



Introduction

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This Handbook provides an opportunity to think critically about how geography as a field of knowledge, not so much as a restraining discipline with fusty conventions but as a rich set of intellectual traditions producing new knowledge with reworked concepts, has emerged and fared over the course of its modern institutionalization. Unlike some other fields, geographical scholarship is not neatly demarcated. Frequently physical and human geography are separated out from one another as if they had completely different historical trajectories. Yet, over a fairly long period of time, it is their very co-existence that is one of the things that has helped to constitute the field at large. It is quintessentially an interdisciplinary tradition when its various 'parts' (physical and human, cultural and economic, etc.) are considered together. Given its catholicity and relatively open boundaries, many of its most compelling practitioners are only viewed as 'geographical' in hindsight. Particularly before the creation of university departments and degree programs in geography, the label 'geographer' or 'geographical writer' was not a self-evident one for many whom we might judge today as central figures in the 'geographical canon' (e.g.

Immanuel Kant or Alexander von Humboldt). Geography as a discipline is, therefore, very largely a retrospectively constituted tradition. Though there are good grounds for feeling uneasy and self-conscious about the invention of traditions, we cannot do without a tradition if we are to engage in common dialogue, avoid historical superficiality, think critically and creatively about the nature of the discipline, prepare the next generation of students, and ground commitments to our fields of study in rapidly changing institutional settings. Traditions are inescapable (Agnew *et al.* 1996). The issue is to ensure that they remain vital conversations between past and present without degenerating into repressive or exclusionary regimes.

In this Handbook we adopt a relatively broad definition of what constitutes geographical scholarship, but we do so in the belief that there is a stream of knowledge sited in discrete locations but circulating over space and flowing across time that can be plausibly labeled 'geographical'. This is not to imply some a priori commitment to a canon of geographical thought operating as a transcendental touchstone for all that comes later. Rather, to adopt the metaphor of ancients and moderns, it is to recognize that

new authors discard some ‘ancients’ only to jump back and expropriate others, even as these are mobilized to create new visions to engage with new problematics (e.g. Klibansky 1936). The central issue is not so much the historical selectivity of the canon as the fact that it has been an unreflexive invented tradition that has avoided serious systematic critical scrutiny. As we draw on historical precursors, therefore, we need to be aware of why we draw on them (and not on others) and that what we draw on will not necessarily be the same as they (or their contemporaries) had in mind. A canon may well be fundamental to a discipline but an unexamined one is not.

Over the past 30 years or so, students of scientific, social, political, and geographical thought and practice have become increasingly sensitive to the questionable ways in which their subject matter has been seen conventionally, often in a so-called Whiggish mode, as leading from a primitive and ill-informed past to what is dominant today. A string of canonical authors is typically given center stage in the unfolding linear disciplinary drama. Such an approach is indeed critical to the modern identities of sociologists, biologists, economists, geographers, and so on. This strategy is deficient in itself, however, because it often fails to justify why some authors are canonical and others are not, and it typically fails to situate authors in the context of their places and times. These two critiques have become vital components in the reformulation of textbooks in social and political thought. In geography, however, there is still a tendency to obsess about ‘big names’, partly as a result of the way in which universities have recruited talent by bringing in stars with extensive resumes to bolster their reputations, but also because of the technology of ranking journals, departments, and individuals by their so-called impact. Some commentators have hinted at the significance of, for example, networks of communication and the dynamics of ideas (e.g. Claval 1972; Stoddart 1986). But that is about all. There are relatively few studies that

successfully devote attention both to what can be called a ‘human interest’ approach, focusing on key intellectual figures, and to the major conceptual controversies that have wracked the field down the years. Powell’s (2005) exciting intellectual history of geographical disputes over the development of the Colorado River and the origins of the Grand Canyon is one that readily springs to mind.

Strangely, at much the same time, modern geography as a discipline has been tremendously influenced by the theoretical interventions of thinkers such as Roland Barthes, who openly proclaimed the ‘death of the author’, and Michel Foucault who spread the idea of the author into what he called the ‘author function’. We could, therefore, claim writers like these as allies in the task of overthrowing the typical conception of how we construe the field. But that would be mistaken. For we are not so concerned so as to deny authorship in the interest of designating discourses that pass through ‘authors’; our project rather is to situate authors in the context of the material and intellectual venues they occupied and the conceptual controversies in which they engaged. For without these their contributions relative to one another cannot be evaluated. Authorship will thus appear in the pages that follow, but not as a cause for celebration in itself.

In this Handbook, therefore, we do not aspire to canonize any set of authors. Rather, we propose, on the one hand, to examine the venues or places in which a range of texts, ideas, and concepts from multiple authors have emerged and among which they have circulated; and, on the other hand, to scrutinize critical and contested concepts that have served as both the ‘core’ of the field and whose expropriation, reworking, and elaboration, continue to frame and inform disputes over the direction and power structure of the discipline today. In other words, we seek to balance two critical approaches. First we focus on venues that generate geographical knowledge and are productive of modes of discourse subsequently available to people in



particular times and places; and secondly we direct attention to the intellectual and social histories of key geographical concepts whose meaning and import have evolved, sometimes controversially, over long periods of time.

The endeavor, therefore, is to situate the main ideas and influence of authors who arguably have made fundamental contributions to geographical thought and practice, and to locate them spatially, historically, and intellectually. More particularly, the discipline we are addressing here is Western, largely Anglo-American, in provenance. For this we offer no apology. We make no claim to universalism for the Handbook. There are undoubtedly other streams of geographical knowledge than the ones we are concerned with here, but these often have had little or no direct influence on the traditions we are addressing. Where they are indebted to traditions of scholarship from elsewhere, the essays that follow seek to specify these and to identify the character of the intellectual obligation. To put the more specific approaches to the geographies and conceptual history of geography into a wider frame of reference, however, we do need to provide a set of preliminary orientations that trace the genealogy of terms such as 'geography' and 'the geographical' and to outline the various broad streams of theoretical and methodological thinking that have informed the field down the years.

