Geographies of generosity: beyond the 'moral turn'

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GEOGRAPHIES OF GENEROSITY: Beyond the 'moral turn'

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GEOGRAPHIES OF GENEROSITY

> "It is not an accident or a limitation or a prejudice that we cannot care equally about all the suffering in the world: it is a condition of our existence and sanity".
> Bernard Williams (2006, 147)

1). Introduction

There is now a wide variety of work which argues that Geographers should take more sustained notice of ethical theory and moral philosophy (e.g. Casey 1997, Corbridge 1993, 1994, Sayer and Storper, 1997, Proctor and Smith, 1999, Sack 1998, 2003, Smith 2000, Harvey 2000, Cloke 2003, Lee and Smith 2004). David Smith (1997) goes so far to suggest that there is 'moral turn' underway in the discipline. The papers in this Special Issue are a contribution to this set of debates. They build on discussions of both 'caring at a distance' (Silk, 1998 2000, 2004; Smith, 2000) and 'geographies of responsibility' (Popke 2003, Massey 2004). These two topics have become central themes around which geographers have addressed moral philosophy and theories of ethics. And discussion of caring at a distance and the geographies of responsibility both frame Geography as an enterprise that is peculiarly well suited to the dilemmas of the contemporary, globalised world.

The claims made on behalf of Geography in these debates are dependent on particular assumptions about the way in which normative issues articulate with the theoretical and empirical projects of the discipline. In this paper, we challenge some of these assumptions, particularly with respect to their treatment of the theme of *partiality* in ethics and justice. Debates in Geography often present partial commitments as morally or politically problematic on the grounds that they prioritise self-interest, exclusionary, and geographically restricted ways of relating to others. Partiality is, then, often seen as an impediment to the expansion of care, concern, or justice to 'others' over 'distance'. In Sections 2 and 3 below, we outline how debates about caring at a distance and the geographies of responsibility frame partiality as a problem to be overcome. We then go, on, in Section 4 to use the theme of generosity as an entry point in order to argue that partiality and finitude might be the conditions for any ethical-political project that is at once both geographically expansive and geographically sensitive.

2). Caring at a Distance

The starting assumption of discussions about 'caring at a distance' is that the sorts of virtues that people display towards loved ones, friends, neighbours, or compatriots become that much more difficult to sustain over large distances. There is, furthermore, a tendency in these discussions to run 'distance' together with 'difference' so that the problem of caring at a distance is rendered equivalent to the problem of relating to 'Others': the central figure of these debates is that of the *distant stranger*. Distance and difference are considered problems precisely because it is 'care' that is the privileged virtue in these discussions. The value of caring relationships in contemporary moral philosophy is derived from a thorough going critique of universalising theories of justice. The justice/care pair is easily mapped onto the universal/particular pair, and in turn onto the impartiality/partiality pair. In turn, it is easy for Geographers to suppose that the universal and the particular map onto spatial relations of distance and extension on the one hand, place and proximity on the other.

It is from this set of homologies between, on the one side, justice, universality, impartiality, and distance, and on the other hand care, particularity, partiality, and proximity that Geographers' distinctive problematization of caring at a distance is derived. Sympathetic to the difference-critique of universalising theories of justice, attuned as they are to variety and diversity, Geographers are nonetheless loath to wholeheartedly embrace the value of care precisely because of its implied affirmation of the unavoidably partial nature of any and all ethical judgement. The value of care is necessarily derived from it being a virtue of partiality, extended to some particular others on the grounds of attachments of feeling or emotion. Care is therefore easily contrasted to the dictates of reason, either positively or negatively. This leads to the dilemma whereby embracing the value of care seems to undermine the value of equality which underwrites any workable principle of social justice. Justice is not supposed to allow for differential consideration on the basis of personal attachment or partiality. The idea that the value of care should be elevated over the abstract value of justice can, as Smith (2000, 97) notes, easily turn into an excuse for caring only for one's family or friends, or perhaps an exclusively defined set of members of the same ethnic or national group as oneself. Yet justice also seems to threaten to impose a degree of impersonality in its application of universal principles. The question that arises is whether it is possible to maintain the sensitivity to personal, embodied expressions of need that underwrites the value of care (as distinct from justice, whose value lies in impartiality), while combining it with an extension over geographical space and to people different from oneself.

Michael Slote (2000), one of the key figures in the contemporary revival of virtue theories of ethics, suggests that one way of solving this conundrum is to distinguish between two kinds of caring relationships: *intimate caring*, based on personal relations with people one knows very well, and *humanitarian caring*, extended towards others one only knows about. But this distinction still seems to suggest that the paradigm for care is naturally given in some way, after which the question of extension is added on as a kind of secondary supplement. Indeed, there is a long tradition that views care in terms of an apparently natural pattern of obligations, for which the paradigm remains at the scale and scope of family relations. The *intimate caring/humanitarian caring* distinction therefore reiterates an older distinction between 'caring for' and 'caring about' (Noddings 1984). This distinction is rooted in the assumption that the primary source of the value of caring relations derives from a person being focused on and absorbed by other people. Care implies sensitivity to the specificity of the needs of other people. According to this definition, the value of care seems to mitigate against the extension of care to anonymous others. 'Caring for' others is, in short, supposed to be more authentic than 'caring about' others, in large part because caring for is performed directly, up close, face-to-face, in relations of very intimate proximity; whereas 'caring about' allows distance to intrude into these relations thus producing indirect, mediated relations.

