

New Ways in Geography

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Preface

New Ways in Geography continues my earlier research into the philosophical foundations of our discipline and brings together several of my lines of thought about what can be done to improve geography as a knowledge producer. Following the style of French geographers, I could have called the volume in a more arrogant manner, but the experience of my previous three books taught me to be modest and to understand that scientific progress does not happen over night, through some fortunate epiphany. Instead, I learned that the change of disciplines is incremental and cumulative and the impact of a new idea owes as much to luck and networking, as it owes to its intrinsic quality, originality, and relevance. I do not propose a radically new geography and I do not even claim that mainstream geography is in some fundamental way inadequate.

Consider the structure of this book. Under the heading Old Ways I try to answer the question whether geography as we know it is worth keeping. The first chapter constitutes the first segment of the answer: it argues that traditional scientific disciplines are not as bad as we sometimes like to think they are (and see the discourses on the post - disciplinary era, interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, etc). This argument is then used in the second chapter to investigate whether geography specifically is worth keeping. The chapter outlines a multi-layered perspective, by drawing on a rather comprehensive screening of the contemporary

scientific and political landscape. It concludes that even if we admit a Cinderella status for geography among the disciplines, this aspect brings some secondary benefits out of which a rejuvenated geography can emerge.

The second part of the book – New Ways – discusses some lines of flight towards this rejuvenated geography. Given the editorial constraints, I selected three possible new ways on which I have started to work lately. Thus, chapter three explores the stakes of an engagement between geography and metaphysics in the analytic tradition, chapter four makes some suggestions about how to understand the relativity of norms in geographical practice, and chapter five brings together two case studies that help me explain why we need to pay sustained attention to the vicious logic of epistemic neglect. I end the volume with some final thoughts, where the intimate continuities between this book and its twin – Pragmatic Scepticism and the Possibilities of Knowledge – are rendered apparent.

For the reader of this book, these intimate continuities are a curse rather than a blessing. If one truly wants to understand my theoretical positions, one has to read my work as a whole, or at least my most recent book Pragmatic Scepticism and the Possibilities of Knowledge. It is there that I develop the crucial concepts that constitute the building blocks of my philosophy: pragmatic scepticism, recursive cartographies, Time is Space is Difference, scale as contexts collapsed within the unit of analysis, epistemic lock-ins, ontological lock-ins. It is also there that I develop a lengthy argument about the nature of scientific practices and the peculiarities of geographical practices. The way I define geography and its inner historicity are to be found there as well. New Ways in Geography merely adds several new layers on the foundations set there.

My scholarly activities in the past years have been split between Romania, England, and Canada. I decided to publish this book with a Romanian press, but in English, in order to meet several goals. It is very important for me to have my work available at a decent price for the Romanian audience. It is also important to have it in a language that allows the book to be read by an international audience. I wish I had the time to translate the volume in Romanian as well, because the number of Romanian geographers who are fluent in English is still limited. At this stage, I can only hope that the editors will arrange for a translation in the near future.

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Old Ways

Old Ways

It appears quite strange for a geographer to raise the question *whether geography as we know it is worth keeping*, since it is assumed that at least geographers themselves believe in the value of their discipline. However, recent evolutions in the social studies of science and in academic practice (Bassett, 1996) justify the radicalism of my question. I have in mind the contestation not only of geography in particular, but of the value of academic disciplines, broadly speaking (see Sayer, 2000a, Gregson, 2003). In addition, one cannot ignore the dismantling of a considerable number of geography departments in the United States over the last decades (although in the last few years the process has diminished, partly due to the institutional support strategies of the AAG, partly due to the shift at departmental level towards market-oriented educational goals and research interests). Finally, one could point to the ongoing debate about the possibility and need to keep physical and human geographies 'united', although the institutional strategies of disciplinary survival clearly underline the dangers of separation. In what follows, I will build an argument for an affirmative answer to the critical questioning of *old ways* of doing scientific research. The approach is two-fold: *firstly*, I will produce a theoretical defence of the worthiness of traditional academic disciplines (see also Schoenberger, 2001), by drawing on findings in epistemology, history of ideas, philosophy of science; *secondly*, I will discuss some non-romantic considerations about the value of geography as we know it, in close connection with what has already been said in my previous books.

1. Traditional Disciplines

In a paper called 'For postdisciplinary studies: Sociology and the Curse of Disciplinary Parochialism/Imperialism', presented at the Wessex Conference (2000, Birmingham), Andrew Sayer pleaded for a replacement of 'cul-de-sac' disciplines with 'postdisciplinary studies', in which the path of knowledge would be dictated only by the logical-causal connections implied by one's ongoing research. The main strategy in the argument for this shift was a caricature-like presentation of what disciplines are and how they work, as well as an idealisation of how postdisciplinary studies would solve all the problems of the inadequate contemporary organisation of the production of scientific knowledge.

The first problem with Sayer's position is that he does not seem to realise the significance of what we called *the analytical imperative of human knowledge*. The idea of some postdisciplinary studies sounds quite unrealistic, since it lacks both a (minimal) analytical framework and a consideration of the implications of post-objectivist epistemologies for these dreamed-of studies. One way or another, the systematic production of knowledge involves some 'cutting', some focusing imposed by the very limitations of the humans' minds. In other words, any 'cutting' or epistemic positioning has a double side (see also the reflections on epistemic gains and losses in *Pragmatic Scepticism and the Possibilities of Knowledge*): on the one hand, it makes possible the production of systematic knowledge. This aspect is invaluable in that any positioning has, beside the epistemic commonalities with other positionings, a certain *uniqueness*, a perspective on the 'reality out-there' that bears the marks of the distinctiveness

of the labour undertaken within a given horizon of knowledge.

On the other hand, the epistemic cutting inherent to any research position makes impossible the ideal of total knowledge, the fantasy of viewing the whole spectacle of reality from above, unbiased and unrestricted. Systematic ignorance is always produced alongside systematic knowledge. It is not the disciplines that are guilty for producing ignorance ('bad knowledge'), but the very limitations of the knowledge capabilities of humans. Sayer calls this ignorance *parochialism* and associates it with disciplinarity, thus wrongly assuming that it can be overcome by his 'cosmopolitan' postdisciplinary studies. But we have to rethink the idea of 'ignorance' by dissociating it from the disciplines and by attaching it to all epistemic endeavours, whether disciplinary or not. Furthermore, this rethinking has to cast a positive note on ignorance, insofar as it is the twin of knowledge, its Other, both being produced as we go about and labour in our horizons of research. Ignorance makes possible the privilege of seeing certain things, precisely *due to the un-seeing* of other things. In Donna Haraway's words (1991, page 123):

We do not seek partiality for its own sake, but for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible. *The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular.* (my emph.).

Sayer's modernist worldview ('critical realism') makes him prisoner of the 'view from above' fantasy (Haraway calls it the 'God's trick'), whilst contemporary sensibilities acknowledge the modest, situated, nature of knowledge. This acknowledgement does not unequivocally imply relativism or the denial of any sense of scientific progress (cf. Bassett, 1999). Rorty's definition (1979, 1987) of 'rationality' as being civilised and sane in the act of

knowledge (listening to the others), Miranda Fricker's project (2000) of a perspectival realism (which underlines that epistemic standpoints partly 'overlap', which allows some restricted commensurability and dialogue; cf. Povinelli, 2001), or Donna Haraway's (1991, 2000) work on situated knowledges make this point quite explicitly. To quote again from Haraway (1991, page 119):

The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another.

The processes of education and socialisation within a discipline illustrate all the good and bad sides of situated knowledges. One's education *stamps* him/her to pay attention to certain things/facets of reality: the geographer develops an epistemic obsession for space and culture-nature links, the sociologist for social relations, the psychologist for the individual, etc. In the *big dialogue* which shapes the progress of knowledge, all these separate perspectives defend their cases and are likely to contribute to the correct appreciation of the role of their 'obsession' (space, complexity, society, the individual, etc.) in the explanation of the world. Disciplines are like *advocates in a trial*: to win the trial, it does not suffice to plead one's case convincingly (prestige among disciplines). The other secrets of success reside in *listening carefully* to what the opposite side says, and *being able to improvise* and re-shape your initial discourse accordingly (the 'theoretical' trade between disciplines).

By 'advocating' their cases, disciplines do not only ensure a more effective production of knowledge in the long run, but also become *repositories* of invaluable research traditions and specific expertise. We often underestimate this historical dimension. We cannot know for sure how the reality 'out-

there' is, but disciplines offer myriad alternative answers which can be exploited in the building of better approximations of that reality ('better' either as a synonym for 'closer-to-truth', or as a synonym for 'closer-to-justice'; it depends on one's epistemological regime). I want to argue that, in the same way we speak and theorise about the need to preserve *biodiversity*, we should speak about preserving *epistemodiversity*. And a multitude of disciplines offers more of it than a few totalising and shapeless 'postdisciplinary studies'.

In order to survive, scientific disciplines *have to be open* to the findings of other disciplines, either by incorporating their findings, or by offering 'answers in reply'-alternative findings. Disciplines tend to reproduce themselves, to develop those rules and processes that ensure their future existence. All disciplines share this *survival imperative*, and its acknowledgement is fundamental for understanding why, even nowadays, they are so effective and competitive as knowledge producers. It becomes apparent that in everyday scientific practice this imperative of survival entails an '*opening-towards-others*' imperative, a peculiar type of disciplinary rhythm that is to be continuously achieved. It is this epistemic-cum-political logic that forces disciplines to fight parochialism, i.e. the monotonous iteration of their very own repositories of knowledge. This is why we cannot speak of boundaries, but of *disciplinary boundary-tracing*: a continuous negotiation between *importing* other's findings and *iterating* and trying to export one's own. And this is why boundary-tracing is not peripheral to a discipline, but *crosses* it throughout as it weaves its apparently parochial rhythms. Sayer caricatures disciplines in that he portrays them as 'fortresses', or as *autistic-narcissistic entities*. Disciplines might be somehow narcissistic, but this does not mean that they look exclusively at themselves, regardless of the

dangers of public exclusion and stigmatisation. It just means that they take care of their 'lives', which are continuously threatened by competing disciplines (as contested traditions, all disciplines elaborate answers to those acts of contestation; and the chief answer is the opening-towards-others). It follows from this reassessment that one should substitute 'parochialism' in Sayer's account with two distinct issues which it misleadingly hints at:

– Firstly, with *ignorance*, as the biological datum which does not allow humans to know everything at once. In actual scientific practice, 'ignorance' unfolds through horizons of research to produce constellations of epistemic gains and epistemic losses (erroneous knowledge, not known, hidden, mis-understood, distorted, etc.). From the perspective of the Enlightenment project, this seems sad; however, from the point of view of the post-moderns, this is a rather good thing: it allows space for modesty, it alerts us to the privileges and politics of 'knowing', it prevents the fulfilment of the totalising dream of modernity (total knowledge, 'rational' planning of everything). 'Ignorance' is not the sin of disciplines only, it is a datum for humans as a species (I essentialise here strategically the human species);

– Secondly, with the *iteration* of the disciplinary repositories of knowledge. In the production of new scientific findings, a discipline *combines* in various degrees 'imported' findings from other disciplines with approaches of its own (from the discipline's repository, which allow one to conceive of a discipline as a 'tradition'). Since we unpack here what makes a 'discipline' so epistemically effective, note that the verb '*to discipline*' could be applied for saying that the narcissistic impulse of a discipline is 'disciplined' by the imperative of survival and the entailed 'opening-towards-others' imperative. Conversely, the importation of new findings is 'disciplined' by forcing them to become

disciplinary and thus enter that discipline's repository of knowledge. At this point, the *marking* done by the disciplinary *signifiers* plays a crucial role, as argued in my earlier work (see the volumes 'Thinking space', 2000, and 'Timespace', 2001, as perfect examples of this practice: they consist of sets of articles written (in part) by geographers who were asked to over-mark with spatial signifiers their analyses of a number of trendy social theorists). Curiously, this second type of disciplining is also part of what was called the imperative of survival. Indeed, had disciplines not 'disciplined' the imported findings, they would have lost their identity and become collections of heterogeneous findings (i.e. Sayer's 'postdisciplinary studies').

The word 'parochial', then, operates as a successful rhetorical device for *stigmatising* disciplines (cf. Goffman, 1990, for his notes on tribal stigma). But disciplines reveal themselves to be worth keeping¹ producers of knowledge if one interrupts this rhetoric of parochialism with a more complete image - one which uses the aforementioned vocabulary (situatedness, privilege, 'ignorance', 'iteration', 'analytical imperative', 'imperative of survival', 'opening-towards-others imperative', 'marking - with - disciplinary - signifiers imperative', 'narcissistic impulse', 'repository of disciplinary knowledge', 'negotiation', 'to discipline', 'boundaring', 'contestation').

With regard to the second accusation, *the imperialism* of disciplines, Sayer seems to be the victim of his own philosophy - critical realism. He starts the argument with a critique of Pierre Bourdieu, who correctly stated that 'every science has to use its own means to account for the greatest

¹ Recently, Johnston (2002c, 2003) has raised the problem of the balance of inter-disciplinary trade. He brought quantitative evidence that geography is imbalanced: it imports much more than it exports. In this context, who would want to maintain such a discipline?

number of things possible, including things that are apparently or really explained by other sciences' (quoted by Sayer, 2000a, page 6). According to the philosophy of critical realism (Sayer, 1995), the world is *layered* into different realms, and each of these realms has its distinct functioning and causal relations. In addition, critical realists claim that humans can have *access to 'real' truth* (i.e. truth-as-representation). These two building blocks of critical realism explain why Sayer could say (2000a, page 6) that 'imperialism invites mis-explanation through misattribution of causality'.

Unconvinced by critical realism, I have argued, following the huge debate on the possibility of knowledge, that a sceptical epistemology would be a reasonable, accommodating position. This means that instead of the *triumphalist optimism* of a realist epistemology (concerned with 'the proper way of finding the truth'), we should conceptualise an *epistemological negotiation* with *modest, piecemeal approximations* of how that truth might be. This involves a systematic encouragement of as many epistemic standpoints as possible, so that the alleged 'reality' is scrutinised from as many as possible of its facets. The ongoing dialogue of disciplinary perspectives would then outline commonalties and agreements on what 'reality' might be. Hence, it would provide: a) feedback and novel inputs to the respective disciplinary endeavour (some disciplinary worldviews might systematically be unsuccessful in finding commonalties with others, and therefore there might be external feedback that there is a need for a 'scientific revolution' in that discipline, if it is to avoid increasing contestation and falling into disrepute, etc.); b) improved approximations of the truths of 'reality'. In critical realism, the knowing subject is elitist, individualist, 'macho'; in sceptical epistemology, it is replaced with a conversation of

'sane' (open to dialogue) epistemic subjects, who together elaborate, and obey protocols of enquiry intended to transform 'lay/trivial' knowledge into 'scientific/verified' knowledge. These propositions on the dynamic of scientific knowledge entail that 'imperialism' is a good thing, and has to be encouraged. Indeed, plural perspectives on the same slice of 'reality' enhance the chance of knowing it better and new perspectives are produced precisely as outcomes of comparing hitherto conflicting perspectives, in an utopian (but salutary) attempt to retain all their advantages, whilst leaving behind all their short-comings. Plural positions impose comparison and critical judgement, stimulate new associations, 'fluidify solidified thinking' (C. Malabou, 1996).

These aspects notwithstanding, the idea of a layered world is particularly mis-leading, for it grounds a fantasy of ontological distinctions, which in turn presuppose pure explanations (read simplifications) for each layer. By speaking of 'mis-explanation through misattribution of causality', Sayer reveals the 'realist' passion for *purity*: pure ontology (distinct layers), pure epistemology (*the* proper explanation). Unfortunately for critical realism, all the recent developments in hard sciences (e.g. the science of complexity), humanities (philosophies of overdetermination), and social sciences suggest that reality is anything but 'pure'. The denial of the beneficial role of disciplinary imperialism reinforces the tautology of critical realists. Thus, they take for granted a layered ontology, which, as it is not exposed for verification (Carnap, 1995) or falsification (Popper, 1981), becomes a reason for the dismissal of all epistemological attempts to make 'impure' explanations out of these allegedly layered realms.

If the postulate of the layered world were put under the lights of epistemic doubt, then imperialism would change

status, from being rejected, to being welcomed. The *overlapping* of perspectives would help in judging to what extent the 'layered world' is a reasonable hypothesis. This is the position of the sceptical epistemology advocated here: we cannot know whether there are layers or not, therefore, in a modest attempt to approximate a provisional answer, we should encourage disciplinary imperialism, plural explanations about the same realm (which allows then a search for commonality). Taking a different approach, the philosophy of *overdetermination*, according to which everything influences, in various ways and to different extents, everything, makes imperialism (disciplinary ~) the most desirable thing in science.

