A Sketch of a Geographic Theory of Morality

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A realist geographic theory of morality, based on the assumption that the real exists and that the good also exists and is part of the real, broadens and deepens geography's contribution to moral concerns. The theory focuses on the moral qualities of place. Places are essential to our projects because they allow some things to take place and disallow or displace other things. Because place is engaged in including and excluding, it raises moral issues from the start. Geography provides two approaches to evaluating these issues. The first is based on instrumental geographic judgments, which relativize the virtues of truth, justice, and the natural that are mixed within each place. What is good (true, just, and natural) is shaped by the projects or goals of the place. The second issue is based on intrinsic geographic judgments. These draw upon qualities of the good that are not dependent on any particular place or project, but that can be used to judge them. Intrinsic geographic judgments show how truth, justice, and the natural are contextual, but not relative. Moral progress occurs when instrumental geographic judgments become more like intrinsic geographic ones. Intrinsic geographic judgments demonstrate that moral issues of truth and the natural are as important as issues of justice: the judgments help derive particular principles of justice and their formulation in rights. *Key Words: morality, the real, the good, place, instrumental and intrinsic geographic judgments, truth, justice, and the natural.*

Schools, homes, hospitals, slave plantations, and concentration camps are geographical events. They take place on the earth's surface. They are part of reality. But are they moral or good?

Places, as humanly bounded and constructed areas of space, are complex, and so too are judgments about them. Even though we can judge only particular aspects of a place that may be good or bad, sometimes these are so overwhelming that they color the entire place. Certainly this is so for slave plantations and concentration camps, and it may be the case for many other places, even for homes that are so dysfunctional that they are literally hells.

Place in the sense used here is something we create, but place in turn enables us in our projects. The effects or consequences of place are so critical to virtually all our undertakings that we cannot really be human agents without it. Place produces effects and is thus a cause, even though place depends on us, and we are causes or agents that depend on it. This makes place and self mutually constitutive. We emphasize one side of this relational causal quality of place and self when we say that place "does something," that it has "an effect," or that "it is a cause," just as we emphasize the other side by saying "we cause" or "we have an effect." Here, the emphasis will be on how place is a cause and produces effects, with the understanding that the full relationship involves ourselves as agents.[1]

In terms of the moral, each and every place has import, not only because of the projects that it supports, but because of how place helps structure and organize these projects. By clearing an area of space, place helps destroy things to create things. By pushing things aside so that some things can take place, it disallows other things from happening. Creating, destroying, including, excluding, immediately invoke basic moral issues and engage us in questions about the real (or reality) and the good.

I will discuss how geography itself emphasizes qualities of the real and the good that help us to judge, on geographical grounds, aspects of places, and even entire places, when these aspects are strong enough to color most everything else. These qualities of the real and the good are often neglected by more traditional nongeographical conceptions of what is right and moral. Explaining how geography reveals these often overlooked

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qualities and how these lead to geographically grounded judgments of right and wrong forms the foundation of a geographical theory of morality.

This essay offers only a sketch of the theory.[2] It will differ significantly from many nongeographic moral theories, and also from most geographical discussions about morality, for these focus almost exclusively on questions of justice, as these apply to the fairness of access and distributions of goods and resources (Smith 1998). This essay will show that justice is hardly all that is involved in a geographical view of morality, and that theories of justice themselves presuppose conceptions of the real and the good.[3] Having the theory begin with these allows geography to open up a deeper and wider understanding of the moral that, in turn, leads to geographically grounded ideas of justice.

This is a realist—not a relativist—theory, and it pays close attention to context. It assumes that an empirical reality exists—we contribute to it, but we do not make it up; and it assumes that the good is real—we do not make that up either. The links among geography, the real, and the good are complex. I will not be able to provide definitive meanings for each, although I will provide provisional ones as we go along. This is so for two reasons: the three are as much a set of dynamic relationships and processes as they are things, and it is their dynamic and reinforcing relationship that is most important for our discussion; the real and the good especially are ineffable and inexhaustible, and so we can only ever know facets of them. A sense of their complex relational qualities is seen in a brief overview of the three, starting with geography.

An Overview: Geography, the Real, and the Good

Geography

Geography is about how human beings transform the earth and make it into a home (Tuan 1991; Sack 1997). Indispensable to this transformation are the geographical tools or instruments of place, space, and landscape (Sack 1997). Each of these is important, but place (which includes the use of boundaries) will be the primary focus because it provides the central, complex, and indispensable means by which humans do this transforming. Human projects of changing nature into culture, and of developing ever more culture, require place. How place—as a bounded and controlled area of space—is necessary for projects will be an important component of our discussion. For now, let us simply assume that most human projects require place: they could not be undertaken and completed without it.

Geography then is about our transformation of the earth and our use of place to do this transforming. This, though, is only the first of two levels of meaning. It refers to our geographic agency and how we use geography to attain goals. As we undertake projects, we create and sustain places and landscapes as instruments and thus affect a part of reality—expanding and contracting it. We are geographical beings even without being aware of it. Yet, when we are conscious of our geographic nature and reflect upon it, we then enter the second level of meaning which refers to geography as a field of inquiry. Any of us can be conscious of our geographic agency, but those who call themselves geographers are perhaps more so and attempt to sharpen our everyday sense of place, space, and landscape into technical terms in order to understand our role as geographic agents. The point about these two levels is that even though we are geographical without being aware of it, being aware of this important human quality helps us to be better at what we are doing and helps guide us to expand reality for the better.

Geography and the Real

We are place-makers because our lives and the projects we undertake require geographical structure in the form of places and their interconnections in space. Creating places so that projects can take place is part of how we help make a world or a reality. Indeed, one of the central problems is understanding how creating places changes reality and even expands (or contracts) the real. The cultural landscape worldwide was far simpler 30,000 years ago than is the case now when the earth's surface includes innumerable places such as rooms, buildings, offices, farms, municipalities and countries in which projects and their associated activities take place. Place making has helped us increase the scale and quantity of reality, but has it increased our awareness of reality?

Some places make us more aware of the world. Schools try to do this, and universities even more so. And other places, though not dedicated to increasing our awareness, at least do not impede

our efforts to gain a broader and more realistic view. Even so, there are places that obscure our view and even try themselves to appear less real and substantial than others. Places of fantasy and escapism, although real and substantial, attempt to appear less so than the places that unselfconsciously help us manage our daily lives and focus on particular projects. Although places of fantasy have curious effects on our sense of the real, a more severe challenge to our awareness of reality comes from places that constrain our view with opaque boundaries. Extreme cases of narrowing our view result from places that censor information about the rest of the world, and from places that are secret. In the latter, we may not even know that such a place exists, and even if we do, we do not know what projects it contains, and so are thereby denied access to that part of reality.

The relationship between place and reality is complex. Places are real, and increasing their number in one sense may increase reality. Yet some places contribute to or expand our awareness of reality, and others may diminish it. As we shall see, the moral implications of our geographic agency depend not only on whether we expand or contract reality, but also on whether places make us more or less aware of reality.

Geography, the Real, and the Good

All places are real and complex, but are all of them good? Before we begin, I must again caution that places possess many facets, but one or a few can be so overwhelmingly good or bad that they color the entire place. The same is true for people. Even the worst of us may have a few positive qualities, but these are not enough to save us from moral condemnation. So, even our brief discussion of place and reality sets the stage for believing that some places are better than others, that all places are not as good as they can or should be, and that some places are evil. Concentration camps and slave plantations had so very little to redeem them that they are not good at all.

