Part II Theoretical Intersections

Chapter 5

Historical Materialism and Marxism

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> Historical Materialism offers to study social process in its totality; that is, it offers to do this when it appears, not as another "sectoral" history – as economic, political, intellectual history, as history of labour, or as "social history" defined as yet another sector – but as a total history of society, in which all other histories are convened.
>
> E. P. Thompson (1978: 70)

The first sustained attempt to develop historical materialism within cultural geography was by Denis Cosgrove.[1] Cosgrove (1983: 1) argued that "[b]oth Marxism and cultural geography commence at the same ontological point." Both "insist on characterizing the relationship between humans and nature as historical." But historical materialism differs from cultural geography by also insisting that humans "make their own history and themselves." Cosgrove argued that culture was best understood as "the production and reproduction of material life [as] necessarily a collective art, mediated in consciousness and sustained through modes of communication," and that cultural geographers needed to come to terms with the key debates that animated historical-materialist and Marxist theories of determination.

Historical Materialism . . .

The general philosophical position of materialism begins from the fundamental assertion that "matter" is the "primary substance of all living and non-living things" (Williams 1983: 197). The English word for "matter" derived from Latin and old French words designating building material: the physical substance of any *thing*. By extension, "matter" has come to designate the substance (obviously physical or not) of things, relationships, and events (1983: 198). Tracing philosophical materialism[2] to the fifth century BCE, Williams (1983: 198) suggests it really flourished in England (with Hobbes) in the seventeenth century and on the Continent soon thereafter as logical extensions were made from materialist philosophies of nature (e.g. nature as the result of "bodies in motion") to philosophies of society. Such philosophical materialism stands in opposition to idealism (and spiritualism) by denying that objects and relations derive their substance from ideas.

"*Historical* materialism" is a more modern variant, and typically signifies a particular set of concepts and affinities within Marxism: it indicates a body of *theory* (as well as a philosophical position). Trained in Hegelian philosophy, Karl Marx sought to transform the dialectics he learned into a theory and philosophy adequate to the political – revolutionary – social struggles he was engaged in. To do so, Marx rejected Hegel's idealism to develop instead a "materialist conception of history," which Engels later termed "historical materialism." Historical materialism is differentiated from broader materialism by its insistence, as Cosgrove (1983) noted, on humans' self-*production* of reality, of the worlds humans inhabit. For Marx, "self production," including the self-production of consciousness, was always deeply and inescapably *social* (rather than individual). And all social practice was itself historically and socially conditioned, determined by the dead weight of preceding practice and the institutions to which that practice gave rise. As Eagleton (1999: 5–6) put it, "Marx was aware that just for us to have an idea, a good deal else must already have taken place. What must already have happened in order for us to reflect? We must already be practically bound up with the worlds we are pondering and so already inserted into a whole set of social relations, material conditions, social institutions."

As a system of thought and analysis, then, historical materialism begins from certain premises:

> The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. . . . Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. (Marx & Engels 1970: 42)

Given such arguments, Cosgrove made several related points critical to cultural geography. First, Marxism's "materialist conception of history" starts from a specific epistemological basis, namely that "the writing of history must set out from the natural bases of human life – the physical nature of human beings, and the natural conditions (geological, vegetational, climatic) in which they find themselves." Second, through the modification of these conditions – through the production of our very means of subsistence – humans produce themselves as human (and produce a new nature). Third, the production of the means of subsistence is social, it is conducted in a specific (historically determined) "mode." Fourth, and quoting Marx and Engels (1972), "this mode of production must not be considered simply as the reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. Rather it is a definite form of expressing their life, a definite 'mode of life' on their part." And fifth, the historical development of this "mode of life" in turn determines the form that social relations take.

. . . and Cultural Geography

These points suggested to Cosgrove (1983) that cultural geography could greatly benefit from a sustained encounter with Marxian historical materialism. Cosgrove

(1983: 3) noted that cultural geography already had many affinities with historical materialism, but up until then it had not developed what he called "the class dimension." Cultural geography, Cosgrove averred, needed a new *political* orientation. In particular, cultural geography possessed an inadequately differentiated and sociological notion of culture, and was thus ill-equipped to deal with questions of difference and power. As importantly, when questions of specific human agency entered cultural geography (e.g. Duncan 1980; Ley & Samuels 1978), they largely neglected "historical examinations of relations of production" and thus tended "towards phenomenological idealism" and radical individualism (Cosgrove 1983: 4).