One finds in Geographers' discussions the same assumption that the value of care is uniquely derived from intimate, place-based relationships, and that obligations to distant strangers are in some way derivative of these relationships. For some, morality sensibility itself is formed in place-based contexts (Sack 1997). Geography in turn is held to be particularly well-attuned to understanding the place-based practices upon which any more extended activity of caring must, it is argued, be founded. The capacity to care at a distance is held to be possible because place-based relationships of care are universal, in the sense that they are found everywhere, without necessarily being universalising. The challenge, on this view, is to imagine ways of extending "the geographical, psychological and political scope of a universal human activity" (Silk 2004, 229).

What is of value in Geography's discussion of care is the affirmation of the significance of relationships of partiality in motivating ordinary, everyday practices of commitment and concern. But this affirmation is too readily tied to a prioritization of place-based relationships which set place off against distanciated and differentiated relationships. It is from this uneasy combination that the idea that caring at a distance is a problem is derived.

Rather than supposing that caring-about is a secondary, derivative variant of a more genuine set of relationships of caring-for, we might instead start from the observation that any caring practice, in order for it to be caring, has to be attentive and responsive to the needs of the other. The capacity to care-about comes prior to actual practices of caring, and remains an essential aspect of them. In making this suggestion, we are following Fisher and Tronto's (1990) argument that in practice care is composed of four activities each of which is associated with a distinctive moral capacity:

1. the capacity to be *attentive* to the needs of others;
2. the capacity of taking *responsibility* for meeting needs for care;
3. the capacity to actually provide care *competently*;
4. the capacity to be *responsive* to the ongoing needs of receivers of care.

Practices of care involve the complex integration of all four of these activities, and this in turn involves the co-ordination of activities over various spaces and diverse temporalities, or what McKie *et al* (2002) refer to as caring-scapes. The idea that care's value lies only in the intense *familiarity* of circumscribed personal relationships is not sustainable once we recognize the degree to which any caring practice depends on mediating practices, relations of professional competency, and various institutional and material infrastructures.

Above all, what Fisher and Tronto's distinction between four aspects of caring suggests is that care is something that is called forward by the expression of needs by others, and that in turn requires an ongoing disposition of attentiveness and responsiveness towards others. The irreducibility of these dispositions suggests that a crucial aspect of having the competency to care is a certain degree of distance, passivity and separation. These are the conditions for hearing and acknowledging the expressions of need coming from others.

The practical dependence of care on attentive relations of responsiveness is one reason why we should reject the imaginary geography that associates the genuine value of care with place-based relations, and therefore sees distance as a barrier to care. It is from this understanding that the idea that geographically expansive moral or political relationships need to be *justified* arises (e.g. Brock 2005). In fact, there is a strong normative case *against* this association of the value of care with place-based relations of intimacy and attachment. Onora O'Neill (1996, 149-50) points out that there is a strong tendency to see certain virtues (like care, trust, or kindness) as properly embedded in specific types of relationships – characteristically, those with friends and family. She points out that these relationships are also the sites of various vices, for example, neglect, unkindness, deceit and betrayal. The conclusion she derives from this observation is pertinent to Geography's treatment of the geographies of care:

> If the very relationships that provide preferred contexts for various virtues also provide fertile grounds for the contrasting vices, these contexts cannot be constitutive of those virtues.

This argument applies as much to the spatial contexts that geographers often present as the exemplary scenes of various moral virtues as it does to the relational contexts O'Neill has in mind. In short, there is no good reason to suppose that moral harm arises only through relations of distancing, exclusion, or non-recognition; nor that relations of proximity are the natural scene of moral virtue (Barnett 2005).

3). Geographies of Responsibility

Fisher and Tronto's four-fold model of care outlined above suggests that the motivation of virtuous actions such as caring cannot be solely self-referential or monological. If care is embedded in relations of attentiveness and responsiveness, then determining the scope of obligations or responsibilities is not simply a matter of reasoning and calculation about the consequences of one's own self-caused actions or those of the collectivity to which one belongs. In turn, this means that the practical motivation of action is unlikely to be dependent only on the didactic practices of demonstration and proof. We make this point because of the widespread assumption that geography has a special educational role to play in transforming the moral imaginations of pupils, students, and the general public by showing how their actions are entangled in spatially and temporally extended networks of unintended consequences.