This chapter organised the defence of the epistemic worthiness of disciplines by means of a structured *reply* to Sayer's accusations of disciplinary parochialism and imperialism, by the systematic invocation of a *sceptical epistemology*, and by the production of a *dry explanation of disciplinary identity formations*. The latter has two major facets:

a) A matter of *embodied mind and enminded body*: humans have a limited capacity for 'storing' and 'assimilating' information and, therefore, their *reasoning* as decentred subjects of knowledge bears a certain distinctiveness produced by the interplay between what the subject has managed to 'assimilate' and what (s)he has not managed to observe. Humans are both mentally 'narrow' (partial knowers) and mentally 'privileged', in that they are in the possession of a specific *mental cocktail* through which they see the world. In addition, the disciplines in which prospective scientists are educated and socialised influence their epistemic cocktail (or apparatus): they are 'stamped' with the more or less tacit knowledge of their discipline and, as actants committed to systematic knowledge in the

mundane spaces of 'science', their perspectives thus become unique and invaluable. A geographer would tend to pay more attention to the spatial dimension of things, to the processes through which things combine together in assemblages called 'places', to the ways in which culture and nature relate, etc. (S)he will tend to use more frequently maps, to do fieldwork, to seek 'messy' correlations, etc. Of course, this *geographical reasoning* varies in time and space, from one geographical school to another, etc., but the definition of geography would suggest that some commonalities referring to issues of 'space' and 'Earth's complexity' do exist across the scattered practices that label themselves 'geography'.

The fact that each scientist is an 'open actant' (his/her epistemic cocktail being only partly 'disciplinary') as well as the opening-towards-others imperative permanently limit the narcissistic impulse of disciplines. All the other non-disciplinary components mingling in the epistemic cocktail of a knowing subject (socialisation through a particular native language, religious beliefs, political beliefs, personal experience, distinct sets of readings, temperament, diverse bodily affordances, etc.) are *gates* through which disciplines communicate and interfere with what is beyond them. These gates constitute the scales of paratextual research, insofar as one operates with an understanding of scales as contexts collapsed within the unit of analysis (see my previous book on pragmatic scepticism). This understanding renders obsolete the outside/inside dichotomy, since all these gates and 'flows' are constitutive to the mundane spaces of 'science'. And as the outside is always already within, the depiction of disciplines as closed self-centred systems, as 'old vestiges' (Massey, 1999), or as 'fortresses' becomes deceptive;

b) A matter of *signifiers*: for a certain finding to be accepted as belonging to a discipline, one has to mark it with the distinctive signifiers of that discipline, process through which it enters the disciplinary repositories of knowledge (which make disciplines 'traditions'). All importations have to obey this marking process/rite of passage, which transforms them from 'findings from other disciplines' into 'discipline's findings' (in geography, for example, Foucault's work was imported through studying [marking] the role of space in power-knowledge formations; cf. Philo, 1992, Hannah, 1997). The problem with this rite of passage is that signifiers, the same way as all other 'entities', are *plural actants*, archipelagos of facets, mere linguistic instabilities performed by the processes of differance (Derrida, 1981, 1997, Spivak, 1999). Therefore, the marking with signifiers enacts not only the vicious 'enjoyment' (Zizek, 1993) of appropriating and domesticating the discipline's Others, but also the 'linguistic unease' (Riley, 2000) of (un)intended signification. Indeed, signification is *curse*d always to have '*side-effects*', which, curiously enough, become more important than the initial process of marking itself.

To provide a complementary undertaking of these insights, I will parallel signifiers with *honey*. Let us imagine that somebody has two pots of honey—one with reddish honey, the other with yellowish honey. She wants to mark two nearly identical slices of just-baked bread with differently coloured honey. In so doing, two side-effects take place: a) because honey is sticky, some of it remains on her fingers. It causes unexpected trouble and unease. She has to handle the problem; b) by just marking the slices with honey, she actually changed the marked object, not only in a superficial way (through colour), but also in a more profound way, because honey infiltrated and changed the constitution and

properties of the initial slice of bread. Going back from honey to science, let us take a 'careless' geographer (see Simandan, 2005) who wants to publish an article in a geographical journal. She has to pass the disciplinary customs, the issuing of the visa being conditional upon her marking the paper with the established signifiers.

But to do so, she has to theorise *about*, and *with*, those signifiers, now transformed into *concepts*: she cannot just spread words on a sheet of paper, for that *sheet* simultaneously operates as a coherent body of *ideas*. 'Space', 'place', 'environment', etc. have to enter not only the 'sheet of paper', but also the study inscribed on that sheet of paper. Their use forces her to handle the side effects of making them meaningful (which in turn generates a *second series of side effects*, through the Derridean play of *différance*), of putting them to work in the endeavour to provide new scientific findings. Disciplines unfold in this interplay of materiality and ideas, which provides them with *identity* and with an effective mechanism for the production of systematic knowledge.

The *surprising conclusion* of these pages is that what makes disciplines so effective is precisely their *narcissistic 'parochialism'* (understood as *desire to survive, grow, and enjoy peer esteem*): i.e. the very sin invoked by those who wanted to prove their lack of efficiency and hence the need for their replacement. The imperative of disciplinary survival leads them to: a) continuously accommodate their findings to what happens in other disciplines; otherwise they would be left behind, stigmatised, and dismantled as not useful; b) mark all imported findings with their identity-signalling signifiers, a process through which original findings are created and added to the disciplinary repository. This narcissistic parochialism has then considerable epistemic virtues.

To persist in lay metaphors, if one thinks now not of honey, but of *wine*, one can draw a parallel between the flavour of dusty old wines and the epistemic long-run efficiency of dusty old disciplines, on one side, and another one between new 'cheap' wines and new academic hybrids, such as 'Environmental Science'. Their striking feature is their orientation towards *applied research*, which, although a money-generator (in an age when universities are forced to perform the 'neoliberal myopia' [Watts, 2003] seriously; cf. Reading, 1996, Botting, 1997), is, in the long run, sterile for the progress of science - which is grounded in fundamental, 'blue-skies' research. It is precisely that divide between *substantive* geography and *paratextual* geography (and 'geography' could be replaced here with any example of other traditional disciplines) that these hybrids (including here Sayer's 'postdisciplinary studies') lack. This debilitating lack enables one to approach hybrids not as *substitutes* for disciplines, but as practices *complementary* to disciplines. Indeed, to keep consistent with our epistemology of epistemic gains and epistemic losses, we have to admit that this lack not only disables certain things, but also enables other things that disciplines are bad at. Thus, one can make the case that hybrids are likely to *speed up* the processes of bounding between traditional disciplines, which otherwise would be 'bounding' at 'normal' speed only. These theoretical statements dovetail with current best academic practice in the major research universities of the US, which have not replaced disciplinary divisions, but *added* to them centres for integrated/transdisciplinary research (they usually function with most of the staff having joint positions, out of which one is in a traditional discipline).

Work in the *paratextual* dimension of a science is indispensable for its progress in fundamental research. Think of the assault on traditional regional geography (starting

with Kimble's seminal 'The Inadequacy of the Regional Concept', 1951), think of the arguments for turning to new worldviews and methodologies (see Harvey's 'Explanation in Geography', 1969, Thrift's 'On the determination of social action in space and time', 1983, and "'Strange Country": meaning, use and style in non-representational theory', 1996, Chorley and Haggett's 'Models in Geography', 1969, Peet and Thrift's 'New Models in Geography', 1989; think also of the role for producing reflection and attachment of apparently neutral syntheses, such as Johnston's five editions (1979 to 1997) of 'Geography and geographers...', or Livingstone's 'The Geographical Tradition', 1992) etc. Those enquiries and writings on what a discipline should do, how it should develop or abandon obsolete approaches, are crucial for fostering the philosophical ('big picture') reflection within a discipline and for turning to new research programs. Even those *trivial arguments* within the paratextual dimension on what is 'proper geography', what are its distinct features, what constitutes 'deviations from the course of historical development' (Hartshorne, 1939) are very important in that they continuously question the signifiers with which one has to mark a finding within geography in order to have it sanctioned as 'proper geography'. The same happens with the paratextual dimension of other disciplines, and one could think of the role of the much more prestigious theoretical physics, theoretical biology, philosophy of mathematics, etc. This understanding of the value of the paratextual for the production of scientific knowledge will result in chapter 4 in the making of a case for an institutional and conceptual reorganisation and rejuvenation of paratextual geographies.

2. Geography As We Know It

The answer to the question whether geography is worth keeping involved, firstly, a demonstration of the fact that disciplines in general are worth keeping. One might have stopped here, by reassuringly reasoning: since disciplines are worth keeping, and since geography is a discipline, it follows that it is worth keeping. However, I will push the question further and ask separately why geography as we know it has its distinct value among disciplines, or, putting things differently, why it is a discipline at least as good as the others.

The reason for so doing is two-fold. First, even among those who agree that disciplines are useful and irreplaceable, some voices contest the need for geography by arguing that it is not a *proper* discipline and that its work can be done or is already done by other, more acceptable disciplines.

Second, the answers given by geographers to the above challenge, although numerous and (some) reasonable, do not seem to me thoroughly convincing. Much more can be said and the argument could follow different lines of enquiry, solidly grounded in recent developments in philosophy and the social sciences. What follows then, is a mere summary of these different lines of flight.

A basic issue remains how to shape the argument about the worthiness of geography: on one side, there is the big debate on whether physical geography and human geography should be *split* in two distinct disciplines or should be kept united; on the other side, there is the historical record of the *dismantling* of geography *altogether* in some universities. In some countries (Northern Europe, Russia), the aforementioned split is (in some universities) a *fait*

accompli, but the survival of geography in those departments is not at the moment under threat in the way it is in the neoliberalised universities (see Lemke, 2001, Vallas and Kleinman, 2001) of the English-speaking world. The belief underpinning this chapter is that the real issue remains the identification of a solid argument for the discipline *as a whole*. Indeed, the 'splitting of geography' debate (cf. Johnston, 1997, 2002c, Thrift, 2002b) becomes increasingly anachronistic, given at least four compelling observations:

1. From an *ethical* point of view, it is '*postcolonial*', and from an *epistemological* perspective, it is an *oversimplification*, in that it ignores both the reality of geographical practices outside the English-speaking world and the structure of geography in the English-speaking world. It is abusive to say that geography has these two components (physical geography and human geography) *only*.

As an example, in the geography department of the 'Babes-Bolyai' University, Romania, geography was organised into four research groups: a) human geography (population, settlements, economy, social, cultural, political geography, tourism), b) physical geography (geomorphology, climatology, hydrology, pedology, biogeography), c) regional geography (which includes the geography of landscapes, the regional study of continents, and territorial planning) and, d) environmental science (environmental geography, general geography, theory and methodology of geography). A fifth research group- on technical geography (GIS, remote sensing, topography, cartography) has not yet been constituted because of administrative constraints. Generally speaking, in Romania subdisciplines such as landscape geography, environmental geography, regional

geography, general geography, theory and methodology of geography, territorial planning, GIS, remote sensing, cartography and topography are included in neither physical geography nor human geography, but are separately considered within the system of geographical subdisciplines. This is also the case for other geographical traditions, but what I want to suggest is that this non-dualistic classification of geographical subdisciplines is *much more realistic* than the dualistic classification: the signifiers 'environment', 'region', and 'landscape' create discursive spaces in which the findings of physical geography and human geography come together, without necessarily reproducing the feared ideas of environmental determinism and possibilism. Instead, the thesis of *overdetermination*, for example, is a sophisticated approach that can leave behind these traditional fears.

These aspects aside, consider the fact that geographical techniques form a sort of *infrastructural* geography (Simandan, 1998), which underpins the 'substantive' geographies: a GIS geographer working on human geography topics has much more in common with a GIS geographer working on 'physical' issues, than with his non-GIS human geography colleagues. As for, territorial planning, it can be done in all sorts of ways: in England it appears to be a kind of critical perspectives on policy issues, in Romania it is much more locality-based, 'romantic', and involves fieldwork and knowledge of physical geography (the need to be able to read a geomorphologic map, for example). It acts as one more subdiscipline that interrupts the 'human/physical' dichotomy. The same work of interruption comes from general geography (think of Peter Haggett's 'Geography-a modern/global synthesis', with its four editions, from 1977 to 2001) and paratextual geographies ('theory and methodology of geography'). For both ethical and epistemological reasons, this *postcolonialist*

oversimplification of geography into two big halves has to pass away, but if we want to speed up its death, we have to acknowledge the three aspects that led to its contemporary pervasiveness:

a) *Comfortable research*: instead of bothering to make the big picture of what geography is (set of disconnected practices scattered over the globe), it is more comfortable to focus on the English-speaking world only and to add at the beginning of one's paper a warning phrase about 'the limited focus' of the study. The fact that English is a universal language discourages native speakers to learn foreign languages, and this also helps the aforementioned narcissism;

b) The European tradition of thought (starting with 'Black Athena', cf. Gilroy, 1993), has always ethically and epistemologically *disregarded hybrids*, since they are taken to be *derivative from*, and *secondary to*, the primary, *strong poles* of various dichotomies (figure 1). This dichotomic ontology generates a *dichotomic epistemology* ('important things' versus 'details' and 'shades') and a *dichotomic ethics* (whereas the 100% ontological purity of the poles A and B entails first-order ethical consideration, all the in-betweens are *impure* mixtures of A and B, their ontological impurity slipping into ethical impurity: 'ABs' are debased entities which dare to trouble the harmony of the world).

This flawed logic renders all those in-between geographies *reducible* to the strong poles. Sometimes this 'epistemic violence' (Spivak, 1988, 1990, 1999) has meant *total appropriation* (see the way in which regional geography has become a part of human geography in the English-speaking

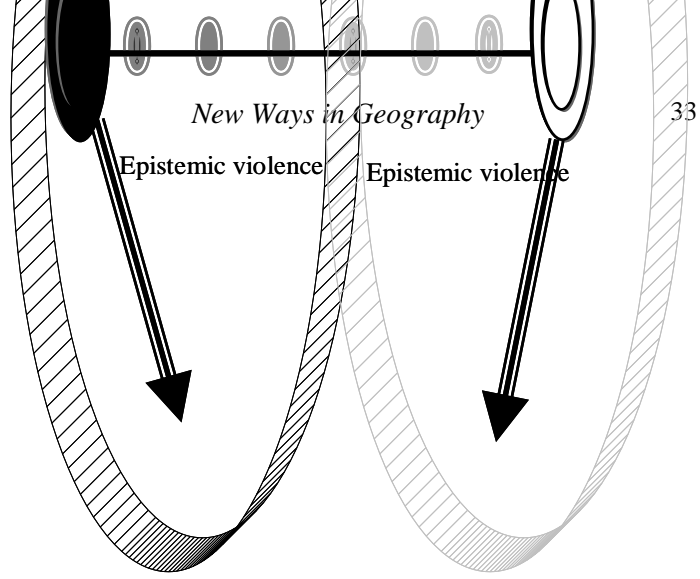


Figure 1: Pure dichotomous poles (A & B) and their impure derivatives (ABs)

world; Thrift's influential 'On the determination of social action in time and space', 1983, defined the region² (page 79, meeting place of social structure and human agency!) or literally *the dismantling of hybrids* in their A and B constituents (see the 'purification' [Latour, 1993] of environmental geography into human environmental geography and environmental sciences!). More frequently, it has meant the use of a sort of *lato sensu* definitions of the two poles, so as to *leave nothing* between them (see how the two big circles in figure 1 'eat' the small ABs hybrids).

In the same logic of appropriation and purification, the history of geography would belong to human geography because it is about human issues (!), although everybody would agree that it is not exactly 'proper', 'normal' human geography (which means research about space in society and society in space).

c) *The negative implications of the layered perspective of the world*, partly analysed in the critique of Sayer's paper. Ever since European thought shifted from an *Aristotelian-holistic-messy* perspective, to a *Platonist-atomistic-puritan* perspective (Tonoiu, 1997), the discrete ontology of distinct realms has underpinned the European worldview and has considerably influenced the production of scientific knowledge (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984, Stengers, 2000). Within the convention of ideal types, figure 2 illustrates a detailed model of layered ontologies (2, a), as well as a simplified model (2, b).

This second perspective has been particularly influential and damaging in geography. Those pleading for the separation of

² These new regional geographies have very little in common with pre-Kimble (Kimble, 1951) regional geographies. At the time, geographers were less influenced by social theory and more focused on geography as 'crossroads science', i.e. its bridging of social sciences with the hard sciences.

