

medieval London, an earthquake demolished much of San Francisco, and Nazi bombers flattened Rotterdam, human vision and will were able to overcome disaster. Out of the ruins new cities of no less distinction and greater functionality emerged.²⁶

We have examined briefly certain relationships between time and the experience of place. The main points are these: (1) If time is conceived as flow or movement then place is pause. In this view human time is marked by stages as human movement in space is marked by pauses. Just as time may be represented by an arrow, a circular orbit, or the path of a swinging pendulum, so may movements in space; and each representation has its characteristic set of pauses or places. (2) While it takes time to form an attachment to place, the quality and intensity of experience matters more than simple duration. (3) Being rooted in a place is a different kind of experience from having and cultivating a "sense of place." A truly rooted community may have shrines and monuments, but it is unlikely to have museums and societies for the preservation of the past. The effort to evoke a sense of place and of the past is often deliberate and conscious. To the extent that the effort is conscious it is the mind at work, and the mind—if allowed its imperial sway—will annul the past by making it all present knowledge.²⁷

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Epilogue

Human beings, like other animals, feel at home on earth. We are, most of the time, at ease in our part of the world. Life in its daily round is thoroughly familiar. Toast for breakfast is taken for granted, likewise the need to be in the office on time. Skills once learned are as natural to us as breathing. Above all, we are oriented. This is a fundamental source of confidence. We know where we are and we can find our way to the local drugstore. Striding down the path in complete confidence, we are shocked when we miss a step or when our body expects a step where none exists.

Learning is rarely at the level of explicit and formal instruction. The infant acquires a sense of distance by attending to the sound of a human voice that signals the approach of his mother. A child is walked to school a few times and thereafter he can make the trip on his own, without the help of a map; indeed, he is unable to envisage the route. We are in a strange part of town: unknown space stretches ahead of us. In time we know a few landmarks and the routes connecting them. Eventually what was strange town and unknown space becomes familiar place. Abstract space, lacking significance other than strangeness, becomes concrete place, filled with meaning. Much is learned but not through formal instruction.

Nearly all learning is at the subconscious level. Thus we acquire a taste for a certain dish, learn to like a person, appreciate a painting, and grow fond of a neighborhood or resort. Things that were once out of focus for us come into focus, and we perceive them to be individuals and unique. This power to see people and places in their complex particularity is most highly developed in human beings. It is a sign of our superior intelligence, yet we rarely feel the need to apply the power in any systematic way. We claim to know a friend or our hometown well, although we have not done research on either. Even the acquisition of a skill does not always call for explicit instruction. Eskimo children, for example, become hunters by watching adults at work and by doing. We learn to ride a bicycle without a manual of physics; formal knowledge of the balance of forces may even be a handicap.

Routine activity and standard performance do not require analytical thought. When we wish to do something new or to excel, then we need to pause, envision, think. An athlete must of course work at his skill, but his performance will improve if he *thinks* about his movements and tries to perfect them in thought as well as in the field. Thinking and planning help to develop human spatial ability in the sense of agile bodily movements. But far more impressive is the effect of thinking and planning on spatial ability taken in the sense of "conquering space." With the aid of charts and compass (products of thought), human beings have sailed across the oceans; with even more sophisticated instruments they can take leave of the earth itself and fly to the moon.

Analytical thought has transformed our physical and social environment. Evidences of its power are everywhere. We are so impressed that to us "knowing" is practically identical with "knowing about," and Lord Kelvin has gone so far as to say that we do not really know anything unless we can also measure it. Much of human experience is difficult to articulate, however, and we are far from finding devices that measure satisfactorily the quality of a feeling or aesthetic response. What we cannot say in an acceptable scientific language we tend to deny or forget. A geographer speaks as though his knowledge of space

and place were derived exclusively from books, maps, aerial photographs, and structured field surveys. He writes as though people were endowed with mind and vision but no other sense with which to apprehend the world and find meaning in it. He and the architect-planner tend to assume familiarity—the fact that we are oriented in space and at home in place—rather than describe and try to understand what "being-in-the-world" is truly like.