The Handbook, then, will consist of three sections devoted respectively to Geographical Orientations, Geography's Venues, and Critical Geographical Concepts and Controversies. The first will provide a brief overview of the genealogy of 'geography' in various forms by surveying the dominant narratives of the field that have informed the methodologies and understandings of theory that have animated the discipline. Attention will be given throughout these chapters to the borrowings from and relations with other fields including interdisciplinary ones. The second section will highlight the range of spatial settings and locations in which

geographical knowledge has been generated and around which its main products circulate and are adopted and adapted. We identify 20 or so venues as of primary importance in the historical geography of geographical thought. This list is likely to be far from exhaustive, and the venues identified have waxed and waned in relative significance over time. However, they represent at least some of the key technologies and sites for the production and reproduction of geographical knowledge and its associated texts. At the same time they contribute towards an understanding of intellectual history that takes the role of space and place with great seriousness. Taken together they contribute towards the cultivation of a 'geography' of geographical knowledge and practice. The third section will address a range of critical concepts and associated controversies that have served sometimes to unify, sometimes to divide, geographical scholarship; down the years they have been expropriated anew, invested with new meanings, and used to define new 'intellectual tribes' that cite their members favorably but subject others to unremitting censure. This section moves beyond the notion of a received canon to identify reworkings and recombinations that have challenged established wisdom. It is again inevitable, as with the section on venues, that not every concept that has had some role in the geographical endeavor can have its own chapter. We have selected those that have had a persistently superordinate status in the hope that other related ones will also be addressed. Thus, for example, such concepts as movement, circulation, diffusion, and iconography should all put in appearances at suitable points in chapters devoted to landscape and nature/culture. Our aim is to be as comprehensive as possible but without claiming to be encyclopedic.

In this Introduction we try to do three things. First, we present a general perspective on what can be called 'geographies of knowledge' to highlight the perspective that has inspired the focus on venues in the body of the Handbook. If from one viewpoint this



is a negative activity, providing an alternative to the obsession with authors, authorial intent, and 'big names' in much of what goes for the history of geographic knowledge, from another it is profoundly renewing for the field itself. It points to how much geography is itself implicated in the ideas of geography as a scholarly field of endeavor and as a practical and engaged enterprise; at the same time it brings to prominence the crucial significance of how ideas, technologies, and practices circulate, transform, and settle. Knowledge production and circulation, therefore, is not that special. The profoundly human processes of everyday life, cultural presuppositions, geopolitical contestation, and social competition are at work here as they are in all other aspects of human existence. The second thrust of the chapter is to provide a theoretical perspective on the other major substantive section of the book: the essentially temporal frame by which ideas and concepts are transmitted, reformulated, and redefined in disputes as a result of the waxing and waning of various fashions and enthusiasms. Tides of theoretical, methodological, and referential fashion seem to have washed geography's shores at an increasing rate in recent years. As authors move from bandwagon to bandwagon we can trace their moves without having to make coherent 'whole' intellectual lives out of their much messier parts. Finally, we provide a brief summary of the substance of the chapters themselves and of how we see them fitting into the overall structure of the Handbook.

GEOGRAPHIES OF GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

Recent rethinking about where knowledge is produced and how it circulates can helpfully inform our understanding about geographies of knowledge. Such geographies, of course, are not simply ends in themselves. The point is to understand the ontological bases of knowing from perspectives that do not either

privilege a singular history of knowledge associated with a specific world region such as Europe versus China (a typical relativism), or presume conceptions of knowledge that implicitly or explicitly assume their own self-evident universality (a typical positivism). The specific sites or venues within which geographical knowledge is produced and across which it circulates must be situated within the framework of these larger concerns. There is no 'view from nowhere'. Knowledge is always 'local, situated, and embedded' (Shapin 1998: 6). But this is not to imply that there is no such thing as 'true' knowledge. Rather it is to insist that we need to know how knowledge is made in order to judge how well it should 'travel'. How knowledge is produced and circulates is fundamental to establishing its relative credibility or the trust that can be placed in it. Now that we know how Cyril Burt collected his data and Margaret Mead relied on her informants we can reach more reliable conclusions about what faith to put in their findings and interpretations.

Recent rethinking of the geography of knowledge can be considered initially with respect to four dominant tendencies in thinking about the nature of the world and the character of knowledge production—tendencies that need to be identified and contested. Unfortunately, they are rarely raised together and, as a consequence, dealing with any one does not always necessarily involve addressing the others. Subsequently we will turn to how we hope to use various geographies of knowledge in hopes of coming to grips with one or more of these dominant ideas about the nature of the world and the character of knowledge production.

First of all, knowledge is often regarded as simply a commodity like any other that is exchanged in a 'marketplace' of ideas. The most truthful ones win out in an evolutionary competition based on the professionalization of knowledge accumulation in universities and research institutes. From this viewpoint, there is no separable social influence on knowledge whatsoever. Now, one does not



need to endorse the view that all explanatory schemes, theoretical positions, and empirical claims, are equally truthful to accept that what knowledge becomes 'normalized' or dominant and what is marginalized has something to do with who is doing the proposing and where they are located. The marketplace of ideas is not a level playing field. There are both sociologies and geographies of knowledge production and circulation. The positivism that remains defiantly agnostic about the social-geographical sources of its knowledge and the uses to which such knowledge is put is increasingly problematic. Yet knowledge is never simply a prisoner of culture, will, or power. The sort of detachment or ability to look beyond one's own limited horizons cultivated by 'academic freedom,' but also characteristic of people under much less congenial social arrangements (dissidents in Cold War Eastern Europe and contemporary China, for example) means, as Thomas Haskell (1998: 152–3) suggests, that we take seriously both parts of a famous quotation by Nietzsche, usually used to indicate the impossibility of disinterestedness and the inevitability of relativism. The second part judges that some 'conceptions' can be more complete than others:

There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the more affects we are allowed to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing be. Nietzsche 1969: 119.