Place is the focus of attention, but it must be realized that no place operates in isolation. A place is linked to a system of places. A slave plantation in the American South was connected to other plantations, to the slave trade, and to the territorial laws and rules that sustained slavery; similarly, a concentration camp required a complex geography of collecting victims and transporting them to the camps—all of which was supported by territorially based laws and statutes legalizing such actions. Judging a place then also involves judging a network of places in which it is embedded. I will show that these judgments can be made largely on geographical grounds by geographical criteria. These geographical criteria or *geographical principles of judgment* themselves are derived from facets of the good that are emphasized by geography. Once enunciated, they are readily seen as facets of the good, yet they have been largely neglected by conventional moral theory. The fact that geography brings them into especially sharp focus and employs them permits us to say that these facets constitute a *geographical conception of the good*, provided that we do not take the word "conception" to mean something that is made up. I must stress that these are facets of the good that are real, but that geography brings together and illuminates. This conception and the judgments that follow from it form a *Geographical Theory of Morality*.

The theory points toward the good and recognizes that there are numerous paths along the way. It does not provide a detailed list or set of commandments of what should or should not be done. Rather it offers guidelines to help judge if a particular place or project is a move in the right direction. These judgments may challenge or complement other judgments from nongeographic moral theories. Comparisons such as these can enrich these moral theories, especially when they draw attention to the respective conceptions of the good assumed by each.

Since those theories that are on the right track will at best illuminate only some facets of the good, and imperfectly so, it is not surprising that moral theories contain dilemmas and tensions, and lead to contradictory assessments. Justice contains the apparently contradictory strands of being meted out on the basis of equality, or according to merit, or by need. Political theories find liberty and equality difficult to reconcile; and metaphysics finds perfection in both parts of the apparently contradictory relationship of permanence and change. Theories tend to reconcile contradictions by privileging one quality of the good and making the others derivative or special cases while assuming all along that if we only could know more of the good, contradictions would ultimately disappear. These characteristics are no less true of the geographic theory of morality. It will draw attention to how geography creates moral tensions and contradictions, and how it offers a direction to the good that helps

resolve some of them, at least temporarily, and that charts whether our actions are more or less on course.

A Geographical Theory of Morality

I have noted so far that our geographic place-making is part of the real, and our places can expand or contract the real and our awareness of it. We have also seen that not all places are good. Let me now put these together in a *Geographical Theory of Morality*. The theory will show that geographic judgments come in two forms. One is *practical or instrumental geographic judgments*, which are tied to our geographic agency and examine how effectively place is used in achieving the goals of particular projects. The other is *pure or intrinsic geographic judgments*. These draw upon facets of the good that are illuminated by being geographically aware and that are used to evaluate the instrumental judgments and uses of geography. Here, instrumental and intrinsic will be the preferred terms because pure and practical may be confused with Kant's use of these terms in his *Critiques* (1952).

The basic problem of a geographical theory of morality is to understand instrumental geographic judgments, intrinsic geographic judgments, and how intrinsic geographic judgments can be used to judge instrumental geographic judgments. In addition, the theory must explore how intrinsic geographic judgments are reinforced by or compete with other major moral theories. I will address these issues in three stages: first, I discuss how the structure and dynamics of place both allow it to help create a reality and provide the means of instrumentally judging place; second, I explore the geographical conception of the good and draw from it criteria that lead to intrinsic geographic judgments; third, I discuss the implications of a geographical theory of morality and its connections to other moral theories.

Instrumental Geographic Judgments and the Real

Our geographical selves transform the earth and make it into a home by making space into place. Everything occurs in space, including our own projects. But unlike the rest of nature, human projects rely on place especially. Much about instrumental geographic judgment hinges on the relationship between place and space, so this is where we will begin.

Place and Space

As an area of space with rules about what may or may not take place within, place undergirds our projects. These projects do not simply happen in space, they need a place for them to occur, and they compete for such places. Although space precedes place in the ontological sense of being there before we and our projects ever existed, and places and the flows among them are in space, it is still place that is the primary geographical instrument undergirding our projects (Curry 1998), and places' structure and dynamics become the source and impetus for flows through space (Sack 1997).

Theorizing about place is possible only in relation to space. The theory developed in *Homo Geographicus* (Sack 1997) shows that the way we set aside parts of physical space and make these into places encourages, deflects, and controls the flows through space that are essential for human projects. Humans do not "construct" space except in the sense of developing places (including farms, cities, and wilderness areas) along with the means of communicating and interacting through space. It is place and the flows among places that are constructed, and the most important issue is how place works in this process.

Since place involves ourselves as agents in bounding and controlling areas of space, a place must have rules about what is or should be in and out (Sack 1993; Cresswell 1996). These humanly made and enforced rules are part of what deflects or prevents some spatial interactions and encourages others. If we like, we may call the location of purely physical things and systems of things in space places, but these are not really full-fledged and functioning places in the geographic sense unless they contain humanly made rules to bound and constrain the things and interactions. Unless human rules are part of the process, the term place can be dropped, or replaced, without remainder, by the original idea of things or interacting objects located in space.

When, however, an interacting set of objects or a system such as a drainage basin, prairie, or wilderness area become bounded and defended by rules about in and out, then it becomes a place.

At present, most natural systems on the earth's surface are places and affected by being so. Yellowstone, Antarctica, and even the oceans, have been demarcated with rules about what may or may not take place within them. Many terrestrial natural systems may in fact be sustained by such rules. And of course virtually every human system is also. Terrestrial nature, then, has become in part a system of places, and we often protect nature by making it into a place. In so doing, it contains elements of culture, if only in the rules governing what may or may not take place.

Structure and Dynamics of Place

How then do places work? How do they have an effect that makes them instruments in projects? The actual causal mechanism of place—its causal circuit and loops (Sack 1997)—is too complex to discuss here, but the outcome of this mechanism can be readily seen in the *structure and dynamics* of place.[4] This refers to the mix of elements of nature, meaning and social relations that place helps draw together (Sack 1997). The mix occurs at two levels: the level of elements and the level of virtues. Consider first the level of elements.

Level of Elements. All places contain elements of nature and culture: wilderness areas contain cultural rules stipulating what other cultural processes may not take place, and a factory contains elements of nature such as heat, light, gravity, and our biological selves. A finer and more useful set of distinctions can be made when we recognize that what is normally meant by culture is divisible into the social and intellectual, or for geographical purposes, the realms of *social relations and meaning*. In mixing nature and culture, places then are mixing elements of these three (*nature, social relations, and meaning*) and different types of places possess different mixes.

Consider for example an academic presentation on the nature of geography, delivered to faculty and students in a university lecture hall. The hall draws in elements of *social relations*. The members of the place are part of the university and its particular departments. They are further socially differentiated as undergraduate and graduate, assistant, associate, and full professors, and by being parents, children, aunts, uncles, and rich and poor. This place also draws elements from the realm of *nature*. The room contains heat, light, the force of gravity, electromagnetic fields, and people as biological beings. But, for this place the most important realm is that of *meaning*. The place itself, and the elements of social relations and nature, are there to support the project of that place which is the lecture about the nature of geography, and what the lecturer has to say may well affect what geography means in the future. Lecture halls are places that focus on meaning, in this case, the meaning of geography.

At another time, the lecture can change—the meaning of the place can be about social injustice, or about natural processes of sedimentation and glaciation. These are shifts of emphasis, but they are still about what these processes mean. But greater shifts can occur if elements from social relations or nature actually displace the focus on meaning. To use a dramatic example, students may commandeer the lecture hall and open its doors to the homeless—not hold a lecture on the subject, but actually change the place to a homeless shelter. Then the place is in the grip of social relations. Or, if the windows in this hall were to be blown out by strong winds, or if an ice storm were to down power lines, the place may then be in the grip of nature.