In Cosgrove's view, then, there was a logical basis, and a real need, for a *rapprochement* between historical materialism and cultural geography, one that derived both from the political-intellectual agenda of Marxism (understanding society-nature as a totality and historically determined) and from the interest in ways of life that had animated early cultural geography. But for this *rapprochement* to be effected, a number of theoretical difficulties had to be addressed. Chief among these was the primary one that has bedeviled Marxism (and for that matter cultural geography) throughout its history: how to theorize the relations of determination that comprise the society–nature totality, and within it how best to theorize culture. This dual theorization of determination and culture needed to be a key task for materialist cultural geography.

Determination . . .

The classic statement of materialist determination comes in Marx's (1970: 20) Preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

> In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises the legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.

Social existence – and the "conditions of possibility" that emerge through the production of the means of subsistence (no matter how simple or elaborate) – provides a foundation for social, political, and intellectual life. The direction of determination seems one-way: from economic foundation to social, political, and intellectual life. But as Cosgrove (1983: 5; see also 1984: 55) argued, "Marx's terms here are contingent. . . . They do not demand a deterministic interpretation." The question then is a practical one: just how *should* they be understood?

Reacting in part to the rise of an Althusserian notion of "overdetermination," Raymond Williams (1977: 87) argues that in Marx's work (and in historical materialism more generally) "determination" must be understood as both a "setting of limits" and an "exertion of pressures": "to determine or be determined to do something is an act of will and purpose. In a whole social process, the positive

determinations, which may be experienced individually, but are always social acts . . . have very complex relations with the negative determinations that are experienced as limits." Moreover, according to Williams (1977: 87–8), the ultimate provenance of both the positive exertion of pressure and the negative definition of limits is human self-activity, human social practices:

> Determination . . . is in the whole social process and nowhere else: not in an abstracted "mode of production," nor in an abstracted "psychology." Any abstraction of determination, based on the isolation of autonomous categories, which are seen as controlling or which can be used for prediction, is then a mystification of the specific, always related determinants which are the real social process – an active and conscious as well as, by default, a passive and objectified historical experience.

This is not how determination has always been understood within Marxism, especially within those parts of Marxism that concern themselves with "culture." Rather, "in the transition from Marx to Marxism, and in the development of mainstream Marxism itself, the proposition of a determining base and the determined superstructure has been commonly held to be the key to Marxist cultural analysis" (Williams 1977: 76).

In Marx (if not in Marxism), the *relationship* between base and superstructure was understood in a particular way:

> Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, as foundation, there is built a superstructure of diversified and characteristic sentiments, illusions, habits of thought, and outlooks on life in general. The class as a whole creates and shapes them out of its material foundation, and out of the corresponding social relationships. The individual, in whom they arise through tradition and education, may fancy them to be the true determinants, the real origin, of his activities. (Marx 1926: 55)

Note here that Marx argues that people, working in and with a set of "*social* conditions of existence" (especially in relations of property, in this case), and functioning within specific classes, *create* and *shape* the superstructure. The superstructure is not "determined" in some mechanistic and autonomous way by the "base." It is rather produced by people within a set of determinant and enabling conditions defined by the totality of already-existing social relations.

Further, as Williams (1977: 76–7) points out, the use of "superstructure" here (and elsewhere) indicates a rather complex concept that incorporates legal and political forms standing in relationship to relations of production; class-inflected forms of consciousness; and a "process, in which over a whole range of activities, men become conscious of a fundamental economic conflict and fight it out." These three meanings of superstructure "direct our attention . . . to (a) institutions; (b) forms of consciousness; (c) political and cultural practices" (Williams 1977: 77), each of which are *produced* by people living in and reproducing historically determinant social conditions. A historical-materialist approach to social life, then, is one that looks at social production and relates it to its historical and geographical development, and to the constant reproduction and transformation of the conditions of existence, of "modes of life."