Haskell (1998: 153) concludes: 'The ideal of objectivity [if not that of neutrality] requires no more of a foothold than this.' Of course, a commitment to a modicum of objectivity, at the very least as a regulative ideal, by no means provides a guarantee that it will ever be successful in the outcome, only that it is vital to consider it as a goal rather than, say, cynically acquiescing to the presumption that knowledge always does or *should* serve power, or that this or that perspective is necessarily wrong simply because we do not like it or it is not from our culture. The main

claim here is that knowledge emanating from one place is not necessarily incommensurable or unintelligible relative to knowledge produced elsewhere. Cross-cultural communication goes on all the time without everything being entirely lost in translation. Indeed, knowledge in some places gains in both the possibility of greater geographical scope and cultural sensitivity when it is informed by knowledge coming from other places. There is much confusion about such matters in contemporary disputes about epistemology in social science in general with the possibility of constrained objectivity often summarily dismissed in favor of social determinisms of knowledge of various types often justified using a loosely employed language of social construction with extreme cultural relativism as the inevitable outcome.

The second presumption is that world geography or global space are conceived of as a 'surface' rather than, say, as Doreen Massey (2005: 4) suggests a 'meeting up of histories'. Such reconceptualisations matter because a surface (at least in a Euclidean sense) presumes total ease of movement, timelessness, no directional bias, and an Archimedean view over the whole. Yet world history has always been a narrative of collisions between conceptions of space (and time) as the world itself was made and remade by the imposition of dominant grids (think of latitude and longitude or dating based on pre-Christian and Christian eras) more than a straightforward incision of history on a passive surface. Any particular theoretical position necessarily contains within it specific grids of space and periodizations of time that deeply trouble standard spatial and temporal designations. It thus makes sense, for example, to ask questions like 'Whose Middle East?' or 'Whose medieval world?' is under scrutiny. At the same time, this perspective can overstate the linearity of intellectual development in different regions at the expense of noting both the limits of historicism (many ideas are not all specific to time and place but discovered independently in several places and persist



over time) and the complexity of knowledge formation even within particular locations. Failure to acknowledge such possibilities results in a crude spatial reductionism.

Another inclination is an impulse to characterize space in terms of temporal periods by categorizing some places as 'following in the footsteps' of others as they recapitulate previous history. This was the main move of modernization and other developmental conceptions of space and time when they were brought into circulation in eighteenth-century Europe. From this viewpoint, because some places are more developed economically, they must necessarily be superior in other respects such as the presumed universality of their knowledge claims. Eventually, by learning from their betters, those lower down the global order can potentially catch up. The very possibility that some still think this way is a greater reflection of the global dominance of some places over others than any inherent intellectual superiority reflecting 'stage' of development. Typically, national states are taken as the basic units of account arrayed along a developmental continuum. Much social and political theory, in particular, tends to be intimately intertwined with specific nation-states and to assume a world thus divided. At one time larger bounded territorial entities such as 'civilizations' were given priority and there are indeed signs that something similar is currently resurfacing. Either way, what is missing is the fact that such hard-walled territories are both relatively modern and anything but universal. Projecting the assumption that they are in fact both ancient and universal produces an image of the world as a mosaic of rigidly bounded 'peoples', 'cultures', and 'societies'. It is to these entities that the cultivation of knowledge is thus often fallaciously ascribed.

The final tendency is the sharp contrast frequently drawn between space, representing the general or universal, on the one hand; and place, standing in for the local and specific, on the other. Places are often thought of as if they are 'bunkers' or isolated communities

separated from everywhere else. For both nationalism and identity politics more generally, place is commonly seen as the ideal locale in which the group lives hermetically sealed off from all others (Simpson 1995: Chapter 5). To cosmopolitans, in contrast, space is the ideal; a world without borders in which hybridity and cross-cultural intercourse reign in all directions. This opposition, present most clearly in contemporary globalization debates between those locked into a territorialized world and those proclaiming an incipient world of placeless flows, misses both the extent to which places are almost always parts of spatial networks reaching across cultural and political barriers, and at the same time settings in which distinctive social and moral habits and routines take place. Recent thinking in human geography suggests that relational spaces and relatively bounded places co-exist and interrelate rather than being mutually exclusive (Agnew 2005: Chapter 3; Coleman and Agnew 2007). Binary or oppositional views of place and space, therefore, offer a mistaken basis for understanding the workings of geographies of knowledge.

Much cultural and literary theory of the past quarter century has been taken up with debating one or more of these issues, though often with different terminology. However, the critical question of ultimate 'ontological belonging' has increasingly bedeviled the debate: from the politics of group identity to the 'clash of civilizations'. In this construction, perhaps too much discussion of the geography of knowledge comes too close to what Timothy Brennan (2006: 6) calls 'a religious approach to knowledge in general, that is, the creation of like-thinking communities based on transcendental convictions'. In this regard, knowledge is always and everywhere regarded as emanating from incommensurable and totally distinctive worlds reflecting primordial cultural identities that the Western Enlightenment has merely driven 'underground'. In this way critical reflection is largely abandoned for excavating this or that experiential difference. At an extreme



the emphasis on 'local knowledge'—a stance in which all science [for example] is seen as ethnoscience with standards rooted in a particular culture—withdraws objectivity, turns the abdication of judgment into a principle of judgment, and recalls what was once a right-wing preoccupation with 'Jewish physics', 'Italian mathematics', and the like. Bronner 2004: 162.