The forms of partiality that both feminist theorists of care and communitarian theorists value are too often conceptually embedded in the personal sentiments that motivate care for one's nearest and dearest (see Smith 2000, 97-106). As we have seen above, Geographers have been concerned with finding justifications for extending the scope of care in a humanitarian fashion, to more anonymous others in distant locations. In making these arguments, there is a tendency to fall back on a variant of weak universalism, which posits some principle of identity, solidarity, or similarity as the grounds for extending care to distant strangers. This is where arguments about caring at a distance connect up discussions of the 'geographies of responsibility'. Geographers have argued that the imperative to extend obligations over distance follows from the complexity of causal relationships that connect people living in different places through market transactions, supply chains, or displaced pollution effects. These connections mean that we are in fact bound up with and implicated in the lives of all sorts of people living in all sorts of different places (Corbridge 1998). The attractiveness of this model of responsibility lies in the idea that geography is very well placed to provide the pedagogical resources that will demonstrate to those in positions of privilege that they do, indeed, have these sorts of responsibilities. Empirical observation of the interdependence of spatially disparate activities is presented as the key foundation for an expanded geographical ethics of responsibility appropriate for a globalised world. Geography's value as a discipline lies in the claim that knowledge of distant outcomes is a prerequisite for responsible action.

There are various examples of this paradigm of geographical responsibility. One reference point is Harvey's (1990) account of the geographical imagination, which has helped to generate a whole field of work on commodity chains in which it is supposed that, by demonstrating the linkages between locations of production, networks of distribution, and acts of consumption, the alienating effects of modern capitalism can be exposed. Actor-network theory has been enrolled into the same type of project (Whatmore and Thorne 1997). The shared assumption of these type of accounts is that the secret to motivating practical action lies in helping people to *re-cognise* their entanglement in complex networks of commodification and accumulation (Castree 2001). In the process, the defunct theory of commodity fetishism is not only redeemed as a moral tale for our times, but fetishism is in turn reframed as essentially having to do with a deficit of empirical knowledge. Knowledge, in turn, is made into the prerequisite for various strategies of *re-connection*.

These sorts of arguments only work if we presume two things. Firstly, we must presume that ordinary people are not already, currently engaged in all sorts of caring, responsible activity, but that they are trapped within self-interested, privatised worlds of restricted imagination. Secondly, in turn, we must presume that this restricted imagination is caused by their inhabiting a world of veiled relations that hides from view their real interests and obligations. There is an unacknowledged moralism at work in these discussions. The presumption is that people are naturally inclined to act in egoistical pursuit of their own self-interest unless motivated by knowledge and reason to do otherwise. Perhaps the problem here comes from the fixation on the vocabulary of responsibility itself. Talking about responsibility immediately brings to mind the idea that it has to do with imputing blame and establishing liability (Ricouer 2000). 'Responsibility' and 'obligation' sound like burdens, the sorts of things people might reasonably be expected to try to shirk if they could.

Tracking the geographies of intended or unintended consequences of actions does little to establish the locus or scope of moral or political responsibility. The normative claim of the geographies of responsibility literature lies in the argument that we are all implicated in geographically extensive 'communities of affected interest' that spill over the boundaries of territorialized polities and the obligations of citizenship (Massey 2004). There are different variants of this model in Geography, but each one depends on establishing some type of causal loop between actions and consequences. The connection might be simply an assertion of causal responsibility, as in debates about sustainable consumption for example, where it is often argued that people, as *consumers*, help to reproduce destructive environmental practices by the purchases. In other accounts the demonstration of a connection might be supplemented by a claim that some people benefit from being positioned in such spatially extensive networks, and that therefore one has a responsibility that follows from unfair reward (Corbridge, 1998). Furthermore, the demonstration of the connection is routinely accompanied by an appeal to self-interest, as in the case of many environmental campaigns. Such campaigns often position people as responsible on the grounds that they are implicated in environmentally destructive systems of production and consumption that in the future will threaten their own, or their children's, health, livelihood, or security.

These understandings of responsibility, based on identifying connections between our actions and distant, mediated consequences, seem straightforwardly 'geographical'. They seem to assume that the task of motivating practical action inheres in the activity of tracking the routes and networks through which our own actions link up to actions and events elsewhere, or later on. There are two problems with this assumption. Firstly, what falls from view in these geographies of responsibility is any concern with the relationships of attentiveness and responsiveness that we discussed in section 2 above: the geographies of responsibility literature remains resolutely monological in its favoured emphasis on the need to *justify* responsibility by reference to an actor's own actions. Secondly, even in its own terms, it turns out that the assumption that simply describing causal, systematic linkages between (unwitting) actions and (unintended) consequences justifies practical actions does not stand up anyway. Why is the case?

Establishing that actions have outcomes that may not have been intended, because of the intermediary operations of other human and non-human actors that are required for these actions to come-off successfully, is certainly a good way of showing people that their own actions do, indeed, have potentially wide consequences. But precisely because the demonstration of a person's implication in, for example, labour exploitation in far away places or in environmental degradation only works by establishing the dependence of these consequences on myriad mediating actions, then strictly speaking the motivating force of the demonstration is fairly indeterminate. It might persuade a person that their actions contribute, in small ways, to the reproduction of those harms. It is just as likely for someone to conclude that their contribution is so highly mediated that not only are they not able to do much about it, but that this doesn't really count as being responsible in any reasonable sense at all. This is the impasse that any theory that derives responsibility or obligation from the consequences of an actor's own actions ends up facing:

> A person can be morally responsible only for what he does; but what he does results from a great deal that he does not do; therefore he is not morally responsible for what he is and is not responsible for (Nagel 1979, 34).

