HUMANISTIC GEOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT. The focus of humanistic geography is on people and their condition. Humanistic geography is thus not primarily an earth science, yet it is a branch of geography because it reflects upon kinds of evidence that interest other branches of the discipline. The following topics are briefly noted from the humanistic perspective: geographical knowledge, territory and place, crowding and privacy, livelihood and economics, and religion. The basic approach to these topics is by way of human experience, awareness, and knowledge. Humanistic geography contributes to science by drawing attention to facts hitherto beyond the scientific purview. It differs from historical geography in emphasizing that people create their own historical myths. A humanist geographer should have training in systematic thought, or philosophy. His work serves society essentially by raising its level of consciousness.

HUMANISTIC geography reflects upon geographical phenomena with the ultimate purpose of achieving a better understanding of man and his condition. Humanistic geography is thus not an earth science in its ultimate aim. It belongs with the humanities and the social sciences to the extent that they all share the hope of providing an accurate picture of the human world. What is the nature of the human world? The humanities gain insight into it by focusing on what man does supremely well in the arts and in logical thought. The social sciences acquire knowledge of the human world by examining social institutions, which can be viewed both as examples of human inventiveness and as forces limiting the free activity of individuals. Humanistic geography achieves an understanding of the human world by studying people's relations with nature, their geographical behavior as well as their feelings and ideas in regard to space and place. Relations with nature and geographical behavior are, however, also the concern of other geographers. For example, a physical geographer examines man's relations with environment and a regional analyst studies the "laws of spatial interaction." What can the humanist geographer contribute? The question presupposes that we know the meaning of humanism and of the humanistic perspective.

HUMANISM

Humanism appears to have different meanings. Erasmus (1466–1536) was a humanist, but so was the zoologist Sir Julian Huxley (1887–1975).[1] What did a Renaissance scholar and a modern scientist have in common? They both sought to enlarge the conception of the human individual. Renaissance scholars turned to classical studies, Greek ideals, and science in reaction against the set and narrow doctrines of the clerics. Erasmus, himself an ordained priest of the Roman church, deplored the religious bigotry of his time; his tolerance and vast learning were evidence of his willingness to expand the concept of man beyond the teachings of his church. Strange as it may seem, even in the twentieth century, a scientist-humanist like Julian Huxley saw a need to fight the constraints imposed by religious dogma. Even now Genesis carries more weight than the theory of biological evolution in some schools.

Historical usage thus allows us to define humanism as an expansive view of what the human person is and can do. A restrictive view still exists. In the universities it is dogmatic science rather than religion that now tends to circumscribe the appropriate language of discourse concerning man. The humanist wonders at this wry turn of events whereby a former liberator becomes censor. Humanism stands for the more inclusive view. Renaissance scholars like Eras-

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[1] Julian Huxley, *The Humanist Frame* (New York: Harper, 1961); and idem, *Religion Without Revelation* (London: Watts, 1967).

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mus and Sir Thomas More did not deny religious doctrine; they thought it insufficient. The humanist today does not deny scientific perspectives on man; he builds on them.

HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE

What is the humanistic perspective? In what way is the humanistic conception of man more comprehensive than that of science? An answer is suggested by looking at the academic disciplines that now lie at the core of the humanities. These are history, literature, the arts, and philosophy. They all focus on thoughts and acts that are uniquely human. At the heart of history, for instance, is the event. Human events differ in character and scope, but they are alike in that they show the human capacity to initiate, that is, to begin anew.[2] If it is granted that people can truly initiate, then events such as the meteoric rise of Islam, the French Revolution, the invention of America or of dialectical materialism, are largely unpredictable. Besides history, literature and the arts are standard areas of humanistic concern. In artworks people's experiences of life and the world are vividly objectified. All animals express themselves, and chimpanzees can be taught to paint, yet literature and the arts are specifically human endeavors. Science itself is a unique manifestation of human capacity, and hence the nature of science is of vital interest to humanists. Doing philosophy is perhaps the human activity par excellence for its basic character is reflection. The habit of philosophical reflection is rare among nonhuman creatures. People not only dance, speak, and think, as other animals may also do, but they are able to reflect on their acts and to evaluate them critically. From the scientific perspective many themes in sociology and in human geography—whether male-bonding, territoriality, or architecture—are almost reducible to those of animal ethology.[3] The humanistic perspective focuses on activities and their products that are distinctive to the human species.[4]

THEMES IN HUMANISTIC GEOGRAPHY

Scientific approaches to the study of man tend to minimize the role of human awareness and knowledge. Humanistic geography, by contrast, specifically tries to understand how geographical activities and phenomena reveal the quality of human awareness. I will use the ethological model in science to provide the point of departure for examining the humanistic perspective. Other reductive scientific models of man—"economic man," for example—can also serve as points of departure, but to avoid overlap and confusion I have not used them. Overlap exists because all scientific models of man simplify the human capacity to know, to create, and to obfuscate. Does humanistic geography offer a fresh way of looking at geographical phenomena? To provide an answer I have briefly explored five themes of general interest to geographers: geographical knowledge, territory and place, crowding and privacy, livelihood and economics, and religion.