Such extreme cultural relativism critically ignores the fact that cultures in the modern world never exist in isolation and that 'cultures' themselves are assemblages of people with often cross-cutting identities and commitments. From this viewpoint, culture is 'an idiom or vehicle of inter-subjective life, but not its foundation or final cause' (Jackson 2002: 125).

Be that as it may, knowledge creation and dissemination are never innocent of at least weak ontological commitments, be they national, class, gender, or some other particularity. This is precisely the point of referring to the geography of knowledge: the question of *where* brings together a wide range of potential ontological and epistemological effects under the rubric of spatial difference. At the same time, massive socio-political transformations in the world are shaping changes in how we (whoever and wherever we are) engage in how knowledge is ordered, disciplined, and circulated. Cross-global linkages are arguably more important today than at any time in human history, not so much in terms of the conventional story of producing places that are ever more alike, but more especially in creating opportunities for interaction between local and long-distance effects on the constitution of knowledge. As a result, anomalies in established theories as the world unleashes surprises and the subsequent limits to the conventional theoretical terms in which theories have been organized—states versus markets, West versus the Rest, religion versus secularism, past versus present, the *telos* of history versus perpetual flux, uniformitarianism versus climate change—pose serious challenges to the disciplinary codes that have long dominated geographical thinking. Perhaps the most

serious issue concerns the continuing relevance of the idiographic/nomothetic (particulars/universals) opposition that has afflicted Western social science and geography since the *Methodenstreit* of the late nineteenth century. Knowledge is always made somewhere by particular persons reflecting on their place's historical experience. 'Universals' often arise by projecting these experiences onto the world at large. What is needed are ways of understanding how this happens and drawing attention to the need to negotiate across perspectives so that geographical knowledge can be less the outcome of hegemonic impositions (and a dialogue of the deaf) and more the result of the recognition and understanding of differences, both cultural and theoretical.

VENUES AND CONCEPTIONS OF THE GEOGRAPHY OF KNOWLEDGE

There are broadly five different ways in which geography is currently understood as entering into knowledge production and circulation. We are sure that others might characterize this intervention differently or identify themes we have missed. Typologies such as this are inherently problematic, of course, simplifying a much more complex picture in order to achieve some purchase on it. And so our own schema is put forward as a tentative first approximation. As the literature on this expanding field develops a more refined typology will doubtless emerge. The five geographies of knowledge that we identify here are ordered so as to reflect their relative emphases put on particular places or milieus versus the spatial diffusion and circulation of knowledge across places. The various venues that are the subject of later chapters are the practical fruit of how geography as understood in these five ways conditions knowledge creation and diffusion.

The first way of conceiving the geography of knowledge is the ethnographic, by which we mean approaches that conceive of



knowledge as inherently plural and that focus on the venues and sites in which knowledge is produced and consumed. The emphasis here lies in rehabilitating what are sometimes called 'indigenous knowledges' or in pointing out how 'science' is culturally inflected by local particularity. Another related but distinctive position tends to privilege the role of 'coloniality' or the effects of colonialism on knowledge hierarchies. A third derives more immediately from the philosophies of phenomenology that emphasize the intimate relations between particular geographical contexts of 'being', on the one hand, and knowledge acquisition, on the other. While also seeing knowledge as produced locally, a fourth lays stress rather more on how the local becomes global given the rise and fall of ideas in tandem with their political/intellectual sponsors. Finally, emphasis has tended to shift recently from knowledge production to knowledge circulation and consumption in the form of highlighting what is called the 'geography of reading'. To be sure, this distinction should not be pressed too strongly for a clear boundary line between the production and consumption phases of the knowledge circuit cannot be drawn. And it is for this reason that Secord (2004: 661) has encouraged us to 'shift our focus and think about knowledge-making as a form of communicative action'. Nevertheless, taking seriously the mobility of knowledge has recalled attention to the fact that ideas circulate widely but generate distinctive readings in different places.

The cultivation of a greater sensitivity to the diverse geographies of knowledge has much potential. And to illustrate something of its riches, a brief exposition of a few of the perspectives that have been adopted is worthwhile. Our purpose here is neither to argue for the superiority of any one approach, nor to present an all-embracing survey. To put it another way, what follows is illustrative rather than exhaustive, suggestive rather than comprehensive. It is simply intended to demonstrate something of how thinking geographically about geographical knowledge

might offer distinctive insights into the working and practice of geography itself.

Sites of knowledge

Many good examples of this first approach can be found in Laura Nader's edited collection *Naked Science: Anthropological Inquiry into Boundaries, Power, and Knowledge* (Nader 1996). One insight here lies in challenging the notion that a certain idea of 'science' as a geographically invariant techno-rational activity beyond society necessarily produces knowledge superior to other 'ways of knowing'. But science itself also takes on different intellectual inflections in different locations. One of the most relevant and interesting chapters in this regard is a comparison of primatology in Japan and Canada (Asquith 1996). In this case, perspectives on the 'nature of nature' reflect unarticulated assumptions about the roles of groups and individuals in the behavior of apes and monkeys. In Japan primatologists engage in long-term observation of groups with an emphasis on inter- and intra-group relations, ranking, and individual to group affiliation. In Canada the focus lies in intense short-term observation of adaptive behaviors of individuals. These differences do not seem to be coincidental. Japanese human society is famously group-oriented compared with Canada or the US.