Nagel's point here is that grounding questions of responsibility on causal principles alone actually leaves everything important about the motivation of practical action out of the picture. Because the 'geographies of responsibility' literature presumes that people are responsible by virtue of the extended consequences of their own actions it cannot in fact do what it claims to do, namely establish a compelling reason for anyone to take responsibility for distant suffering or distress.

By presuming that either empirical or conceptual demonstrations of causal implication in distanciated relationships of connection and entanglement can both justify and thereby motivate practical action, Geographers too often fail to give adequate attention to what one might call, after Korsgaard (1996), the sources of normativity. By this, we refer to the closely linked questions of *why* normative claims should be acted upon at all and of *how* conduct in relation to norms, principles, and values is actually motivated in practice. To illustrate why it might be worth taking more time to consider these questions, consider the similar looking arguments of Iris Marion Young (2004) and Onora O'Neill (2000) on global justice. Both authors propose a geographically expansive account of moral and political obligations. In terms of their geographical content, both arguments seem to support Geographers' assertions about the stretching of responsibility over globalised networks of action. However under closer scrutiny they mobilise the geographical aspect of their argument in relation to somewhat different normative principles – the reasons for acting they provide and presume are significantly different.

Young's account of global labour solidarity does more than tell a geographical story about the responsibilities we have by way of our being connected into wider spatial systems. Her aim is, rather, to establish some basic principles through which people can reason about their actions (Young 2004, 385). Her account stresses questions of power and privilege as well as simply connection, and it is certainly compelling. Our point here is that Young's guiding normative principle is the idea that people are likely to be moved by a concern to avoid reproducing their unwitting implication in the reproduction of harm to others.

In O'Neill's work, one can find a similar looking argument, and one that comes to similar looking conclusions regarding the widened geographical scope of responsibility and obligation. But it is premised on a different normative principle. O'Neill suggests that we should afford equal moral status to distant others because, in our everyday activities, we presume and take for granted their status as moral agents. Therefore we owe justice and moral standing to distant strangers as well as to those close at hand:

> Hence *if* we owe justice (or other forms of moral concern) to all whose capacities to act, experience and suffer we take for granted in acting, we will owe it to strangers as well as to familiars, and to distant strangers as well as to those who are near at hand (2000: 196).

The important point here is that O'Neill's guiding principle of moral motivation is not the avoidance of harm, as in Young. It is instead a revised, constructivist account of Kantian universalizability, according to which actors are beholden by their practical actions to treat others as pure ends in themselves.

The point of contrasting O'Neill and Young is twofold. First, and to reiterate, neither thinks that simply establishing geographically extensive patterns of causal responsibility has any motivating force in and of itself. This is precisely why, in both cases, appeals are also made to aspects of self-interest and to a sense of fairness as well as to geographical connections. Second, focussing only on the geographical content of these accounts, on the assumption that it is geographical knowledge that can and must fulfil the motivating function, has the effect of hiding from view the different normative principles that are in play in these demonstrations: principles such as the avoidance of harm, expressions of solidarity, or autonomy. What both Young and O'Neill demonstrate is that, on its own, the mere fact of being bound into relationships with distant others does not actually provide any compelling reason that could account for or motivate relationships of care, concern, or obligation. Nor, in either case, is it actually meant to.

Even in cases where strong arguments can be mustered that there are causal relationships between our actions and distant people and places, questions of practical motivation only get off the ground once issues of direct liability or blame are left behind. Therefore it is important to attend more closely to the sorts of claims made about why being geographically implicated should lead to any type of practical action. In their engagements with moral philosophy and political theory, perhaps Geographers should take a little more time to reflect on the assumptions that different theoretical accounts make about what sorts of motivations and influences people are, and should be, susceptible to. These assumptions can, of course, be assessed empirically, but they are also subject to normative assessment in their own right.

What both Young and O'Neill demonstrate is that, at the very least, the reasons one might have for acting differently or not in light of causal knowledge are not likely to be reasons of knowledge alone. This point returns us to the theme of attending to and responding to others. There is a deep strain of thinking that imagines that understandings of responsibility and obligation could be arrived at monologically, outside of any encounter with others. This is a disposition which, in presuming that it is possible or preferable to take on the suffering of the world, inadvertently arrogates to itself the perspective of impartial observer (Williams 2006, 145). There is a degree of detachment implied by thinking that tracking consequences and worrying primarily about the outcomes (whether intended or unintended) of one's actions could or should provide the criteria for normatively evaluating one's conduct. In the case of both care and responsibility, a crucial aspect in the motivation of actions is likely to be attending to and responding to the expressions and claims of others. The fixation on chains of causality hides from view the degree to which responsible, caring action is motivated not in monological reflection on one's own obligations, but by encounters with others.