Geographical knowledge

If man's uniqueness lies in his special capacity for thought and reflection, then it follows that the primary task of humanistic geography is the study of articulated geographical ideas. In the humanistic fields, time is indeed lavished on great thinkers and writers from Plato to William James. By analogy, humanistic geography might

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[2] "History, in contradistinction to nature, is full of events; here the miracle of accident and infinite improbability occurs so frequently that it seems strange to speak of miracles at all. But the reason for the frequency is merely that historical processes are created and constantly interrupted by human initiative, by the *initium* man is insofar as he is an acting being." Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Present* (Cleveland: World, 1966), p. 169.

[3] It is far from my intention, or that of any humanist, to belittle the wondrous accomplishments of nonhuman animals. As an example of what they can do, see Karl von Frisch, *Animal Architecture* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974). In his conclusion, Karl von Frisch wrote: "We humans are proud of our inventions. But can we discern greater merit in our capabilities than in those of the master builders who unconsciously follow their instinct? . . . There are biologists who are convinced that they, or future generations of scientists will ultimately find the key to life in all its manifestations, if only research perseveres. They are to be pitied." Op. cit., pp. 286–287.

[4] "Let the argument [for the new geography] start from the spiritual ancestry of man rather than from his animal origins, put human will and aspiration and effort first, and the terrestrial domain second—it is after all underneath our feet if we stand up—and the old premises which have clamped us down so long must vanish, and maybe a new birth will be given to a most ancient part of knowledge." William A. Gauld, "Towards a New Geography," *Nature*, Vol. 147 (1941), p. 548. My thanks to Fred E. Lukermann for this reference; it is an early trumpet call for humanistic geography.

be confined to the study of the works of meritorious geographers. Knowing the history of geographic thought has been a part of graduate student training for some time. Humanistic geography, in this limited sense, is an accepted subfield in the discipline. It is also somewhat anemic. Strabo's thoughts lack the depth and subtlety of Plato's, and do not require sustained explication. Except to specialists, the detailed tracing of ideas from one geographer to another can be rather dull and provincial, like the lengthy exposition of a minor novelist's intellectual ancestry in an English class.

Humanistic geography has, for one of its tasks, the study of geographical knowledge, but what is geographical knowledge? Broadly conceived, knowledge of geography is necessary to biological survival. All animals must have it; we speak of timber wolves as having "mental maps" and of migrating birds as supreme "navigators." Knowledge of geography in this sense is animal instinct, developed to varying degrees of acuity in the different species. In contrast, the geographical lore promoted within the culture of academic departments is highly conscious and specialized. Between these extremes lies a broad range of ideas regarding space, location, place, and resource. All human groups possess such ideas, though their degree of articulation varies widely from group to group. Some people lack a formalized sense of space and place; they can find their way in their world, but this ability is not transformed into knowledge that can be passed on verbally or in maps and diagrams. Another people may be excellent navigators who sail with confidence over the broad ocean and whose geographical knowledge is formally organized so that it can be taught, yet they may lack any developed concept of spatial systems and hierarchies. A third group may have elaborated a cosmos in which spatial hierarchies are a major component, yet its members are indifferent applied geographers.

We know little why cultures vary so much in developing spatial skills and in fostering geographical knowledge.[5] Why are some primitive peoples able cartographers whereas others, materially more advanced, lack the concept of map making? What is the relation between spatial ability and spatial knowledge?[6] Such questions, of central importance to humanists, have barely been raised in the geographical profession. Although we may know much about the specialized knowledge of academic geographers we fail to place it in the total spectrum of geographical awareness. This spectrum extends from the "mental map" of migrating birds to our own "mental map" as we drive in a state of trance, from implicit knowing to explicit knowledge as encapsulated in Polynesian navigation charts, from simple ideas on the structure of space to the intricately spatial hierarchies of the Dogon.[7]

Territory and place

Ethologists have shown how animals live in their ecological niches. Some species defend their living space against intruders. They behave as though they regard certain bounded areas as their own; they appear to have a sense of territory. Scientists and popular writers both have extrapolated their data from the animal to the human world. Human attitudes to territory and to place bear a clear resemblance to those of other animals. The humanist, however, must go beyond the analogy to ask how human territoriality and attachment to place differ from that of creatures less burdened with emotion and symbolic thought.[8] There is, for instance, the problem of conceptualization. All animals, including human beings, occupy and use space, but area as a bounded unit of space is also a concept. An area of some size, characteristic of an animal's territory, can seldom be perceived as a whole. The songbird is reputed to have a strong sense of territory, but the songbird is

[5] John W. Berry, "Temne and Eskimo Perceptual Skills," *International Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 1 (1966), pp. 207–29. An abstract and schematic account of the relation of culture to knowledge of space is in Georges Gurvitch, *The Social Frameworks of Knowledge* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972).