A large body of experiential data is consigned to oblivion because we cannot fit the data to concepts that are taken over uncritically from the physical sciences. Our understanding of human reality suffers as a result. Interestingly, this blindness to the depth of experience afflicts the man in the street no less than it does the social scientist. Blindness to experience is in fact a common human condition. We rarely attend to what we know. We attend to what we know about; we are aware of a certain kind of reality because it is the kind that we can easily show and tell. We know far more than what we can tell, yet we almost come to believe that what we can tell is all we know. At a party someone asks, "How do you like Minneapolis?" The typical response is: "It's a good city, a good place to live in, except perhaps for the winter, which seems to last forever." Thus with tired phrases our personal and subtle experiences are misrepresented time and again. Another form of lazy communication is the colored slide show of the family outing. Its effect on captive guests is soporific. To those who have taken the trip each picture may suggest something intimate, such as the feel of the warm sand between the toes, that does not appear on the slide. But to guests the pictures are only pictures, often visual clichés that threaten to march over them in endless platoons.

As social beings and scientists we offer each other truncated images of people and their world. Experiences are slighted or ignored because the means to articulate them or point them out are lacking. The lack is not due to any inherent deficiency in language. If something is of sufficient importance to us we usually find the means to give it visibility. Snow is snow, undifferentiated phenomenon to urban man, but the Eskimo has a

dozen words to express it. Feelings and intimate experiences are inchoate and unmanageable to most people, but writers and artists have found ways of giving them form. Literature, for example, is full of precise descriptions of how people live. The academic disciplines themselves yield abundant experiential data that deserve our closer attention.

A rich body of material already exists for the student of environment and man. (And who, in his own way, is not such a student?) For him—that is, for all of us—a basic problem is how to organize this eclectic material. The present essay is one attempt to systematize human experiences of space and place. It can claim success if it has made the reader see the range and complexity of experience, and if in addition it has clarified some of the more systematic relationships between and among the wealth of experiential components. But the essay has a still larger purpose, which is that the kinds of questions it poses (if not the answers) enter the debate of environmental design. The discourse of planners and designers must be enlarged to include questions such as these: What connection is there between space awareness and the idea of future time and of goal? What are the links between body postures and personal relationships on the one hand and spatial values and distance relationships on the other? How do we describe “familiarity,” that quality of “at homeness” we feel toward a person or place? What kinds of intimate places can be planned, and what cannot—at least, no more than we can plan for deeply human encounters? Are space and place the environmental equivalents of the human need for adventure and safety, openness and definition? How long does it take to form a lasting attachment to place? Is the sense of place a quality of awareness poised between being rooted in place, which is unconscious, and being alienated, which goes with exacerbated consciousness—and exacerbated because it is only or largely mental? How do we promote the visibility of rooted communities that lack striking visual symbols? What is the loss and gain in such promotion?

These questions do not make the life of the social scientist and planner any easier. They make it, for the time being, more

difficult by opening up facts that both professionals and non-professionals have found convenient to forget. If we examine certain visionary plans, study certain social surveys, and eavesdrop on the small talk that is the common fare of life, we are likely to discover that whereas the world is enormously complex, human beings and their experiences are simple. The scientist postulates the simple human being for the limited purpose of analyzing a specific set of relationships, and this procedure is entirely valid. Danger occurs when the scientist then naïvely tries to impose his findings on the real world, for he may forget that the simplicity of human beings is an assumption, not a discovery or a necessary conclusion of research. The simple being, a convenient postulate of science and a deliberate paper figure of propaganda, is only too easy for the man in the street—that is, most of us—to accept. We are in the habit of denying or forgetting the real nature of our experiences in favor of the clichés of public speech. And here is the ultimate ambition of this essay, in common with the thrust of humanistic enterprise: to increase the burden of awareness.