Charles Colby, who virtually grew up as fellow geographer with Jefferson, has written:  

_In his published work Jefferson was creative and in many cases brilliant, but seldom systematic and logical. Perhaps it is more accurate to state that he was systematic in his distributions and not in his explanations . . . Viewing the course of geographic thought in the first half of the Twentieth Century, I conclude that Jefferson created a one-man school of geography._

Geographers have perhaps been rather pre-occupied by the visible part of Jefferson's geography—the novelty of idea suggested by Colby and numerous other geographers. His point of view and method have remained little known. But it is just such a study of method and point of view transcending time and place that provides the scientist of any age with excitement and wonder. Too frequently the geographer has confused the method of the individual geographer with disciplinal methodology. Rarely has the soul of a geographer been bared, his humanity and competence ordered and subjected to scrutiny, his intellectual apparatus and scientific system sought. The geographer may be guilty of not learning the lessons offered by a study of intellectual history. A dualism presents itself. Geography is not essentially a study of geographers' mind systems and thoughts; this may be the realm of the philosopher. Yet the discipline needs to associate itself intimately with the personalities, systems, philosophies of its forebears in addition to their works, if it is to grow strong and healthy, more nearly complete. It is difficult to understand the work of the intellectual of a bygone age unless one understands his approach and point of view which are method for the individual.
In attempting to unravel the mind system of a thinker who contributed much to geography one must not necessarily seek an ordered methodology: if one reveals a method that is as large as a personality, a method whose values and direction are an emotional response to experience in the latter part of the nineteenth century when historical positivism was sponsoring fact collection in social science, when social Darwinism was permeating every nook and cranny of inquiry and at a time when descriptive appreciation was legitimately science, if a method so characterized is revealed, it requires no reasoned explanation or justification.

Jefferson's supreme disregard of the question "what is geography" stemmed from his feeling that there might be no geography, only geographers. He refused to erect a schema, a position, and thus become prisoner to his own pronouncements. Believing that the subject was not yet ready to search for a discipline, he busied himself calling roll on the social and physical sciences, collecting, collocating, and synthesizing data that it might be made subject to scrutiny by the geographic fraternity.

Jefferson believed that the geographer who wished to observe, collect facts, witness truths, to develop thoughts, need have no more philosophy than a point of view. He believed that truths, once recognized, should be published and thus shared. He frequently remarked that the offering of a work was more vital than its correctness, for the work would serve as a basis for revision and improvement. His task was to explain, not to justify. He offered no glittering world system. No naive finalism controlled his study. Thought and yet more thought was the essence of his geography. Implicitly he believed an approach would come with the years of toil. Jefferson, inspired by Davis, and convinced by empiricism, had learned to say "it looks as if." Caution and prudence, patient unambitious analysis, was his way. The fact had, necessarily, to be studied in itself, carefully verified by observation and experiment. He applied sound judgement, was a constructive thinker, had read Newton and agreed that "the essential of discovery is patient thought," recognized that the scientific man does not stumble upon new facts or conclusions by accident, but finds what he looks for. His fertile imagination, though kept in firm check, nevertheless managed to leaven his notable powers of observation and leave behind the impression that this balance of imagination and observation was the very essence of discovery.