. . . and Culture

But what then of "culture"? "Culture" was not a key word in Marx's own work, but cultural theory has been an important and vital part of Marxism. Beginning with Gramsci's work in Italy in the 1920s, Lukács's theoretical and literary work in the same period, the Frankfurt School of Weimar Germany, and really accelerating (in different ways) in the "western Marxism" of post-Second World War France and Britain, theorizing culture became a focus of intense debate. "Culture," of course, is a remarkably multivalent concept, signifying everything from modes of thought and specific artistic productions to whole (infinitely complex) "modes of life."[3] It is impossible here to do justice to the range of meanings associated with the concept of culture; instead I will make a narrower argument about how culture has been figured in Marxism.

If we take as a starting point that culture is a concept that designates a "way of life" (and that, as Eagleton [2000: 1–2] says, "brings together both base and superstructure in a single notion"), and if we follow Williams (1958) in knowing that culture is ordinary (that it saturates every corner of life), then a Marxist approach to culture has two primary goals: (1) understanding how culture is produced – where it comes from; and (2) determining how it can be transformed through workers' own self-activity – how it can be made progressive and liberating rather than repressive and exploitative. These two goals have often been in tension in Marxism.

They were, however, brilliantly negotiated in the life and work of Antonio Gramsci. On the one hand, Gramsci's (1971) celebrated writings on hegemony (that sought to understand how power worked "culturally") turned attention to the analysis of the *institutions* through which power and domination were effected. On the other hand, such an institutional analysis indicated that institutional spaces could be created that promoted alternative modes of knowing, consciousness, and social struggle. Countercultural institutions were necessary to the development of counterhegemonies. Countercultural institutions (schools, newspapers, etc.) were vital components of the class struggle (Gramsci 1985: 20–46).

Despite his emphasis on class struggle, however, Gramsci's own definition of culture was decidedly conservative, almost Arnoldian in cast[4] : "I have a Socratic idea of culture; I believe it means thinking well, whatever one thinks, and therefore acting well, whatever one does" (1985: 25). But he differs from Matthew Arnold when he acknowledges that socialist "thinking well" will have to be organized: "Let us organize culture the same way that we seek to organize practical activity" (1985: 225). Culture, then, was an end in itself, *and* both a result and a means of organization. Proletarian cultural organization was particularly important because "the proletariat is a practical construct: in reality, there are individual proletarians, more or less educated, more or less equipped by the class struggle to understand the most refined socialist concepts" (1985: 32).

The development of countercultural institutions was critical because, in Gramsci's view, new modes of production are always "presupposed" by transformations of consciousness and social institutions; and yet these cultural transformations themselves can only become dominant – hegemonic – when the mode of production is revolutionized. In Gramsci's work, "culture" is both produced *for* workers and *by* workers. Workers' consciousness generally, and its class consciousness in particular,

are the results of these two aspects of cultural production, which is exactly Williams' (1958) point when he insists that "culture is ordinary."

But if culture – and consciousness – is ordinary, then understanding its production required an even fuller understanding of its contours under capitalism. For Gramsci such an understanding could only come with the development of a robust communist party and a suite of cultural institutions associated with it. The Hungarian Marxist György Lukács, by contrast, turned to philosophy to understand the nature of the pressures and limits that determined culture. Reinserting Hegel in the center of Marx's analysis led Lukács to a more pessimistic set of conclusions about "hegemony" and its relationship to consciousness.

Writing in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, and in the midst of the rapid economic restructuring that Gramsci called "Fordism," Lukács sought to uncover the relationship between the fetishization of both commodities – which he called their "reification" (which itself can be roughly described as their "thingification": Lukács 1968: 86–7) – and working peoples' consciousness. His goal was to show how processes of reification in the social world (especially the world of work) produced a similar reification of consciousness.