Places everywhere tend to specialize in the mix of elements of nature, meaning, and social relations they draw together. Schools, churches, and museums emphasize meaning, but of different kinds. Factories, offices, and prisons stress various facets of social relations, and parks, wilderness areas, and scientific laboratories stress different elements of nature. Again, elements of the other realms are present, but which is stressed is the issue. This stress or mix changes over time. It is dependent on what happens in other places throughout space. And most important here, it depends on our own intentions and projects. These places enable us to pursue projects, and so they and their mix of elements are judged in terms of the goals or ends of those projects.

If the lecture hall were to still focus on the lecture in geography, then we would judge its mix of nature and social relations accordingly. But if it were to be overrun by social relations—taken over by demonstrators and turned into a homeless shelter—the project of the place would have changed and so too would our judgments of this place's instrumental value in achieving these new ends. But note too that place, by its very nature, makes these shifts and goals possible, and that it does so by drawing together elements of nature, social relations, and meaning. This is how

geography, through place, contextualizes and allows things to take place.

The use of a lecture hall as an instrument in the project of developing and conveying geographic meaning is part of a larger system of places and set of projects. The geographic topic in this hall is linked to other lectures about geographic topics that are part of a geography department's research and teaching goals, which in turn are part of the larger ones for the university as a whole, and so on. And as the effectiveness of the mix of elements in the lecture hall can be judged for the purpose of the lecture, so too can the effectiveness of the mix of elements in the other places of the university system (including other departments, libraries, and parking lots) as to the degree to which they hinder or enhance the university's primary focus on meaning.

The empirical level of the geographic structure and dynamics of place makes it clear that not only does place mix elements that would not have come together without place, but place provides the possibility for us to think through and trace the flows of these elements through space (even though we may not be aware that it is the structure and dynamics of place that generate these connections). That is, we can become geographically aware of the implications of actions resonating through space among nature, meaning, and social relations. This understanding is different from that obtained by thinking only of the projects themselves, or of only one or another of their components. The mixes in place and their connections to other places through space is part of the contribution of geography to projects, and being aware of this is the basis for evaluating that contribution.

At this point, several criteria of judging at the instrumental level have already been established. One is that the instrumental justification for a place existing at all involves judging whether or not it contributes to a project. Judging the effectiveness of a particular place to a project involves judging if a particular mix of elements—a place's structure and dynamics—contributes to the project, and if the flows of elements in and out of the place contribute to the larger project of which this place is embedded. Eliminating, substituting, or changing a place involves the same sets of judgments.

Level of Virtues. These criteria are only half of the story for instrumental judgment. They concern the empirical level of the structure and dynamics of place. Yet another, and perhaps more important, layer of criteria for judging arises because the elements of meaning, nature, and social relations themselves are grounded on values that regulate and guide their use. That is, meaning, nature, and social relations can themselves be animated by specific values or *virtues*. If the lecture hall is to focus on the meaning of geography, it is to do so because the lecturer and the audience wish to know what is the true meaning of the field. Some meanings are less essential, less real, less convincing, and in these senses, less true. *Truth* here is the primary value or virtue that lies behind and animates an emphasis on meaning in a project. Debates over the meaning of geography are in some ways implicating issues of truth. And just as there are different elements of meaning, so there are different criteria or definitions of truth (e.g., truth as correspondence to reality, truth as logical constituency and coherence, truth as revealed, etc. [Edwards 1967; Horwitch 1990; Putnam 1981; Searl 1995]). Different places and projects then emphasize different aspects of truth, but as a virtue, truth is there undergirding the use of meaning.

Elements from the realm of social relations and their mix in particular places are undergirded by conceptions of *justice*. Even though a lecture is about the meaning of geography and the pursuit of truth, it still involves social relations, and these must be just. It would be unfair or unjust to exclude people on the basis of race. On the other hand, the lecture is sponsored by a university department, and so it may be fair or just to exclude those who are not members of the university community—those who do not possess that criterion as a social relation.

Many places exist whose primary project is some form of social relations, and the virtue that animates these places then would be that of justice. As is the case with social relations possessing many facets (rich and poor, parents and children, employer and employees, professors and students, etc.), so too does justice include multiple facets (e.g., justice as equal treatment or equality, justice as treatment on the basis of need, justice as treatment on the basis of merit, and justice as care (Clark 1986; Corbridge 1993; Entrikin 1994; Gilligan 1977; Harvey 1996; Kittay and Meyers 1987; Kymlicka 1990; Smith 1997; Walzer 1983; Young 1990). Different places and projects then emphasize different facets of justice, which in turn undergird particular social relations.

The same applies to the realm of nature. Elements of nature are involved in every place, and

place is often the means to protect or restore nature. Nature then can be either in a supporting role or as the primary project of a place. In either case, *the natural* is being thought of as something good, or as a virtue (Fleming 1988; Harvey 1996; Jonas 1984, 1996; Light and Smith 1997; Wilson 1992). There are numerous elements of nature and the natural, and there are also varieties of ways in which the natural is a virtue. It may be a virtue in the sense of necessity, or of essence, or of that which is not humanly constructed.

Just as place through its structure and dynamics draws together and mixes elements of nature, meaning, and social relations, it draws together and mixes elements of truth, justice, and the natural. In the lecture on geography, the project was the meaning of geography, which was (or ought to have been) driven by the search for truth—most likely a correspondence theory of truth. But the mix and emphasis of virtues can shift. If a stranger stumbles into the lecture hall, ill and disoriented, it would not be fair to continue on the track of truth. Rather this stranger should be treated justly. And so, the place then shifts, for a moment at least, from a focus on truth to a focus on justice. Justice temporarily trumps truth. And if a storm were to blow out the windows and cut the heating system, then the hall would be so inhospitably cold and wet that it would be natural (not true or just but natural, especially as necessity) to discontinue the conversation. At that point, the natural trumps truth and justice.

As place then draws together elements of nature, meaning, and social relations, it also draws together elements of these virtues. While, in the above example, truth, justice, and the natural were involved, it was particular elements of each that were engaged by place. The lecture most likely engaged the concept of a correspondence theory of truth (or perhaps a coherence theory) but not a revelatory theory of truth (one that comes from God). That kind of truth may be the focus of a place of religious worship. Certain elements of truth are best supported by certain elements of justice. In the classroom, the student's search for truth will not be supported simply by any facet of justice. Awarding grades on the basis of merit is one element of justice that does seem to support students in their quest for truth, whereas awarding the same grade to all students equally, regardless of achievement, may not support their quest. Nor would the use of a justice based on need. No matter how much a student pleads for a high grade, or how much he or she may be humiliated by a low one—in other words, no matter how much the student "needs" the grade—the teacher should not award it on that basis, but rather according to the principle of merit.

This mix of virtues need not be the same in another type of place that has different ends or values. In most workplaces, the products produced create wealth, which leads to social distinctions and power relations. This means that the primary concern in workplaces is not truth (and meaning) but issues of justice (and social relations) that focus on wages, labor practices, and the distribution of profits. The particular type of justice from the point of view of employees might be equality—equal pay for equal work—and not merit or need. But in another type of place that focuses on social relations—a homeless shelter—the purpose of the place's social relations encourages us to think of the issue of justice as need, not as merit or even as equality. In a typical home or household, though, the particular projects may not be so clearly circumscribed as in the school, factory, or homeless shelter. Indeed, the home can shift in its emphasis almost instantly, from meaning and truth, to social relations and justice, to nature and the natural. Sometimes the parents, in helping with homework, or in simply discussing ideas, are interested in conveying meaning and searching for truth. But when problems of discipline arise, then the focus shifts to social relations and justice. And then again, the health and biological needs of the family make the home move closer to the realm of nature and the natural. When the home moves too far in the direction of meaning or truth, it may become more like a school than a home, and may neglect social relations and justice, or even the natural biological functions and processes of children. And when the place becomes focused almost exclusively on social relations and justice, it may lose sight of meaning and truth, and also the biological.

