

Much of the recent discussion on environmental issues I have found both unsatisfactory and disquieting. Unsatisfactory because the analyses of behaviour or of particular problems are so frequently mechanical and abstract, simplifying the world into easily represented structures or models that ignore much of the subtlety and significance of everyday experience. Disquieting because these simplified structures often then serve as the basis for proposals for the design of environments and the manipulation of people and places into patterns that are supposed to be more efficient. These discussions are usually couched in the scientific terms of objectivity, fact, and theory which appear to have become widely accepted as the *only* valid and rigorous terms for explaining and resolving environmental problems.

This book has been written, if not exactly in opposition to these types of studies, at least as an attempt to participate in the development of an alternative approach to understanding environment. It is concerned not with abstract models and theories, but with the 'lived-world', with the settings and situations we live in, know and experience directly in going about our day to day activities. Specifically it is an examination of one phenomenon of the lived-world—place, and attempts to elucidate the diversity and intensity of our experiences of place. Place and sense of place do not lend themselves to scientific analysis for they are inextricably bound up with all the hopes, frustrations, and confusions of life, and possibly because of this social scientists have avoided these topics. Indeed the phenomenon of place has been the subject of almost no detailed discussion, although philosophers, historians, architects, and geographers have made brief comments about it.

In this book one of my main aims has been to identify the variety of ways in which places are experienced, and to do this four main themes have been developed. First, the relationships between space and place are examined in order to demonstrate the range of place experiences and concepts. Second, the different components and intensities of place experience are explored, and it is argued that there are profound psychological links between people and the places which they live in and experience. Third, the nature of the identity of places and the identity of people *with* places is analysed; and fourth, the ways in which sense of place and attachment to place are manifest in the making of places and landscapes are illustrated. The essence of the argument relating these themes is that distinctive and diverse places are manifestations of a deeply felt involvement with those places by the people who live in them, and that for many such a profound attachment to place is as necessary and significant as a close relationship with other people. It is therefore disturbing that so much planning and remaking of landscapes proceeds apparently in ignorance of the importance of place, even though the protests of the expropriated and uprooted demonstrate this very importance.

It would not be realistic to investigate the phenomenon of place without attending to the parallel phenomenon of placelessness—that is, the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardised landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place. Part of this book is therefore an examination of the attitudes of placelessness and of the manifestations of these attitudes in landscapes.

The philosophical foundation for this study of place and placelessness is phenomenology—a philosophical tradition that takes as its starting point the phenomena of the lived-world of immediate experience, and then seeks to clarify these in a rigorous way by careful observation and description. Phenomenological methods have been used in a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, theology, ethology, and biology, and have in these cases been developed as a viable alternative to approaches based on the philosophy of science. Yet in geography, in planning, and in architecture there have been no more than a handful of discussions concerning the relevance of phenomenological methods. In its application of phenomenological procedures to the phenomenon of place this book does therefore constitute a deliberate attempt to develop an alternative and philosophically well founded way of studying environment. This may not always be obvious because the technical language of phenomenology is avoided wherever possible, but the ideas and methods of phenomenology are implicit throughout the book, and are largely responsible for its structure.

Partly because my academic training has been in geography and partly because geographers have frequently held that place is central to their discipline, this book begins in geography. But the arguments developed and the phenomena examined have a much wider relevance than the discipline of geography. Architects, landscape architects, planners, and all those engaged in the investigation or design of environments, landscapes, or places can perhaps find something of interest here. And while the language and ideas are certainly academic, this book should have something to offer to anyone who feels an identity with a place, who appreciates a diversity of landscapes, or who is concerned about the on-going erosion of the distinctive places of the world.

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