Since, as Marx (1987 ed.: 45) noted, a "commodity is in the first place, a thing outside us" that fulfills needs, and since the exchange of commodities establishes a social world in which relations between people appear as if they are relations between things, the production of commodities is *necessarily* alienating. Under capitalism, this alienation is deep because labor-power itself is commodified. As divisions of labor are extended and deepened, labor-power's *formal equality* – that is, its abstraction in the marketplace to some quantity of socially necessary labor-time (1987 ed.: 47–8) – ensures that the "finished article ceases to be the object of the work process" (Lukács 1968: 88). It becomes possible "to separate forcibly the production of use-values in time and space" (Lukács 1968: 89) so as to better control and rationalize their production. This is important because:

> [T]his fragmentation of the object of production necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject. In consequence of the rationalisation of the work-process the human qualities and idiosyncrasies of the worker appear increasingly as *mere sources of error*. . . . Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of the process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. (1968: 89; see also Marx 1987 ed.: 306)

In such a system, the bourgeoisie as much as the proletariat is subject to alienation:

> The atomisation of the individual is . . . only the reflex in consciousness of the fact that the "natural laws" of capitalist production have been extended to cover every manifestation of life in society; that – for the first time in history – the whole of society is subjected, or tends to be subjected, to a unified economic process, and that the fate of every member of society is determined by unified laws. (Lukács 1968: 91–2)

The only recourse is to fight against this: to defeat alienation and the reification of consciousness, "revolution is a categorical imperative" (Berman 1989: 142) – as is a communist party or other revolutionary organizations that seek to instill an oppositional culture. For, as Berman (1989: 142–243) argues, "Without culture and con-

sciousness," without the "development of a vibrant, dynamic, self-critical, and self-renewing radical culture," working people "will not be able to grow in awareness and autonomy, to develop their critical will and their sense of power. If they do not grow and develop this way, the reification-machine will go on running" – as indeed it did in the subsequent evolution of the Soviet Union and its client states (see Buck-Morss 2000).

Lukács, like Marx, argued that the "natural laws" of capitalist production extended into every "manifestation of life in society." The expansion of capital – accumulation for accumulation's sake – is the imperative. But capital's own expansion inevitably runs up against its own limits as a system: there is demand for only so many cars, so many bananas, or so many light bulbs. The expansion of capital therefore necessitates a constant search for new markets (new buyers of cars, bananas, and light bulbs); the development of new needs and wants (the desire for a more luxurious car, a yellower banana, or a brighter light bulb); or the colonization by the commodity of new parts of social life (the commodification of back-seat sex; the commercialization of the *meaning* of the banana; or the turning into property of the very *idea* that a light bulb going on over a head is meant to represent). "Culture," as a way of life, as social meanings, and as artistic production, is inextricably bound up with commodity production.

All three strategies for the expansion of commodity production are important, but it was the third that drew the specific attention of theorists associated with the "Frankfurt School" (see Jay 1973). In the wake of the Second World War and reflecting on the rise of American mass entertainment, its two leading theorists, Adorno and Horkheimer, both cognizant of their debts to Lukács, focused squarely on what they came to call "the culture industry." They were concerned to theorize the changing role of art in social life. "Movies and radio no longer pretend to be art," they wrote. "The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce" (Adorno & Horkheimer 1993: 31). This "rubbish" is differentiated not by subject, but through market segmentation. "Marked differentiations such as those of A and B films, or of stories in different price ranges, depend . . . on classifying, organizing, and labeling consumers. Something is provided so that none may escape" (1993: 32). "Culture" is here something that it produced as a commodity so it may be consumed as a commodity. Its value is realized in exchange. Use-value is merely a vehicle towards the consummation of that exchange.

But cultural commodities like films or radio shows are more insidious than other types of commodities because when they are used, they inevitably seep into and help to shape consciousness: "The whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry" (Adorno & Horkeimer 1993: 33). Or as the French situationist Guy Debord (1994: 29) later put it: "commodities are now *all* there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity." If the culture industry has developed out of the imperative of capitalist expansion – out of the imperative to find additional corners of social life to commodify – it is nonetheless important that it plays a crucial *ideological* role in contemporary society:

> What is decisive today is . . . the necessity inherent in the system not to leave the customer alone, not for a moment to allow him any suspicion that resistance is possible. The princi-

ple dictates that he should be shown all his needs as capable of fulfillment, but that those needs should be so predetermined that he feels himself to be the eternal consumer, the object of the culture industry. Not only does it make him believe that the deception it practices is satisfaction, but it goes further and implies that, whatever the state of affairs, he must put up with what is offered. . . . Pleasure promotes the resignation which it ought to help forget. (Adorno & Horkheimer 1993: 40)

The culture industry's industrial and ideological roles are mutually supportive, equally important, and ingeniously unified. The reification of consciousness is – not even subtly – advanced.