Judgments about the appropriate mix of virtues in a place depend on the existence of others with their own mixes, and on the interconnections and flows among these places through space. A place devoted to one type of virtue cannot exist without other virtues being taken care of elsewhere. If truth is the only virtue pursued, then where will our needs for justice be met? If, in the pursuit of justice, merit is the focus of attention, then where will our concern for need or for equality be met? And, in any of these cases, where will nature be

addressed? What places will set nature aside and protect it, or will focus on our own needs as biological beings and on how these depend on the well-being of places of nature?

The structure and dynamics of place not only shows that nature, meaning, and social relations are mixed and interact among places through space, but also that truth, justice, and the natural are mixed and interact among places through space, and that these two levels themselves are interrelated. This structure and dynamics enable geography to be a necessary and powerful instrument in projects. Instrumentally, the appropriateness of the mix, and the rules and boundaries of place that support it, depends on whether it enhances or impedes the project. When it enhances it, instrumental judgments would call the place good.

The instrumental judgments of place are relative. They concern place's effectiveness within a project. The instrumental partializes and particularizes meaning, nature, and social relations, and truth, justice, and the natural. It turns them inward. True, a place often contributes to other places in a system of projects in which these other places are instruments. The lecture hall is part of classrooms and labs in a system of education, and the factory and store contribute to production and consumption in an economic system. From the instrumental point of view, knowledge of these links are still evaluated the same way—in terms of how they affect the goals of particular, though perhaps now larger, projects. We may be able to trace these effects outside the system, but if we do, the instrumental view provides no way of judging except to switch to the values of another project that uses these other places as part of its ends.

Still, the elements of place spill over its boundaries, linking places in unexpected ways. How then are particular practices and their broader geographic consequences to be evaluated? How are the contradictory and relativistic qualities of the numerous instrumental judgments to be assessed? In other words, how do we free the virtues of truth, justice, and the natural from their captivity within projects so that they can become instruments of judgments in general? For this, we must consider intrinsic geographic judgments. These help us seek truly the qualities of the real and the good. I will introduce intrinsic geographic judgments by way of an example.

Intrinsic Geographic Judgments and the Good

Soon after the end of World War II, cooperation among the Allied powers, difficult at the best of times, was breaking down. Stalin decided to move the Soviet Union to an increasingly isolated position. Churchill observed this, and in 1946, during a speech in Fulton, Missouri, proclaimed that an Iron Curtain had descended across the continent. The term was apt, for Stalin used the geographical boundaries of the Soviet Union as such an Iron Curtain, preventing those on the outside from seeing in, and those on the inside from seeing out.

The Soviet Union with its Iron Curtain used the structure and dynamics of place to create a new reality. But was it good? Certainly there are so very many parts to evaluate. Yet what I want here to focus on is the use of boundaries. These embody the in and out of place rules that enforce the mix of elements within the place. Stressing how these boundaries set the place apart from the rest of the world allows us to see connections between the real and the good that contemporary moral theories miss.

These boundaries, and the mix they imposed, can be evaluated instrumentally. If we think that Stalin's goal for the Soviet Union was, as he said, the development and strengthening of socialism and protecting it from Western subversion, then was the Iron Curtain an effective geographical strategy for that goal? The Soviet Union certainly felt under siege by capitalist countries who regarded socialism as a threat and wanted it to fail. The Soviet Union also thought it was important for its survival to be as economically independent of the West as possible. Given, then, the Soviet Union's concerns about its own security and autonomy, the Iron Curtain may have been an effective means of furthering the project of socialism, though judgments of this kind, of course, are not easy, and, to be done correctly, require detailed knowledge of the facts, including the geographical principles that help us understand what place and space do to this kind of process. In addition, we must be aware that any use of place by one party creates a reaction by others that can change the geographic dynamics. Once the Iron Curtain descended, Churchill used it as a means of engaging the U.S. in (a largely British conception

of) European affairs (Taylor 1993: 76). So while judgments are never simple, they are made all the time, even without a deep understanding of geography. For the sake of argument then, let us assume that using political boundaries as an "iron curtain" was an effective geographical strategy for Stalin's project of socialism: it was good in a practical or instrumental sense.

This kind of good is linked immediately and directly to the real. The Iron Curtain helped the Soviet Union and its form of socialism continue as a reality. If the project were not to succeed, if the place fell apart, then the geographical strategy would not have been instrumentally or practically good, and this part of reality would disappear. But this kind of good is constrained by and derived from the values of the project, and our curiosity about the good does not usually end at this point, for we surely would like to know if the project itself is good, and how the use of geography contributes to this broader sense of the good.

As I noted in the previous section, this broader good might be considered still an instrumental one, though embedded in an even larger project, so that Stalin's Iron Curtain may have been justified by thinking not only of socialism for the Soviet Union, but for the entire world. Or, the project may have been embedded in a sense of national sovereignty and hence justified by the rights of all nations to do what they like within their borders. Also interpretable as instrumental are the objections to Stalin's strategy that arose from political interests of other countries who saw Stalin's project as a threat to their own. Communism was capitalism's enemy and antagonistic to Western democracies, and so it was in the national interests of these countries to do all they could to subvert Stalin's project. These kinds of objections to the Iron Curtain, which were the basis of much of Cold War rhetoric, still define the good in terms of particular projects that can be justified by being embedded in still broader ones.

Some would argue that embedding projects in ever larger ones may be the only means of justifying what takes place and how geography is used as a means in such ends. That is, there are only instrumental judgments, and the good and the moral are in the last instance nothing more than rationalizations for particular projects. What is good and moral becomes relative. Others would deny that all we have are instrumental judgments. They would appeal instead to moral theories that postulate general criteria that attempt to conceive of the good in a way that is independent of any particular project. Kant's categorical imperative and utilitarianism's precept of "the greatest good for the greatest number" are examples in which the criteria for judging are not relative (Kant 1952; Mill 1979). We too will seek general criteria that are independent of particular projects, but will do so along a geographic line of inquiry that leads to facets of the good that are illuminated by geography and from which follow criteria for judging that are not dependent on particular projects and yet can be used to evaluate these projects and their geographies. Those values drawn from qualities of the good emphasized by geography provide the conditions for *intrinsic geographic judgments*.

The first of two important qualities of the good, illuminated by geography and leading to intrinsic geographic judgments, is the value of a heightened and expanded awareness of reality. In geographic terms, this means it is good to see the world and its parts or places as clearly as possible and understand how these places make up the world. As a shorthand, I will call the geographic form of this the quality of *seeing through to the real*, and it is this quality that becomes a basis of intrinsic geographic judgment.