[6] Thomas Gladwin, *East Is A Big Bird: Navigation and Logic on Puluwat Atoll* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970). The book is more than a study of Micronesian navigation. Its broader frame of concern is the relation between spatial ability and spatial knowledge.

[7] Cosmologies and their spatial structure are far more complex in West African societies than among tribes in Central and East Africa; Victor W. Turner, "Symbols in African Rituals," *Science,* Vol. 179 (1973), pp. 1104–05.

[8] Susanne K. Langer strongly criticized the ethological model of human behavior in *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), pp. 54–116. She compared and contrasted animal and human acts, animal and human perceptions of space and place. See also W. H. Thorpe, *Animal Nature and Human Nature* (London: Methuen, 1974).

perched high on a tree and it is able to survey the entire area that it takes to be its own. Mammals living close to the ground cannot survey a whole area. Their real territory is not bounded space but a network of paths and places.[9] People are able to hold territory as a concept, envisage its shape in the mind's eye, including those parts they cannot currently perceive. The need to do so, however, may not arise. For example, migratory gatherer-hunters have few occasions when they need to envisage the boundary of their territory.[10] Territory for them is therefore not circumscribed area; it is essentially a network of paths and places permeable to the paths of other hunters. By comparison, farm communities tend to have a strong sense of property and of bounded space.

What is the role of emotion and thought in the attachment to place? Consider the animal as it moves along a path, pausing from time to time. The animal pauses for a reason, usually to satisfy an important biological need—the need to rest, drink, eat, or mate. The location of a pause becomes for the animal a place, a center of meaning which it may defend against intruders. This model of animal behavior and feeling for place is readily applicable to human beings. We pause to answer biological exigencies; each pause establishes a location as significant, transforming it into place. The humanist recognizes the analogy, but again he is disposed to ask how the quality of human emotion and thought gives place a range of human meaning inconceivable in the animal world. A case that illuminates human peculiarity is the importance that people attach to the biological events of birth and death. Animals make no fuss over them. To pragmatic animals locations have value because they satisfy current life needs. A chimpanzee does not wax sentimental over his past, over his birthplace, nor does he anticipate the future and dread his own mortality. Shrines dedicated to birth and death are uniquely human places.

Human places vary greatly in size. An armchair by the fireside is a place, but so is the nation-state. Small places can be known through direct experience, including the intimate senses of smell and touch. A large region such as the nation-state is beyond most people's direct experience, but it can be transformed into place—a focus of passionate loyalty—through the symbolic means of art, education, and politics. How mere space becomes an intensely human place is a task for the humanist geographer; it appeals to such distinctively humanistic interests as the nature of experience, the quality of the emotional bond to physical objects, and the role of concepts and symbols in the creation of place identity.[11]

Crowding and privacy

The impact of high population density on the quality of urban life has engaged the attention of social scientists and planners. Does crowding produce stress, leading to antisocial behavior and sickness? Observations of animals in crowded conditions show that they indeed suffer and tend to engage in abnormal and self-destructive acts. Human beings no doubt also experience physical and psychological stress when subjected to crowding. Except under extreme conditions, however, it can rarely be demonstrated that social and individual pathologies are caused by high population density rather than by the malfunctioning of social and economic forces. Culture mediates between density and behavior. People in crowded Hong Kong are no more prone to crime than people living in relatively spacious American cities. On the open plains of the Kalahari Desert the !Kung Bushmen are crowded by choice, and biological indicators of stress are absent despite the high density.[12]

How culture mediates between population density and behavior is a challenge both to social scientists and to humanists. The distinctively humanistic approach lies in describing the quality of the emotion experienced in spe-

[9] Paul Leyhausen, "Dominance and Territoriality as Complemented in Mammalian Social Structure," in Aristide H. Esser, ed., *Behavior and Environment: The Use of Space by Animals and Men* (New York: Plenum, 1971), p. 26.

[10] A. Irving Hallowell, *Culture and Experience* (New York: Schocken, 1967), p. 210.

[11] I have explored this theme in two papers, "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective," *Progress in Geography*, Vol. 6 (1974), pp. 211–52; and "Place: An Experiential Perspective," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 65 (1975), pp. 151–65; see also Edward Relph, "The Phenomenon of Place," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1973.