Jefferson presented the spectacle of a thinker, armed with his own chosen intellectual apparatus, a living exemplar of the process of self improvement, choosing to think of matters personally interesting and
significant to himself, who only incidentally wondered at the structure of the discipline. Frequently he assumed the role of universalist trespassing in the field of geography. Only rarely did he peer at the structure that housed the subject matter of his interest. His enthusiasm was engendered not by earthly aspiration but by a compulsion to understand and to enjoy the life of an educated mind. Fortunately Jefferson's immediate environment was large enough to accommodate men of science wishing to find a new direction for their thoughts. The exuberant confidence of a United States, whose exhausting westward marathon was well-nigh run, encouraged a release of creative energies, significant since the social thought and clime of time and place inevitably form the environment to which intellectuals are bound. This milieu was responsible for, although not responsible to, scientific attitudes and appreciation by men of letters. America in mid-passage displayed fidelity to esthetic affirmation. Thought was uninhibited: no dogma biased constructive social thought; the field of research was essentially limitless; men were inspired by the aftermath power of the industrial revolution which encouraged the analytical quest, which affirmed the necessity of the freedom of inquiry and produced a large number of thinkers who focused their efforts on posited problems and thereby distinguished themselves, by their very attempt at use of a scientific method, from men of belles lettres with whom they coexisted. This larger milieu encouraged academics to feel free and think freely. No coercive group unanimity exercising cultural authority influenced Jefferson. And so his work was able to have about it the air of scientific neutrality; it was uncommitted to any metaphysical or theological interpretation of its findings, and it was free from all forms of control that those authorities can impose in the attempt to reconcile scientific findings with orthodoxy. He had no compulsive, automatic reactions, but simple loves of country, home, and soil.

Disciplinary boundary lines had not been established; inter-disciplinary academic piracies and jealousies did not sap energies which were set to the tasks of inquiry, fact gathering, and ordering. A long tradition in physiography, involving the names of Dutton, Powell, Gilbert, and Davis which dominated, was authoritative but not authoritarian as deviants from that tradition began to demonstrate early in the 1900's. Earnest and careful scholarship rather than attempted geographic science won acceptance in American geographic circles. This freedom was further advanced by universities, colleges, normal schools and high schools where faculty were thrown back upon their own resources to develop geography courses and fashion them from their own interests.

Jefferson's earliest courses at the Michigan State Normal College
were such an amalgam, being a product of his personal travel experiences combined with the physiography he had learned from Davis at Harvard. Knowledge and understanding, and the inculcation of such in the classroom, seemed more important to Jefferson than geography. He had the freedom to study and teach what interested him most. His classroom teachings would very frequently parallel his own studies, his classroom elaboration helping his independent thought. At times one feels the chalk and the talk of the classroom in his writing. Jefferson's personal interests largely determined the nature of what he would next talk or write of as geographic. He worked in areas where others frequently had not trod, in what seemed geographic, always with the desire to bring an informed intelligence to bear on the matter and to encourage others to think on the finished results that they might better them. Especially did inaccurate pieces of work attract Jefferson's attention that they might be improved and made correct. Otherwise Jefferson had a no more sophisticated working definition of geography for his own purposes than the way people lived on the land.

Jefferson did have a geographical "point of view." It was subject to his evolution in thought and may be gleaned from a study of his course offerings, articles, books, slides, photographs, book reviews, autobiographical notes, and correspondence. Jefferson's geographical viewpoint did change. Initially he was steeped in Davisian physiography, but this gave way early in the century to a most loosely conceptualized interest in man on the land and especially in the factors which promote the full expression of a people's genius. This shift finds expression in Jefferson's interests as published in American Men of Science.² Edition I, 1906—tides, river meanders, beach cusps; Edition II, 1910—geography of tides, river meanders, beach cusps and rainfall of great lakes, distribution of man, distribution of temperatures; Edition III, 1921—same as Edition II; Edition IV, 1927—distribution of man, distribution of temperatures, population growth, geography of cities; Edition V, 1933 and Edition VI, 1938—distribution of man, distribution of climates and of culture, population growth, geography of cities.

Jefferson's only published physiographic and geologic articles, ten in number, found print in the decade 1897–1907. In that latter year he commenced publication of articles more interesting to the human geographer. Jefferson's post-Davisian geographic point of view is partly revealed in the following statements. On the occasion of the Roorbach questionnaire Symposium of 1914, Jefferson expressed his geographical point of view, paragraphs of which were later published in the Bulletin of the American Geographical Society.³
Mark Jefferson thinks "There is most need of investigation of the distribution of man over the earth and the explanation of the facts observed." This leads immediately, he says, "into the explanation of the facts observed."

Mark Jefferson says, "In general the greatest tasks of all are still the ascertainment of all possible facts of geography," and the putting of them "into groups and relationships admitting simple statements qualified by statement of the width of applicability to which they are entitled."