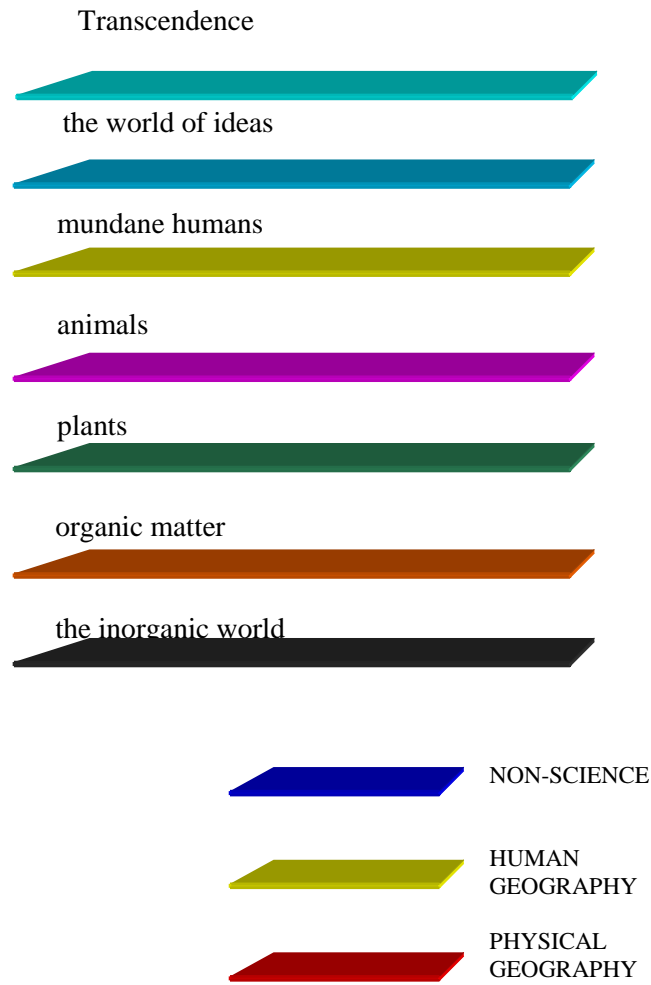


Figure 2: Layered ontologies (detailed model above; simplified model below)

geography into its two alleged halves (reviewed in Johnston, 1997) argue that humans constitute a distinct realm (which entail distinct functioning, distinct causalities, distinct ethics, distinct epistemologies) from the non-human, and that, therefore, human geography has nothing to do with physical geography (and vice-versa). In their view, 'geography' as a whole is a *relic* from the times when its sole task was *to describe naively* and map the world. Once that task was upgraded to the *causal explanation* of the world, the counter-intuitive tenet that reality is layered would impose the normal separation in a geography studying one realm (the humans), and a geography studying the other realm (the non-humans; the layer of 'transcendence' acts as the frontier between proper science, speculation, and false beliefs, and geography withdraws here, lending the frontier to theology). Given this infratheoretical compass, the discursive toleration of in-between geographies has always been *marginal*:

(i) In the first place, they were taken to be *remnants* of the old naïve descriptive geography. They might still exist, *but they should not be taken seriously*, the argument goes, because they are in the course of extinction: the 'tectonic' plate of naïve geography has not yet *melted* completely in the 'asthenosphere' of post-innocent, explanation-seeking geography. Once we push to the ultimate consequences the truth of layered worlds, these remnants will fall into oblivion. No wonder then, that in the English-speaking world, environmental geography dissipated into a human side (cultural or political economy approaches) and a physical side (numerical modelling, etc.), whilst regional geography and the geography of the landscape lapsed either into systematic stigmatisation as 'passé' and trivial, or into appropriation by representational cultural geography (see Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988, for the

case of 'landscape') and economic geography (see Massey, 1995, for the case of the 'region').

(ii) In the second place, one can make the case that they have not been properly considered, since a geography speaking of *in-between geographies* would appear as *strange* and *unscientific* to the *other* scientists: (a) they would not fit their worldview of a layered world, which would encourage them to believe geography is unscientific; (b) they would accuse geography of being *ethically and scientifically dangerous*, since in-betweens 'between' humans and the non-human world would allow the scary ghost of *environmental determinism*, or its soft, emasculated double (possibilism) to enter through the back door.

2. Coming back to the four compelling issues which should make the 'splitting of geography' debate a remote episode from the discipline's past, the second aspect is that this debate often ignores *recent developments in science and philosophy* that support the idea that a united geography is not merely tenable, but truly desirable (and most of the answers to the question of why geography is worth keeping follow).

(i) *Ontology*: the evolution of ideas in ontology has taken place in connection with the new findings in hard sciences (see the parallels between postmodernist theory and quantum physics and complexity theory, for example; Cilliers, 1998, Dillon, 2000). Among the new ideas in this area, perhaps the most favourable for geographers has been the substantial increase in the attention paid to the ontological role of *space*. Authors such as Martin Heidegger, Gaston Bachelard, Michel Foucault, Giles Deleuze, Henri Lefebvre, and Anthony Giddens, have contributed to the increased respectability of spatial theorising in philosophy and social science (Crang and Thrift, 2000, Casey, 1997).

This theoretical niche was partly appropriated by geographers and used as the golden gate for refreshing and adding sophistication to the discipline. It has also allowed them to dare to occupy a more visible place in academe, by exporting disciplinary artefacts of relevance across the humanities and the social sciences (e.g. Gregory, 1994, Harvey, 2003, Amin and Thrift, 2002, Whatmore, 2002, Barnett, 2003b).

However, physical geography has poorly exploited the resource of 'space' (cf. Massey, 1999, Gregory K J, 2000) focusing instead on the traditional dwelling on the other big theme- 'Earth's complexity' (e.g. Lau and Lane, 2001). Physical geographers limit the uses of 'space' to shallow considerations about the scales of analysis, instead of making it a central matter, worthy of extensive theorising. The striking feature of this ontological concept 'allotted' to geography is that *it is 'universal'*, referring both to the 'human sphere' and to 'the physical world'. As such, it provides a solid ground for a united geography. A science of 'space' for society, and another science of 'space' for the physical world would appear *dubious*, given, firstly, the universality of space, and secondly, the empirical evidence that space is produced through the messy interference of the 'human' and the 'physical'. One can add to this a common-sense reasoning: grounding two distinct sciences of 'space' on the weird hypothesis of a layered world, each with its own space, is much-too-problematic when confronted with the common sense observation that space is visible, 'real', whilst the presupposed existence of layers is conspicuously invisible. How could two sciences be developed on such an uncertain hypothesis? It sounds much more sensible to ground a science on the strong, intuitive, 'reality' of space. Whether that space is layered or not would be one of the questions on its research agenda - but again, a question, and

not the foundational premise of that science. What I want to underline here is that one of the two big themes of geography -'space'- has nothing to do with the dichotomous ontology of culture versus nature (see Franklin, 2002) and the attendant dichotomous epistemology of social sciences versus hard sciences. It disregards and exceeds them, hence providing a fascinating ground for a discipline with real stakes (one of them being that it has a *tool*-the concept of space - which allows researching the reality out-there in non-dichotomous [culture/nature] regimes of analysis). Social theory aside, further assertions of the importance of space increasingly come from the hard sciences (e.g. the spectacular development of topology within mathematics, or the hypothesis that the human brain has 'place cells'; etc.), but I do not feel qualified enough to elaborate on these.

Another favourable ontological development refers to the reassessment of *the body* (Barad, 2003), which opens windows towards *nonhuman* bodies, and thus links and blurs the 'layers' of the world. The recent revamping of the phenomenological idea of *umwelt*, Merleau-Ponty's concept of *flesh* (a commonality for all organic and inorganic entities in the world), Lucretius' concept of *swerve* (brought to light by Jane Bennett, 2001), Gil's concept of *exfoliation* (1998), Haraway's concept of *cyborg* (1991,1997), as well as the troubling redefinition of *agency* (Ingold, 2000, Whatmore, 2002), provoke the social sciences to refigure themselves (Joyce, 2002) by re-envisaging what counts as 'social'. The latter process has taken the form of a concerted enquiry into the commonalties of ontological 'actants', move beyond narrow explanations of scaled 'worlds'.

From a distinct, yet complementary direction, one might portray geography as a transgressive science meant to account for the (*increased*) *hybridisation* of the world (Michael, 2000): genetically modified plants and animals,

cultivated soil, artificial organs, 'sensitive' computers, the ozone hole, etc. Recent theorisations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 1988, Latour, 1993, 2002, Latour and Serres, 1995, Haraway, 1997, 2000; Bennett, 2001, prefers to speak of *crossings*) about the reality of a hybrid world argue that hybrids (cf. Bhabha, 1994) cannot any longer be disregarded as 'details' between pure poles. On the contrary, hybrids are the ones that now occupy the central stage, the pure 'entities' (poles) being pushed to the margins of theoretical attention. Geography seems the best-placed candidate to study these hybridisations, as a science which has always had its own hybrids ('purified' precisely now, when the world hybridises at increased pace).

Auspicious ontological projects have also been proposed through the increasingly influential *rhizomatics* (Deleuze), and *Actant-Network-Theory* (Calloun, Serres, Law, Latour), which oppose to the rigidities of layers the 'promiscuously' heterogeneous flows (see also Bloch, 2000) and webs of connection. They advocate (and therefore are exploitable as arguments for a [united] geography) a vision of the world which implies shifts from the static to the mobile, from entities to interactions and flows, from 'simple' harmony to the reality of *hubris*, from universal causation to contingent configurations of influence, from theories of centralised power to practice-based theories of power (Hetherington and Law, 2000).

Furthermore, the powerful philosophy of *overdetermination* appears hard to be refuted and is influential in both postmodernist social science (e.g. Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2002) and in complexity theory (Manson, 2001, Urry, 2003). Needless to say, it makes for a very strong tool for defending the case of a united geography: if, in various degrees, everything influences everything, researching things only separately (society-one strand of sciences; nature-another

strand of sciences), without paying attention to how they interfere seems bizarre and foolish. Even if, by absurdity, the social realm were 'separable' from the layer of the natural realm, there is room and need for a discipline that focuses on the ways in which these two 'worlds' influence and change one another. (If the two 'worlds' are defined as systems, geography would be, 'space' notwithstanding, the study of the external relations of these two systems).

Another project, valid from the ontological and epistemological points of view, but problematic from the ethical and political sides (see subchapter 5.2), is Tim Ingold's Heidegger-inspired *dwelling perspective* (Ingold, 2000). To an extent, it might remind one of a whole tradition in geography of defining our discipline as 'the study of Earth as the home of people'. However, this tradition has perpetrated unfair assumptions about the superiority of humans and the role of the Earth as nothing more than a resource for humankind (or more exactly, for manhood; cf. Rose, 1993). The dwelling perspective, had it not been for its ethical-cum-political dirty legacies, would have helped, the same as the overdetermination thesis, to theorise society-nature relations well beyond the risks of reproducing the traditional explanatory spectrum *determinism-possibilism-voluntarism*.

The Nietzschean urge '*out of profundity*' underpins much of postmodernist and poststructuralist theory and one can surely use it to produce an argument for geography, first through ontology, second through epistemology (I will analyse the epistemic virtue of superficiality later in this chapter). The ontological claim that things do not have 'depths' and 'behinds' subverts the layered vision of the world (which presupposes 'aboves' and 'belows', i.e. depths). *Out of profundity* suggests the idea of archipelagos of connections, of flat causal cartographies, and we tried to summon these

openings into our own ontoepistemic model of *recursive cartographies*, the components of which (events, rhythms, legacies) undo the sinister modern fantasy of 'culture *versus* nature' dichotomies. Will this Nietzschean attitude help refigure our discipline as the study of these flat cartographies of complexity? Noteworthy here is how the metaphor of superficiality helps the mental connection between the two big themes of geography: the complexity of the non-layered, 'empirical' space / the space of the non-layered, empirical complexity, etc.

Curiously enough, even the philosophy of *critical realism*, if stripped of the tenet of layered ontologies, can prove instrumental in the building of an argument for geography. To be sure, one of its other tenets is that Humean laws allow only for a potential causation, the actualisation of which always depends on the *context*, which can favour or forbid it. In other words, the standard goal of proper science (searching for universal laws) has to be doubled by an analytical, detailed *account of the settings of the world, of context formations*. Otherwise, explanation remains a mere caricature of how things work.

(ii) *Ethics*: the epistemological specificity of geography dovetails with the changed ethical sensibilities of recent times, and, in an era when ethical considerations tend to be *prioritised* even when judging science, this accord helps the production of a robust argument for geography. Chief among these new sensibilities appears the *celebration of difference* (Butler, Laclau, Žižek, 2000, Spivak, 2003). Accordingly, and to counteract the 'modern' celebration of sameness (purity; universals, laws, etc.) geography is redefining itself as a matter of difference and has, as an epistemic task, to make sense of difference in the world (space is difference, complexity is difference; cf. Massey, 1999, Sibley, 1995). A related ethical sensibility values the

idea of *subverting established orders and explanations*. To say the least, geography offers a *spatial perspective* (Massey, 1995, Allen, 2002), neglected in the established scientific discourses, as well as *robust accounts of the complexity of the world* (Harvey, 1996, Whatmore, 2002) which subvert both the current political-economic order (cf. Hardt and Negri, 2000, Peck and Tickell, 2002) and mainstream protocols of scientific enquiry (cf. Hess, 1997, Latour, 1999). Add to these the endeavour to *extend the emancipatory ideal* from issues of class inequality (Harvey, 1973), to culturally produced inequalities (Young, 1990, Benhabib, Butler, Cornell, and Fraser, 1995, Brown, 2000). For example, the double emancipation of women and nature (nonhuman subjects) has become nowadays a convergent issue, in which geography is fruitfully involved (Plumwood, 1993, Whatmore, 2002): hitherto, the discourse of the emancipation of women unfolded precisely in terms of raising them up from the mere 'natural', to become men's equals, whilst the extension of ethical consideration to nonhumans was a peripheral and poorly grounded matter.

(iii) *Social and educational imperatives*: the so-called 'real/relevant' problems open additional lines of argument for geography (cf. Peck, 1999). The 20th century witnessed a *huge extension* of the *interactional sphere* of the humans with the other components of the world, the peak of which being probably the hole in the ozone layer and global warming (cf. Demeritt, 2001). This intensification of the human/nonhuman interplay stands as necessary and sufficient condition for pleading its sustained research. 'Global Environmental Change' competes for the rank of the most important challenge for humankind. By offering the much-needed *global perspective*, geography is best situated among the other disciplines to confront this challenge. By 'best situated', I have in mind not only its epistemological

focus (the search of the complexity of the world, including by means of the universal tool of 'space'), but also its comparative advantage in *education*. Geography is among the few sciences which has the elasticity to elaborate and disseminate discourses at strikingly divergent levels of sophistication: the low levels make it an accessible and, (in some places) popular discipline among pupils (as seen in the UK in its choice for the A levels), well above the hard sciences and some of the social sciences. At that 'popular' level, it offers *the big picture* of the world, the *type of reasoning* which unravels unexpected connections, the essential skill of *reading the non-textual* (maps and images, in a global society of the 'image'; Harvey, 1989), and an *implicit ethics* which starts with the care for knowing the other(s), hence producing cognitive and affective openings that unsettle narrow-mindedness.

The neoliberalisation of higher education (see the special issue of *Antipode*, 2000/32) has fuelled, *inter alia*, the trend to assess disciplines not only epistemologically, but also *economically* (as consumers and producers of various resources). When compared with the hard sciences and their interdisciplinary hybrids (which have clear economic 'value' through technical and technological applications of their findings) geography generally appears as *unprofitable*, as a discipline with an educational vocation. Yet, the former 'dusty', 'educational' discipline of geography has metamorphosed in the second half of the 20th century into an interesting multiparadigmatic discipline (Johnston, 1997) in which fundamental research and critical emancipatory theory coexist in a tense constellation (e.g. the conflicts at the AAG Annual Meeting in New Orleans, 2003, including the scandal over Cutter et al, 2003) with more '*profitable*' activities (cartography, GIS, remote sensing, locational analysis, epidemiology, study of the spatial behaviour of the

consumer [e.g. the Santa Barbara school, around Reginald Golledge], quantitative economic geography, urban and regional planning, environmental impact assessment, applied geomorphology, and, more recently, the geographical study of terrorism (cf. Cutter et al, 2003). There is then a strong *political geography of our discipline*, which has manifested itself, among other things, through a considerable debate in paratextual geographies about what direction geography should follow (Johnston, 1997): either to become a *critical* approach, revealing truths that support emancipation, or to play the *card of profit* in a post-welfarist society. Regardless of one's politics, from a purely epistemological perspective, this internal diversity of geography appears as a strength, producing a disciplinary dynamic that cannot stay aside from ethical and political involvement.

Diversity allows geography to be a *multi-faceted 'actant'* within various societies, and thus to better solve its biggest image problem: that of an 'ignored', ghostly discipline (Massey, 2001), always forgotten in classifications of science. The condition of a multi-faceted actant allows it to *be visible* and *therefore appreciated* for its value, in the multiple domains where it plays a role (from information sciences to the study of performativity, from rural planning to the physics of the Earth, etc.). The big stake and challenge is to experiment with the extent to which the overall character of the discipline can be *replicated* within the new generation of professional geographers (how can one be made to handle satisfactorily, both physics and cultural studies, both computers and political economy, etc?).

(iv) *Recent developments in the hard sciences* support with sophisticated theoretical tools the idea that approaches to reality which do not try to divide it into a cultural realm (human geography) and a natural realm (physical geography) are scientifically tenable. Among these

compelling developments, one would enlist *fractal theory* which works as well in urban studies (Batty & Longley, 1994) as in fluvial and coastal geomorphology; *the theory of catastrophes* (designed by René Thom to become an all-encompassing explanation of the dynamics of the world; his models explain all ruptural trajectories, from a Scientific Revolution, to the falling of a bridge); the *theory of bifurcation* ('bifurcation' has already entered into the vocabulary of both human geographers and physical geographers); *the theory of dissipative structures* (see Simandan, 1997; it is a competing project to that of René Thom, who accused Ilya Prigogine of seeking success by using a too 'artistic' language, at the expense of scientific rigour); *the unity project in physics* (the attempt to unify in a single TOE -theory of everything - all the four physical fields; the name of the theory is misleading, for, whilst true of everything, it does not *explain* everything); the huge expansion of *information sciences* (everything, whether 'natural' or 'human', is *data* to be analysed and modelled through a transgressive methodology; the development of GIS contributes to the centripetal tendencies within geography); *complexity theory* (the language and tools of which are entering into geography in various ways³).