[12] Gunter Gad, " 'Crowding' and 'Pathologies': Some Critical Remarks," *Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 17 (1973), pp. 373–90; and Patricia Draper, "Crowding among Hunter-Gatherers: The !Kung Bushmen." *Science*, Vol. 182 (1973), pp. 301–03.

cific settings. For example, existentialist writers have noted how even one more person in the room can create a sense of spatial constraint. A man practices piano alone in a large hall; someone enters to watch. Immediately the atmosphere changes for the pianist. From being the sole subject in command over space he has become one object among many, all under the gaze of another subject. Feeling crowded here is a kind of malaise, arising out of the subconscious awareness that now two perspectives, which are different and therefore conflicting, survey the same objective field.[13] Privacy is shattered. Privacy in this instance is the need to be with one's own acts and thoughts, undisturbed by those of a stranger. In solitude a person creates his own world; safe from another's gaze he seems to sustain the existence of all that he sees. All people need privacy; the degree and kind vary. Crowded conditions make it difficult to escape the human gaze, and thereby a developed sense of self.[14]

Crowding and privacy have a physical term: they are affected by physical space and by numbers of people. They have a biological term: beyond a certain density, under specified conditions, biological indicators of stress appear. They have a pronounced human term, which requires the understanding of culture but which is not exhausted by the idea of culture; for irrespective of culture, man can occasionally feel bitterly alone in the midst of his own kind and a plenitude of being in solitude. What does "crowded" mean? Where people barely have room to stand they may yet open up intellectual and affectional spaces for each other so that the epithet "crowded" is inappropriate. On the other hand, hostility creates a sense of suffocation, a narrowing of the world that physical space can do little to alleviate.[15]

[13] See Jean-Paul Sartre's well-known analysis of the problem of the existence of others in *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), particularly the section called "The Look," pp. 340–400.

[14] A. F. Westin, *Privacy and Freedom* (New York: Atheneum, 1967); and J. Plant, "Some Psychiatric Aspects of Crowded Living Conditions," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 9 (1930), pp. 849–60.

[15] O. F. Bollnow, "Lived-Space," in N. Lawrence and D. O'Connor, eds., *Readings in Existential Phenomenology* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 185–86.

Livelihood and Economics

An animal's activities may be viewed as tending to the preservation of the species. Its relations with other organisms and its behavior in the environment are functional as the anatomical parts and physiological processes within an individual organism are functional. The lives of creatures are almost exclusively economic.[16] Neither the bowerbird's dance nor the termite's skyscraper are impractical *jeux d'esprit*; they are instinctive acts in the service of biological life. This widely accepted animal model has at times been extended to the human world. Taking the analogy to the extreme, all human activities appear to be economic and functional in the sense that they support the social system outside of which people cannot live. Whether it is the worship of the sacred cow or ritual human sacrifice, they may be shown to have important economic consequences, and hence they are not beyond the economic rationale.[17] The humanistic perspective on economic life may be presented as answers to two questions.

1) What do the terms "life-sustaining activity" and "livelihood" mean? In the animal world it is assumed that all activities are geared to the sustenance of life. In the human world, however, the needs of biological survival consume only a part of human energy even in the harshest natural environments.[18] Livelihood in the

[16] I put in the qualifier "almost" advisedly. The Cambridge economist Joan Robinson wrote: "Non-economic activity is not unknown amongst animals. The pelicans, whose economic life is all at water level, spend time soaring high in the air in the company of cranes. The elaboration of the dominance system amongst many species seems to be greater than is necessary for social discipline—it gives the creatures, so to say, an object in life beyond merely keeping alive." Joan Robinson, *Freedom and Necessity: An Introduction to the Study of Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), p. 24.

[17] The social scientist is tempted to exaggerate the way in which various human activities are related. As Ernest Gellner put it: "More merit attaches to showing that a feud really contributes to the coherence of the group, or that the religious ritual has important economic consequences, etc., than to saying that the overtly or apparently economic really is such, or that the apparently pointless ritual really has no point at all." Ernest Gellner, *Cause and Meaning in the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 89.

[18] Richard B. Lee, "What Hunters Do for a Living, or, How to Make Out on Scarce Resources," in Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, eds., *Man the Hunter*

human context does not merely mean activities that maintain a community's biological life. The term livelihood is used foremost of human beings—and for a good reason: even among the most primitive people gaining a living is colored by unzoological aims and values. In advanced societies the unzoological nature of many economic activities is conspicuous. Producing armaments, for example, is an economic enterprise that provides a livelihood for many workers, but its contribution to the survival of the species is in doubt. From the standpoint of biological increase, armament manufacture is one of mankind's less practical enthusiasms. Impractical enthusiasms, affecting in different degree all compartments of life, are grist for the humanist's mill.