4). Generosity, Motivation and Disposition

Geographers have tended to assume a particular model of moral agency in their discussions of care and responsibility. It is a model that is widespread, perhaps even foundational, of a whole field of social science endeavour (Barnes 2000). It presumes that agency is a vector of blame, shame, and guilt, and that causal explanation is a prerequisite for motivating responsible, other-regarding action (Williams 1995). This, in turn, informs a pedagogy which presumes that people need to be shown the consequences of their actions in order to be motivated to change, to take responsibility, to become more caring for the world around them. Not only does this pedagogy assume that such motivation works by tracking the consequences of action, (more or less intended, more or less spatially dispersed). More worryingly, it assumes that people don't already care, aren't already acting responsibly. The exhortatory register of so much of Geography's discussion of morality and politics certainly fits with the temper of the times, in which there is a widespread assumption that people are naturally inclined to be self-interested egoists. Some people (phantom neoliberals, mostly) think this is a good thing, and that more people *should* behave like this; many more, across the political spectrum, think that that more and more people *do* act like this, but that this is a bad thing. In this section, we want to elaborate on the theme of *generosity*, in order to suggest that this base-line assumption of egoism and self-interest might not be the best starting-point from which to approach questions of practical, normative action. And we want to suggest that, despite whatever 'moral' overtones it might possess, generosity be thought of primarily as a political concept: generosity is a *modality of power* akin to forgiving or promising, that is, as a practice through which "the living together of people" is routinely sustained over time and space (Arendt 1958, 180).

Sack (2003, 31) argues that a moral theory "cannot force us to behave well. It can only persuade us through logic and reason that it discloses a better way of acting". While the first part of this observation might be correct, the second part raises the question of whether the force of persuasion to which people are susceptible is limited to logic and reason alone. In pedagogic practice, Geography's engagement with moral philosophy has certainly not restricted itself to logic and reason at all. We have already suggested that there is an implicit model of moral motivation at work in Geography, one that turns on the idea that people can be moved to ethical action by a combination of empirically demonstrating their implication in distant consequences with an emotionally charged imputation of *guilt*. Geographers have also focussed primarily on providing justifications for caring more or taking more responsibility, where this often refers to extending care and responsibility over distance. Now, any attempt at the justification of practical conduct necessarily implies some model of how ethical motivation works (Nagel 1970, 3). As already noted, the theories of ethics and morality that Geographers have developed are not merely addressed at other academics; they are embedded in pedagogic programmes that circulate in public spaces of education, news journalism, and even popular media. As Nagel observes, the notion that the motivational problems of practical action require one to find a robust principle by which people will be justifiably persuaded to act presumes that this consideration, whatever it might be, can be successfully conceived by theorists and then communicated through one form or other of pedagogic practice. We suggest that people are motivated in all sorts of ways, by all sorts of different things.Any putative justification for acting morally "must rest on empirical assumptions about the influences to which people are susceptible" (ibid., 3). If these assumptions are not true of those to whom a moral argument is addressed – of those about whom it is mean to apply, if not directly persuade – then the justification will have "neither validity or persuasive force" (ibid., 4).

So, one question that arises for us is just what types of 'motivational influence' do Geographers assume people are susceptible to? We have already suggested that one answer to this is that there is an excessive investment in the influence of causal knowledge. But another question that arises, in so far as this first answer seems plausible, is just what is the motivational *problem* to which Geographers accounts of caring at a distance and the geographies of responsibility are meant to provide a solution? It seems to us that across the range of debates reviewed in sections 2 and 3, there is a broadly shared assumption that the task of a morally engaged, normatively committed Geography is to overcome entrenched tendencies towards acting in self-interested ways and according to a geographically restricted horizon of obligation. Self-interest and egoism are routinely aligned with having a restricted geographical imagination, and are counterposed to moral 'goods' such as altruism, which is in turn aligned with more expansive geographical horizons. For example, Sack argues that "altruism inspires a care for distant strangers (others with whom one has no personal connection and hence nothing personally to claim)" (Sack 2003, 29). He further claims that the task of Geography is to assist in justifying why people should be "less self-centred and more altruistic" (ibid., 38). Why is it that Geographers fall so easily into assuming that people are naturally self-interested egoists? Why is it that caring, being responsible, acting out of concern for strangers, are not recognised to be an ordinary part of everyday life? And why is it that acting out of altruistic motivations should be considered wholly at odds with self-regarding concerns?

These are, of course, rhetorical questions. In order to shift attention away from the assumption that self-interest is a natural disposition that needs to be countered, and that moral actions such as altruism need to be motivated by providing cast-iron justifications, we are drawn towards the theme of generosity. We focus here on the question of the relationship between self-interest and altruism, because it provides a way into this theme of generosity. It is true that most models of altruism remain resolutely monological. They tend to keep the focus of moral agency squarely on the giver, who is ascribed all the active attributes of moral subjectivity, at the cost of the receiver, who is thereby rendered a rather passive subject. Furthermore, by discounting the validity of instrumental concerns in motivating altruistic actions, such models suppose that the value of an altruistic act can be wholly determined by reference to the intention behind it, irrespective of the outcomes of any such act. Both these problems arise from the assumption that altruism and egoism are related in zero-sum terms: that being altruistic requires one to gainsay various self-regarding motivations. But one cannot account for other-regarding conduct without considering the co-implication of self-interest and altruism, of intrinsic and instrumental concerns (see Mansbridge 1990). For one thing, the 'goods' valued by the recipient or beneficiary of any altruistic act must be taken into consideration by the generous subject – the generous act is, after all, meant to augment their capacities and capabilities:

> we cannot coherently imagine a world in which everyone had exclusively altruistic motivations. The goal of the altruist is to provide others with an occasion for selfish pleasures – the pleasure of reading a book or drinking a bottle of wine one has received as a gift. If nobody had first-order, selfish pleasures, nobody could have higher-order, altruistic motives either (Elster 1989, 53-4).