Beside the hard sciences, there are favourable developments in the nowadays not-too-fashionable discipline of *logic* (cf. Simandan, 1998). Among them, one would first point to the superb proliferation of *non-binary* logics, such as Stéphanne Lupasco's *dynamic logic of the contradictory* (a dialectical logic of the included third, which was used in the building of

³ In Simandan, 1997, I defended the idea that in geography complexity theory comes as a *successor project* to the heavily criticised general systems theory, one of the transdisciplinary approaches *en vogue* up to the early 1980s.

the *project of transdisciplinarity*, launched by Bassarab Nicolesco and Edgar Morin, in Lisbon, in 1996; cf. Nicolesco, 1999) or Grigore Moisil's *logic of nuanced reasoning* (Moisil, 1975), etc. Complementary to the work on non-binary logics are the theorisations and *logical models of vagueness and fuzziness*, which entail alternative ways of thinking of the world and provide sophisticated methodological tools for geographical modelling.

(v) *Epistemology*: It is *de rigueur* nowadays to criticise Descartes' 'Discours de la methode' (1637) for having set the modern scientific paradigm, with its subject-object dichotomy and its 'violent' need to divide the object of knowledge so as to make possible its understanding. However, it is all too frequently overlooked that this second rule of proper research preceded a third rule: the need to reassemble the 'pieces' of analytical knowledge into a coherent whole, in order to obtain 'the big picture' of reality. It is particularly on this third rule that geography has been, and could be, grounded (Haggett, 1990, 2001, Gould, 1999). In the last decades, a number of outstanding figures in philosophy and the social sciences have decried the noxiousness of piecemeal knowledge and the lack of communication between knowledges of apparently distinct realms. One could enlist here C. P. Snow's famous lecture on 'the two cultures' (hard sciences versus art and humanities), Karl Popper's positions in 'The Logic of Scientific Discovery' (1934/1981), 'In Search for a Better World' (1997) and 'The Myth of the Context' (1998), Thomas Kuhn's 'The Essential Tension' (1982; cf. Kuhn, 2000), or, from another perspective, Bruno Latour's 'We have never been modern' (1993). Their substantive and authoritative arguments provide resources for advocating a 'crossroads discipline' (Claval, 1991), which, although 'dubious', could stand as a 'fascinating experiment in holding together culture

and nature in a single explanatory framework'. (Livingstone, 1992).

A different strand of work against the privileging of analyticity in modern epistemology comes from various schools of thought within *Gender Studies*, which have revealed the pernicious associations between masculinity, analyticity, and 'proper' science on one hand, and femininity, synthesis, non-proper (soft) science, on the other hand. Even in the hard sciences (particularly in *ecology* and, more broadly, in *biology*) there is a growing dissatisfaction with the golden rule of analyticity, with the attendant arguments for valuing more integrative approaches (e.g. Margulis and Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, Ilya Prigogine's research, the work of Maturana and Varela). After three centuries of hegemony of the *atomistic-analytical mode* (due particularly to the prestige and influence of physics, or, more exactly, of the Newtonian paradigm in physics), the last three decades have witnessed the growing appeal among scientists of the *Aristotelian mode*, which favours holistic approaches and blurs rigid categories (Tonoiu, 1997). The long-lasting controversy *Erklären versus Verstehen* (Explanation vs. Understanding; Monism vs. Dualism) in epistemology has thus reached new dimensions (e.g. Heelan, 1998), after decades of domination by the supporters of methodological dualism. And this increased acceptance of methodological monism makes the argument for a united geography less problematic.

Related to this debate, yet distinct from it, is the problem of *epistemic path dependency* (figure 3). The usual way of thinking the evolution of knowledge processes is that, because of the increased amount of information, one cannot avoid *specialisation*. However, because of the powerful imaginary of a purified world (Latour, 1993, Haraway, 1997), the specialisms in which we are 'allowed' to specialise

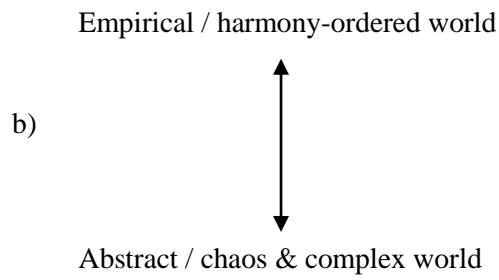
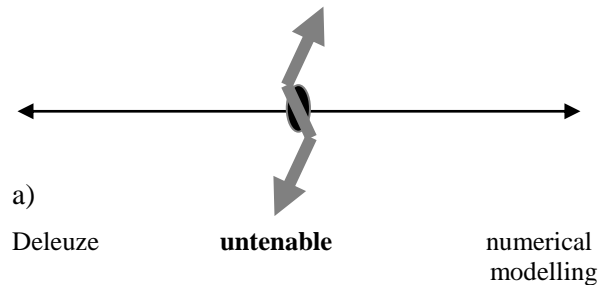
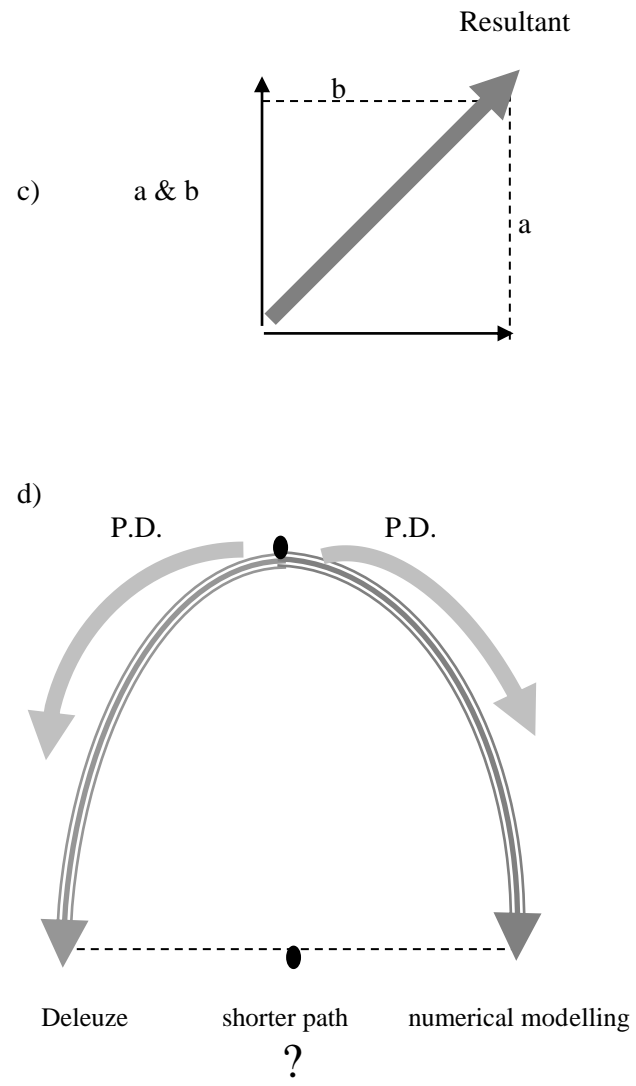


Figure 3: Epistemic path-dependency and alternative horizons of research (a-d)



are unproblematised (figure 4). They seem to be *the natural foci*, the only way in which a division of knowledge could take place (politics for political scientists, the economy for economists, culture for cultural theorists, the human mind for psychologists, the social past for historians, etc.).

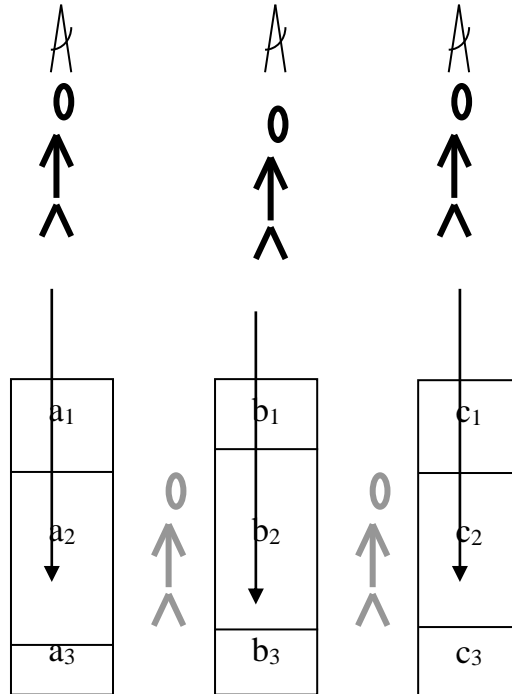


Figure 4: Proper scientific foci *versus* geographical foci (geographers in-between traditional research foci)

These imaginaries of naturalised analyticity underpin the arguments for the separation of geography into human geography and physical geography, as well as those for the dismantling of geography altogether. The sin of the discipline stands in its having a too broad 'focus' to be scientifically tenable (figure 3-a suggests this idea: one cannot know both social theory and the philosophy of Deleuze, and complicated numerical modelling in hydrology. It is just untenable). In contrast with this, one can defend geography in two ways:

1. *The standard argument*: specialisation is good and is unavoidable, but it has some *side effects*, such as the loss of a coherent big picture of the world and of the potentially fruitful correlations which could be made between various foci. Geography would then be *the antidote* to these side effects. It is a special discipline, *the main focus of which is to avoid standard foci*. It is a weird, yet necessary, celebration of the *virtue of being superficial* (epistemologically *restless*). As already shown, both very 'modern' scholars (Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn) and *avant la lettre* 'postmodern' philosophers (Nietzsche's - 'out of profundity') made the case for this type of antidote.

2. A *'Heideggerian'* argument differs from the standard argument in that it problematises in a deeper way the fabricated nature of epistemic foci. According to Heidegger's epistemology

(Heidegger, 1962, 1977; cf. Dreyfus, 1993; see also Simandan, 2005) in our attempt to know the world, *we set boundaries* to portions of reality, which then are taken-for-granted (as things, entities, realms) in the scientific endeavour. In so doing, we systematically produce ignorance

alongside systematic knowledge, we open horizons by closing other horizons.

Standard scientific research not only endorses the existence of a reality out-there, but also entertains the fantasy of the existence of some 'natural' foci. Through Heidegger and those who draw on him (Donna Haraway, 1991, Alessandra Tanesini, 1999), one can dismiss the idea of 'natural' foci, and replace it with a position that underlines the agency of humans in setting boundaries and delimiting foci for rendering knowledge possible. This line of thought opens enticing possibilities for an argument for geography. If there are no natural foci, then a separation between proper, 'focused', disciplines, on one side, and an atypical (exceptional, queenly), non-proper, non-focused discipline (geography) has to go away. Indeed, any human knowledge is subject to the analytical imperative, and geography is focused as well, with the difference that the boundaries of its foci are unconventionally set (figure 5; confront it with figure 4).

Instead of focusing geography using the model in figure 4 – $a_1 - a_2 - a_3$ (hard science), $b_1 - b_2 - b_3$ (social science), and $c_1 - c_2 - c_3$ (humanities) – we can focus it differently, using the model in figure 5: $a_1 - b_1 - c_1$ (descriptive geography; i.e. getting to know the data of the Earth; the 'surface' of things), $a_2 - b_2 - c_2$ (theoretically-informed geography) and $a_3 - b_3 - c_3$ (ontological geography, which excavates the taken-for-granted of the two other geographies). If, following this destabilisation, one returns now to figure 3, (s)he will see how we have manipulated his/her way of seeing. The apparently untenable tension between getting to know Deleuze and getting to know numerical modelling (3-a) is the result of how *we set the framework*: 3-a exposes a *linear* representation of knowledge, with allegedly *opposite directions* of research required by 'opposite' specialisms,

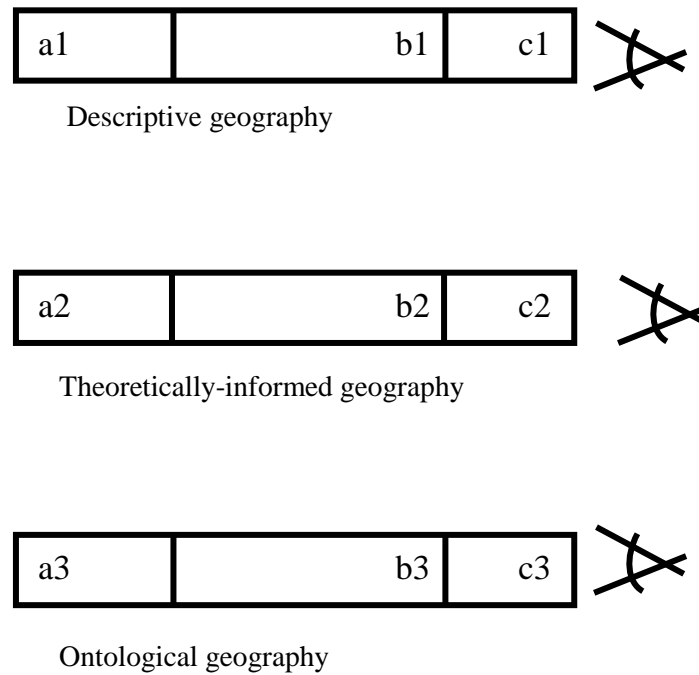


Figure 5: Cutting research foci differently

so as to suggest that these opposite directions render impossible a satisfactory coping with the requirements of knowing both physical geography and human geography. However, 3-b exposes a different portrayal of knowledge, in line with the recent sensibility of scholars, who tend to leave

behind the worldview of an ordered, deterministic, clock-like, harmonious world (underpinning both the Enlightenment project, and the main systems of religious beliefs; cf. Eliade, 1979, Israel, 2001) and to adopt the imaginary of a complex, even chaotic, world (Thrift, 1999b, Urry, 2003).

This tendency manifests itself in both philosophy and social theory (signified in figure 3 by Deleuze) and in the hard sciences (signified in our drawing by numerical modelling). Figure 3-c exploits the habit of physics to combine forces so as to determine their resultant, by putting together 3-a with 3-b and obtaining a *resultant* 'force', distinct from either of its two sources (3-a and 3-b). As 3-d shows, the apparent predicament of geography as a scientific unified discipline is the result of a *solidified way of thinking*, of an epistemic path-dependency ('P. D.' or 'epistemic lock-in'). If we follow the two arrows of everyday habits of research (P. D.) the distance to cover between Deleuze and numerical modelling seems huge.

Nevertheless, if we change perspectives and set different boundaries (destabilising models such as *recursive cartographies* help the process), we might discover that there are *shorter paths* (the thin interrupted line), worthy of our research energies. Geography is then an attempt to 'fluidify solidified thinking' (C. Malabou), to show that in epistemology 'anything goes' (P. Feyerabend, 1975), as long as the research outcomes are good. By saying this, I want to emphasise *the pragmatic idea* that it is *not the effort* paid for doing something that should be applauded, *but the results* obtained. For geography, this pragmatic stance entails two consequences: *firstly*, the long-standing methodological controversies within the discipline (e.g. quantitative methodologies versus qualitative methodologies) could be taken to be, to an extent, *snobbish*. Indeed, their concern has

been more with how to revamp the discipline in such a way so as to have it accepted in the established world of science, and less with the intrinsic usefulness of these methodologies in maximising the quality of disciplinary research outcomes. A pragmatic shift towards focusing on outcomes is better not only for judging the value of disciplines, but also for fighting all sorts of methodological rigidities and unfavourable rankings grounded on them.

Secondly, by advocating results as the sole criterion for evaluating a discipline, we emphasise the idea of *ongoing justification through present results* and hence undermine the comfortable *ontological* (space matters, therefore geography matters), *epistemological* (geography offers a different standpoint on things, and therefore it is worth keeping), and *historical* (long record of past achievements; past performance best predictor of future performance) justifications. In other words, we do not have *first*, to justify the usefulness of geography, and then practice it; instead, we justify it through the results of that ongoing practice.

There is scope for a qualification, however: whilst the ontological and historical justifications are trivial, the epistemological justification for geography appears dubious only when it stands as the sole justification. Combined with the pragmatic justification ('the outcomes matter'), it is undoubtedly powerful: once we have agreed that geography has outstanding results (may them be in applied work or pure theory), we might (and should) ask what the *explanation of these results* is (paratextual reflection feeds back onto substantive research later on). This type of question would eventually lead to the issue of the production of geographers as *epistemic agents* and of the explanation of what makes the *geographical standpoint* distinctive.

Thus, one would notice that geography is *the sole* discipline in which training usually consists of substantive knowledge⁴ *in both* social sciences and hard sciences (a sociologist might follow *a* course in mathematics, a philosopher *a* course in theoretical physics, but these are ‘exceptions’ from the bulk of the normal ‘human’ courses taken). Secondly, (s)he would see that the education of a geographer involves both *practical-‘relevant’* skills (reading a map, orientation, GIS, working in tourism, etc.) and *pure theory*. A third observation would then refer to *methodologies*: on one side, there are ‘imported’ (proper) methods (such as interviewing, focus-group, numerical modelling, regression analysis), on the other side geography still hosts some *Bohemian methodologies* (e.g. the reading of a landscape/the geographical gaze) that, although the subject of various ironies, remain powerful in some geographical traditions (e.g. Romanian).