2) To what extent do people distinguish between economic and noneconomic activities? The ability to make such a distinction implies a secular and pragmatic attitude to life. Modern man is pragmatic, but he is not alone in his concentration on tangible rewards. Tribal cultures run the gamut of skepticism, materialism, and spiritual fervor.[19] The sharpness with which a compartment of life is identified as economic, devoted to the production and exchange of material goods, varies widely from society to society and within each society.

Economic forces operate whether people recognize them as such or not. Awareness, however, has an impact on the kinds of decisions made and hence on the functioning of the economic system. We may ask, do traders at African periodic markets know how the economy works? Some no doubt know more than others. How does this partial and differential knowledge affect the geography of marketing? People act on the basis of the information they have. This information may be received wisdom or, at the other extreme of deliberate choice, it is a product of computerized economic analysis. All people make plans. Professional planners differ from ordinary folk in that they have—or claim to have—the most articulated body of knowledge at their disposal. To what extent do planners, professional and nonprofessional, make use of economic theory and facts in reaching decisions? How good are the results? Such questions may be asked of planning at all scales from the home and shopping center to the nation. In general the problem of how knowledge, real or illusory, affects behavior is central to the humanistic enterprise.

Religion

Religion is present to varying degree in all cultures. It appears to be a universal human trait. In religion human beings are clearly distinguished from other animals. How can a humanistic perspective contribute to the geography of religion? The field is in disarray for lack of a coherent definition of the phenomenon it seeks to understand. Research on barns and house types is cultural geography, but research on churches and temples seems to belong to the geography of religion. Why is *feng-shui*, a technique for locating graves and houses, not treated as a branch of applied geography or even of surveying? Is it deemed religious because some practices in geomancy appear supernatural or magical to the Western scholar? A field so lacking in focus and so arbitrary in its selection of themes cannot hope to achieve intellectual maturity.

A humanist geographer concerned with religion begins by asking, what is the meaning of religion? To the extent that religion is a special kind of awareness, how does it differ from other kinds of awareness? The word religion is derived from the Latin *religare*, which means to bind again, that is, to bind oneself strongly to a set of beliefs, faith, or ethic. More broadly speaking, the religious person is one who seeks coherence and meaning in his world, and a religious culture is one that has a clearly structured world view. The religious impulse is to tie things together. To what? The "what" is the ultimate concern that theologians speak of, and it differs from people to people. Ultimate concern is the emotion-charged expression for the kingpin of a system of beliefs or the central principle that binds the components of a world view. The central principle may be God, the belief that "God does not play dice," a social or ecological ethic, or a concept of justice or of historical development. In this view, Buddhism is as much a religion as Christianity, and atheistic Communism is a religion no less than agnostic Confucianism. At the individual level, Albert Einstein was as religious as Thomas Aquinas; their kingpins differed but not their passion for a meaningful cosmos.

(Chicago: Aldine, 1968), pp. 30–48; and Marshall Sahlins, "Notes on the Original Affluent Society," ibid., pp. 85–89.

[19] Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Panteon, 1970), p. x.

All human beings are religious if religion is broadly defined as the impulse for coherence and meaning. The strength of the impulse varies enormously from culture to culture, and from person to person. A nonreligious culture or person is described as secular. What does secular mean? It means the religious impulse reduced to a minimum. A secular person is a pragmatic person who does not act from a set of unwavering principles; his acts are ad hoc, based on the needs and conditions of the moment. He feels no urge to integrate his experiences and knowledge with a larger system. He has many short-term projects, but no ultimate concern. Modern technological society is secular because its orientations are largely pragmatic; its members do not subscribe to any authoritative world view. It is a mistake, however, to equate modern industrial society with the secular outlook. Some nonliterate peoples are very pragmatic. They may practice magic, but magic is mainly a technique for achieving limited ends and is not integrated with any system of religious thought. A humanistic approach to religion would require that we be aware of the differences in the human desire for coherence, and note how these differences are manifest in the organization of space and time, and in attitudes to nature.

HISTORICAL AND REGIONAL

The tasks in humanistic geography thus outlined are all capable of systematic treatment; indeed they invite a systematic, conceptual, and comparative approach. What is the place of historical and regional geography in the humanistic enterprise?

If history is a pillar of the humanities, then historical geography ought to be a pillar of humanistic geography. The parallel is misleading, however, for "historical" is not just an adjectival form of "history." The two words differ in meaning. History is concerned with events; without events no history. Historical, on the other hand, refers to a past time; it is a static concept. Historical geography may be the land use and settlement geography of an area in the past, or it may review a succession of such pasts. Events themselves are important insofar as they directly or clearly affect the earth's surface. Given this criterion, a historical geography of California must include the Gold Rush. A historical geography of Europe, however, need not mention the French Revolution, even though it was a major event by any historical standard other than its immediate impact on field patterns. To use physical change in the landscape as the measure of the importance of a human event is to take physical geography for model. Historical geography can be very remote from humanistic concerns. To the geographer it seems as though history and geography conjoin only in the study of large-scale migrations. Mass movements of people, such as the settlement of the New World, are major happenings, and geographers study them, but once the land has been settled they lose interest in human initiatives other than those that visibly alter the landscape. The Civil War is a watershed in the history of the United States, yet historical geographers have paid little attention to it.