It turns out that altruism only makes sense if one supposes that other people, the objects of one's generosity, have a quite valid interest in their own pleasures, in augmenting their own capacities. If this instrumental, outcome-oriented consideration is discounted, any altruistic act – the giving of care, or knowledge, or objects without concern for oneself - would turn out to be self-negating. It would be little more than an act done to augment the moral righteousness of the generous subject.

So rather than supposing that altruism and egoism are opposed versions of selfhood, we might think instead of the co-existence of two different perspectives that go together to make up ethical subjectivity: a subjective, partial, personal perspective, in which a person acts as an 'I'; and an impersonal perspective, in which actors strive to adopt an objective position on states of affairs (see Nagel 1986). We have learnt to be rightly suspicious of accounts that privilege an abstracted, detached perspective, and to recognise the validity of the affections, concerns and goals that people experience from their own partial, personal perspective. But we should not suppose that these two perspectives are opposed to one another, nor that the subjective, personal dimension of ethical dispositions is resolutely hostile to reason. The possibility of self-less virtues like prudence and altruism is testament to the capacity to view oneself as persisting through time (prudence) and of recognising the reality of other persons (altruism). While altruism depends on the "full recognition of other persons", this also depends on having a conception of oneself as "merely one person among others", (Nagel 1970, 88). It is this impersonal perspective that is crucial to any responsive form of practical conduct, since it is the condition for acting in relation to the insistent demand of practical reason, that is, of acting in the expectation of having to give an understandable account or offer a normative justification for one's conduct before others. Assuming that moral action follows solely from the personal perspective of the 'I' would be to "to view oneself as a benevolent bureaucrat distributing such benefits as one can control to countless other beings, with whom one may have various relations or none" (Nagel 1979, 88). Practical action that is responsive and attentive, in contrast, therefore requires the capacity "to view oneself simultaneously as 'I' and as *someone* – an impersonally specifiable individual" (Nagel 1970, 19). This latter, 'objective' perspective is the condition of being able to cultivate "a view of oneself as a small being interacting with others in a large world" (Nagel 1979, 88). It is a view that presupposes and requires that one might be called upon to offer interpersonal justifications for one's actions and points of view. On this view, principles become important not in grounding action in advance, but in contexts where the necessarily finite qualities of any action provoke occasions to give reasons and provide justifications.

Nagel's classic account of the possibility of altruism indicates that arguments about morality, ethics, and the like do not need to abandon the realm of reasonable argument in favour of moral exhortation. They do, though, need to consider more modest, less subject-centred conceptions of the self. One source for developing such conceptions is recent literature on the theme of generosity. Thinking about relationships of generosity suggests a different placement of self-interest and other-regarding virtues, of egoism and altruism, and also points towards a more practical agenda for thinking through the normative issues raised in Geography's 'moral turn'. Issues of giving, the gift, and generosity have become increasingly important in mainstream moral philosophy and social theory, as well as in debates inflected by post-foundationalist Continental philosophy (Schrift, 1997)). This range of work suggests a rethinking of normative questions that might escape the strictures and prescriptions of those accounts that focus overwhelmingly on providing justifications for various forms of obligation or responsibility.

Theories of the gift are often presented as an alternative to the economistic calculation of exchange and contract. This understanding is derived from anthropology, where the gift has been conceptually constructed as a mode of interaction that epitomises values of reciprocity that supposedly ground the very possibility of sociality and community. Since Mauss (2002), the gift relation is understood to initiate a chain of relations in which the presentation of a gift obligates the recipient to offer a gift in return, thereby "setting in motion temporal, lasting cycles of obligations" (Gudeman 2001, 80). In anthropology the value of gift relations is derived from the assumption that relationships of commodity exchange or contract are essentially egoistic and atomistic, whereas the gift is relational and altruistic. In this way, anthropological accounts of the gift are frequently seized upon to counter the seemingly hegemonic arguments of modern theories of rational choice.

Theories of the gift are able to offer an alternative to egoistic, self-interested models of social interaction only by embedding sociality ever more firmly within a circle of obligatory relationships. Derrida's *Given Time* (1992) calls into question the assumption that gift relations offer a preferred, morally superior model of conduct. He shows the degree to which the calculative give and take of gift relations is identical to that normally reserved for exchange and contract. Derrida's demonstration is simple enough: starting from the position inherited from Mauss and others, where gift-giving is conventionally counter-posed to exchange, he shows that as soon as a gift is given knowingly as a gift, the subject of generosity is always anticipating a return, already taking credit of some sort, if only credit for being generous. This relationship between *giving* and *taking* inscribes the gift within a circuit of reciprocal exchange that it is supposed to exclude. The apparently 'ethical' content of the generous act is thereby annulled in the very moment of its taking place.

