

REFLECTIONS I: BIOGRAPHIES

WRITING THE WORLD: REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF GEOGRAPHICAL THOUGHT

Richard T Harrison, University of Edinburgh

The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there
(LP Hartley 1953/2015)

When the History and Philosophy of Geography Research Group was originally conceived and established in 1985 it was based on two arguments. First, the descriptive argument was that there was already an emerging, if highly diffuse, interest in the history and philosophy of the discipline. This was reflected in the inclusion in *Progress in Human Geography* of a 'Progress Report' on Methodology and Philosophy from volume 1 of the journal, renamed 'History and Philosophy of Geography' from volume 4. Institutionally, the IGU had established a Commission on the History of Geographical Thought in 1968, renamed the Working Group on the History of Geographical Thought in 1980. Second, the normative argument was that there ought to be a more formalised focus on the history and philosophy of the discipline, based on the view that knowledge and knowledge production was highly contextual. This was both in terms of the ontological and epistemological role of the 'hand of time' in shaping what we know and how we come to know it, and in terms of the impact, actual and potential, of developments in the theoretical and philosophical adventures in cognate disciplines. Thirty-five years later, while these issues are still germane, the brave new

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world of hyperobjects and wicked problems suggests that there is merit in re-examining the place of history and philosophy in geographical thought. In the remainder of this paper, we articulate this around six core imperatives: the importance of polyvocality and the heterodox; the explication of the institutionalization and socialization processes, then and now, in the discipline; the pursuit of the implications of the contextualization of knowledge at the individual and the discipline level; the erosion of essentialist and internalist accounts of the history of the discipline (the 'manifest destiny' of the subject); the integration of and response to the voice of the Global South in a decolonialised geography; and the end of 'his-story' as the basis for the discipline's historiography.

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