The humanistic element in historical geography is often minimal. Humanistic geography, however, clearly requires knowledge of history and of historical geography. People have history; other creatures do not. History is not only the passage of events but their conscious reconstruction in group memory for current purposes. History, thus defined, plays an essential role in the human sense of territoriality and place. Consider Quebec and the American West. The past makes Quebec what it is today; it has given the province its distinctive landscape and culture. The humanist must know the province's factual past, but the past does not determine Quebec's present identity. Its present identity is being created by the Quebecois through the selective use of their past. The past, in this sense of reconstituted history, is an arsenal for the forging of a national consciousness and ideology. Reconstituted history need not be real; it needs only the semblance of reality. The American West reminds us how little the popular image of a place depends on scrupulous historical knowledge.[20]

Regional geography that succeeds in capturing the essence of place is a work of art. Portraying a region has the same kind of difficulty as portraying a person, but compounded manifold. A person is his biology, his environment, his past, accidental influences, how he sees the world, and how he deliberately prepares a public image. The identity of a place is its physical character, its history, and how people make use

[20] David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place; Landscape and Meaning," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 65 (1975), pp. 1–36.

of their past to foster regional consciousness. Art attends to minutiae; it is highly specific and yet it gives the impression of universality. A village can seem a microcosm. Life in a Pennsylvanian town is all the detailed events of a specific place, yet told with genius it appears to shed light on human nature and the human condition.

The vivid depiction of a region is perhaps humanistic geography's highest achievement, but artistic success is not a program that can be followed. Humanistic geography would be a counsel of perfection if restricted to creating works of art. The themes here suggested for humanistic geography do not require the unified vision or a talent for synthesis of the highest order. Their merit is that they can be systematically explored.

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Humanistic geography, with its focus on awareness and knowing, runs certain risks. These include seeing design and deliberation where none exists, assuming concordance between mind and behavior, and paying excessive attention to beginnings when consciously held purpose guides action.

Seeing Design

Consider building construction. A humanist geographer sees workers engaged in their separate tasks on the scaffolds of a rising skyscraper. Each week a new story is added to the building, and eventually it is completed. The humanist is tempted to regard the final structure as a design in someone's head which has been fully carried out. The workers, for example, look as though they know exactly what they are doing, yet it is more likely that each worker knows only his own role and that of close colleagues. None has the complete plan in his head, not even the foreman or the chief architect. Knowledge is everywhere partial, yet the skyscraper is built. It exists as an integrated and fully functioning unit.

Take a simple urban system made up of a central city surrounded by a ring of smaller settlements. A humanist looking at the system may see it as a design that lay originally in a master planner's head and then was faithfully executed. In fact, although it is possible to plan such a system to the last side road, most urban networks have come into being as the result of unintegrated individual decisions. Their overall design is produced by the operation of largely impersonal economic forces. A scientist tends to see human patterns emerging without the benefit of human will; a humanist, by contrast, is inclined to perceive intention where objective forces alone operate. An extreme example would be to describe the pattern of a snowflake as designed, a manner of speaking to which scientists—in their offguard moments—are also prone. Opportunity, for the humanist, lies in recognizing the risk, and with the risk in mind to ask the extent to which awareness and design enter in the creation of human environments at different scales.

Mind and behavior

Both the scientist and the humanist are likely to assume a concordance between mind and behavior, between what a person says and what he does, between belief and works. By assuming concordance a scientist frees himself from the need to study verbalized attitudes since he can infer, if necessary, the attitude from observable action. A literary humanist, for his part, tends to regard verbalized attitudes, particularly those canonized in literature, as sufficient evidence of what people actually do. When a social scientist undertakes to survey attitudes with questionnaires, he too assumes that the stated opinions are good guides to action. Expressed belief and behavior often conform, but they sometimes do not. Opportunity, for the humanist, lies in attempting to understand in depth the nature of beliefs, attitudes, and concepts; the strength with which they are held; their inherent ambivalences and contradictions; and their effects, direct as well as indirect, on action.