The deconstruction of the classical anthropological discourse of a foundational reciprocal generosity is shaped by a concern to uncover the degree to which the type of moral reasoning exemplified by gift theory is dependent on notions of property – of the possession by a sovereign subject of its own self and of other objects. This is the 'political unconscious' of gift theory. Deconstruction de-centres the subject of moral obligation through a gesture of dispossession, showing that generosity is not quite so straightforwardly in the gift of a subject as might be supposed. Now, the point of this demonstration is not to suggest that all social relations are, at base, self-interested ones. It is, rather, to call into question the assumption that just relationships must necessarily be premised on a principle of symmetrical reciprocity – an assumption that underlies monological forms of moral reasoning in which subjects are held to be obliged with reference to their own voluntary actions. Derrida's point is simply that a pure gift relation is not possible in practice, nor preferable in principle. It might therefore be a good idea to stop supposing that it should serve as the benchmark of critical judgment or normative evaluation.

It is worth underlining that Derrida's deconstruction of the gift takes as its object of critical analysis not a scene of non-recognition, of non-reciprocity, or of exclusion. Its target is an exemplary scene of reciprocal, inter-subjective recognition that might be supposed to typify a non-allergic, ethical relationship between self and other. This intense suspicion of the morality of reciprocity echoes the phenomenological ethics of Emmanuel Levinas (see Barnett 2005). Drawing on Derrida, Levinas, and Irigary, Iris Marion Young (1997) has developed the notion that it is in relations of asymmetrical reciprocity that ethical relationships find their feet. For Young, far from premising ethical action in the logic of reciprocal obligation, it is in relationships that escape the logic of contracts and exchange altogether that one might glimpse a mode of relating that escapes the circularity and self-possession of obligation. This argument suggests an alternative way of framing questions of commitment, one which does not suppose that obligation has to be derived from establishing some relationship of debt between an active moral subject and their passive object of concern. Rather, it suggests that ethical conduct is best exemplified by practices of sacrifice, devotion, and love; practices which might be the stuff of ordinary, everyday life (Miller 1998).

One can find similar sorts of arguments in other lines of thought. The idea that a purely self-less act is possible or preferable is, for example, questioned by Jon Elster in his account of the relationship of altruism and self-interest:

> Pure nonselfish behaviour is represented by anonymous contributions to impersonal charities […] Only gifts from unknown to unknown are unambiguously unselfish. (Elster 1989, 55).

This argument has some interesting affinities with Derrida's argument that only an act that disavowed any return, one that could not be knowingly given as a gift, could accord with the requirements of a pure gift: a pure gift could not be recognised as a gift by another party. Elster's point, though, throws the deconstruction of the gift into new light. He notes that gift giving, as exemplary of altruistic conduct, can all too easily serve the interests of the donor (ibid., 58). Generosity can, it seems, also be a means of reproducing inequality and dependence.

This is also the starting point of Rosalind Diprose's (2002) account of corporeal generosity. She notes that many accounts of generosity take for granted the division between a set of subjects in possession of things to be given, and a set of subjects to whom gifts are passed. Generosity can certainly be undertaken out of a self-interested motivation to be seen to be a good person, and as such, might even lead to a reproduction of unequal relations of possession. Diprose draws attention to the extent to which the idea of generosity as an individual, altruistic virtue that motivates people to act towards others with no regard for their own benefit continues to presume that generosity is a virtue that inheres wholly in the exercise of sovereignty over the self's own actions.

The significance of this kind of argument is that it points towards an alternative understanding of relations of generosity. What follows from Young's account of the ethics of asymmetrical reciprocity is that generosity is rightfully embedded in relationships of responsiveness and attentiveness to others. Likewise, Diprose premises generosity on an embodied disposition of openness, a mode of relating that constitutes the self as affecting and affected by others. When generosity is separated from receptivity to the needs of others (that is, when it is presumed that generosity is an obligation arrived at outside of any encounter with the agency of the receiving subject), then it threatens to reproduce harm:

> Insofar as generosity does not understand itself to be deeply rooted in a receptive encounter with others, it will proliferate a blindness, theft, and imperialism despite its best efforts (Coles 1997, 3).

Coles's notion of receptive generosity is meant to restore this sense of encounter and relation to thinking about ethics. It is notable that this type of relationship depends on a degree of passivity and separation that redistributes the imagined moral geography of relations of proximity and distance. For Coles, Diprose, and Young then, generosity is recast as an embodied disposition that subsists in the practices and dispositions of attending and responding to others.

Writers like Young, Coles, and Diprose point towards a normative account of generosity not as a regulative ideal, but as a constitutive practice of sociality, community, and being together. It is in this sense we suggest that generosity be thought of as a *modality of power*. By this, we mean it is a practice through which people ordinarily act in concert to sustain relationships over time and space, relationships that enact their own normative principles and which depend upon non-sovereign modes of selfhood (Arendt 1958, 213-214). We also mean to suggest that generosity is not a 'moral' concept at all, in so far as this is meant to imply a regulative ideal of some sort against which the actualities of practice can be judged and evaluated from the position of an impartial observer. Generosity is, by definition, a partial virtue that cannot be universalised, precisely because of its emplacement within concrete encounters with others, however mediated these may be. This means that any given act of generosity must also exclude generosity to others. Like other partial virtues such as compassion, the 'withholding' of generosity is structurally embedded in the act of being generous (cf Berlant 2004). The possibility of generosity, so to speak, rests on the impossibility of pure generosity. Or, to put it another way, generosity is necessarily a finite, partial virtue, because it is a mundane, ordinary, and everyday practice always undertaken in the company of others.