Questions of ideology also animated the French communist theorist Louis Alhusser. Althusser's legacy, both politically and intellectually, is complex. For Cleaver (2000: 50), Althusser's theoretical efforts to create a "structuralist" Marxism in the 1960s and 1970s constituted a (failed) attempt to develop a Marxism palatable to the still Stalinist French Communist Party, and should pretty much be dismissed as such. Cleaver is right, but unfortunately, Althusser's theoretical arguments have nonetheless had an enormous impact on subsequent radical cultural theory. In his famous essay on what he called "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISAs), Althusser (1971) asserted that ideology is the set of representations and images through which people live – or experience – their "conditions of existence." But these images and representations are always grounded in some set of institutions (such as church, school, or media) which served as functionaries of the state by assuring the "interpellation" – or "hailing" of "subjects" (see Hall 1996). ISAs always possessed a "relative autonomy" from the economic "base," even if that base was always determinant "in the last instance" (Althusser 1971). Althusser borrowed from Freud and Lacan the notion of "overdetermination" to explain this relative autonomy, arguing that any subject position, like any "moment" in a social formation, was always the product of not just a single determinant, but the pressures and forces of a large suite of determinations. Ideology, embodied in ISAs, hailed people into place, established them as subjects in their social worlds, and presented them with the images and representations through which they could make sense of both their subjectivity and their place in the world.

When "overdetermination" was connected to the notion of social formation, Althusser claimed that it reoriented materialism towards a "middle ground" between a generalized mode of production and the specificity of everyday life, presumably "hitch[ing] together the base and superstructure" that Althusser thought Marx had "formally detached" (Inglis 1993: 83), and allowing for "a close material and conceptual analysis of social relations within a given place at a given time" (Smith 2000: 752). The ultimate irony of Althusser and many of his closest followers in structural Marxism is that this is exactly what they *did not* do, and on their failure to move beyond the formal and the conceptual, the theoretical and the abstract, English Marxists like E. P. Thompson (1978) and Raymond Williams (1977) launched withering attacks.

In particular, Thompson showed that sitting at the heart of the Althusserian project was a deep *idealism*. In language that still has deep resonance today (since it names exactly the problem that remains in contemporary structuralism, including that which goes by the name "poststructuralism"), Thompson (1978: 148 orig-

inal emphasis) found lurking "behind Althusser's grotesque notion of ideological 'interpolation' or 'hailing' . . . even more *chic* notions of men and women (*except*, of course, select intellectuals), not thinking or acting but being *thought* and being *performed*." Men and women were creatures of systems – of systems of *thought* – and thus merely bearers of social relations, not shapers of them, not resisters against them, not people *experiencing*, and therefore transforming social life.

There is, thus, a significant difference between Althusser's antihumanism and the deep cultural pessimism of Adorno and Horkheimer. For the former, people are hailed into preestablished ideological and social places, places constructed by the "structure." For the latter, the very *will* of people is recognized right from the beginning. What is decisive, they say, is the necessity of not leaving people alone, because as soon as they are left to their own devices, they will struggle against the shackles that contain them, they will seek to break out of them and create something new. People are not *hailed* into position as (for example) consumers, but must be *induced* into shaping themselves as consumers, into finding being a consumer the best way to live, the best way to organize experience. The reproduction and expansion of capital requires, against all countervailing forces, that social life be limited, and pressures exerted in such a way that people need and want to consume so as to live, and to live well and enjoyably.