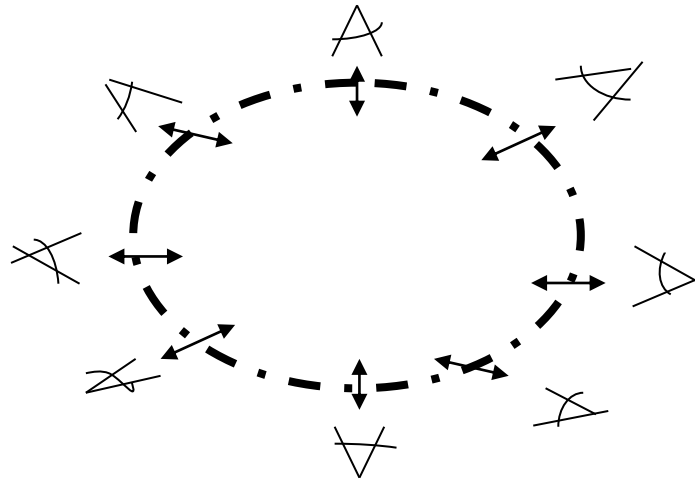
If we combine these three observations, geography appears as a very interesting and vigorous *hybrid*, as a site of *epistemodiversity*, as a ‘situated knowledge’ (at least) as valuable as other situated knowledges. It seems to be the embodiment of *the virtue of superficiality*, to which it is ‘condemned’ by its very legitimating referents (both ‘space’ and ‘Earth’s complexity’ involve holistic accounts, searches for correlations between allegedly distinct realms, etc.).

The 20th century has witnessed the increased dissemination of the model of science as a *continuous negotiation of biased perspectives*. In this model, scientific *progress* emerges through the process of *comparing* different knowledge-


⁴ I am not claiming that geographers are *sufficiently skilled* in both types of sciences. They have a grounding (i.e. at least some undergraduate courses) in both, but subsequently they specialise in a particular area. But the way they study that particular area is in subtle ways influenced by this broader educational baggage.

offers of different disciplines (consider, for example, Karl Popper's idea of science as *open society* and his argument for *falsification* as core-mechanism for the advancement of knowledge; see also Reichenbach's distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification). Controversies (cf. Bassett, 1999) arise over the nature of that 'progress': whilst some see it as a definite, unproblematic 'step forward', others concede that we take something to be progress for practical reasons only, without knowing for sure whether it is 'real' progress or not. Whilst this matter continues to be riven with controversies, the model of science-as-negotiation (figure 6) is widely accepted (see the work of Popper, Kuhn, Habermas, Rorty, Lakatos, Haraway, Harding, Fricker, etc.).

For geography, it encompasses both a huge *chance* and a *challenge*. It presents a chance because this model does not necessarily impose apriori standards of scientificity, such as the formalisation and quantification required by the model of logical positivism (the Vienna Circle). Therefore, geography does not have to strive for meeting certain prerequisites (the way it did in the period of the Quantitative Revolution), but to prove that its findings, perspectives, and discourses are useful to the *negotiated shaping* of the broader scientific discourse (e.g. across the social sciences, across the hard sciences, etc.). The chance of not having to meet established criteria of formal scientificity undoes the risk of narrowing perspectives through the continuous stigmatisation of 'non-scientific' practices (e.g. the theological or magical traditions in geography). As an actor in this model, geography also has to dwell with a *challenge*: the challenge to present itself well 'in public' (e.g. after the last RAE, 2001, British geographers realised that they publish too few books and the geography panel recommended more efforts



Legend:

 disciplinary perspectives

 import-export of findings

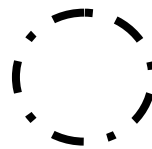
 Continuous negotiation of the overall discourse of science

Figure 6: Science as continuous negotiation of biased perspectives

in this direction). The main advantage of geography in this inter-disciplinary *competition* (which, in neoliberal times, becomes the Darwinian *struggle for life*- see the assaults on chemistry and history in the UK, in 2003) stands in its being a mere generic name for a wide range of scientific practices, multiparadigmatic and multi-faceted in character. Its public performance engenders practical matters (planning, GIS, epidemiology, applied physical geography, environmental impact assessments, etc.), educational tasks (offering the big picture), and theoretical contributions (the reassessment of space in social theory, the new ethics of culture-nature relations, conceptualisations of globalisation, political practices, economic strategies, etc.).

3. A *third reason* that renders less relevant the 'splitting of geography' debate stands in the *contemporary politics of the academic division of labour* (see the debates in *Antipode*, 2000, and *Geoforum*, 2002). In the first place, from the point of view of the managers of a university, fewer departments are better, since this allows for financial savings. The issue for administrators might be to dismantle a geography department altogether (e.g. Salford in 2003) for being 'dusty' and unprofitable, and not at all *to separate it* further into a physical geography department and a human geography department. The pressing issue now is not so much the administrative splitting of geography, as is the struggle for the overall *survival* of some geography departments. In the second place, beside economic savings, the obvious fact that *size matters* gives a further impulse to both university managers and academic geographers to keep (in any given university) the discipline within a single department. Big departments entail not only more power and institutional prestige, but also more effective ways of organising the production of knowledge (this is one of the tenets –and

consequences - of the RAE: the bigger, the better for the quality of the research). Little wonder, then, that the dismantling of geography departments has been in almost all cases the dismantling of *small* geography departments, without sufficient discursive and institutional resources to fight university-wide decisions.

Add to all these one of the implications of our definition of geography: diverse scientific practices scattered over the earth mean *very local* and *specific* answers to the question of the survival of geography. And, indeed, there are places where this question is out of the question (e.g. in Romania, the last decade has been characterised by a substantial increase in both the number and the size of geography departments).

4. Finally, a *fourth reason* refers to a *logical exercise* about *rhetorical resources*. A separate discipline -human geography, for instance- could be grounded on the matter of space: it offers a spatial perspective within social science. In addition, a distinct physical geography could be grounded on a spatial perspective, or on the need to approach the complexity of physical phenomena at the surface of the Earth. Let the argument for human geography be X, and the argument for physical geography Y.

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{HG - X} \\ \text{PG - Y} \end{array} \right.$$

What is striking is that an argument for geography as a whole is infinitely stronger than: a) X, or b) Y, or c) X and Y, since the *synergetic effect* in the case of geography is more than the mere (X+Y) sum. Whether we refer to the need to fight excessive analyticity, to explore a non-layered view of the world, to account for culture/nature

relationships, to the virtue of being superficial, to the 'Heideggerian' argument for putting things differently, etc., all these make a much stronger argument than the simple issue of offering a spatial perspective. Moreover, even the big theme of 'space' could be better invoked for a *single* geography: if space is indeed a fundamental issue, than it should be a sufficient ground for a coherent account of the spatiality of *reality as a whole*. Accepting a science of space for the social realm, and another science of space for the physical realm undermines the claim that space is of fundamental importance, since its importance is superseded by that of the alleged culture/nature divide.

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} G = X + Y + Z, \\ \\ Z > X + Y \end{array} \right. \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{where } Z = \text{arguments} \\ \text{for geography as a whole,} \\ \text{beyond the X and Y arguments} \end{array}$$

In conclusion, the only reason why it is important to ask the question whether geography is worth keeping is to destabilise the established comfortable answers which have been given so far (whether they are historical, epistemological or ontological) and to plead for the idea that the answer does not precede the doing of geography, but is continuously given as we go about, by the quality of the outcomes (theoretical, 'applied') of that 'doing'.

New Ways

New Ways

So far, this book has made the case for the idea that disciplines in general, and geography in particular, are not outdated models of organising scientific research. Instead, it argued that the old way of disciplinarity has many virtues and that it *entails* interdisciplinary commerce. Nevertheless, we outlined that the worthiness of any given discipline does not really stand in *a priori* claims about its epistemological, ontological, and historical specificities, but is a function of the perceived quality of its research outcomes. It is this last observation that grounds the endeavours of the following chapters. To be sure, Seyla Benhabib (1986) separates theoretical work into two components: the critical moment and the utopian-constructive moment. *New Ways in Geography* takes this distinction seriously: after two chapters that evaluated the *current* disciplinary formation of geography ('Traditional disciplines', 'Geography as we know it'), this second part ventures into a set of arguments for *transforming* geography into a better producer of knowledge. I grouped them into three chapters, each debating a distinct type of transformation. Thus, I begin by proposing an alternative *turn* ('Intimations with metaphysics'), then I advocate a range of alternative *reflexive practices* ('Excavations in the relativity of norms'), and I end by pleading for alternative *conceptualisations* in geography ('Reflections on the logic of epistemic neglect'). Before proceeding further, it is particularly important to prepare the reader for the (otherwise bizarre) encounter with the distinct discursive style and distinct logic of what

follows. The previous chapters were written in a more traditional manner, with arguments developed at length and close attention to ensuring the logical flow normally expected of a ‘coherent’ study. There will be no more of these now. This is not because of one’s whims, but because at this stage the aforementioned conventions would hinder the purpose of this project, namely *to open up* the discipline of geography so as to make it more valuable epistemologically and politically. If one wants to open up the discipline, one needs to break free with the textual apparatuses that limit creativity and replace them with a Dadaist epistemology that encourages the freedom of thought, tentativeness, the right to be wrong, the acceptance of half-baked ideas, and the understanding that any academic writing is necessarily provisional (i.e. a mere sequence in the dynamic of any healthy scientific conversation).

We are all familiar with the prerequisites of a successful brainstorming. Chief among them is to avoid worrying about the ‘seriousness’ of one’s insight and to avoid worrying about how those insights put on paper will eventually fit into a larger, ‘coherent’ whole. This second part of the book unfolds as the trace of the *impossible negotiation* between the imperatives of proper academic writing and the imperatives of genuine creativity. It does justice to none of them, but at least it offers a *springboard* for rejuvenating the geographical conversation. I invite my readers – through the backdoor – into the room where that impossible negotiation took place. Not all the results of one’s brainstorming could have entered in the mean space of a book. One had to choose between either providing underdeveloped arguments for many possible disciplinary transformations, or selecting very few examples of transformations, but with decent argumentation for each of them. Given the evaluative constraints to which an academic writer is forced to obey, it

was necessary to emphasise the latter constellation (of epistemic gains and epistemic losses) by including only three of these possible disciplinary changes. Selection was then necessary. But with what selection criteria? At least six were carefully pondered.

The first criterion was to choose those types of endeavours that render apparent the different levels at which a discipline's transformation could happen. Indeed, the *first new way* proposed looks at the macro-level (inter-disciplinary commerce): the possible engagement between two academic disciplines (geography and traditional metaphysics) that ignore each other at the moment. The *second way* discussed approaches the meso-level (the discipline of geography as a whole) by questioning the relevance of the metaphor of geography-as-extended-conversation and excavating the relativity of norms. Finally, the micro-level (the dynamic of particular concepts and the logic of epistemic neglect) is explored as the *third way*, as the argument descends toward the book's conclusions.

The second criterion consisted in selecting different types of possible disciplinary transformations, each of them requiring specific doses of intellectual energy, discursive power, and political sensibility. Thus, the analysis begins by advocating a turn to metaphysics, then it proposes an alternative reflexive practice, and it ends by pleading for a more sophisticated conceptualisation of what we mean by 'the past' in geographical discourse.

The third criterion was to do justice to both of the two dimensions of geography – the 'textual' (i.e. geographical discourse about 'real' issues) and the 'paratextual' (i.e. geographers' discourses about themselves and their discipline). And this was particularly tricky: how was one to accommodate a 'textual' (discursive) intruder (the analysis of the 'dwelling' perspective) within the realm of a clearly

paratextual piece of research, without decisively undermining the unity and smoothness expected of a good book? Two strategic manoeuvres were deployed for this impossible task: the first was to weave the ‘textual’ component into a broader unifying theme provided through the intersection of the two aforementioned criteria. Indeed, the final chapter of the second part (‘Reflections on the logic of epistemic neglect’) considers the micro-level of transformations, by means of two case studies. The chapter offers a more elaborated way of conceptualising the past in both paratextual (case study 1: *The past is a foreign country*) and textual geographies (case study 2: *Heidegger and the past of dwelling*). The second manoeuvre consisted in challenging the very protocols of enquiry and norms of good research in geography, by providing an alternative reading of what the ‘coherence’ of a discourse might mean (and see the conclusion of the book).

To close this accolade and return to our criteria, the fourth was to select those types of disciplinary changes that bring genuine novelty to geography. Our discipline is a conversation about space and place increasingly marked by the effects of the cultural turn. To stimulate truly challenging *new ways*, I avoided marching in the same directions. Instead of the cultural turn, I advocate a turn to metaphysics (the first new way), instead of ‘geography-as-conversation’ I argue for reflection on the relativity of what it takes to be a good geographer (the second new way) and instead of overly dissecting space and place, I plead for similar attention to dissecting the ‘past’ and to circumventing the logic of epistemic neglect (the third new way).

If one pauses for a moment and re-reads these four criteria, one detects in them the privileging of diversity, of the aim to open up geography in as many and as creative ways as possible. Yet, apart from limiting the number of

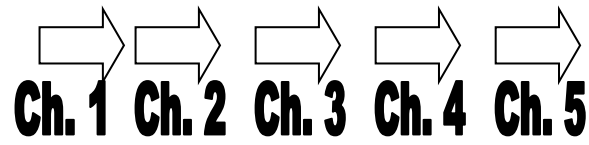
transformations discussed to three only, what other things could one do to ensure that the project, whilst retaining the energizing freshness of a 'brainstorming', manages to obey those constraints that make a piece of research 'proper'?

The urgency of this micro-political question forged the remaining two criteria of selection. Thus, the fifth criterion applied was to select those transformations about which I thought in enough detail to be able to provide at least the beginning of an argument for them. Indeed, earlier versions of the second new way and of the second case study of the third new way are published in refereed journals, while the remaining parts were exposed and discussed at conferences and seminars, as preliminary steps before submitting them for publication.

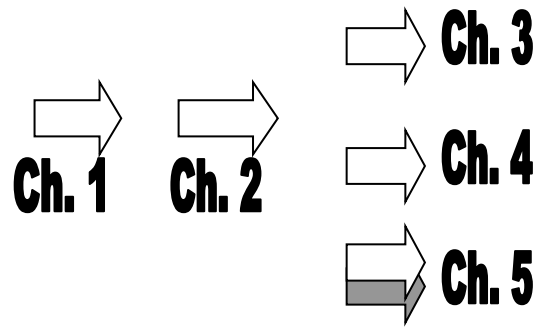
Finally, the sixth criterion considered revolved around the imperative of continuity in one's research. To be sure, not too many researchers will read one's book and even less will be seduced by its propositions. In this context of scarcity, it is normally expected that at least its author will continue to work in the directions opened by his/her own earlier research. Therefore, I selected the three directions of disciplinary transformations to which I will devote my energies in the following years. Consider with some sympathy the fact that this book does not analyse something that had an end (a Revolution, a novelist or philosopher from past centuries, etc.). In that case, the standard paragraph in the concluding chapter that exposes one's future research directions and their link to the current work would have sufficed. The object of my enquiry is a living 'creature' – the discipline of geography. My own theoretical framework – the pragmatic scepticism implied by 'recursive cartographies' – forces me to put myself into the map of this enquiry. But both 'creatures' (the discipline and myself) are, at least in the light of a particular line of metaphysical

thought, the sum of: a) them-in-the-past, b) them-in-the-present, and c) them-in-the-future. The following chapters are the result of the bizarre work of putting myself-in-the-future into the map of geography-in-the-future, in line with the epistemic obligations I have towards recursive cartographies. I am fascinated by the idea of researching the interface of geography with metaphysics (and see table 1 for a personal research agenda in the following years). I am thrilled at the thought of taking further the analysis of what it takes to be a good geographer, by exploring the consequences of Judith Butler's (1990, 1993, 1997a-b, 2000) novel theorisation of the formation of subjectivities (cf. Crossley, 1996, McNay, 2000). What might this mean for how we produce ourselves as geographers? Equally, I am impatient at starting to refigure what the 'past' means in geographical discourse. I will do so within the generous framework of recursive cartographies, a model that I hope to apply in the realm of 'proper', textual geography, as exemplified in the second case study of the final chapter ('Heidegger and the past of dwelling'). T. S. Eliot said that the end is where we start from and this could not be more true of this book. It deliberately ends (excluding the conclusion) with this case study of 'textual' work (the analysis of the weight of the past in the theorisation of the environmental discourse of 'dwelling') placed there as an 'opening' of the paratextual towards the textual, of the past (a finished book) towards the future (much more work in 'textual' geographies in the years to come).