Beginnings

Active planning is necessary when a person encounters new challenges, such as moving into a new job and neighborhood. He has to decide where to live, where to go shopping, and how much time he can afford to spend in commuting to work. At a larger scale, the migration of a people from one country to another calls for deliberative thought both before the journey and at the end, when migrants have to adapt to a new country. The humanist runs the risk of paying excessive attention to beginnings, when consciously held purpose and planning play a large role in behavior. He is likely to forget that habit rules people's lives, and that once a satis-

factory pattern of movement is established it tends to remain. From the objective viewpoint the pattern of movement may look complicated and highly deliberative; in fact, it is executed with a minimum of pauses for decision-making.[21] Habit is biologically adaptive. Tasks, once learned, can be performed unthinkingly so that thought is freed to explore and respond to new challenges. A humanist who recognizes the force of habit in all spheres of human activity is better able to appraise the importance of initiative, the ability to break out of habitual modes under the guidance of conscious thought.

RELATIONS TO SCIENCE

Humanistic geography builds, critically, on scientific knowledge. The rules and laws formulated in science are perceived to function as fate in the human drama. People obey physical and economic laws whether they recognize them as such or not; people are also the playthings of chance. The humanist geographer must be keenly aware of the constraints on human freedom. Unless he knows animal spatial behavior he cannot distinguish human actions that are biologically conditioned from those that depend on the deliberating and liberating mind; unless he knows how animals react to dense packing he cannot know how human beings uniquely respond to crowding; unless he knows the impersonal forces of an economy he cannot estimate to what degree human beliefs and ventures are founded on illusion.

Humanistic geography has another and more direct link with science. The subfield, we have seen, is centrally concerned with the quality of human awareness and with learning. How do people acquire spatial skills and knowledge? How do people become emotionally involved with place? Such questions show that the humanist geographer shares the preoccupation of the developmental psychologist. Their questions are similar, though addressed to phenomena of different complexity and scale. Even their field techniques have in common the detailed observation of individual behavior in real life. Jean Piaget's works, for example, contain many detailed accounts of children playing in the house and in the yard that have the intricacy and concreteness of a novelist's art.[22]

Humanistic geography's contribution to science lies in disclosing material of which the scientist, confined within his own conceptual frame, may not be aware. The material includes the nature and range of human experience and thought, the quality and intensity of an emotion, the ambivalence and ambiguity of values and attitudes, the nature and power of the symbol, and the character of human events, intentions, and aspirations. A social scientist can probably benefit from reading biographies, histories, poems, and novels as human documents, but they are often too dense-textured and specific to suggest possible lines of research. One of the humanist geographer's roles is that of an intellectual middleman: he takes these nuggets of experience as captured in art and decomposes them into simpler themes that can be systematically ordered. Once experience is simplified and given an explicit structure, its components may yield to scientific explanation.

TRAINING

The basic training of a climatologist can be specified with clarity and logic. What is the ideal education for a humanist geographer? A background knowledge of physical geography, animal ethology, and concepts in the social sciences is useful. Facts from these fields are for him a point of departure and a reminder of the many constraints that impersonal forces place on man. From ethology, moreover, he learns techniques of observation.[23] The humanist geographer must obviously have linguistic skills, and not only in the sense of writing well; he should be aware of the nuances of language, of the ambiguous meaning of key words such as nature and natural, doing and knowing, equilibrium and development, the quality of life; he must develop a sensitivity to language so that

[21] Herbert A. Simon identifies the complexity of human behavior as a reflection primarily of the outer (artificial) environment; *The Sciences of the Artificial* (Cambridge: MIT Press paperback edition, 1970).

[22] For example, Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space* (New York: Norton, 1967).

[23] "I feel that I can cooperate best by discussing what it is in ethology that could be of use to other behavioral sciences. What we ethologists do not want . . . is uncritical application of our results to man. Instead, I myself at least feel that it is our method of approach, our rationale, that we can offer, and also a little simple common sense, and discipline." N. Tinbergen, "On War and Peace in Animals and Man," *Science*, Vol. 160 (1968), p. 1412.

he can read, so to speak, between the lines of a text and hear the unsaid in a conversation. He should be well read in history and in imaginative literature.

A climatologist need not be well read in scientific philosophy to be competent in his scientific work. A humanist geographer, by contrast, must have a keen interest in philosophy, for philosophy raises fundamental questions of epistemology to which he can seek exemplifications in the real world. Philosophy also provides a unified point of view from which a whole range of human phenomena can be systematically evaluated. The scientist has no need to acquire deliberately a point of view or philosophical frame. Scientific methodology is such a perspective and frame; it is universally accepted and it has amply demonstrated its usefulness in the domain of material objects and abstract relations. The humanist, by contrast, must seek a philosophy suited to his purpose.[24] Without a fundamental viewpoint his work tends to become disjoint esoterica. Having such a viewpoint is to confess limitation rather than bias. Bias occurs when we are ignorant of our philosophical presuppositions or when we insist that a perspective is an all-inclusive system.