We have argued here that Geography's engagements with moral philosophy are wrong-headed in so far as they are premised on faulty assumptions about the sorts of influences people are liable to act upon (one's that privilege causal knowledge as the primary motivating force), and also flawed assumptions about the sorts of problems that academic reasoning about normative issues is meant to address (the assumption that people are too egoistical and not altruistic enough). In contrast, we have suggested that other-regarding actions are ordinary and everyday; and that the consequential actions that motivate people to change their conduct are not only their own self-caused actions, but also the actions of other actors who make normative demands of them to notice, attend, and respond to their needs (see Barnett et al 2006). Our reason for developing this argument here is not to present 'generosity' as a paradigm of personal, moral conduct or ethics that can or should augment 'politics' in some way. The *normative* problems of *motivation* that are addressed in moral philosophy are hardly restricted to ethics or morality alone: they are pressing issues in the conceptualisation of political action and the meaning of justice. We do think, though, that in relation to debates about politics and morality, justice and ethics, Geographers too readily have recourse to modes of monological reasoning which suppose that the key to motivating action lies in justification and explanatory knowledge. Focussing on a modalities of action such as generosity suggests, instead, a different programme, less exhortatory, more exploratory: one which looks at how opportunities to address normative demands in multiple registers are organised and transformed; at the ways in which dispositions to respond and to be receptive to others are worked up; and how opportunities for acting responsively on these dispositions are organised.

5). Geographies of Generosity

The papers in this issue all build upon debates about caring at a distance and geographies of responsibility that we discussed in Sections 2 and 3. Each one also develops the analysis of *practices* of generosity that suggest the limitations of both these paradigms. They focus on different aspects of generosity, often with specific reference to the ways in which new modes of spatial relationship are constituted through institutionally mediated practices of generosity. Empirically, each one focuses on the geographies through which generosity is modulated, where this includes donating money, volunteering, or giving one's time in the care of others. Theoretically, the papers draw on a range of perspectives concerning the relationships between giving and receiving, caring and being cared for. In particular, the papers take up the challenge of thinking beyond dualisms of active giving and passive receiving, by thinking through both the forms of responsiveness and receptivity that motivate generous behaviour as well as the modes of agency that elicit such responses. All of the papers therefore use the geographies of generous practices – whether this refers to the sites of giving, the spatialities of generosity, or the human and natural objects of generous conduct - to examine the multiple and complex motivations of generous practices, and the way in which these intersect with wider projects of political and social transformation.

Martin Buttle turns his attention to practices of generosity that are enabled, framed by and promoted through different organisational infrastructures, starting from the premise that people are generous in myriad different ways. Buttle's paper focuses on people's engagement with ethical banks. People have made considered decisions to transfer their banking requirements to banks that operate explicitly ethical modes of practice that include contributing to various charitable development programmes. Buttle asks how such banks construct ethical discourses, and in what ways they enrol customers into particular models of what it is to be concerned with the fate of others..

We have already seen that 'distance' is a privileged topic in geography's discussion of moral philosophy. The idea that distance is an impediment to generous responses to the needs of others or to caring action is challenged in the next two papers. Paul Cloke, Jon May and Sarah Johnston focus on the forms of othering through which homelessness is constructed as an occasion for people to engage in so-called 'moral selving'. The structural process and the powers of agency that have seen a tangible rise in homelessness are hidden, yet what is obvious is the increased number of homeless people. The mediating practices that allow people to be generous with their time and energy as volunteers is premised on homeless people not being distant, but up close and visible. Sean Carter looks at how a stretched-out, distanciated network of generosity and care was developed and sustained amongst a diasporic community of Croatian migrants in North America during the 1990s. In this case, distance from an imaginary 'homeland' is the very condition for the development of networks of assistance which combined an ambivalent mix of material, political, and moral support. There is, in short, a geopolitics of generosity.

The final two papers in this issue explicitly challenge the terms on which Geography's 'moral turn' has been conceptualised and institutionalised. Ian Cook *et* *al* develop a sustained critique of the pedagogies through which Geography in schools as well as in tertiary education has put in place a mode of moral education premised on making cognitive connections between 'here' and 'there'. They outline an alternative practice of affective pedagogy that exceeds and challenges the established model of 'cognitive mapping'. Nigel Clark's paper questions the extent to which non-human agency can call forward generous responses. He argues that the global response to the Asian tsunami in December 2004 was provoked by its qualities as an *event*, not simply as a response to the needs of affected people. Both these papers, then, return to the argument outlined above, that thinking about the geography of generosity opens up new horizons for understanding the receptive, responsive, and attentive relationships through which ethical action is provoked.

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