In the introduction to *Man in Europe*, 1924, Jefferson wrote:

*I have no mandate to define geography but of course I have a point of view, which is colored by my occupation of teaching teachers of geography. I want children to know where some of the most important peoples of the world are and what they are like, so first I want the teachers to know these things themselves."

In 1930, and in the introduction to his book, *Exercises in Human Geography*, Jefferson wrote—"Our geography is mainly concerned with men—where they are and what they are like." In seeking the "where" of man, he studied the distribution and characteristics of houses in many parts of the world, plotted man's distribution and resultant settlement patterns, and concentrated especially upon the geography of cities. An integral part of Jefferson's "where" was a concealed "why." He never observed a distribution without asking "why?" This obliged him to rediscover the physical environment as the home of man. This is not to suggest that Jefferson ever neglected the physical environment, for his studies of climate had been numerous throughout his career, but as man consumed more of his time, correspondingly less was accorded study of the physical environment.

One year later, Jefferson essayed a longer statement concerning his point of view. In 1931 A. E. Parkins circulated a questionnaire concerning "The Nature of Geography" to approximately twenty leading geographers of the U.S.A. Parkins' collection of replies to the questionnaires has been destroyed, but a duplicate copy of Jefferson's response, drawn from his own personal papers, is reproduced here to depict his geographic point of view in 1931:

*Many people—even educated people—use the word geography in a merely locational or distributional sense. The geography of sardines, they would say, must deal with the distribution of sardines, either before or after catching and canning. The geography of whales would surely tell where to look for whales. What could the geography of wooden shoes mean but their distribution in space? If you could put all*
the wooden shoes in the world down on a map in the places where they are at the present moment, with some indication of their numbers at every point where they occur, that would certainly show the geography of wooden shoes.

Someone has said that anything that you can put on a map is subject matter of geography. That is what I call locational or distribution geography. Many would prefer to call the study of the features of the moon's visible face lunar geography. Anyone would understand that the geography of my study-furniture meant the placing of the chairs and tables about the room.

But geographers are contemplative persons who cannot be satisfied with so meagre an account of the subject. We contemplate the things and their distribution. If asked why, we can only say that we take pleasure in it. We like to. But no one can contemplate the distributions of the major features of the earth and its inhabitants without fancying that he perceives causes and relations behind and among distributions. No distribution on earth is fortuitous. One thing is not independent of another. Some sort of order is usually perceived in any distribution, even though not understood in all its details. Wooden shoes are at once seen to be the work of tool-using men who have risen at least to an iron-using culture. Also they occur only in lands with readily worked woods. Also they are a response to rainy and muddy weather. The maps of iron-using men, of forests and of rainy weather enable us to foretell where we shall find the wooden shoes. Then come the exceptions, like the United States, where we think we have found something better in rubber footwear. Their use in parts of France, and the presence of a compact body of people of French origin in Quebec province who are known to cling strongly to old ways, would make it reasonable to look for some use of wooden shoes among the Canadian French.

Geographers like to think of these contemplations and reasonings on the facts of distribution of geography. The nature of geography is the fact that there are discoverable causes of distributions and relations between distributions. We study geography when we seek to discover them.

The mere distributed facts are no more geography to us than a fossil is geology to the geologist. If to the heedless they are all of geography, geography means nothing much to them of necessity. The heedless do not even perceive any distribution or grouping at all. For them a map is as meaningless as a table of statistics to those who do not understand statistics. They are folks who see with the eye only and not with the mind. It appears to us that they do not see at all. For them there is neither art nor science.
But there is an art of geography—the delineation of the earth’s features and inhabitants on maps—cartography, and a science of geography, which contemplates the fact delineated and seeks out causes of the form taken by each distribution and its relationship to others.