Approach then this second part as an *experiment*, as a *voyage into the future* that is so much indebted to the weight of its past. Approach it open-mindedly, by admitting that an altered view of 'coherence' brings not only epistemic losses, but also strong epistemic gains. Consider figure 7a-b. Had this project been organised within the linear understanding



7a: Linear understanding of ‘coherence’



7b: Robust understanding of ‘coherence’ (note that white arrows signify paratextual discourse and grey arrows ‘textual’ discourse)

Figure 7: A graphical explanation of the unusual structure of the book

of ‘coherence’ (logical flow from one chapter to the next chapter; see figure 7a) it would have lost its present robustness. As it is organised now (see figure 7b) it diverts from the linear model, whilst still playing the overall role of a logical ‘segment’ within the broader linear flow of the whole book.

This ‘anomaly’ is worthy because it maximises the stakes of the question to be answered: ‘What new ways can be opened to improve geography as a knowledge producer?’ Each of the three new ways provided (the three last chapters) is, from a logical point of view, independent from the others, which means that their individual validity and their chance of success among geographers do not collapse if one of the new way is badly received by the community of peers. A ‘coherent’, linear relation between the three would have implied exactly this: as one chapter would have ‘logically followed’ from the other, a devastating critique of the first chapter in the logical flow, would equate with a devastating critique of the whole endeavour. The alternative arrangement (figure 7b) of the three subchapters provides a robust, ‘take-what-you-like’ set of arguments, which, in the overall picture, maximises the contributions this research project might offer. Let us proceed then, by first turning to metaphysics.

“Discourse” is rooted in words meaning “to run about”, and “dis” signifies “apart” or “asunder”. The origins of “conversation”, on the other hand, lie in words meaning “to associate with”, and “con” signifies “with” or “together”. Are we “talking apart”, or are we listening to each other?

Susan Hanson (1999, page 139)

3. Intimations With Metaphysics

One of the most effective means to transform a discipline is *hybridisation* (Dogan, 1997) through novel research programs that undermine the divide between formerly disarticulated areas of enquiry. The secret of strengthening geography would then consist precisely in *the art* of detecting the most promising (disciplinary) partners for hybridisation, and *the skill* of making the most of those hybridisations. This chapter argues that one of the best answers geographers could advance to the continuous need to improve their discipline resides in a *turn* to a particular branch of philosophy: *metaphysics in the analytic tradition*. Although not all geographers might want to be involved with it, it is likely to make a difference to the shaping of our discipline. Thus, it may sustain the better integration of the poorly connected practices labelled 'geography' (e.g. physical geography-human geography, English speaking world's geography- geography elsewhere, GIS - critical human geography; Purcell, 2003), the introduction of alternatives to geography's contested and contestable communicative practices and styles of intellectual trade

(inter-clique wars, *ad hominem* arguments), or to the reconfiguration of its foci and theoretical foundations.

Whereas 'metaphysics' is nowadays a word almost everybody in the social sciences tries to avoid, 'ontology' - its partial synonym - enjoys a quite strong discursive presence. In the argument that follows, I will use the signifier 'ontology' to refer to all abstract and general concerns with what there is, whether they come from philosophy or from elsewhere (poststructuralist theorising, hard science, etc.). The term is useful to alert us to the fact that most general theories of social scientists (e.g. Giddens' structuration theory, Bourdieu's theory of social fields) or of complexity studies contain ontological issues. By 'metaphysics', however, I will refer strictly to the branch of philosophy from within the Anglo-American analytical tradition.

After a brief note about the philosophical-cum-political position underwriting the case for this particular turn, and a sketch of the existing geographical engagements with ontology and ontological engagements with geography, I will elaborate related arguments, *firstly*, for the general relevance of ontological research for geography, *secondly*, for the fruitfulness of challenging this research through a turn to metaphysics, and *thirdly*, for the potential to enhance the benefits of this turn by striving to foster an inclusive ontological conversation.

At this point, the already invoked idea of 'fruitfulness' helps me to place the considerations over *epistemic scepticism* from the previous chapters against the broader backcloth of *pragmatism*, to produce the philosophical hybrid that underpins the argument for this turn. I dub the hybrid *pragmatic scepticism* or *qualified neo-pragmatism*, given that it takes from pragmatism in general (see Bernstein, 1992) and from Richard Rorty (1979, 1989) in particular,

eleven ideas (which partly overlap): fallibilism, anti-foundationalism, impossibility of absolute commensurability, reluctance towards grand theories, fruitfulness as *the ultimate criterion*, science as conversation, radical contingency, radical pluralism, endorsement of democracy, acceptance of capitalism, and irony. It is a *qualified* neo-pragmatism in two important respects: first, politically, in the sense that we should prioritise radical emancipatory commitment (on this line, I agree with Bernstein's criticism of Rorty); second, epistemologically, by maintaining that the most fruitful epistemic position is not a radical endorsement of fallibilism, anti-foundationalism and impossibility of absolute commensurability, but a sceptical position which maintains that we cannot know for sure whether we can or cannot know the Truth. The sceptical dimension allows room for opening a broad epistemic conversation with both sides (traditional internalist epistemologies and 'social studies of science') of the debate over the nature of science. It also enables me to exploit in the construction of arguments plural regimes of truth, ranging from the *pragmatic* regime of truth (e.g. 'it is *useful* for geographers to think in these terms...') to the *representational* regime of truth (e.g. 'convergent recent findings from hard sciences suggest that...'). This produces benefits by making the lines of the arguments acceptable from different, even conflicting, epistemological views.

This philosophical-cum-political option, now made explicit, hopes to contribute to the spread in geography of pragmatist ideas, for, as Trevor Barnes (2000, page 633) reminds us, within our discipline 'there have been sporadic but neither consistent nor concerted attempts to draw on pragmatist writers.' It also hopes to clarify the reasoning deployed whilst navigating the sea of current and potential

geographical engagements with ontologies. It is to this issue that I now turn.

Current geographical engagements with ontology & ontological engagements with geography

Four observations come to mind with regard to research linking ontology with geography: *first*, this kind of research seems to have developed only in the English speaking world's geography. In other traditions, the attempts are rather sporadic (Claval, 1991). *Second*, the greatest part of studies in this field is concerned with 'non-modern' (Latour), postmodernist (Baudrillard), and poststructuralist (Deleuze, Derrida) insights, as well as with older continental philosophy (Bergson, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger). Nearly nothing has been said about contemporary Anglo-American metaphysics and about older (pre-Heidegger) metaphysics. Curiously, this neglect happens at a time of fascinating 'progress' in this area (Jubien, 1997). *Third*, most ontological projects discussed in geography seem to be socially centred. Very little work has been carried on ontologies of the non-organic, for example (but see David Mark, 2001, Mark et al, 2001). *Fourth*, one can distinguish three major types of engagements of geographers with ontological debates:

1) Ontological theories imported and applied in geography (geographical ontologies) such as the project of critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978, 1979, Sayer, 1995), of phenomenology (Pickles, 1985, drawing on Husserl, Schatzki, 1991, drawing on Heidegger), of non-representational theory (Thrift, 1996, 1999a, 2002a, who proposes a 'weak ontology' of surfaces), of dialectics (e.g. the work of David Harvey and particularly Harvey, 1996) or trialectics (Soja, 1989, 1996). In physical geography, there have been much fewer major ontological projects and

concerns. This has led three physical geographers (Bauer, Winkler and Veblen, 1999, page 778) to suggest that:

Perhaps it is time to look deeper and to interrogate the ontological foundations of our discipline, to tease out the very essence of concepts such as space, landform, or place.

2) *Non-systematic engagements*: by this I refer to most contributions in critical/theoretically-informed human geography, which touch upon one or two ontological issues (e.g. time, space, difference, place, essentialism, the realms of culture & nature) without making ontology the bulk of their work. Frequently, these ontological discussions are part of the researched trio epistemology - ontology - ethics (e.g. issues of non-human agency, of hybrid geographies; Whatmore, 1999);

3) *Research programs*: the only ones worthy of this name are related to GIS. Recent years have witnessed a considerable interest in GIS ontologies, but it has to be said that, given the technical constraints of GIS (Schuurman, 2000), the ontologies relevant for it are quite limited. In USA, research in this field is co-ordinated through the 'research theme' 'Ontological Foundations for Geographic Information Science', by the UCGIS (i.e. The University Consortium for GIS). GIS ontological research is associated with the geography departments at- among others- Santa Barbara (Goodchild, Couclelis), Pennsylvania State University (Gahegan), Maine (Egenhofer), Pittsburgh (Hirtle), and particularly Buffalo (David Mark and philosopher Barry Smith). Its long term goal (ten years and beyond; Mark, Egenhofer, Hirtle, Smith, 2001, page 6):

Is to complete the description and formalisation of the ontology of all phenomena at geographic scales. This needs to go hand-in-hand with the development of appropriate mechanisms that support the integration of geo-ontologies at

different levels of explicitness, and the development of guidelines for the resolution of conflicts in geo-ontologies.

The significant detail here is to note that, when they speak of ontologies, GIS specialists do not refer at all to either the branch of philosophy called 'metaphysics' or to ontological claims within social theory. Instead, they point to nothing but to conceptual models underpinning GIS (Guarino and Giaretta, 1995, have distinguished between 'Ontology' and 'ontologies', the latter denominating the conceptual work undertaken in GIS). Frank and Kemp (2001, page 53) have recently underlined the importance of this research program/sub-specialism (GIS ontologies):

Ontologies are models of real world concepts, linked by rules, to organise information in a structured manner. Often, ontologies form hierarchical structures that can be used in information system and database contexts to inform the user about the semantics underpinning the data sets and enable intelligent query and retrieval. When ontologies are embedded in databases and closely linked to existing computational entities they provide additional information about how entities are related to each other, across abstraction levels and in specific application domain contexts. Ontologies are created, not discovered, thus enabling GIS to move from being entirely data driven systems to more intelligent ones where formalised and applied rules support user-GIS interaction in the spatial, temporal and scientific dimensions.

As for the exploitation of *the interplay* between ontological and epistemological matters, human geographers, particularly those working in the traditions associated with the cultural turn, have shown some interest, but usually at 'specific' levels, such as in the debate over the social construction of scales and regions (Paasi, 1991, 2003, Marston, 2000, Macleod and Jones, 2001, Herod and Wright, 2002) or the level of subdisciplines (e.g. Barnes, 1996, Gibson-Graham, 1996, and Thrift and Olds, 1996, for

economic geography). The paratextual debates about the discipline of geography, have not, however, rigorously exploited this interplay (cf. Rose, 1993).

Whereas geographers have been interested in philosophy, *philosophers concerned with geographical matters* have been very few in recent times (e.g. those collaborating for the new journal 'Philosophy and Geography'; I do not mention here continental philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 1988, in the work of whom space is a crucial component). In the particular case of *metaphysicians*, only Barry Smith (1997, 2001, Smith and Mark, 1998, 2001, Smith and Zaibert, 2001, etc.) has attempted a series of ontological theorisations with a geographical 'touch', in the context of his unusually wide concerns (formal ontology and quantum mereotopology, the metaphysics of economics, embryontology, foundations of Gestalt, topological foundations of cognitive science, Husserl, Brentano, Kafka, etc.) and in close association with GIS specialist David Mark (hence, their focus on formalisation & GIS-applicable models).

In short, the abstract map of engagements between geography and ontology reveals the co-existence of *three* disciplinary areas which do not 'overlap' (communicate): the largest is that of physical geography in general and of geographies in the non-English-speaking world. Here one needs careful scrutiny (and generosity) to identify some very pale traces of engagement (we might call it *the area of non-engagement*). The second is that of *Anglo-American critical human geography*, seduced by ontological theories not from contemporary metaphysics in the analytical tradition, but from continental philosophy, cultural studies, and social theory. The third, and smallest, area is that of *GIS*, which tackled some incipient connections with developments in contemporary metaphysics. However, as it concentrates

attention on the arduous problem of technical applicability, its relevance for other corners of the discipline remains rather dubious. From these considerations, a careful reader might already guess some of my arguments for a metaphysical turn. But is it clear to all geographers why ontological work is so important, so as to make it a central endeavour in our discipline? The aforementioned abstract map of engagements implies a negative answer to this question. Therefore, in what follows, we will mention some of the stakes ontology raises, with particular reference to the (re)making of geography.

The general relevance of ontological research for geography

We have suggested (Simandan, 2005) that any human knowledge is not only an opening of a new horizon, with all the hopes and promises associated with it, but also a closing of other possible horizons, veiled by our immersion in a certain intellectual project. This vision makes the myth of Sisyphus extremely relevant for describing the scientific endeavour in the long run, and for some, this might look quite depressing, given that they will never reach ultimate Truth (figure 6). For others, it acts as a guarantee against boredom. As Rorty (1987, page 45) has put it:

We cannot, I think, imagine a moment at which the human race could settle back and say, "Well, now that we've finally arrived at the Truth we can relax"...On the contrary, we should relish the thought that the sciences as well as the arts will ALWAYS provide a spectacle of fierce competition between alternative theories, movements, and schools.

The practical consequence of this state of affairs is the need to explore as many horizons as possible, to change perspectives, *to put things differently*, to grasp the world from alternative corners, hoping that -through this

restlessness- a better approximation of truth becomes possible. And ontological research is an efficient vehicle for doing this kind of thing. Actually, it is the best. Frequently, the solution to a problem lies in the displacement of its framework, of the taken-for-granted on which the problem emerged. A problem is the sign that we are prisoners of a vision (i.e. epistemic lock-in). That we are stuck in it. That we do not entertain the possibility of things *being* radically different. Ontology is the locus that systematically entertains this possibility. There is no room for the taken-for-granted there.

Most of the far-reaching part of the work of postmodernists, poststructuralists and feminists has striven to deconstruct the ontologies on which unjust social practices have relied, revealing that our uncritical acceptance of those ontologies is the result of their concerted reinforcement through social practices (Foucault, 1994, Butler, 1990, 1993, 1997a-b, 2000, Lucas, 2002). We have been educated to believe a certain order of things, and, as such, we have become agents supporting that order of things. We ended up loving the things that make us unhappy.

To pick the case of geography, most of the amazing change in the discipline in the last three decades has resulted from the re-working of its ontology. New theories about space, place, region, nature, borders, hybrids, structure-agency intimations, are just a few examples. But I think we are only at a shy beginning, largely restricted to Anglo-American critical human geography. A robust ontological engagement for the whole discipline would lead us into exciting, new territories. An ontologically-based approach is likely to be the solution for some of the most persistent and troubling problems geography has confronted with, the human geography / physical geography divide figuring chiefly among them. To be sure, the interest in the discipline of

geography is nowadays (at least) as high as ever, but the concrete manifestations of this interest have been much more diverse than before. There have been some recent contributions concerning the re-integration of physical geography and human geography (Massey, 1999, Gober, 2000, Golledge, 2000, 2001), but the idea that they have too little in common to constitute a single coherent discipline (idea closely associated with those geographers prone of critical realism) is still alive. Thus, recently Sayer (in Massey, 1999, also Sayer, 2000a) re-endorsed this view through a (mis)interpretation of the (contested) property of emergence. In reply, I developed an *ontologically-based* argument for the unity of geography in chapter two, drawing on a vast array of ontological 'resources', which included the theorisation of space as a universal concept, the thesis of overdetermination, and concepts such as 'flesh', 'cyborg', and 'swerve'.

At first glance, ontological enquiry seems to epitomise the very idea of completely abstract, *completely irrelevant-for-practice research*. But one can argue that 'blue-skies' research is more relevant for society than much of what we readily admit as relevant, applied work. Many would disagree, however, with this latter contention. One could position⁵ purely theoretical research in geography as being uncomfortably situated between the Scylla of emancipatory, radical geography and the Charybdis of 'making money' geography (e.g. GIS, spatial statistics, remote sensing, applied physical geography). However, as it has been suggested in the previous pages, only through an abusive

⁵ This is just a rhetorical manoeuvre that helps me make a point in the argument. I am aware that much work in GIS, spatial statistics, remote sensing, and applied physical geography is not about making money and that there are emancipatory dimensions in a big part of these areas of research.

oversimplification could one label ontological enquiry as 'blue-skies' research. It plays a central role for both emancipatory geography (ontological deconstruction is a prerequisite for effective emancipation) and 'making money' geography (as discussed in the case of geospatial ontologies for GIS). In other words, no matter where one stands on the troublesome axis of 'relevance -irrelevance' that cross-cuts the direction debates within the discipline, (s)he could hardly refute the claim that ontological enquiry can make a substantial difference for all geographers.

All these arguments for ontology *in general* remain valid for metaphysics in particular (we defined the two terms in the introduction to this chapter) Nevertheless, *not all* the arguments for metaphysics apply to ontological endeavours in general. This situation is important enough to result in a distinct argument for a metaphysical turn in geography. Let us turn to this particular turn, then.

Arguments for a metaphysical turn in geography

Metaphysics encompasses a large array of topics, but at its core stands the study of being *qua* being (Loux, 1998, 2002), of the very general features of reality. And this looks like an interesting, rewarding endeavour, for all of us. It constitutes the most difficult part of philosophy and its doing presupposes strong analytical power, abstract thinking, the art of building solid, resilient arguments, and the use of a very rigorously defined terminology, which could offer a valuable model for geography. For one of the very few issues on which almost all geographers have agreed is the lack of rigor in our discipline's terminology, a drawback that (some suspect) has been accentuated in recent years because of the cultural turn (Sayer, 2000b, Martin and Sunley, 2001, Martin, 2001, Barnett, 2003a). Eric Swyngedouw (2000)

summed up these suspicions quite well. He remarked that (page 41):

Geography is an eclectic and fashion prone discipline. The attention span in the discipline for major theoretical or methodological perspectives is rather short-lived... (and) leads to often rather superficial dabblings with epistemological and methodological issues of intellectual traditions that are much more complex, variegated, and sophisticated than their customary cursory introduction into geography usually suggests.