USEFULNESS

Geography provides useful knowledge. It "subserves the needs of states," Strabo claimed.[25] The kinds of information that geographers collect and map may indeed have served large organizations, if not from the time of Strabo, then from the time of the great European explorations and the founding of empires. Any large organization must ask questions of "how many" and "where." Governments establish bureaus for the express purpose of gathering and filing data. Geographers, when they map land use and population, contribute to this vast Sisyphean task.

What is usefulness? One criterion is being paid: by definition a work is useful if it is remunerated. Another is discernable effect on people's lives and on the land. A third is humane purpose: a work is useful if it contributes to the welfare of society. What is the use of humanistic geography? A humanist geographer is rarely paid, except in a liberal arts college, for what he does. He has no assured role in a traditional bureaucracy, because processing massive statistical material is not one of his skills. What effect does a humanist have on the real world? Students are, of course, a part of the real world and dedicated teaching can open minds. In fact, by the criterion of effect on others, the humanist in his classroom may be judged more useful than his practical-minded colleague in a planning office. The accumulation of data is no guarantee of use. Tons of land use maps, park and recreation reports, city and state plans never see the light of day. Dreams that begin on the drafting table too often take a short trip to the filing cabinet where they are permanently entombed.

How does a humanist geographer contribute to human welfare, as, for example, in the design of a better physical environment? His scientific colleague can suggest a more efficient transportation system, or ideal locations for new industries and sewage plants. What can the humanist do? Generally speaking, the humanist's competence lies in interpreting human experience in its ambiguity, ambivalence, and complexity. His main function as a geographer is to clarify the meaning of concepts, symbols, and aspirations as they pertain to space and place. Here is a specific hint of how he can serve. People's response to physical setting is mediated by culture, which is so much a part of day-to-day living that it can rarely be seen by the inhabitants themselves. One of the humanist's functions is to make the virtues and defects of a culture explicit. He should be able to suggest to the planner that in some cultures people prefer to live close together; on the other hand, he should be able to remind people that togetherness, however desirable, is achieved at the cost of certain other human values. The humanist will show how place is a shared feeling and a concept as much as a location and a physical environment. He can suggest means by which a sense of place may be enhanced.

Despite these possible services the humanist's approach will never be really popular. The reason is not simply because it seems far less efficient than the direct manipulation of the physical environment. A more basic reason is that

[24] Phenomenologists and philosophers concerned with the symbol have influenced my perspective on humanistic geography. A short list of names would include Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ernst Cassirer, Susanne Langer, and Nelson Goodman.

[25] *The Geography of Strabo*, translated by H. L. Jones (London: Heinemann, 1917), Vol. 1, pp. 16 and 19.

few people care to probe deeply into themselves. Self-knowledge, the prime reward of the humanistic enterprise, has always been suspect in Western culture.[26] Consider the problem of creating a sense of place or of national identity. In such a task it helps to dramatize a neighborhood's or a nation's achievements; it helps to highlight a place's image by Madison Avenue techniques. At a deeper level it helps to ignite in the people a consciousness of their own past by such means as historical pageants and coffee-table books. Where does one stop in this probing of experience? As an individual's past is full of buried skeletons, so even more is the history of a people. A humanist who starts well by telling a neighborhood how to embellish its image loses his client as he lays bare its complex and not always savory past.

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Humanistic geography is critical and reflective. The world of geographical facts includes not only climate, farms, settlements, and nation-states, but geographical sentiments, concepts, and theories. A humanist looks at this world of facts and asks, what does it mean? what does it say about ourselves? As a professional group geographers are not noted for introspection. Like our great forebear, Alexander von Humboldt, we are extroverts. Our endearing trait, and defect, is the tendency to rush out and do things without pondering why. A fitting coda to this essay is Wilhelm von Humboldt's wry comments on his younger brother, Alexander. The comments are unfair, as a dedicated humanist or scientist can often be unfair to enthusiasms alien from his own, yet to the extent that they jolt our complacency they have a message for us.[27]

> You know Alexander's views. They can never be the same as ours, much as I love him. It is downright funny when he and I are together. I always let him talk and have his way, for what's the use of contending when the first bases of all our principles are totally different. Alexander has not only unique learning and truly comprehensive views, but an unusually lovely character: warmhearted, helpful, self-sacrificing, unselfish. What he lacks is a quiet contentedness in himself and in thinking. That is why he understands neither people, though he always lives in close association with someone and even by preference concerns himself with people's feelings, nor art, although he readily comprehends all its technical aspects and is a pretty good painter himself, nor—and this is a bold and frightening thing to say about him—does he understand nature, though every day he makes important discoveries in natural science.

[26] Michael Gelven, *Winter, Friendship, and Guilt: The Sources of Self-Inquiry* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1973), pp. 12–20.

[27] Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Humanist Without Portfolio*, translated by Marianne Cowan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), p. 407.