Jefferson’s study of human distribution did not eliminate his interest in physiography. In 1935, at the age of 73, accompanied by his daughter Phoebe, Jefferson travelled the length of the Tagus Valley, taking numerous photographs of its physiographic and human features. Resultant from this excursion was a physiographic study presented to the Association of American Geographers in 1936, “Is the Iberian Plateau a Plain of Marine Denudation.” His “man in geography” Jefferson recognized as a logical extension of the work of those geographers that had gone before him. He was building on an established geographical foundation; he was not beginning anew. He accepted, and was proud to claim intellectual descent from men who had centered their endeavors in the physical environment.

You cannot pick your father. Fathers cannot always pick their sons. Your father had to take you a good deal as you happened. Your intellectual father, however, you are free to pick.

The head of the school of geography at Ypsilanti picked William Morris Davis as his geographic father in 1897, when he recognized Davis’ extraordinary powers of observation, analysis and reasoning applied to the forms of the Earth’s surface. Happily this involved Professor Davis in no responsibility. Just as a physical father cannot always transmit his powers to his son, a self-elected intellectual son need not expect to attain the powers of the parent he desires, but he may hope to grow in the admired direction.

Nor need one bother father in selecting remoter forebears. For scientific grandparent we select Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz. When he settled in America in 1848 he brought inspiration to a whole generation of American naturalists to pay more and more attention to Nature herself and give less slavish attention to words of print. There was opportunity of descent, for Davis came to Harvard in 1866 and entered classes where Agassiz and his teachings dominated. That influence we elect for grandparental.

This fragment was written in 1924.

It was the ability of Jefferson to have his own “notion” that seemingly emancipated him from the bondage of Davis and physiography. After self-scrutiny and self-criticism, patient thought about acquired facts led him to develop his “Jeffersonian notions.” Now these notions are not necessarily truths or laws, though he might refer to a notion as a law. He was not attempting immediately to propound causalities; the
enunciated notion would be made public and rendered subject to further scrutiny. His notion would cause and encourage the further search for truth. His comprehension was the product of the submission of facts to close scrutiny over a period of time. It was the method of the man’s mind, not a method developed for or derived from, an accepted discipline. He wanted more and more honest study, believing that system would inevitably evolve to manage the acquired facts. There was no orderly subjection of an idea to a hierarchy of preconceived questions, rather was his method a flow of an involved self over an idea or observation. Care, patience, thoroughness, even duplication and irrelevance characterized this method. Facts which Jefferson had long appreciated suddenly merged together, forming a new pattern: a notion had been born. This was the fruit of Jefferson’s labor, and seemingly enabled him to wean himself from W. M. Davis, whose “notions” Jefferson had previously enjoyed. Jefferson felt his notions were assertions concerning God’s truths. They were what won for him his refreshing and Jeffersonian point of view, his originality, his individuality. In 1940 Jefferson wrote in a casual letter:

All my work is animated, I like to think, by a desire to get at the meanings behind well-assured material data. I do not regard much that is imagined as standing on facts at all, except that facts are culled which seem to favor a “Notion” which is the writer’s motive power.

The frequency with which Jefferson used the term “God’s Truth” in his personal notes and correspondence warrants attention. His notions were “God’s Truths” recognized. Jefferson’s discovery of Darwin at the age of 23 and W. M. Davis at the age of 33 had confirmed his belief that strict biblical interpretation did not provide a rational explanation of the phenomenal world. He emerged with his own understanding of the meaning and role of religion which had vast implications for his life’s work. He recognized religion as offering a set of values, a method of comprehending life, an attempt at interpretation of arrival to the present. As science and understanding progressed, he could substitute knowledge for religious interpretation. Jefferson did not doubt the existence of a “God of things as they are,” an unknown force, which was for him the supreme challenge in comprehension; science and knowledge, Jefferson believed, would help the individual more nearly understand “the God of things as they are.” The Bible was well written, it stretched man’s imagination to compose it, but it was incomplete. It had to be added to. Darwin added to it. Agassiz added to it. Davis added to it. The Bible was a beginning. It attempted to comprehend creation and the unfolding drama of man and animal on the earth. One could not expect it to be truth, but it was a position from which to work. It would
cause controversy and thought. Truth would come with time. Thus Jefferson had a God, recognized a value in the Bible, and was able to write: 7

I have never understood Easter as a matter of religion. I have never understood the role of the Cross in religion. Santa Cruz! Why Holy? Why not Infamous?