Experience, for Thompson (1978), thus had to be placed at the center of Marxist analysis, and when this was done then the sort of base–superstructure argument that Althusser advanced can be seen to be little more than nonsense. In perhaps some of the most famous lines from his long critique of Althusser, Thompson (1978: 96) lays out this argument in reference to his own research on the historical role of law in shaping English capitalism:

> I found that law did not keep politely to a "level" but was at *every* bloody level; it was imbricated within the mode of production and productive relations themselves (as property-rights, definitions of agrarian practice) and it was simultaneously present in the philosophy of Locke; it intruded briskly within alien categories, reappearing bewigged and gowned in the guise of ideology; it danced a cotillion with religion moralising over the theatre of Tyburn; it was an arm of politics and politics was one of its arms; it was an academic discipline, subjected to the rigour of its own autonomous logic; it contributed to the definition of the self-identity both of rulers and of ruled; above all, it afforded an arena for class struggle, within which alternative notions of the law were fought out.

Law was experienced; law was an experience; the experience of law shaped social life; social life struggled back against the law; social formations were shaped and transformed. To understand this required not a flight into idealist fantasies about structure and ISAs, but careful historical-materialist analysis: a careful analysis of the historical record.

For a Marxism without *historical* materialism was no Marxism at all, and it certainly wasn't *materialist*: that was exactly Thompson's charge against Althusser. It was also Williams' (1977: 92). The problem with structural Marxism, according to the latter, was not (as often charged) that it was "too materialist" (leaving too little room for consciousness, ideas, and the accidents of social life), but that "it was never materialist enough."

Marxist Geography . . .

Cosgrove's 1983 call for a historical-materialist cultural geography was written in the context of these debates. As he put it in his landmark *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, the key relationship that geographers needed to explore was "between cultural production and material practice" (1984: 2):

> A cultural concept like the landscape idea does not emerge unprompted from the minds of individuals or human groups. . . . [H]istorically and theoretically it is unsatisfactory to treat the landscape way of seeing in a vacuum, outside the context of a real historical world of productive human relations . . . (1984: 2)

Thompson- or Williams-style historical materialism thus had to be at the heart of radical cultural geography, as Cosgrove made so clear in the second chapter of *Social Formation*.

But there was another foundation for Cosgrove's call for a materialist and radical cultural geography: the development of Marxism in geography itself. Marxism entered geography not through cultural theory, nor even through economic theory, but rather through the activist engagements of scholars radicalized by the upheavals of the 1960s (Peet 1977, 1998). In this regard, the turn to Marxism came as part of a much wider radical transformation of geography that included developments in anarchism, feminism, ecology, and humanism as geographers sought to theoretically ground their own growing activism.

Dissatisfaction with the dominant positivist spatial science of the day (which he had done so much to codify) led David Harvey (1973) to turn first to liberal and then to Marxist theories of social justice, and in doing so to lay out (for the first time in geography, though there were precedents in urban sociology) an explicitly Marxist and explicitly geographic urban theory. Harvey's goal was to expose the systematic *roots* of urban injustice, not just map its effects (as liberal and positivist theory was limited to doing). For Harvey, however, a Marxist reconfiguration of geography demanded geographic reconfiguration of Marxism. The space and spatiality which is implicit in Marx's work had to become explicit. The result was *Limits to Capital* (Harvey 1982). *Limits* focused on processes of capital circulation, its ossification in the built environment, and the contradictions to which these two processes gave rise. Together with Massey's (1984) *Spatial Division of Labor* and Smith's (1984) *Uneven Development*, *Limits* set the stage for the development of a rigorous Marxist economic geography that examined capitalist development and restructuring, uneven development, and labor market dynamics.