Like Donna Haraway writing about how the political and the psychological come together in *Primate Visions* (1989), this study is an arresting example of just how culturally embedded science can be and thus how knowledge is variously constructed in different places even when certain common canons of observation and recording information are still operative. Metaphors, the particularly powerful ways in which scientific ideas are expressed in ordinary language, are often important in interpreting results in some ways rather than others (e.g. Ezrahi 1995; Leary 1995). Various 'social studies' of science take these insights down to the level of



the laboratory and the classroom. In the context of geographical knowledge, what they suggest is that all knowledge, including that claiming the mantle of science, is socially conditioned by the rituals, routines, and recruitment practices of powerful educational and research institutions.

Geopolitics of knowledge

The primatology example, like many others, presumes that knowledge comes packaged in territorial containers with labels like 'Japan' and 'Canada' and thus that practice in both has developed separately. At a world scale, perhaps the outstanding feature of the past centuries has been the way most places have been incorporated into flows of knowledge dominated by Europeans and extensions of Europe overseas, such as the United States. This is the story, in Eric Wolf's evocative phrase, of *Europe and the People without History* (Wolf 1982). Raised particularly by Edward Said (1978) and more recently by Walter Mignolo (2000) and others, colonialism is seen as laying the groundwork for a global geopolitics of knowledge. Initially giving rise to the type of knowledge typified by Orientalism, it has subsequently engendered reactions from historically subordinated places to which such phrases as 'subaltern knowledges' and 'border thinking' are often appended.

From this viewpoint, the modernity associated with Europe can no longer be imagined as the only home to epistemology. Mignolo (2000: 95), for example, emphasizes what he calls 'subaltern reason' as 'a diverse set of theoretical practices emerging from and responding to colonial legacies at the intersection of Euro/American modern history'. Much of this writing centers the experience of colonialism (in its various manifestations) as key to knowledge production. Rather than a singular experience, however, knowledge generation is recognized as inescapably plural. The 'place of theorizing'—in the sense of being from, coming

from, and being at particular venues—conditions what can or may be said (Mignolo 2000: 115). This is not to suggest that only people from place *x* can say so-and-so, but to acknowledge that it is a fusion of 'historical circumstances and personal sensibilities' that makes this likely to be the case. Certainly, dependency theories of development and literary genres such as magical realism with their obvious roots in Latin America, and subaltern studies with its strong connections to India, suggest that Mignolo is onto something here. Indeed, he suggests that the United States as a settler society with its own roots in colonialism can also be viewed in a similar light rather than being simply seen as an extension of Europe into the Americas. His slogan 'I am where I think' clearly identifies knowledge production as geographically relational, reflecting particular colonial histories and how these stimulate indigenously generated local content. This contrasts with the European-based 'theo-' and 'ego-' politics of knowledge that systematically devalue what Mignolo (2006) terms the 'geo-' and 'bio-' graphic politics of knowledge that emphasize epistemological 'rules' grounded in the history of political imperialism as differentially experienced around the world. The fact that these ideas now have wide circulation across the globe suggests that flows of knowledge are hardly 'one-way streets' in the ways that they once were thought to be.

Geographical 'being' and knowledge

Our third type of geography of knowledge is phenomenological with its weight on concern for the ways of acting and knowing that humans bring to 'being in the world'. Drawing from Martin Heidegger and other philosophers, but also having roots in the discipline of geography (Wright 1947; Lowenthal 1961), the interest here lies more in establishing how conceptions of space, place, and time are themselves contingent on



what Edward Casey (1996: 19) calls the 'dialectic of perception and place' because human beings are 'ineluctably place-bound'. Ontologically, such Heideggerian claims have led some to reconceptualize the human agent as always and necessarily embedded in the world, and thus, even methodologically, not abstractable from it. In the work of anthropologists like Tim Ingold (2000), this conviction has resulted in a resculpting of the idea that the world in which we *dwell* is a relational one that is brought into being by how we act in it. Of course, it is commonplace today to say that many of us live in a world that is 'de-localizing' and 'de-territorializing'. Yet, it may be more empirically insightful to say that the present situation is one in which for many people there is 'crisis and a modification of our traditional experience of space and place' (Hönnighausen 2005: 46) than a total 'de-spatialization' of life. As Clifford Geertz says: 'No one lives in the world in general.' Actual places, both as experienced and as imagined, serve to anchor conceptions of how the world is structured politically, who is in charge, where, and with what effects, and what matters to us in this place. Thus, Americans and US policy-makers bring to their actions in the world a whole set of presuppositions about geopolitics that emanate from their experiences as 'Americans', particularly narratives about US history and the US 'mission' in the world, that are often occluded by academic debates about 'theories' that fail to take into account such crucial background geographical conditioning. As Lisa Anderson (2003: 90) has noted, much of the 'liberal tradition' that has shaped social science in the United States has had 'a geographical, territorial association'. She quotes Kenneth Prewitt in support:

The project of American social science has been America. This project, to be sure, has been in some tension with a different project—to build a *science* of politics or economics or psychology. But I believe that a close reading of disciplinary history would demonstrate that the 'American project' has time and again taken precedence over the 'science project' and that our claims to universal

truths are, empirically, very much about the experience of this society in this historical period. Prewitt 2002: 2.

With something of a note of irony, Heidegger's view of world politics can be seen as illustrating this point. As Dean Lauer (2005) has recently argued, Heidegger had a geopolitics that was a result of his seemingly 'academic' philosophy of 'being-there.' The US and the Soviet Union, in this construction, represented the victory of universalizing creeds over being-in-place. In the context of post-Second World War Europe, consequently, 'Heidegger sees Europe as caught between the millstones of American liberalism and Russian Bolshevism' (Lauer 2005: 134). In this understanding, they are metaphysically the same because they, 'Russia and America,' are locked into a 'dreary technological frenzy, the same uprooted organization of the average man. At a time when the farthest corner of the globe has been conquered by technology and opened to economic exploitation.' (Heidegger 1987: 37). Of course, both creeds did in fact have definite geographical roots, their own ways of being-in-place, even as they embarked on a global hegemonic contest.