Valuing an awareness of reality is a deeply held part of our human nature. It draws attention to our intellectual capacities to reason and to pursue truth. Making awareness public allows our views to be tested against others and clarifies the picture for all. As geographic beings, we are curious about the world and want to know what lies beyond the horizon (Buttimer 1993; Cosgrove 1996; Hartshorne 1939; James 1972; Kropotkin 1916; Ritter 1822–1859). This curiosity is manifested in the cartography of every culture in every period, from the ancient and preliterate to the modern, and how each culture's maps provide a picture of the whole, even when it is a mythologized picture of the world and the cosmos (Harley and Woodward 1987–1997). Seeing how the world and its multiple parts interact—seeing through to the real—is an intrinsic good that also can lead to good effects. A heightened awareness of the real increases our understanding of the consequences of our actions, which we must have in mind if we are to be morally responsible agents.[5]

But, one might say, even if this is an important value in geography, is it not again an instrumental one, necessary for any project? and is it not of instrumental value in that it is of use to geography itself as a project? I will take each in turn, after I

note that if a project absorbs intrinsic geographical values, these values do not become less intrinsic. Rather, places become better as projects absorb intrinsic values, or to put it another way, we make moral progress as instrumental values become more like intrinsic ones.

Now, as for the first objection, it is true that any project must enable us to see how things are connected, and so a greater awareness of the real increases the effectiveness of our own projects, and seeing through to the real then could be part of any instrumental set of values. But most often the real that we are interested in when engaged in a project is constrained by the scope and purpose of that project. Revealing our ideas about the real to the public may in fact run counter to the project's goal, which may thrive on detailed and secretive knowledge. In contrast, the value of seeing through to the real that is intrinsic to geography is a heightening of public awareness of the real—an expansive awareness that examines publicly the whole world and its parts.

Again, one might object that seeing through to the real is still part of a project, namely the project of geography, and thus remains instrumental. This objection is countered when we remind ourselves that this value is a deeply human one. We are intellectually curious beings, insatiably so. We not only want to see reality, we probe it, using our imaginations to understand what lies behind or beneath what we see to create visions of new realities that become realized as part of our future projects.

An even deeper reason why an expanded awareness of the real is a good appears when we contrast good with evil. Most evil is due to a lack of awareness of the consequences of our actions, and of the possibilities that exist to do better. This lack of awareness is both a cause of evil and an effect or consequence in that immeasurable suffering results when people are unaware of what they are doing. It applies to us as individuals and to us as part of social structures, institutions, and cultural entities. Being involved in large-scale projects over which we have little control does not absolve us of the responsibility of being aware. That humans generally prefer good to evil and that evil's prevalence is due to some form of ignorance is, of course, an assumption about goodness and human nature, but it is one shared by many of the greatest moral theorists, including Socrates, Augustine, and Kant.

An expanded awareness that comes from seeing through to the real is then a good in itself that can have good effects. If we are interested in doing the right thing, we would want to know more about the real, for this will allow us to understand the consequences of our actions. Awareness of our effects are even more important now that we are geographical leviathans, radically transforming the earth to the point that our actions affect even the possibility of our own collective capacity to survive, and hence awareness itself. At this point, awareness of the consequences of our actions becomes its own precondition. Seeing through to the real then is a value that follows from a general conception of the good. Here is how we can use it to judge the Iron Curtain.

Place may have been used effectively as an instrument in the Iron Curtain, but place's use violated the intrinsic geographic good of seeing through to the real. It obscured, if not literally blocked, everyone's view of the place and its link to the rest of the world. A part of the real thus diminished our understanding of the rest of the real. The place may have been good instrumentally, but not intrinsically. This judgment is reinforced when considering the consequences of an obscured vision. No place, not even the Soviet Union, can be completely isolated and unconnected to other places. No matter how impermeable its borders, activities still spill over: borders do not bound the migration of plants and animals or the circulation of the atmosphere. Even people and ideas are smuggled in and out. So, in spite of the Iron Curtain, what happened inside did affect the outside world, and conversely. Yet the restrictions of the Iron Curtain made it difficult, if not impossible, for those both in and out to keep track of these spillovers and to understand the consequences of their actions.

In this way, the Iron Curtain, although part of reality, and a part that expanded the real, nonetheless was anathema to the geographic good of understanding the earth and its parts, and the consequences of our actions. A portion of geographical reality was then interfering with our ability to understand it and the rest of reality, and so, for this case, the judgment about intrinsic geographic good contradicts the judgment of instrumental geographic good—the effectiveness of the Iron Curtain as a tool in the development of Stalin's project.

The Iron Curtain is a historically important example of removing a large section of reality, but does our criterion for judging condemn any place that to some degree removes what takes place

from view? To do so would be a mistake, for place, by its very nature, obscures to some degree. Place bounds things and affects what takes place, and in so doing, partly obscures what can be seen. From the viewpoint of those engaged in projects within the place, the boundaries include some things and exclude others, and what is excluded is pushed mostly out of sight so that attention can focus on the task at hand. From the perspective of those outside the place, boundaries interfere with our ability to be in contact with and to see the things that are taking place. Boundaries create degrees of opacity, often by veiling, or erecting a veneer or a mask. Veils, veneers, and masks create different senses of opacity.[6]

Places then provide us opportunities to think about and explore the world, and they also are a significant part of the world we wish to explore. This duality is problematical because as places help focus our attention on reality, they are bounding the real and thereby creating a degree of opacity. Using the geographical judgment of seeing through to the real to condemn all degrees of opacity would then condemn all places along with our geographical nature.

To avoid this, there must be other facets to a geographical theory of morality that will help assess conditions of opacity. We will find them as soon as we introduce the second intrinsic geographic judgment. But for the moment, even the "seeing through" principle and its requirement that knowledge be shared, along with the following caveat, will go some way to help us avoid condemning all opacity. The caveat is that the opacity necessary for a project to take place can be justified if the place and the project will ultimately enhance our collective ability to see through to the real, and if all of those engaged in and affected by the project agree to its undertaking. That is, occupying space, closing the doors to our offices and laboratories, our homes and businesses, is justified if the projects that take place lead to an enhanced view of the real, and if those involved and affected by it undertake it willingly. Of course we can only know if these projects are successful after they are completed, but there are indications of the likelihood of success. One is if the project itself seems to contain the value of "seeing through" among its goals, another is if the project is not to last indefinitely, and yet another is the consensual nature of those involved in the undertaking. Again, the Iron Curtain does not meet these requirements, and most certainly not the last one.

At this point, it is important to mention that society often helps us cope with opacity by providing various means of monitoring what takes place and seeing if it meets some set of standards. In our culture, rights of privacy protect our homes from unreasonable searches and intrusions. But the rest of society has ways of detecting what takes place. Even though we raise our children in the privacy of our homes, schools can monitor our children's behavior to see if they are properly cared for, and if they are not, then social workers and law enforcement authorities may enter our homes to see what is happening. Similarly, a scientific laboratory at a university is expected to be used for specific kinds of research, and it would not be long before university officials knew if this was not the case. Private laboratories may not be so closely monitored, but if they produce things that contravene the laws of the community, they may be found out and shut down.

Social monitoring of what takes place is justified in the general sense that society has given license to and thereby condoned or encouraged the creation of places. But looking at it this way, the evaluation process could be largely instrumental. The places would be condoned or encouraged to produce things that are of value to the society and its overall projects. A culture can condone the use of place for the most heinous crimes, if they are of value to the projects of that society. Consider how the American South, meaning here the pre-Civil War propertied class and their political representatives, valued slavery. This allowed for the existence of a vast geographical infrastructure of slave plantations—a key instrument of slavery—that was scarcely opaque. Virtually everyone knew in general terms what took place, and southern states enacted complex laws to monitor plantation life in order to ensure that the project of slavery was carried out (Genovese 1974). Or, consider Nazi Germany and its concentration camps. For the general public, these were more opaque than slave plantations, but still penetrable. There is sound evidence to suggest that many Germans knew in general what was taking place and accepted it because it fit within Nazi Germany's project of anti-semitism and racial purification (Goldhagen 1996).