Much of the work inspired by these three books was, understandably, focused on the spatial dynamics of the capitalist economy. It was, in these terms, "economistic," and as such some critics found in the Marxist geography of the 1980s a too narrow, even two-dimensional analysis of social life, one that seemed little interested in the complexity of society and its cultures in place. While some of this critique came from within the broadly Marxist camp, some also came from outside it, as with, for example, Duncan and Ley's (1982) accusation that Marxist geography was "structuralist" and thus theoretically annihilated the real living people who actually produced social life.[5] Marxist geography was seen to be too closely cleaved to political economy.[6]

Even so, as Cosgrove's *Social Formation* made clear, there was exceptional scope within geographical Marxism for developing workable, spatial theories of culture and landscape. This scope was to some extent given shape in Peter Jackson's (1989) important text, *Maps of Meaning*, which sought to construct a cultural-materialist cultural geography sufficient to what seemed to be "new times" (cf. Hall & Jacques 1989). These "new times" quickly came to be called "postmodern," and Jackson's book was launched into geography concurrent with two others that sought to define the *Zeitgeist*, Harvey's (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity* and Soja's (1989) *Postmodern Geographies*. In retrospect, these three books, focused on understanding the relationship between culture, social life, and economy, announced the coming of what has been called the cultural turn in geography, and with it a significant reinvigoration of cultural geography, much, but not all, of it grounded in historical materialism.

. . . and Cultural Marxism in Geography

Two related impulses shaped Jackson's *Maps of Meaning*. The first was to closely tie social and cultural geography to the project of British cultural studies. The second was to use "cultural materialism" as the twine that bound these two fields. Jackson's (1989: ch. 8) "agenda for cultural geography" thus focused on the (complex) material bases for, and explanation of, ideology, race, language, gender, popular culture, and class (as lived experience). Jackson (1989: 182) faulted Marxist geography for developing "a thoroughly de-cultured view of society where social relations are rigidly structured by an inflexible political economy." His goal was thus to interweave the economic Marxism of geography with some brands of cultural studies to produce a "materialist cultural geography" (1989: 43) that focused on the ways that people made culture as much as it focused on the structural constraints within which that making was advanced or limited.

The publications of Harvey's *Condition*, therefore, must have both heartened and disappointed Jackson. On the one hand, Harvey clearly took culture seriously, seeking to ground it in material social practices. On the other hand, Harvey more or less resuscitated something like a base–superstructure model of society,[7] arguing that the "surface froth" of cultural change derived from more "fundamental" transformations in the political economy, in this case the shift from fordist to postfordist regimes of accumulation. The ferment that so much postmodernist culture seemed to celebrate was, in Harvey's telling, inextricably linked to changing modes of exploitation; therefore any celebration was premature, at the very least.

In partial contrast, Soja (1989: 5) considered postmodernism – as a sociospatial *ontology* – to be "a possibly epochal transition in both critical thought and material life." *Postmodern Geographies* develops largely as a critique of social theory, but it does so through constant reference to political-economic change at the urban and regional scales, especially as they are worked out in Los Angeles. What is most striking in Soja's account of new spatial ontologies – particularly given his later work (cf. 1996, 2000) – is its relative inattention to the ways in which these ontologies, linked in his telling to economic restructuring, are *hegemonic* rather than already-complete totalizations of social life. This is all the more surprising because

beginning in the mid-1980s, the Gramscian concept of hegemony had become central to much geographical discourse. For Jackson (1989: 53ff.), "hegemony" allowed for an examination of how power worked through both persuasion and coercion and thus why culture was so critical and always more than something that could be reduced to an effect of the economic base. After all, as Marx (1987 ed.: 537) argued, "the maintenance of the working-class is, and must ever be, a necessary precondition to the reproduction of capital."

"Reproduction" is a critical term. Socialist feminists in the 1970s and 1980s argued that much stronger attention needed to be paid within Marxism to the processes of *re*production, and the ways that they structured and were structured by gender, sexuality, and race. Such work took the quotation from Marx above seriously and made it clear that a focus on production, and on the workplace, was insufficient. The home, the family, the neighborhood, the school, and the store, were all key sites for negotiation and struggle over capitalism and its social formations. Moreover, any adequate theory of capitalist crisis demanded a much closer attention to crises of reproduction than was common in geographical Marxism (cf. Katz 1991a, 1991b, 2001). "Reproduction" needed to be understood as the site of "culture," as the place where the social totality was felt and lived.