The spatial diffusion of hegemonic knowledge

How the universalizing and scientific creeds have recruited adherents beyond their places of origin is the main concern of the fourth approach. This could be thought of as a question of spatial diffusion. In the natural sciences, for example, the conventional way of understanding the spread of scientific knowledge is the realist claim that science's triumphant diffusion is on account of the truthfulness of its findings. But this obscures the labor involved in the successful reproduction of scientific data in different places. The management of laboratory experiment, the calibration of equipment, the training of experts, the disciplining of observation, the



enshrining of protocols in guidebooks and manuals are all implicated in the circulation of natural knowledge. In the broader cultural arena, some have focused on how ideas about social class and ethnicity are spread by imitation from one country to another, whereas others have traced the influence of intellectual conversion in, for example, the diffusion of neo-liberal fiscal and monetary policies by technocrats educated in US universities.

More holistically, however, Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' is helpful in trying to understand how elites (and populations) accept and even laud ideas and practices that they import from more powerful countries and organizations. If part of American hegemony in the contemporary world, for example, is about 'enrolling' others into American practices of consumption and a market mentality (and, crucially, intellectual justifications for them such as those of various management gurus and journalists), it also adapts as it enrolls by adjusting to local norms and practices (Agnew 2005). This is part of its 'genius'. During the Cold War, the Soviet alternative always risked political fission among adherents because it involved adopting a checklist of political-economic measures rather than a marketing package that could be customized to local circumstances as long as it met certain minimal criteria of conformity to governing norms. Today, the conflict between militant Islam and the United States government is largely about resisting the siren call of an American hegemony associated with globalization that is increasingly detached from direct US sponsorship and with many advocates and passive supporters within the Muslim world itself.

Geography of reading

Finally, even in the face of hegemonic trends, not least that of the worldwide diffusion of scientific knowledge, *where* still matters but with respect to how ideas are understood (how texts are read) more than in terms

simply of where new knowledge is initially produced. Thus, in accounting for distinct differences in how Darwin's bio-geographical theory of evolution by natural selection was construed in a number of different settings, David Livingstone (2005) suggests, drawing from one strand of thought in Edward Said (1991) that 'theory travels'. This is not simply a recognition that texts and ideas move from place to place but that in doing so they are modified. As texts travel, they transform. This is not just because local norms or translation into a different language lead to different readings but also because the 'writings and reputations of eminent scientific practitioners have often been mobilized as resources in ideological conflicts of various kinds' (Livingstone 2003: 27). In a sense, therefore, knowledge is made as it circulates; it is never made completely in one place and then simply consumed in another. And this realization renders troublesome any simple bifurcation between knowledge production and consumption. Both are implicated in the intellectual circuitry of knowledge enterprises.

As a tradition, geography has long lauded fieldwork, direct observation, measurement, mapping, and inductive inference. At the same time, however, these favored practices have always been conditioned by the social, bureaucratic, political, and intellectual milieus in which research has been pursued (Meusburger *et al.* 2009). There has never been a geographical 'blank slate' from which research emanates and across which it is exchanged. This is not to say that research results are simply invented and then spread as a result of relative power or influence. Rather, it is to say that research arises out of and circulates by courtesy of conventions and practices associated with different venues that are jointly produced by the five geographies of knowledge. As Kohler (2002) has shown for American biology, the border zone between the laboratory and the field site has been a particularly important zone of contention among biologists, not just in terms of defining separate venues with different



prestige values, but also the distinctive research ‘cultures’ associated with operating within and across the borderline. These spaces arose out of competing intellectual imperatives to emphasize molecular reduction versus ecological complexity, project cognitive authority through emphasizing external as opposed to internal causal validity, and institutional pressures to both define ‘proper’ biology and give its findings credibility in the eyes of the wider public.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONCEPTS AND CONTROVERSIES

The history of geographical knowledge is the history of its concepts, practices, and disputes about them in various registers or keys. Modern geographical knowledge is the product of a modern era in which there is a widespread consciousness of the concepts we use; various concepts and their meanings are often the centerpiece of conflicts about theories, methods, and politics among intellectuals and others, and the evolution of concepts (and the language associated with them) is related to the changing character of particular historical periods. Organizing ‘history’ into epochs is an inevitably fraught and contestable exercise. Yet a good case can be made that prior to the eighteenth century (at least in Europe) there was neither much consciousness of previous history in anything other than a sense of key dates and figures and any concepts applied to the past had a timeless quality to them. These are among the sorts of claims made by Reinhart Koselleck (2002) in his attempt at understanding what he calls ‘conceptual history’. In the field of history concepts such as the ‘Reformation’, the ‘Dark Ages’, ‘feudalism’, and, indeed, the idea of ‘modernity’ itself are products of a view of history as ‘open’ to the future but thinkable only in terms of ‘stages’ and ‘epochs’ that not only signal an increasing acceleration of time but also an acceptance of the presumption that the future will be

distinctive from both present and past. For whatever reason, this did not happen until the Age of Enlightenment. Only at this point could we begin to argue about what this was and whether it was meaningful!

Even in history the invention and elaboration of concepts, however, is a more contentious process than just a theoretical debate about the pros and cons of this or that periodization or the naming of different historical episodes as in Koselleck’s account. Indeed, much of what goes today for post-structuralist thought (Derrida, Foucault, *et al.*) is intimately concerned with precisely the indeterminacy and limitations of all categories and concepts. The claims to rational truth and universality implicit in much conceptual controversy belie the particularism of knowledge claims discussed in the previous section. It is the very lack of fixity and agreement about the meaning of concepts that sparks controversy. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault picks up on this theme:

Disciplines are techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities ... [It] could reduce the inefficiency of mass phenomena: reduce what, in multiplicity, makes it much less manageable than a unity ... [it] fixes; ... it clears up confusion; ... it establishes calculated distributions ... the disciplines use procedures for partitioning and verticality ... they introduce, between the different elements at the same level, as solid separations as possible ... [through] continuous registration, perpetual assignment and classification. Foucault 1977: 219–20.