I have never understood why his disciples turned against Jesus? Or didn't they? I find no inspiration in that. Seems as if Jesus failed in his most intimate associates.

But he spoke fine words many of which are and will be an inspiration forever. The Cross has no value for me.

In a sense understanding and rewriting religion became Jefferson's career. Ultimately for Jefferson, the world would be left with one religion, truth, as science was substituted for sentiment in the religions of the world.

Wanting to understand more about the world in which we live was the essence of his geography. Yet in offering provocations instead of panaceas; in thinking, criticizing, discussing, suggesting without end; in urgently seeking God's truths wherever they were to be found without a more accurately defined and sophisticated method than "go and see, then see and write;" in refusing to recognize barriers to the discipline which he made his, the Jefferson contribution remained largely scattered, inchoate, a series of truths, and penetrating insights, ideas, singly comprehended but not jointly appreciated. In retirement Jefferson attempted to synthesize the more fundamental of his findings in the style of a book, in which the pattern of his searchings was revealed. Death intervened before the work—A Geographer Looks at War—was published. As a document the work has great value for the comprehension of Jefferson's thought, but it does little for the progress of the discipline. The unfinished manuscript indicates that two World Wars, two peace conferences, history of the lives of states, and the depression greatly influenced his thinking. Jefferson learned to despise war. He regarded the destruction of property and the ill-utilization of resources as a sin. This thought led him to think of the issue, war and peace, at great length. He recognized international understanding as necessary to prevent war against man and wage successful war against poverty, disease and illiteracy. His thinking on this subject was influenced by the learned Scot, George Chisholm, for whom Jefferson had great respect. Jefferson recognized the worth of organized opinion. This was a large part of his enthusiasm for the League of Nations and the United Nations. He wanted to see the peoples of the world brought together in their common business of living on earth. He urged that people, stripped of rank
and position, had a common desire everywhere to live well, to enjoy a prosperous happiness. Jefferson had a love of peace and a taste for its works—science, letters, and art. His academic work was undertaken in this context. It was an attempt to cast light on the human enterprise. Jefferson's geography reveals itself as a history of consecutive discoveries.

An enumeration of some Jeffersonian notions, coupled with mention of their first appearance in print, provides an orderly means of access to a vital part of his thought: river meanders and behavior, "Limiting Width of Meander Belts," 1902;8 the anthropographic city, "The Anthropography of Some Great Cities," 1909;9 anglicization of place-names, "A Plea for Anglicized Place-Names," 1910;10 the quantitative measurement of culture and the establishment of grades of civilization, "The Culture of the Nations," 1911;11 application of the annotation of value to the materials of commerce and commercial interchanges, Commercial Values, 1912;12 the north European plain as an invitation to militarism, Notes on the Geography of Europe, 1917;13 the rail tentacles, rail nets, rail webs, as creators of civilization, "The Civilizing Rails," 1928;14 a map projection of six equal-area projections of sixths of the earth's surface, "The Six-Six World Map Giving Larger, Better Continents," 1930;15 the ecumene measurement and the concept of a country as a nation on its ecumene, "The Problem of the Ecumene: The case of Canada," 1934;16 the concept of developed societies evolving primate cities, "The Law of the Primate City," 1939.17