Struggle and the exercise of power within the domain of "culture," then, is a precondition to the reproduction of capitalism. For Jackson (1989: 80), the key to a truly materialist study of culture in geography was to "view culture as the medium or idiom through which meanings are expressed. If one accepts . . . arguments for the plurality of cultures, then 'culture' is the domain in which these meanings are contested." Cultural geography is thus assigned the task of examining the content of these struggles, while at the same time exploring the varying spatialities to which they give rise. A cultural-materialist approach to culture focuses both on cultural politics and the politics of culture: "the cultural is the political" (Jackson 1989: 4).

In an article published in 1995, I accepted that the cultural is always political, but took issue with theories that constructed culture as a specific "realm," "domain," or "signifying system." To me, such theories both re-reified culture, and rehabilitated something like a base–superstructure model, only this time with causality running in the opposite direction. I argued (though not exactly in these terms) that "culture" needed to be reintegrated into the social totality of capitalism as a moment of *power*. Culture was an effect of struggles over power that was expressed as a reification of meaning, certain ways of life, or patterns of social relations: it is a materially based idea (or ideology) about social difference. "Culture" may be different from economic relations, but it could not be severed from them. Within capitalism, "culture" is always linked, directly or indirectly, to strategies and politics of accumulation. A fully materialist study of culture would focus on these strategies and politics (Mitchell 1995).

My article was published in the midst of a torrent of theoretical exploration, debate, and empirical work in geography on questions of culture. Later labeled the "cultural turn," cultural analysis took the geographical academy by storm in the 1990s. In a way that it had not been before, "culture" became both an object of analysis and a means for explanation. And it was, for many geographers, a turn *away* from materialism and towards what Philo (1991, 2000) identified as the

"immaterial": the world of ideas and meanings, discourses and texts, signifying systems and "values" in their most ethereal, most ungrounded sense.

But there remains a vital need to connect values to value, to see how, as Marx would have it, values are always conditioned, always the product of limits and pressures. In a world where even ideas are now property, hedged in by capitalist laws and traded as if they were so many tons of grain, the need for a fully materialist cultural geography is now greater than ever (cf. Barnett 1998), and thus the retreat into the immaterial, and the focus on "culture" as an explanatory realm, that has so marked the cultural turn, comes at an unacceptable cost. Just because geographers have become infatuated with "meaning" and "discourses," processes and crises of accumulation have not come to a halt – nor has the reification machine stopped running. A cultural geography that is really meaningful will have to return to the fact that in the world we live in, the imperative of accumulation sits at the heart of what Williams called "determination of [a] whole kind" which exists "in the whole social process and nowhere else: not in an abstracted 'mode of production,' nor in an abstracted 'psychology' " – which is to say that to ignore the mode of production in our analyses of social and cultural life is every bit as much an error as to reduce all life to that mode of production. And at the same time, historical materialist cultural geography must understand that "culture" itself is a field of accumulation, a locus of and for commodity production. Capitalism is imperialist in its needs and ambitions, seeking to colonize every last corner of our lives. The new (too often idealist, too often immaterial) cultural geography ignores this fact at its – and our – peril.

NOTES

1. Blaut (1980) had earlier suggested that Sauerian cultural geography shared much in common with historical materialism, but he did not develop the point.
2. "The opinion that nothing exists except matter and its movement and modifications; also . . . the opinion that the phenomena of consciousness are wholly due to the operations of materials agencies." *OED*: Materialism.
3. For a cogent discussion see Eagleton 2000.
4. For Matthew Arnold (1993: 79), culture was "the *best* knowledge and thought of the time."
5. Duncan and Ley's (1982) argument was built on a tissue of misapprehensions and perhaps willing distortions of the nature of Marxist geography, which with only a few exceptions was quite anti-Althusserian, but it nonetheless had a great resonance with many not predisposed to Marxism in the first place.
6. Such accusations missed much of what was being written in Marxist geography (including Harvey's [1979] brilliant historical-materialist iconographic reading of the Basilique du Sacré Coeur and the growing focus on society–nature interactions).
7. It should be noted that Harvey's take on the base–superstructure problem is decidedly different from Althusser's. Harvey refuses to trade in the sort of idealist abstractions that were Althusser's bread and butter, seeking instead to show both theoretically and historically the nature of economic determination (in the sense of pressure and limits) of cultural forms.

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