The main point is that rather than just imitating or representing the world, invented concepts also create and circumscribe it.

Cognitive science suggests that such an understanding is by no means simply a post-Enlightenment phenomenon. All humans are concept-creating entities. Our brains constrain and direct information processing by simplifying signals and classifying them according to categories and concepts that emerge from experiences in the world. Although often inexact and problematic, such processes cannot be transcended as a simple-minded empiricism might have us

believe. There is no such thing as 'a purely uncategorized and unconceptualized experience. Neural beings cannot do that' (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 19). The dilemma is that such schematic thinking leads to a reliance on closed and stable concepts even as we know that the world itself cannot be simply mapped on the basis of our limited experiences that these concepts often represent.

In geography the concepts are of course very different from those addressed by Koselleck and other historians. Moreover, even though it is only since the eighteenth century that much of what now goes for geographical knowledge was first stabilized and dignified theoretically in terms of concepts that we would now designate as 'scientific' or resting on some foundation other than that simply of religious faith or of much more than fabrication, it is problematic to claim that previous epochs were somehow 'concept-free'. Certainly the ancient Greeks and Romans, to say nothing of the Arabs and Chinese, had sophisticated vocabularies that they applied to natural phenomena. In early modern Europe, however, much of what went for *geographical* knowledge was exotic travel writing without much if any attention to what we would recognize as explicit conceptual claims or arguments (Dunn 1986; Campbell 1988). An empiricist 'common sense' colored by fantastic imagination and hoaxes of various sorts tended to constitute much of what was thought of as geographical story telling. How could you trust the stories brought back by travelers? What reliable conceptual basis could be given to such geographical knowledge? Such concerns have hardly disappeared. But their addressing has engendered much of what passes for modern conceptual and methodological debate. Many of the fundamental concepts and methods that we have tended to see as definitive of modern geographical knowledge date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries even if since that time, in line with what Koselleck would expect, they have undergone sweeping question, revision, addition, and reinvention (e.g. Peskin 2004).

The career of the term 'space' is indicative, invented initially in modern form in the seventeenth century to refer to the absolute locational properties of matter. Somewhat later given a more relative meaning as incidental to more substantive qualities of things, it has latterly bifurcated within geography to signify either a reformulated absolute 'space' (for those who see the impact of the human hand in the world as better represented by the much older concept of 'place') or as something that can itself have effects as it is 'made' or molded into different shapes by natural and human processes. A good deal of geographic thought has long involved making and disputing claims about words like 'space'. But methodological concepts, such as spatial analysis and cartography, and subject-matter concepts such as landscape, urban/rural, nature/culture, and development, as well as more fundamental explanatory concepts, such as social class, race, cycle of erosion, and ecosystem have all had such symptomatic if distinctive careers. Challenges arise on empirical as well as on theoretical grounds. Until recently, and still in some quarters, human-induced climate change, for example, was seen as problematic empirically as it was theoretically. What constitutes 'proof' or evidence becomes a way of challenging the very veracity or meaningfulness of a particular concept from those affiliated to either some competing concept or theory (uniformitarianism in this case, perhaps) or with a purely 'natural' concept of climate change.

The history of geographical concepts and controversies over them, therefore, can be classified in a number of different keys (following Philo 2008). These keys or registers are rarely completely independent of one another but frequently overlap. For reasons of exposition, however, we can distinguish between them. Some conceptual disputation and hence historic shifts in their meaning and significance is pre-eminently *philosophical*, reflecting on matters of meaning, language, and ontology as well as about the resources for acquiring reliable knowledge about such matters. Questions constantly arise about the

'nature' of such seemingly essential concepts of geographical inquiry as space, place, nature, and landscape, and how these relate to disputes about the causes of natural and social processes. Disagreements arise here, for example, about whether space is 'something' material, or is a property revealed through the relations (for instance, distance and direction) between material phenomena, out of which entities that we sometimes decide to call places, environments, and landscapes are then derived. Some concepts and disputes over them are more *methodological*, in the sense of calling into question the links between the routinized research practices of geography and what goes for 'the scientific method', asking about whether geography should be thought of primarily as a 'science', with physics or economics invoked variously as role models of rigorous theoretical specification, testing, and verification of research hypotheses using only certain very particular types of data. Much of the argument about 'region' in geography in the 1950s was of this quality rather than about its philosophical basis. Questions about statics and dynamics and simplicity and complexity likewise usually arise in this register.

Other conceptual disputes can be described better as of a *social–normative quality*, relating to how well different concepts are held to explain how nature and human society function, change, are divided by inequalities and power differentials, and how society should best be organized or undermined. Conceptual claims and arguments arise in this connection about space, place, nature, and landscape, as entities that can be made and designed or that are inherited and beyond agency. In recent years, for example, race and ethnicity have tended to replace social class as governing concepts in understanding power differentials and place differences within cities. Other concepts are subject to definition and reformulation as a result of more directly *theoretical* fiat and challenge. Concepts such as evolution, cycle of erosion, and ecosystem, to name a few, are closely associated with specific theoretical positions that when