Monitoring what takes place, or even reducing opacity, does not then assure that what takes place is good. But without the chance of seeing through, there is no means of judging at all. The need to balance these issues provides an introduction to the second aspect of an intrinsic

geographical good that helps elaborate the "seeing through" one. This second aspect can be put this way: it is better to have a more varied, diverse, rich, plentitudinous, and complex reality and world, with more different and interesting places; in shortened form, it will be called the *value of variety and complexity*.[7]

This and the first are mutually reinforcing, and like the first, it is a quality of the good illuminated by geography and which we value as human beings. The mysteries of a varied and complex reality beckon us to see through, while a simple, dull, and empty world does not. We assume moreover that this variety and complexity is inexhaustible. We might even say that we are interested in the real because its variety and complexity *is* inexhaustible. Inexhaustibleness lends authority to the real and makes it compelling.

Variety and complexity must not be completely impervious to understanding. Parts of reality must yield to comprehension, or else the real would be something from which we would want only to escape. Understanding this variety and complexity seems to require the assumption that everything in reality is ultimately connected as a single whole; we become more confident that we have made progress in knowing the real—either because our minds require this and have imposed it on the world, or because the world is really like this—when we see the complex relations among parts and whole to be generated by less complex ones. That is, when we can understand how the complexity, richness, and interconnectedness of the world at one level is produced by a simpler set of relations at another, we believe we have seen the real more clearly. Indeed this clarity reveals an underlying elegance to reality, which we strive to find and express in different ways through science, art, and religion.

The world's richness and complexity are not fixed and static. Nature itself changes, and we do too. The projects we undertake require places, and in creating them, we can increase the world's complexity—if we create them correctly. In this way, our geographical agency then can expand the real. Interest in variety and complexity does not have to be driven by purely intellectual matters. This second virtue, like the first, can be of practical help. We may live better in a more varied and complex world. Biological and ecological diversity is certainly important to the quality of life. And the existence of different projects and cultures allows for specialization and sharing. But the capacity to be aware connects the value of variety and complexity to the first value, seeing through to the real, and shows how the second value is ultimately regulated by and justified through the first. A varied and complex reality encourages us to see the real by holding our attention. A sharing of varied and complex views, resulting from engagement in varied and complex projects and cultures, helps us see more clearly. Yet this can be accomplished only if the places that create this complexity and diversity do not overly obscure our vision and prevent us from understanding and communicating what we see. Balancing "variety and complexity" with "seeing through to the real" establishes the right proportions of opacity and transparency. Even though projects need to be bounded, a complex and diverse world is ultimately a connected one where the boundaries of its places are neither so transparent as to discourage projects, nor so opaque as to disconnect them from the wider world and prevent us from seeing through.

Diversity is of value, then, not by itself, but as part of the world and as a means of expanding everyone's awareness, and this need to be part of a whole that expands awareness also sets limits on diversity. A cultural enclave that produces superstition and narrowmindedness, that disparages strangers and isolates its members from the rest of the world may be contributing to diversity, but at the expense of narrowing vision and disconnecting parts. A slum or an opium den can be "different" and "exotic" to those on the outside, but it imprisons those within. In a similar vein, the differences created by the Soviet experiment were more than offset by the obstacles it presented for those inside and outside to see through to the real.

To summarize so far, intrinsic geographic judgment contains two related values that follow from our role as geographical agents constructing a reality and being aware of that reality. The first values a greater awareness of how the places (the parts) we create contribute to the whole or world, and the second encourages us to create a richer and more complex reality of places (parts) and their relations, culminating in the world. In other words, it is good for geographical actions to contribute to an ever enriched geographical reality and an ever increasing awareness of that reality. It is from the subtle balance between these two values and their conception of the good that we base our intrinsic geographic judgments of the morality of places and projects. Most places are morally mixed, for they contribute to neither

aspect of intrinsic judgments very much. Some places are clearly good in that they contribute to both, other places are clearly evil, for they violate one of these criteria to the point where the other cannot offset it.

But why, one might ask, does the theory focus on awareness, when clearly a bad place such as a concentration camp can be condemned directly as a place that murders others, and a slave plantation is detestable because it diminishes human dignity and freedom? There are at least two answers to this question. The first has already been offered: most evil is ultimately a lack of awareness, and so if we wish to find the root cause and effect, we need to consider this issue first. Why do we kill others, treat them unjustly, humiliate them and take away their dignity, and why do we degrade nature, if it is not mostly for the fact that we do not fully understand what we are doing? Yes, we are gripped by vices such as greed, envy, hate, lust, and sloth, and by institutions that have their own defects, but for most of us, the tightness of evil's grip is due to ignorance, and awareness of these defects lessons its hold on us. What other ground provides a justification for moral critique and a hope for moral improvement?

Second, an emphasis on awareness is central to moving us beyond a moral concern that focuses only on others, which is expressed as the issue of justice, to a concern also with both the idea of truth and properties of nature. Justice is undeniably a central issue in morality, and it has been the preoccupation of most contemporary moral theorists. But it is only one of three areas that geography brings to our attention as moral issues. The other two are the search for truth and our relations with nature. All three are part of what is real and good, and neither of the two is necessarily subservient to justice.

Implicit in our discussion is that once the theory points to the good, we would move in that direction. But a theory of the good cannot force, it can only persuade, and its persuasiveness can be enhanced if it can also identify the wrong direction, and describe why it is not appealing. I want to show how the theory can in fact provide us a picture of bad or evil places—ones that narrow our vision and diminish geographic reality. Such a picture can be drawn from using the obverse of the two forms of intrinsic geographic judgment. The obverse leads to three types of places that geographic judgment shuns.[8]

The first one follows from the opposite of "seeing through to the real" and refers to places that narrow and obscure our vision. This form of evil has already been invoked in our discussion of the Iron Curtain, and its extreme geographic form is autarky and secrecy—intentionally cutting one's society off from the rest of the world.

The second one follows from the opposite of valuing an ever more varied and complex geographic reality, and occurs when the variety and complexity of place is diminished. The most distinctive geographic form this takes is a tyranny of one type of place over other types. Forms of imperialism and colonialism can accomplish this under certain circumstances, but examples can be subtler and also more controversial. A model of one type of place may be forced upon us as *the* model for virtually all places, and so they all tend to become alike. The business model in contemporary society is being urged upon schools and hospitals so that students and patients are turned into customers, while teachers, professors, doctors, and nurses, are turned into producers and providers of products and services. If this imposition of one form on another is successful, then schools and hospitals will become more like places of business, and so the differences among them diminishes. Another example occurs when the products of a place tend to homogenize facets of the world, as many would argue is the case with certain forms of mass production and advertising (Sack 1993).

The third geographic evil follows when both geographic criteria of the good are violated. The geographic form this violation takes is a general and constant transgression and chaos. Certainly change for the better is accomplished by some transgressions, but so too is change for the worse, and if there is only transgression, then no projects can take place. We will not be able to see through, for there will be neither a viewpoint nor anything to see, and an inchoate nothing is not the same as complexity and difference.

Some places and landscapes fit more easily into one or another of these extremes. We have already discussed the Soviet Union as a case of autarky and secrecy, but what of North Korea and the former government of Albania? And what of smaller-scale examples within a society of organizations that cut members off from the rest of the world, as for instance those cults that seduce young children to join and then prevent them from leaving?

Examples of tyranny are found in most cases of imperialism and colonialism when places change through the use of force, but many argue it exists

even more pervasively and effectively in forms of cultural and economic hegemony. But these may be more difficult to evaluate as tyrannical because instead of people forcing other people to do things under threats, we have the claim that economic or social processes are doing the forcing, and this presents problems of causality and free agency, or of structure and agency.

