Soil science, the study of soils and their relationships, involves in a goodly number of its aspects, the application of geographic principles and discipline to the solution of certain problems of soil genesis, soil character, and soil distribution. Most of such problems are directly related to place and its attributes, the essential concept about which the science of geography is crystallized. Insofar as soil science relates to the attributes of place it is distinctly geographic in its discipline, that is, the same criteria must be applied to its principles as to the principles of geography.

For, in its essence, geography is the science of place and its attributes. Facts and principles and relationships which include in their composition the concept of place, or which depend upon attributes of place, are geographic. Just as time and time sequence constitute the fundamental concept of history, or rocks and rock relationships constitute the essence of geology, or plants and their functions form the core of botany, so place, and the attributes of place, constitute the essential concept of geography. All controversy and dogma, all definitions and classifications to the contrary notwithstanding, place, with its attributes, has, throughout history, remained the popular and continuous criterion by which geography has been defined as a science.

By this definition, the content of geography is logically and reasonably determined. Whenever the place relationships of any set of facts or principles are under consideration, they are amenable to geographic discipline, and the geography of man, the geography of land forms, or climate or soils, the geography of bananas, or grasshoppers, or even of telephone poles, becomes equally reasonable and logical--and place implies geography.

The geography of soils, the place attributes and relationships, becomes a very real and definite part of soil science, with broad implications and profound significances. The genesis of soils, the character of soils, the distribution of soils, the productivity of soils, are all in considerable measure a function of place and place relationships, that is, of geography.

Soil occupies a most important place in the environmental complex that forms such a large factor in geographic description and geographic interpretation. It is peculiarly a product of the environment, and more fully expresses the environment at any given place than any other phenomenon. However closely its parent material may be related to the well-nigh infinite processes of geology, the soil itself is relatively dissociated from that geologic history. Land form, drainage, and relief are all much more closely related to geologic history than the soil.

Climate, upon which soil genesis and the genetic classification of soils depend, is ultimately determined by quite extraneous to the earth, the quantity and distribution of radiant energy received from the sun by the earth; and consequently, the climatic factor is either directly or indirectly consequent upon situations in which our little earth participates, a negligible part.

Vegetation and the plants which comprise it possess the innate or inherent power of adaptation within themselves, the vital response of plants and all organic life to the elements of the environment, are reflected in the power of adaptation, they all possess in greater or lesser degree, which is not a fixed, but a variable factor, and which shapes the plants and vegetation to a definite form.