subject to dispute throw the nature of the concept itself into question. The history of the cycle of erosion is an excellent example of this sort of linkage from concept to theory. Finally, another set of conceptual disputes are more *ethical* in character: some relate to either the relative closed and unquestioned adoption or the total rejection of certain concepts without careful consideration of their pros and cons. Some theoretical positions, such as Marxism and humanism, often entail a priori commitments to various theoretical entities, such as a certain historical teleology or a relatively unconstrained view of human agency, respectively, which are not readily subject to empirical corroboration. Critique of such commitments usually ends up as totalistic. Other disputes in this register relate more to 'new' concepts—think of gender and development for example—that are invented to address 'absences' but which then complicate the use of a range of longer established concepts and methods and when 'combined' with others (race, for example) take on different meanings. Other ethical disputes are about how knowledge is 'made' on the ground and in the air; in other words the conditions under which fieldwork is carried out, data collected, and the possible harm done to research subjects. From this viewpoint, concepts can be seen as culturally particularistic and imperialistic when applied outside the regions and places in which they were initially developed (see previous section). In some quarters the self-evident superiority of modern, scientific knowledge over indigenous knowledge is no longer acknowledged. The very nature of geographical knowledge as frequently presented is itself called into question on ethical grounds. Concepts such as development, conservation, and geopolitics are particularly subject to such challenge.

Elements of conceptual definition and conceptual disputes operating in all five keys—philosophical, scientific, methodological, social-normative, and ethical—will be found in the chapters in the third section, but, as is also apparent, hybrid variants on each



key—like environmental determinism, spatial analysis, and complexity science—are also in evidence. However, it is also important to note that these considerations also enter into discussion of the venues and practices discussed in the second section. Implicit in those are very different approaches which tend to embody varying balances of the five dimensions, with some being almost wholly philosophical with little else in play (public sphere, subaltern space) and with others being, say, highly fixated on the empirics and ethics of method (e.g. field, archive, and mission station). Other approaches, rather, incorporate shifts across all five registers: battlefield, policy and government, and financial space, for example. One problem inherent in this pluralism, of course, is that many approaches end up talking past one other and defy ready comparison. A further outcome in both sections is that different approaches taken by authors, weighted differentially in the various keys, frequently deploy radically different vocabularies in which even the same words (like ‘space’ and ‘place’ or ‘landscape’ and ‘nature’) have quite different connotations. Buried within our sections, therefore, are the very conceptual distinctions and disputes about which the authors are writing if hidden in their own words rather than simply the explicit focus of the chapters themselves.

THE ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT OF THE HANDBOOK

The Handbook begins with two orientating chapters on the shifting connotations of the label ‘geography’ itself and the different ways in which the subject’s narrative has been rehearsed. These chapters are intended to acknowledge the historicity of the very terms we use and the polyvocal character of efforts to capture its genealogy. One critical implication of these interventions is the need to recognize the historical situatedness of this Handbook itself and indeed of all attempts to

capture the supposed transcendental essence of ‘geography’. For we cannot exempt ourselves from the geographical analysis that we bring to other places and periods. The way we characterize the spaces and concepts that come within the range of this Handbook are necessarily a product of its own time and place. This means that there is an inherent provisionalism and situatedness to the stories contributors tell. But this is not only inescapable, it is desirable; for it underscores the dynamic nature of geographical knowledge and the need for this tradition of learning to engage in dialogue with itself. Geography has no essential definition; it is a dynamic tradition of inquiry that changes over time and place. As Nietzsche (1969: 80) famously put it in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: ‘Only that which has no history is definable.’

The second section of the Handbook dwells on a series of venues in which geographical knowledge has been produced and from which it circulates from arena to arena. Some of these are readily identifiable as ‘standard’ sites of geographical engagement with the world: the field, the weather station, the laboratory, and the archive, for instance. Such ready specifications, of course, conceal as much as they reveal, for these venues turn out to be anything but monolithic. They are differently shaped, managed, and constituted in different contexts, and the ways in which they condition the knowledge that they generate differ from place to place. At the same time, we call attention to other arenas not so routinely recognized as spaces of geographical knowledge—mission stations and art studios for example. In part their inclusion is to widen the domain of venues that legitimately come within the arc of geographical scrutiny, and at the same time to recognize that geographical knowledge is produced in sites that lie beyond the conventional map of geography’s production sites. This broadens the scope of our thinking about geographical knowledges—who owns them, how they are generated and circulated, and what their audiences are. Drawing attention to the geographies of geographical knowledge also



contributes to a decentering of 'the author' as the privileged site of intellectual history and conceptual change. By locating authors in the midst of their own temporal and spatial circumstances, this approach roots biography 'like a reclining Gulliver, to the ground of place and time' (Young 1988: 124).

Finally we turn to a range of critical concepts and controversies that have snaked their way—in different manifestations—through the history of modern geographical scholarship. Thus we focus attention on fundamental geographical concepts like space and place, landscape and ecosystem, race and social class, global climatic change and conservation, to name only a few. But we make no claim to comprehensiveness in the concepts we have selected for interrogation. There are doubtless many other candidates whose inclusion could readily be justified. What we do believe is that those that are dealt with have played critically significant roles in the unfolding of geography as both discipline and discourse, and that by conducting a genealogical inquiry into their history and use, we can glimpse something of how critical concepts emerge and evolve, travel and transmute. What our authors have sought to uncover are the circumstances surrounding the generation and mobilization of some of the discipline's central cognitive commitments, to identify interlocutors in debates over the nature of these ideas, and to portray how they continue to inform geographical scholarship in our own day. This approach is adopted in the conviction that historicizing our own cognitive apparatus is a particularly rich way of grasping the internal dynamic and the external influences that shape the direction in which any tradition of inquiry moves in different times and spaces.

There are, of course, many geographical handbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries and the like currently available to readers. What marks out the present one is the consciously *geographical* analysis we bring to geographical knowledge. By locating geographical theory, practice, and controversy in their spatial-temporal circumstances, we believe

this Handbook will advance the self-referential project of thinking geographically about geography, and thereby of 'geographizing' geography itself.

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