Then there are examples of constant transgression and chaos. We find this most explicitly when society disintegrates, as in Rwanda and Burundi and in the civil strife of the former Yugoslavia. Finally, two or all three of the qualities of evil exist in different proportions in different places. Slave plantations, and concentration camps even more so, were tyrannical. They prevented their victims (even before they were killed) from seeing out. They did not allow them to control their own places, and they constantly transgressed their personal boundaries.

Implications

The geographical theory of morality points out the bad and beckons us to the good. As we move in that direction, we will, of necessity, absorb the intrinsic geographic values into our projects, and thereby make our instrumental judgments more like intrinsic ones. This is the way to moral progress. These arguments define the boundaries of the theory itself, but part of its persuasiveness depends on drawing out its implications. Here we will discuss only those that have to do with its similarities and differences to other moral viewpoints.

Absolute and Relative

The geographic theory of morality depends on the qualities of the good illuminated by geography. It assumes that an accessible world that we help make more accessible, complex, and interconnected has virtue and appeal. The two intrinsic criteria for judging that are drawn from the good are independent of any particular project, and their conjunction forms a dynamic set of criteria for judging places. While the judgments praise or condemn particular uses of geography, the judgments are not absolute in the sense that a place can be judged in isolation. The value of "seeing through to the real," and the value of "variety and complexity" (along with the obverses of tyranny, chaos, and autarky) are about the relationship of places to each other. Moreover, it is not possible to say a particular use of geography is the best (or worst) that could take place, because, by its very nature, place prevents other projects that could have been of equal or greater benefit (or detriment) from occurring, and we could not know the details unless such places were actually to exist. So, while the criteria provide a general direction to the good, their application is to a field of possibilities. Once these are judged, they are still not ranked in terms of their goodness, but rather are judged in terms of whether or not they help us to be on course. Most places are morally ambivalent. They do not push us in any particular direction, or one direction negates the other. In judging places like these, the theory provides a description of how this is the case.

Justice, Truth, and Nature

A geographical theory of morality makes it clear that the moral includes more than justice. Place, as we noted, combines the virtues of truth, justice, and the natural (which correspond respectively to meaning, social relations, and nature) and so justice then becomes only part of geography's moral concerns. The geographic theory of morality—unlike most discussions of morality in geography—does not begin with justice, but rather with meaning and truth, which are the means of understanding the real and the good. But a geographic theory of morality must also address justice and the natural. What does the theory say about justice?

As geographical beings, we create geographies, and we must be aware of them. The intrinsic value of seeing through to the real demands that such views be shared and that everyone be given the greatest opportunity possible to know and expand his or her intellectual horizons. The intrinsic value of creating as complex a reality as possible, but one that can also be seen through, requires that we have in mind how our actions contribute to an integrated and expanding whole. The two together announce a moral obligation to provide everyone with the greatest opportunity to learn, to have free and open access to knowledge, and to create and sustain places that enable us to do this. We cannot deprive some for the sake of others, nor should we limit those who have not

yet reached their potential. Fulfilling this obligation will in turn enrich the world.

In this system, justice concerns our obligations to increase the awareness of all others. Our obligations do not diminish with distance or numbers, for we live in one world with one reality. The only justification for diminishing awareness is if someone does not want to know, and then only if such escape from awareness does not deprive others of the opportunity to know. The theory condemns censorship and secrecy, and it requires free and open access to information. Justice is about our ability to put ourselves in the place of others and see to what degree their views are different, and how ours and theirs can be made more open—an obligation that place, with its structure and dynamics, enables us to fulfill. Justice is about encouraging variety and difference insofar as these contribute to and enrich the whole and assist us in seeing it more clearly. Justice is also about eliminating disease, poverty, and malnutrition. Suffering diminishes our humanity; it narrows our world and prevents us from thinking and reasoning to our fullest potential. Crack houses and places of poverty may increase diversity, but the suffering and ignorance they create diminishes awareness. A just distribution of resources provides all with the opportunity to expand horizons, and a just place creates and sustains these opportunities. Justice is about understanding the consequences of our actions so that we can act responsibly and not diminish the chances for ourselves and others to see and move toward the real and the good.

These issues of justice are ones that the theory justifies because they support a global geography that encourages the understanding and creation of the real and the good. The theory tempers the strident poststructuralist view of a "politics of difference" by showing the affinities that must be present for difference to be good.[9] The more conventional moral theories that begin with justice still have to be justified by conceptions of the good, so why not start there in the first place?

Nature is also addressed by the theory. Place draws together elements of nature, meaning, and social relations, along with the corresponding virtues of the natural, truth, and justice. A geographic theory reminds us that the nature about which we care morally is not the nature of gravity, or the nature of light, but rather about nature as a place or landscape. And since place mixes elements from meaning, nature and social relations, valuing nature and finding value in the natural is never about nature pure and simple. How then do we judge nature as a place? How do the intrinsic judgments justify the diversity of biological systems or biodiversity, and how does it weigh the diversity of such systems against the diversity of human projects?

The implications of a geographic morality would value biological diversity in the same way it values human diversity—as a means of increasing the real and an awareness of the real. In this regard, it also recognizes that the consequences of our actions can threaten biodiversity and the complexity of habitats to the point where these reductions endanger our own biological nature and ultimately the possibility of being aware (Jonas 1984, 1996). As biological diversity diminishes, we might not have the resources we need to live well enough to understand the world, and we certainly would have less of a world to understand. There is a point at which nature could be so diminished as to jeopardize the very existence of productive places, and hence of life chances (Dahrendorf 1979). Global catastrophes like nuclear, chemical, and biological war could make the world virtually uninhabitable for humans. Far less dramatically, we can say that diminishing nature's capacity to provide humans and their future generations with the greatest potentials runs counter to the theory.

Even though the theory uses the same criteria to evaluate biological and human diversity, the theory is anthropocentric, according human life a privileged position that comes from our capacity to reason and be aware. And we repay the favor by recognizing our responsibility for encouraging diversity as a means of increasing awareness and the richness of reality.

Moral and Political Philosophy

How does the theory fit within conventional moral and political philosophy? Let us consider the philosophical first, and point out that there are two levels at which this can be addressed. First, portions of the theory lend support to parts of other moral theories. Emotivism, communitarianism, utilitarianism, and Kantianism all presuppose that context matters (Kant 1952; Mill 1979; MacIntyre 1981; Walzer 1983). Place, its structure and dynamics, and interconnections to other places through space, provide a clear understanding of context and how we can put ourselves in the place of others. Place then

clarifies what is meant by the situated self in emotivism; the community and its spheres of interest in communitarianism; the interests of agents in utilitarianism; and the formulation of reasons or maxims that are judged by the Kantian categorical imperative. In each case, the geographical expands the issues to include more than problems of justice, and makes the agent, her pleasures and reasons, more realistically embedded in projects.

At the level of the theory's general presuppositions, we find that they do not neatly coincide with any particular moral theory. The theory's emphasis on truth, the real, and the good gives it an affinity to transcendental realism. As with the Platonic view, the good is real but ineffable. But unlike Plato (Jowett, ed. 1937), the real evolves in part through our own actions. Other theories assume that good is real, but the geographic theory sees it more like a direction or a "magnetic attraction" that beckons us. We can hope to make progress towards it and disclose more of its facets: its discovery then is a process, but the complete picture is forever ineffable (Tuan 1989). This inexhaustible and ultimately unfathomable quality of the good, and also the real, is part of what makes both compelling.