By its all-encompassing foundational concerns that allow for comparative analyses of apparently incommensurable perspectives, and by its privileging of substantial arguments (e.g. metaphysicians draw extensively on the work of Aristotle or Descartes, for in certain areas they produced the best arguments to date. Nobody ignores their theories just because they are not ‘recent developments’) over those not-quite-so substantial (but largely endorsed just because they are ‘hot’ theories at a certain moment or fit the spirit of the epoch), metaphysics constitutes an excellent remedy to the disciplinary sins described by Swyngedouw. Indeed, instead of systematic doubt and critical judgement towards everything, foundational to the scientific endeavour, the rule in geography seems to be paying ‘reverential reference’ (Massey, 1999) to one discipline or another (e.g. complexity theory, cultural studies) and running away from ‘compromised’, stale fields (such as physics or analytical philosophy). To give just one example of possible contributions of metaphysics to the practice of critical distance, its debates around emergence, the nature of time, determinism, and causation could shed a different light on the *holistic wave* and the apparently brand new worlds heralded by its gurus (Prigogine, Sanders, Winker, Morin, the Santa Fe Institute and co), and appealing to many geographers (but see Thrift, 1999b).

Sadly forgotten in the shadow of postmodernists' proclamation of 'the death of metaphysics' (Flax, 1990), this area has revenged itself on the hasty heralds of its death by a *flourishing unprecedented in its history* (both quantitatively and qualitatively; see the review by Kim and Sosa, 1995). There is plenty of recent material to draw on in this area. Given the compelling intellectual practices and culture of this field, at the end of this new exercise, we are likely to practice geography differently.

Apart from the *general educational role* discussed so far, metaphysics can offer *four more things* that the other engagements with ontology *do not* offer.

First, metaphysics provides *alternative answers* to a whole host of more general ontological problems, tackled by social scientists (to give just one example) as well. It is anti-scientific and non-ethical to work at finding new answers to those problems, without first knowing and dealing with all the previous answers given to that problem, those from metaphysics included. This aside, I would run the risk of maintaining that its answers may be more relevant for geography than the other answers. My courage to risk this springs from two observations. *On the one hand*, most of the ontological concerns in geography belong to Anglo-American critical human geography, the recent spectacular development of which owes enormously to its massive importation from the social sciences. And their ontological dialogues are strikingly socially-centred. In time, this has contributed to widening the cleavage between physical geography and human geography. Metaphysics does not research the general foundations of the *social* reality only, but of reality *in general*. It does not have the narrowness of focusing its enquiries only on the ontological domain of the social. Given these, its theories are of equal relevance for physical geography, in-between geographies, and human

geography. *On the other hand*, those interested in comparing the ways in which metaphysicians and social scientists have built their ontological ‘answers’, would not hesitate too much before admitting that the practices of theory building and evaluation are more rigorous in metaphysics than elsewhere. In sum, metaphysics could provide for our discipline more relevant, centripetal, and more reliable ontological theories and conceptualisations.

Second, metaphysics discusses some *ontological problems* (e.g. possible worlds, identity of the indiscernibles, indiscernability of the identicals, colours, numbers, *de re* and *de dicto* modality, propositions) which are not (or are totally peripheral) on the research agenda of other areas researching ontological matters. These other areas are, one way or another, biased towards, or centred on, those ontological issues pertaining directly to their *specific* ontological domains. Metaphysics is the only ‘complete’, non-biased, general, and systematic analysis of being *qua* being, of the problem of existence, of the abstract features of Reality. As such, geography might have it as its *privileged* partner for ontological concerns. For two themes have interplayed in making geography a distinct discipline: one is *space* (a *universal* concern of the same kind as the problem of existence in metaphysics), the other is the *complexity of the Earth* (culture / nature relations) which *crosscuts* the (recently contested- see Latour, 1993, Haraway, 1991, Ingold, 2000) ontological domains of the ‘natural’ and the ‘social’. Both of these themes need the ‘complete’ ontological analysis of metaphysics, and not only the domain-specific analyses of social theory. Virtually, there are no metaphysical concerns that could be said to be totally irrelevant for geography. This in mind, the broadening of the ontological problems already addressed by geographers with new research topics from metaphysics

will bring new perspectives and insights for the discipline's repository of knowledge.

Third, apart from alternative answers and new research problems, we could import into geography the valuable *disciplinary culture and practice of metaphysics*. What makes it so valuable and why are we in so much need of importing it, after all?

Recently, there have been a number of positions expressing dissatisfaction with the existing intellectual (and inter-personal) practices of geography. They refer to harassment and hatred (Valentine, 1998, Dear, 2001; on the latter see the comments by Natter, 2001, DeFilippis, 2001, Henrikson, 2001), lack of care (Chouinard, Grant, 1996), inappropriate styles of debate and criticism (Pile and Rose, 1992, Pratt, 1996, Hanson, 1999, Golledge, 2000, Hannah, Strohmayer, 2001), lack of terminological rigor and accessibility (Hamnett, 2000, Martin, Sunley, 2001, Martin, 2001), and superficial and opportunistic intellectual behaviour (Barnett, 1998a-b, 2003a, Harvey, 1999, Sayer, 2000b).

To be sure, I am not particularly enthusiastic about all of these contributions. *Firstly*, some of them are associated with a dangerous, superficial, and somehow violent dismissal of what they consider to be irrelevant research (e.g. Hamnett, 2000). And I can be enlisted among the devoted supporters of 'irrelevant' research. *Secondly*, the cynicism imputed to the partisans of sophisticated words and phrases could be equally imputed to the accusers, for sometimes they seem to make such claims without seriously trying to 'listen' and understand what the accused say and why they say it. As Hannah and Strohmayer (2001, pages 386-391) rightly suggest:

Wider intelligibility is not always the goal, nor should it be.
The work of refining or exploring the implications of theory at

an abstract level is an indispensable part of geographic as well as any other sort of intellectual work.(page 386)...to assume from the start that the mere use of specialised terminology brands its users as cynical is unjust.(page 388)...the prospects for useful debate are dim if one's colleagues are assumed to be employing difficult language out of "perverse arrogance" rather than out of a serious commitment to grapple with and represent the dynamics of the world we inhabit. (page 391)

Thirdly, some of the remedies proposed are - to say the least - dubious. Dear (2001, page 11), for example, recommends 'stop the "doubting game" and substitute the "believing game"'. How we can accommodate this substitution with the fact that systematic doubt is constitutive to science is beyond me. And *fourthly*, although some of the remedies discussed are theoretically appealing (e.g. Hannah and Strohmayr's plea for putting the burden not only on the writer, but also on the reader, and for the practice of immanent critique), they lack a pragmatic dimension: how could we actually improve the intellectual practice and culture of geography? What exactly has to be done? And through what strategies, could we make sure - or at least stimulate - the implementation and spreading of those things? I think what we need in geography is to judge theoretical endeavours against a standard of *robustness*. By this, I refer to those features that make a work : a) resilient to the building of an argument for its overall rejection, b) capable of being at least partly accepted by people with different (and conflicting) worldviews, and, most importantly, c) containing within its design 'devices' for the practical achievement of its stated purposes.

These preliminary considerations allow me now to turn to the culture and practice of metaphysics, to point to some of the benefits it has to offer geography.

(i) Metaphysicians are aware that *more recently does not always mean better*. Those who read metaphysics feel that it is indeed a tradition, in which the disciplinary legacy is not confined to the books of history, but re-worked and intertwined in the corpus of contemporary contributions. In geography, we hastily dismiss older work without really bothering to (re)read it. Furthermore, some are so uncomfortable with the discipline's past that they would like to erase it altogether from the research agenda (e.g. Barnett, 1995).

(ii) Metaphysicians have a rigorous understanding and norm of *what a good argument is*. They draw extensively on logic and frequently summarise their reasoning in a very technical, clear way. They speak in terms of 'premises', 'conclusions', 'valid inference', 'thought experiments', they analyse whether a conclusion really follows or not from some given premises, they have the unwritten rule of organising their argument by using very banal, easy-to-grasp, and often humorous statements (e.g. about Bill Clinton, Descartes' arm, tables, houses). This enables the potential critic to focus all his/her energy on checking the validity or fruitfulness of a given theorisation. In geography, arguments usually take a literary form, are replete with rhetorical devices, and are somehow hidden through confusing phrases which re-state what should be demonstrated in the first place (cf. Barnett, 2003a). It is seldom clear which are the premises, which are the conclusions, and which are the chains of inference. We confuse mere writing with arguing. We all too often use *ad hominem* arguments, arguments of authority, circular arguments, and other spurious tools. We

lack the courage to expose our bare reasoning and hide behind a 'cut and paste' style of theorisation.

(iii) Apart from the rigor of argument building, metaphysicians practice *terminological rigor*. It is amazing how much space they spend defining and re-defining their concepts, and how they perform this 'wording' game as a privileged gate for sorting out improved theoretical paths. On the one hand, I agree with Hannah and Strohmayer that sophisticated language is a much valuable theoretical tool that should not be abandoned for the sake of a wide audience. Metaphysics has itself a quite difficult jargon. On the other hand, I also agree with the critics of sophistication in geography in two respects. *First*, there are cases when sophistication is not really needed. A banal sentence in plain English could often replace a long, obscure, and esoteric sentence. Plain English does not entail plain thinking. *Second*, even when sophistication is unavoidable, terminological rigor can and should co-exist with it. To push it further, one could say terminological rigor should be the natural outcome of sophistication (Harpham, 2002). In the doing of theory, the use of banal words should be more risky for we do not usually interrogate alternative meanings of everyday words. On the contrary, when we play the card of sophistication, because we employ an unusual language it is normal to define clearly the jargon, and thus make nonequivocal the intended interpretation of their meaning. It is with this second issue that the disciplinary culture of metaphysics can substantially help us.

(iv) Metaphysics seems to function like a *conversation* in which the role of the reader is as great as that of the writer. One could hardly find hasty refutations for comfortable reasons such as incommensurability. Everything is commensurable. The fact that, ultimately, 'there is no way to test whether one story is closer to the truth than another because there is no transcendental standpoint or mind unmeshed in its own story' (in Flax's words, 1990, page 37) does not really matter. We can always pretend and act as if such a way exists (e.g. by elaborating agreed-upon protocols of enquiry and research evaluation). Otherwise, there is little outcome from the science game.

The reader has to pay attention to the details of an opponent's argument, for part of his/her theory has to include an 'immanent critique' of this argument. Theory building is not solipsistic, but empathic. It summons and expresses a form of polished conversation in which listening carefully to the other and making sure that (s)he understands what you have to say are the golden rules. Hannah and Strohmayer (2001) have recently suggested that geographers need to put the burden on the reader also, and that immanent critique ('...form of critique that proceeds by measuring a position against its own internal standards (founding assumptions, explicit propositions or rules of evidence)' page 401) 'could serve well as a regulative ideal or a point of critical self-reference for those engaged in debate.'(page 401) A metaphysical turn in geography offers the means for making this actually happen. For it is not by mere urges that geographers will start applying these conversational devices, but

by active engagement with the authors and the literatures that already practice them. As actants performing a new game, they will find themselves transformed by the intellectual regime of that performance. Metaphysical conversation allows for no careless or solipsistic ‘participants’. Nor does it admit rude or hatred attitudes, to pick another theme deplored by recent analyses of the geographical debate.

(v) As a pragmatic scepticist, what I most admire in metaphysics and believe is most productive for geographers to borrow, is *the fertile standard against which theories are judged*. It is not limited to a representational regime of truth (correspondence of theory with the reality out-there), as some might believe about this apparently ‘conservative’ area. So far I have noticed five criteria which metaphysicians use to evaluate their work: (1) First comes *rigor*. They check the logic of the argument to make sure it is not flawed and that it has internal consistence; (2) Often they appreciate the *elegance/explanatory power* of a theory, its potential of simultaneously achieving until then hardly accommodatable tasks / goals; (3) Perhaps scared of losing their credibility and grasp of the real world by too much time spent in the skies of theory, they almost always analyse whether the outcome of their work is compatible with *common sense*. All other criteria met, if one’s theory contradicts common judgement, the prospect of enjoying a wide success is seriously endangered; (4) Ever since the medieval metaphysician William of Ockham, a crucial criterion has been that of *simplicity* of theory (also known as ‘Ockham’s

Razor’). By endorsing it, as Loux (1998, page 58) puts it:

We commit ourselves to shearing from our theory all those irrelevant entities that play no essential explanatory role...The moral would seem to be that entities that do no work do no good; indeed, they can do a lot of harm.

Thus, it might happen that a certain critic, although impressed by the elegance of a theory, resists its seduction and rejects it for the fact that ‘it costs too much’, i.e. it incorporates and presupposes too many controversial theoretical entities; (5) Some metaphysicians (especially those endorsing supervenience and eliminativism) consider whether a theory is compatible with *what science* (especially theoretical physics; see Trusted, 1991) *says*. One can easily understand that this has plenty to do with a representational regime of truth.

But what I find most unsettling and challenging from the prospect of a metaphysical turn in geography, is that these criteria do not divide metaphysicians in cliques which admit, each, a single criterion. Had this been the case, cultural ‘wars’ and incommensurable positions would have rendered difficult - if not impossible - an internal dialogue. Instead, the same theory is judged by the same person from the perspective of more than one criterion (the standard against which theories are evaluated is itself *composite*, encompassing virtually all criteria)! Pluralism is often invoked, but rarely practised in the business of science. The state of affairs in metaphysics seems to consist of an *internalised pluralism*, put at work in everyday intellectual practice. This appears to me as an incontestable sign of maturity and of a functional

interpretative community. And we would want this for geography, where cleavages (Johnston, 1998), rifts (Hanson, 1999), and cliques (Thrift, 1996) fuel, and are fuelled by, a disarticulated landscape of often narcissistic would-be-conversations (Purcell, 2003).

In sum, metaphysics can offer geography: (i) *alternative answers* to more general ontological problems, (ii) new research topics (*new 'problems'*), (iii) *its intellectual practice and culture*, and, (iv) *fourth*, the opportunity of 'reversal', by making one day a *spatial / geographical turn in metaphysics*.

Be that as it may, geography, with its catholic sensitivity and long tradition of forging links and bringing together hardly related fields (Paul Claval, 1991, called it 'a science carrefour' / i.e. a crossroads science) is uniquely placed to go beyond a mere metaphysical turn and dare to host *a broader ontological experiment*. If we take the main purpose of this experiment to be the achievement within geography of a better theorisation and understanding of the most general features of *reality*, then the importation of some of the elements of the culture and practice of metaphysics becomes a *subsumed objective* within this main purpose.

This experiment would be a conversation between more than two traditions (geography and metaphysics). Its *melting pot* could bring together virtually all concerns with ontology, may they be from metaphysics or elsewhere (e.g. social science, cultural studies, complexity theory, GIS ontologies, integrative disciplines, the program of transdisciplinarity.). It would enact the mind-provoking game of 1. understanding, 2. coping with, 3. comparing, 4. combining, and 5. generating / transforming situated knowledges the sole

commonality of which is their interest in ontological matters. The usefulness of this conversational experiment may exceed narrow disciplinary dividends (e.g. benefits for geography arising from conversations with metaphysics), and spread to all the participants in the game (from social theory and complexity theory to GIS ontologies and metaphysics).

This broader ontological conversation could foster geography's systematic engagement with *the other integrative disciplines / areas*: ecology, anthropology (see Ingold's integrative project, 2000), complexity theory, the movement of transdisciplinarity (Nicolesco, 1999), cultural ecodynamics (Winder, 2000), etc. The argument could go as follows: one of the traditional problems and criticisms directed towards geography has been that its alleged role of bridging social sciences and hard sciences is practically and epistemologically untenable (see Johnston, 1997, Livingstone, 1992, Peet, 1998). As this traditionally geographical concern for 'Earth's complexity' has been contested and even reclaimed by these other integrative disciplines, some found refuge in the other traditional big theme of our discipline – 'space'. The aforementioned experiment (an 'ontological geography' if you want) can attempt *a shift* from combining findings from analytical disciplines to *combining findings from these competing integrative sciences through a peculiar concern for space, as part of a larger ontological investigation* (a view of geography as an *ontologically informed and spatially biased synthesis of synthetic disciplines!*) It becomes apparent then, that this experiment has the potential to thoroughly hybridise geography's two big themes. And this is a big stake.

Nevertheless, its hybridising potential within geography also encompasses *more seizable (yet important) goals*, such as *opening a dialogue* between the three disconnected areas of ontological engagement (1. GIS ontologies, 2. critical human geography, 3. non Anglo-American geography and physical geography) and *generating disciplinary commonalties* through its potential of cutting things differently and making these ‘cuts’ (see a sample in table 1) of relevance for (almost) all geographers, irrespective of their sub-disciplinary affiliations.