In other ways Jefferson helped advance geographic knowledge. His linguistic abilities enabled him to review numerous studies of a geographic nature from (especially) the work of French, German, Spanish, and Swedish authors for the Geographical Review. In this way he was instrumental in making European geographic thought more readily available to American geographers. He also frequently reviewed the works of American geographers, and ranks as one of the "Big Four" (reviewers) in J. K. Wright's Geography in the Making.18 His objectivity was a vital strength which enabled him to enjoy Huntington and Ratzel yet not embrace any form of Influence or Determinism and to embrace French regionalist literature without embracing Possibilism. This ability to step dispassionately between the schools was a fundamental prerequisite to the Jefferson act of creation. His ability to stand aside from personal issues and conflicts conserved his time and maintained him free of all political entanglement. He despised German geographers who wrote "German geography," but was able to admire sound scholarship which geographers from Germany had produced. His attitude freed him to appreciate a piece of work strictly on its merits,
without feeling compromised by personal friendship with the author. The friendships that he enjoyed with his contemporaries were also of an objective nature. In all the personal papers of the man there is no evidence that he used a first name for anyone beyond his own family. In the Jefferson—Bowman correspondence, which exchange probably totaled 2,000 pieces, Isaiah Bowman was always Bowman! which encouraged the latter to write: "I have never known a first class man who is also a jolly good chap." He was consulted on numerous occasions for his opinion, as though he were some kind of intellectually acceptable arbiter, on matters including the spelling and pronunciation of place names, map form and expression, the delimitation of the Western Hemisphere, the origins of geologic terms including beach cusp, meander scar, and tarn.

His work—spoken at meetings, written in correspondence, or published—helped advance the thought of innumerable individual geographers. Ellsworth Huntington, for example, drew worths and understanding from Jefferson's conception of the North European Plain as an invitation to militarism, from his attempted measurement of the culture of nations, from Jefferson's geographic point of view and quoted Jefferson's "Observations on the Terraces of Peru." Jefferson's system of culture measurement wins extended use and acknowledgment in Civilization and Climate. In the preface to The Environmental Basis of Social Geography, by C. C. Huntington and Carlson, 1929, one reads:

Modern geography considers man the central theme of its study of the earth. However, as Professor Mark Jefferson says: "Geography is not to be regarded in its human aspects as the story of Earth and Man, but as the study of Man using and living on the Earth."

Jean Brunhes made frequent use of Jefferson's studies in the distribution of population in his lectures at the University of Paris. Numerous references to Jefferson's population studies may be found in Human Geography together with a reproduction of the map, "Distribution of population by hemispheres," from Jefferson's Teachers' Geography. The same population map was reproduced in La Géographie de l'Histoire by Brunhes and Vallaux.

Sten de Geer gained inspiration and information concerning river meanders, the mapping of population distribution and categorizing the culture of nations; the Yugoslavs, Cvijic and Vukovic, were helped by Jefferson's river meander studies and fellow Yugoslav, Ivo Rubic, followed Jefferson's urban researches closely. Chisholm received the Jefferson notion of the distinction between civilization and culture; little that Bowman wrote did not contain references to Jefferson's work, but special note might be made of his debt to Jefferson for the first two
published articles of his career which concerned river behavior,\textsuperscript{31} for his interest in South America, and for "Railways as Pioneers," a chapter in \textit{The Pioneer Fringe} of 1931.\textsuperscript{32}

Reproduction of Jefferson's articles or maps in American college textbook literature was commonplace for nearly half a century. Typical of this practice are some Jefferson maps reproduced in J. R. Smith's \textit{Commerce and Industry},\textsuperscript{33} and in \textit{Introductory Economic Geography} by Klimm, Starkey and Hall.\textsuperscript{34} Reference to Jefferson's published work scattered legion through the pages of periodicals and books in footnotes and bibliographies, indicate that many other geographers found Jefferson's studies useful. D. H. Davis acknowledged Jefferson's earlier teaching as a source of numerous facts and ideas in the preface to his book, \textit{The Earth and Man}.\textsuperscript{35} It is not possible to know how many more geographers were influenced by Jefferson's point of view or his specific ideas. His work had soul, not the product of an occasion, but of heart, head, and vocation. Many have benefitted from it; relatively few have had occasion to acknowledge a geographic contribution which has become public domain.

Jefferson's geography would have been infinitely less rich and scientifically less productive if he had allowed a series of measurements to have been substituted for his flow of thought about man on the land. The apparatus of his life's concern was a home, a library, paper, pen and ink, the mail system, and access to the facilities of the American Geographical Society. With this apparatus and the feeling of a poet, he reached out accurately to understand what he saw, took hold of science, and became a powerful moving force while geography in North America was in the making.