcher vis-à-vis the research subject(s), has also been a popular subject of enquiry (eg Eyles and Smith 1988; England 1994). Another area where a fair amount of work has been done concerns how geographical knowledge is represented, in realms ranging from cartography (see above) to academic publication (Brunn 1989; Curry 1991) to education (Havelberg 1990; Kirby 1991; Smith 1995). Less work focuses on implications of geographical research, though explicit attention has been paid to areas with direct social significance, such as planning (Entrikin 1994), and some of the most provocative publications by geographers have taken the implications of geographical research as a starting point for reconfiguring geography (Kropotkin 1885; Harvey 1974). Indeed, ethical issues become more focused as one moves from a particular geographical concept to its technical implementation, and finally to its application. For instance, conceiving space as an isotropic surface appears innocent enough, until one builds a GIS upon this naive assumption for the purpose of, say, specifying social-service facility location. This example also suggests the interrelation of ethical issues across the continuum of geography's epistemological process, and points out the severe limitations in a 'professional ethics' circumscribed solely to questions of research data and publication.

Conclusion: ethics in geography, geography in ethics

Geographers have employed normative concepts, whether wittingly or not, in many ways (Hay 1995). Yet, contemporary geography is a vital intellectual and practical force, due precisely to the willingness of geographers to engage with issues raised outside the discipline, and their ability to offer a distinct perspective on these issues. There is arguably no more important set of issues for geographers to

address today than that dealing with complex and contested matters of ethics. The contribution of the geographical imagination has been significant to date, but much more work remains to be done. In so doing, geographers will have the opportunity to ask once again some of the many moral questions that have circulated through the discipline for at least the last few decades. Ultimately, a more systematic exploration of the overlapping terrain of geography and ethics will yield valuable benefits to the discipline, and to those outside the discipline for whom questions of ethics matter deeply.

I wish to end this paper with questions, not answers, as there are so many to which geographers could apply their intellectual efforts. These can be organized under two main themes: the place of ethical reflection in geographical theory and practice, and the potential role geography could play in the arena of ethics.

What is the place of ethics in geography?

- What kinds of values have implicitly or explicitly accompanied the practice of geography in its recent history? In which areas of geography has explicit moral or normative enquiry been embraced or shunned, and why? Is it appropriate for only a subgroup of geographers to be intellectually concerned with ethics, or does ethics pertain to all geographers?
- What kinds of values and moral issues loom large in the major fields of contemporary geographical research? How might geographers go about addressing ethical problems in their substantive work?
- What role should moral theory (eg concepts of social justice) play in geographical research? What areas of moral theory are most appropriate for inclusion in the agenda of geographical enquiry?
- Should geography be conceived as (at least in part) a normative practice? What implications would exist for concepts central to geographical analysis? How might this reconception help or hinder research in geography?
- To what extent is ethical conduct desirable, definable and/or enforceable in the practice of geography?

What is the place of geography in ethics?

- How might geography help explain the historical development of political, social, environmental and other forms of ethics?

- In what ways do the dimensions of reality elucidated by physical and human geographers (eg space, place, biophysical nature) matter in the case of ethics? How might moral theory be reconceived in light of these elements?
- To what extent are substantive questions of ethics beyond geography's intellectual grasp and/or topical or methodological bounds—that is, beyond the geographical imagination? Should geographical education be reconceived, so that geographers are better equipped to make contributions toward these questions?
- What are the major descriptive, normative and meta-ethical areas in which geographers can make the greatest contribution in ethics? How, for instance, might geographers' inclination toward place-based description and theory be channelled toward resolution of larger normative and meta-ethical questions, such as the tension between ethical universalism and particularism or relativism?

It is questions such as these that await further extension of the geographical imagination. Understanding ethics as an inextricable part of geography's ontological project and epistemological process is the first step in this direction.

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