The theory's privileging of the intellect and reason, and its derivation of criteria of judgment, are in many respects like a Kantian viewpoint (Kant 1952). But because of our geographical agency, the consequences of our actions loom larger in this theory than they do in Kant's, even to the point where we recognize that our actions can jeopardize not just the life and liberty of individuals (and thus be in violation of a Kantian categorical imperative), but of our entire species. Such consequences must be avoided at all costs. In such an extreme but no longer improbable case, what ought to be depends on what is or is possible, which seems to run counter to the Kantian precept that we cannot derive the moral from the empirical, or the "ought" from the "is." Still, this extreme case of our power to end human life in general—which was never contemplated by Kant—is the only instance where the theory allows an empirical likelihood to direct what ought to be. And even then, the justification for avoiding our collective demise turns out to be the same general one that Kant uses for the categorical imperative—that human life and reason are ends in themselves; for in the extreme, valuing life and reason amounts to valuing awareness and complexity.

In many respects, the theory can be embedded in branches of process metaphysics (Whitehead 1941). As with the geographic theory, process metaphysics, along with process theology (Hartshorne 1991), which draws out the moral implications of the metaphysics, conceives of the good as real, ineffable, and leading to criteria for judging that are general and yet sensitive to the fact that the real is emergent and is guided in part by our making the right moral judgments. But where the geographic theory may diverge from process metaphysics is that the latter is far more general in scope, claiming that purpose and reason, although a quintessential attribute of humans, is imminent in all creation, even in the material and subatomic world, and so human obligations are not merely terrestrial, but cosmic and theological.

As far as political philosophy is concerned, the theory's views on justice and its requirement of free and open access to knowledge make it compatible with the essentials of democratic theory and doctrines of human rights that are proposed in the American Constitution and in the U.N. Charter. Rights, though, are political guarantees of particular types of justice, and the theory does not begin with either justice or rights, but with the good, and then leads to principles of justice, and by implication to particular rights that follow from the good. Without a conception of the good to support them, rights, like principles of justice, appear arbitrary. What is more, rights tend to be stated negatively, discouraging us from doing away with something, but not encouraging us to move in any direction. When the underlying conceptions of the good are clarified, we have a better idea of not only what not to do, but also of what we should do, and rights become a necessary means to moving us to the good.

The theory can provide checks on conventional understanding of democratic legitimacy and territorial sovereignty, but with contradictory results. For example, a democratic government's basis of legitimacy assumes that those affected by government will have a voice in it. Yet most democratic governments use geography as an instrument to help define membership and responsibilities (Johnston 1998). With minor exceptions, citizens of the state are those within its borders. Geographic awareness in the sense of seeing through to the real points out that these same states have effects on nature, meaning, and social relations that spill over their borders to the rest of the world (Bader 1995; Carens 1959; Held 1995; Nett 1971; Shapiro 1994). And so it may

be wrong to use place to define political membership and responsibility. The only democratic system that might satisfy these criteria is a world government. But such a system might run counter to the need for geographical variety and complexity.

Conclusion

Contemporary discussions of morality in geography are almost exclusively about justice. Several factors contribute to this. One is a contemporary concern with theories of social relations and especially within Marxist geography. Another is with the dominance of the spatial perspective in geography, which examines the spatial organization of society and the relative positions of its resources. Emphasizing the distribution of things and human proximity and accessibility to them directly raises issues of equality of access and fairness in distribution. Justice and spatial organization fit neatly together.

A focus on the spatial organization of things as the primary geographic perspective emphasizes the material qualities of our lives. We, along with other things in the world, become objects in, and interacting through, space. This perspective tends to lose sight of humans as geographic agents transforming the world. Seeing ourselves as agents comes to the fore more vividly when our focus is on place. Place has a much richer structure than does space. It encourages us to understand activities from both the inside and the outside, and it helps us understand how and why space is important (Entrikin 1991; Sack 1997). A view, then, that incorporates both space and place, but that sees place as not simply a location in space, but rather as the key element by which we as humans engage the world and make it into a home, deepens our understanding of geography and its moral implications.

This is the point of departure of this work. Place emphasizes our own geographical agency and draws attention to the breadth of moral concerns. Place makes the idea of the good more prominent. It shows how justice is one of our moral concerns, but is in turn predicated on conceptions of the good. The good is real but not fixed in stone. Although we can glean facets of it, as an entirety, the good is ineffable. If it were not, then the good would be something static and finite, more a millstone than an inspiration, narrowing the possibilities of human experience (Tuan 1989).

When the current academic fashion is to profess timidity, caution, fear of essentialism, and doubt about the existence of anything, let alone the real and the good, and to convey things in a diffident and even an ironic tone, we need to realize that even those of us who profess this attitude do not live that way. We engage in far-reaching activities. We hold strong beliefs and often state them. Rarely are we relativistic about moral issues, and we continuously judge. Much of the gap between what we profess and how we act arises from a good instinct: we recognize that we are powerful agents and fallible ones; we fear that our misguided actions and beliefs will have adverse effects on the environment and on others. And so not to subject them unfairly to our will and make others into victims is a commendable impulse. It respects human rights and dignity, and the capacity of others to reason. But such restraint is not absolute. We do impose ourselves individually and collectively on others if we are convinced they cannot do the right thing, or if they prevent others from doing so. This is because our original impulse to use restraint, and its legal embodiment in rights and liberties, is itself based on our conception of the real and the good. Once we understand that the good is real and not relative to particular projects and also that it is infinite and flexible, we can be confident that the rights, liberties, and expressions of justice that follow not only are worthy of attention and deserve to be standards for all, but that we should use them to make moral progress. This sketch of a geographic theory of morality is a point of departure in the quest for the real and the good, and place points the way.

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Notes

1. The relational framework in *Homo Geographicus* (Sack 1997) includes not only place and self, but also the realms of nature, meaning, and social relations as mutually constitutive forces. Place and self are central in that they can interconnect nature, meaning, and social relations without reducing two of the realms to a third.
2. An expansion of these ideas will provide the core of a book—*A Geographical Guide to the Real and the Good.* In order to present as much of the theory as possible in an article, I have minimized references and avoided critiquing alternative positions. I believe that too much attention is paid to how one's views are "situated" and not enough to elaborating the views themselves.
3. David Smith (1997) is one geographer who has attempted to situate a geographical discussion of justice within a conception of the good. He emphasizes different qualities of the good than do I, and marshalls them to argue for justice, and not, as I do, for other virtues as well.
4. The causal properties of place lie not only in the mix of elements but in the means by which place draws them together and mixes them without reducing one set to another. Place does this through a causal circuit with three loops: spatial interaction, in/out of place, and surface/depth. These help draw together the elements of meaning, nature, and social relations. These issues are too complex to be addressed here, but are discussed in *Homo Geographicus* (Sack 1997), especially chapter 4.
5. The value of seeing through to the real is also one shared by science and manifested in the National Science Foundation initiatives on science and its moral implications (NCGIA 1994, NSF 1997).
6. My thanks to Kimberly Coulter for drawing this to my attention.
7. I want to stress these two words rather than diverse and rich, which I will also use from time to time, because the biological literature has diversity mean both richness and evenness, and the idea of evenness is difficult to conceptualize in human culture; diversity has also become a politically charged word, while richness is a morally ambiguous term that can be replaced by variety.
8. Compare these geographical issues of evil to anthropological ones (Parkin 1985), where the common denominator seems to be a lack of completeness, something similar to thwarting the geographic principle of not seeing through to the real.
9. The call to attend to affinities among differences is discussed by England (1994), Kobayashi (1994), and Nagel (1998), who also refers to the other two.

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