1. space
2. time
3. entities in space-scattered objects-boundaries-fluidentities-coproduction
4. entities in time-change and persistence
5. structure of entities-the cocktail metaphor
6. causation-determinism, freedom
7. equilibrium-stability, attractors, teleological behaviour
8. elective mediums - bifurcations, catastrophes, dissipative structures, thresholds, revolutions
9. robustness-vulnerability, resilience

10. emergence-layered worlds, naturalism
11. are there 'natural realms / systems' ?
12. scale
13. laws versus noise-contingent regularities
14. synthesis terrestrial sphere
15. difference
16. non-human agency
17. events
18. falsehood
19. colours
20. possible worlds
21. the interplay of ontology and epistemology, of geography (the discipline) and Geography (the reality 'out-there')

Table 1: Some ontologically-related research topics of (potential) interest throughout the disarticulated disciplinary landscape of geography

Behind the noisy disciplinary rhetoric of the all-encompassing, 'exceptionalist', integrative science, we have reproduced within geography, at a lower scale, the very specialisms of the world of science we were supposed to link (economics / economic geography, politics / political

geography, culture/cultural geography). The discipline's history has proved that *this mimetic strategy is damaging for an integrative endeavour*. We have to lubricate our solidified patterns of thought and dare to cut things differently. This is the thing to go for. And a metaphysical turn stands as a promising means for it.

So far, I have discussed a possible 'turn' of geography to metaphysics, and hence I reproduced the signifiers associated with the understanding of *science-as-extended-conversation*: 'geography' sits at the *big table* of the scientific conversation and *turns to speak* with one knowledge producer (cultural studies) or another (metaphysics). This metaphor is so pervasive in the current reflexive practices of our discipline, that I felt tempted to explore what are *the other* possibilities of organizing paratextual⁶ endeavours. This temptation also needs to be seen in the context of a previous book (Simandan, 2005), where I argued for a shift from *science-in-the-abstract* to the *mundane spaces of 'science'*. Indeed, science-as-extended-conversation appears as an *unproblematised remnant* of science-in-the-abstract. While an important part of the poststructuralist, feminist, and postcolonial literatures has departed from the traditional epistemology (i.e. belief in *commensurability, progress, objectivity, and possibility to know* the world out-there) underpinning science-in-the-abstract, it has nonetheless reproduced the *abstract* metaphor of science-as-extended-conversation (i.e. disciplines are reified as 'participants' in a dialogue of abstract ideas). This might have happened because it dovetails with the focus on *language* in much of these literatures (from deconstruction,

⁶ I use 'paratextual' as synonymous with 'metatheoretical' and with 'reflexive practices'. It refers to all that is not 'proper', substantive geography about the world out-there.

to postcolonial critique, and to Butlerian performativity; cf. Harpham, 2002). As geography has recently been marked by the cultural turn (i.e. turn to the aforementioned literatures) the pervasiveness of science-as-extended-conversation in our discipline (& geography – as – extended - conversation; Livingstone, 1992, Massey, 1999, etc.) should come as no surprise. The next chapter then, explores a way to destabilize this paratextual hegemony, re-centering our reflexive practices on what is actually going on in the mundane spaces of ‘science’. It is to the relativity of the norms operating in these spaces that I now turn.

4. Excavations in the Relativity of Norms

Historians of geography (Rose, 1993, Johnston, 1998, 2002a, Livingstone, 1995, 2000) have recently argued that space and place should be taken more seriously in the attempts to understand the becoming of our discipline. In this chapter, I argue that in order to do so, we have to complement the pervasive understanding of geography as a ‘tradition of thought’ or extended conversation (Livingstone, 1992, Peet, 1998), with an understanding of the discipline as a ‘tradition of practice’, in the study of which the chief concern is not the abstract dynamic of ideas, but the concrete becoming of geographers. Hence, I suggest that this becoming might be captured in terms of the normative ideal of what it takes to be a good geographer⁷. This is helpful for four main reasons: firstly, because it regulates the performance of the geographer at all levels and stages of his or her career – from the beginning of undergraduate studies to promotion to full professorship; secondly, because it makes apparent the role that wider social and political contexts play in the production of geographies; thirdly, because it pays little respect to the conventional dichotomy between disciplinary philosophy and disciplinary practice, and blurs in insightful ways the distinction between the normative and the descriptive in scientific knowledge production; fourthly, because it brings place, space, and

⁷ I use ‘good geographer’ in the sense of ‘proper geographer’, but I prefer the former formulation for its vagueness (e.g. any proper geographer would want to ‘improve’, to become an ‘excellent geographer’, etc. ‘Good-ness’ is a relational *and* unstable achievement, at the interface between the self-production of the individual and the (re)production of a scientific community).

scale to the forefront of enquiry, and thus makes explicit the geography of geographies.

I do not approach these issues in a purely theoretical register. Instead, I exploit the advantage of having been socialised in two distinct disciplinary traditions, and illustrate the theoretical propositions by drawing extensively on the empirical 'data' of my 'fractured' history. To be more specific, I did my first degree in geography at the 'Babes-Bolyai' University of Cluj – Napoca, Romania, between 1996 and 2000, and then moved for my PhD studies to the School of Geographical Sciences of the University of Bristol, UK, where I remained for three years (2000-2003). I should emphasise at this early point that this subchapter does *not* attempt a systematic comparative analysis of the two departments. They are used *selectively* and *unevenly* in my argument, to illustrate the theoretical proposition that the theme of what it takes to be a good geographer is a fertile complement to the standard approaches to geography as a tradition of thought or an extended conversation.

In addition, I should emphasise that it is unavoidable that my subject position has biased the way I see and interpret things (see Rose, 1997, Sidaway, 2000), despite attempts to support my explanations with more objective data (e.g. analysis of the curricula, of the marking criteria, of existing literature, etc.). I first detail the theoretical argument, and then illustrate its advantages by reflecting on several facets of what it takes to be a good geographer at Cluj – Napoca and/or Bristol, leaving my Canadian experience (2003-ongoing) to be reflected upon in other books to come.

Thinking of what it takes to be a good geographer

Observing *what it takes to be a good geographer* is fruitful for at least four reasons. *First*, what it takes to be a good geographer constitutes a *normative ideal* that influences the

preaching and doing of geography *at all levels and stages*: from teaching to research; from the undergraduate students who have to follow a certain path of training and accomplish certain standards in order to graduate as geographers; to the academics who have to play the game of institutional geography (norms of proper research, productivity and relevance of research, specialisation, acquisition and maintenance of expertise, etc.) in their search for the rewards associated with being acknowledged as good or top geographers.

Second, it prompts reflection on the relations between disciplinary philosophies and practices and the *broader social contexts*. The actual preaching and doing of geography is a compromise between philosophical convictions about geography (from the level of the individual academic to the level of national scientific communities), and the need to adapt to, and meet the pressures and demands that society, businesses and policy-makers have made of, disciplinary communities in various historical circumstances (see Johnston, 2002a). I suspect that the regulative ideal of a ‘good geographer’ is the very expression of this compromise, and a gate through which needs ‘external’ to the discipline are internalised and operationalised (in training and assessment requirements, departmental development strategies, etc.). Thus, one can argue that in the United States a command of GIS is increasingly expected of a good geographer. Similarly, one might point to the celebration of transferable skills in the UK, and to all the expectations that underpin the narrow but widespread definitions of relevance⁸. To put it differently,

⁸ By narrow definitions of relevance I refer to those arguments that celebrate the virtues of applied and applicable research and label ‘less

the aforementioned compromise runs through various overlapping expressions that range from 'A good geographer has to be socially useful' to 'Better-trained geographers are socially more useful!'

Third, it captures *relations between the philosophy and the practice of geography*, going beyond the concern with how the latter *reflects* the former. Philosophies of geography may be explicit and written (e.g. exemplars such as Hartshorne's 'The nature of geography'), or implicit, 'hidden' in the performance of scientific endeavours. It can happen that an 'official', explicit philosophy, invoked for the sake of intellectual acceptability, is systematically denied in practice; practice which instead has shaped, has been shaped by, and has reproduced, an implicit philosophy perhaps less acceptable and not easily detectable in the disciplinary artefacts. This is evidently the case at Cluj-Napoca. On the one hand, in the few philosophical reflections heard during my four years of undergraduate study in geography, environmental determinism and 'voluntarism' were presented as 'bad' extremes, and possibilism was praised as a sensible third way. On the other hand, in many of the lectures about culture-nature relations in specific regions, the staff actually endorsed environmentally deterministic views. Disciplinary philosophies and practices are mutually constituted: we have to put philosophies into practice, but also practice into philosophies.

Fourth – as I illustrate in the remainder of this chapter – what is meant by a 'good geographer' is always relative / *place-specific*, a fact that has substantive consequences for any attempt to broaden the geographical 'conversation'

urgent' or 'less relevant' the retreat of some geographers into purely abstract theorising.

beyond the confines of major or minor languages (Short et al, 2001), and of different national schools. As scientists in the process of becoming we constantly expose ourselves to criticism, either from our superiors (as students), or our peers (as professional geographers). Such criticism is grounded in more or less explicit norms of good research. However, these norms are themselves varying from place to place. To take the case of British geography (see Sidaway, 1998), international research agendas and peer international recognition (i.e. the *scale* of research and influence) are highly valued in the RAE, and departments with a regional regime of research might therefore be disadvantaged. But space is also involved in the norms of good research by means of the spatial *imagination* underpinning their vocabularies. Thus, from an Anglo-American perspective, the geography practised at Cluj–Napoca may seem backward and parochial, both terms that codify space pejoratively in our cognitive schema.

Methods of becoming: some facets of what it takes to be a good geographer

In what follows, I will illustrate these themes and try to explain some of the facets of what I feel it takes to be a good geographer in the department at Cluj-Napoca, contrasting them – where appropriate - with the situation at Bristol.

To have a good memory, to be fit, and to love the mountain

Until very recently the Romanian higher education system was elitist; to be sure, there were no tuition fees, but in order to reach tertiary education, high school pupils had to learn, usually by heart, a number of textbooks on which they were examined after sitting the equivalent of their A-levels. For geography there were three entry exams each asking for

reproduction and understanding of a textbook (see Barnes 2002 for a discussion of the agency of books in geography). These were 'General physical geography with elements of geology' (Posea and Mandrut, 1992), 'Human and economic geography of the world' (Cucu et al, 1993), and 'The geography of Romania' (Tufescu et al, 1994). Once admitted for undergraduate studies in geography, the challenge for students was to take care not to forget the content of these books, as they constituted the minimal knowledge requirement from which the staff drew to develop our geographical education. Most exams were oral exams, and the consensus among staff was that if a student was asked a question from one of these three 'fundamental' textbooks and did not know the answer, (s)he should not be allowed to pass that exam. This shows that at Cluj-Napoca geography still has a lot to do with *memorisation*, although it has to be said that mechanical memorisation is considered a major 'sin'! There, it is difficult to imagine a good geographer without a good memory: during my four years of undergraduate training we had to learn by heart altitudes, names, locations, etc. because, so the argument went, one has to know well the raw empirical data in order to elaborate theories and follow chains of causation. This type of learning has significant implications for the everyday routines of staff and students, ranging from the nature of the tutorial work (focused on mapping the information delivered at lectures) to the style of evaluation (questions checking the assimilation of received wisdom, rather than originality). On coming to Bristol, I realised that it is more acceptable not to know things that former Romanian colleagues would find it outrageous not to know by heart. Instead, at Bristol there is a premium on wide reading, on developing the ability of being critical, of having analytical presence and originality, and of constructing (and considering) an argument or a model. To

support this observation, one might look at the marking criteria for undergraduate work, which stipulate that first class marks be awarded (Year Two Course Booklet, 2002, pp. 25 – 26):

For work which is excellent not only in terms of the range and depth of understanding of the material used, but also in terms of its level of argument and analysis. First Class pieces of work are clearly focused on the question being answered, and show evidence of intelligence, originality and insight.

The explanation for this difference stands partly in the much more traditionalist Romanian academic culture, which privileges the staff as repositories of reliable knowledge and situates the students on a lower, novice-like rank: one is supposed to know and endorse his/her professor's ideas and with the help of his/her professor's interpretation fiercely criticise those of his/her rivals. This is reinforced by a restricted engagement with theoretical and philosophical issues, reflecting the empiricism and *encyclopaedic* temptations that still dominate the discipline in Romania (see below).

Derived from this power configuration, I felt that at Cluj-Napoca education consisted mainly in *making things difficult for the student*, expecting him or her to rise to the high standards set. All my peers realised that things were going to be made difficult for us on the occasion of our first fieldwork in October 1996. To begin with, the academic staff told us that we were really lucky to study geography at Cluj-Napoca, as, in comparison with the other two prestigious Romanian geography departments from Iasi and Bucharest, it enjoys an ideal location. References to 'a natural laboratory', or 'a geographical laboratory' were common, citing the proximity of the mountains and the impressive variety of natural phenomena and landforms surrounding, or indeed within, the city (e.g. landslides). A

teaching assistant who was completing his PhD in geomorphology led the first fieldwork: a one-day trip in some hills near the city. In total, from early morning until evening we had to walk more than thirty kilometres, including some sections over rough and steep terrain. The teaching assistant warned us that *this was geography*, and that this first trip was just a very easy one, especially for freshers. Some of my peers, exhausted and scared by the prospect of four years of commando-like training started considering very seriously giving up geography, or at least transferring to another department more inclined towards human geography. We all realised that to be successful meant that we had to be supremely fit when, at a certain point of the trip, instead of choosing to walk on a comfortable paved way to our next destination, the teaching assistant decided that we would go by a different route, as long as the other, but more 'natural' and more difficult.⁹ One can approach this account of fieldwork as support for the more outspoken feminist critiques of geography that tend to prioritise physical performance as a masculinity-validating end in itself (e.g. Rose, 1993).¹⁰ However, given the focus of this subchapter, it is more important to pay attention to the fact that in Romania fieldwork tends to be equated with going out into the 'natural environment', and more specifically *mountains* (for undergraduates at Bristol this is not necessarily the case). In four years of

⁹ Thinking back to the notion of the regulative ideal, it is also important to note that staff who failed to meet the rigorous standards of the department, such as those who were "overweight" or were unable to lecture without the aid of extensive notes were subject to ridicule.

¹⁰ In Romania there is no such thing as feminist geography, a fact that helps explain the unproblematic acceptance of the "macho" model of the geographer.

undergraduate training, there were only one or two half-day geographical applications in the urban realm. The explanation for this state of affairs resides in the traditional intellectual position of Romanian geography as a natural, 'hard' science (see Pop, 1999; 2000; for some, the 'natural' is more obvious in the mountains, the urban realm is 'too human'), and in the privileged position geomorphology has always enjoyed within branches of Romanian geography *as a whole*. It is to this that I now turn.

To know well geomorphology

Most of our geographical trips and fieldwork had, as their central purpose, an understanding of geomorphology and the *determinant* role that landforms play in geographical formations. This is just one aspect that shows how at Cluj-Napoca geomorphology is the 'queenly branch' of geography. Geomorphology dominates the structure and content of the curricula, and the ways that departmental culture was, and is, performed by both students and staff. It is no accident that the course in geomorphology is taught by the (former) head of the department and most reputed member of staff. This is the largest of the physical geography courses (five hours per week throughout 28 weeks of the second year) and one of the largest in the whole curriculum (Table 2).

It provides the most feared exam, acting as a gatekeeper, halfway through the undergraduates' four years training in geography. The quantity and difficulty of the material required was impressive because the professor was keen to a) defend and reinforce the prestige of the Department's traditional expertise in geomorphology, ensuring that all graduates know well the bases of this sub-discipline, and b) introduce a very systematic account of geomorphology that

COURSES	HOURS / WEEK
YEAR 1	24 total
- General Geography	3
- Cartography – Topography	3
- Population and Settlements	3
- Hydrology	4
- Meteorology – Climatology	4
- Optional course	3
- Fieldwork	1 month
- Sport	2
- Foreign language	2
YEAR 2	24 total
- Biogeography and the Geography of Soils	4
- General Geology and the Geology of Romania	3
- Geomorphology	5
- Regional Geography of Europe	3
- Economic Geography of the World	3
- Optional	2
- Fieldwork	1 month
- Sport	2
- Foreign language	2

COURSES	HOURS / WEEK
YEAR 3	24 total
- Dynamic Geoecology and the Typology of Landscape	3
- Environmental Geography	4
- Regional Geography of America and Africa	3
- Physical and Human Geography of Romania	6
- Specialisation (two courses)	4 + 4
- Fieldwork	1 month
YEAR 4	24 total
- The Theory and Methodology of Geography	3
- The Organisation of the Geographical Space and the Management of the Territory	6
- Regional Geography of Romania	7
- Specialisation (two courses)	4 + 4
- Fieldwork	1 week

Table 2: The undergraduate curriculum for Honours Geography at Cluj-Napoca (1996-2000)

reviews all the major schools of thought: the landscape tradition, the Anglo-American process geomorphology, French geomorphology, Russian and German geomorphology... This drive for comprehensiveness is discussed later in the chapter. The emphasis on geomorphology had its impacts on student behaviour. Fear was diversely performed, including episodes of crying, trembling, and denial: actions and emotions exacerbated by

the fact that the exam was a viva. The anxiety of students was at its height when we were queuing outside the exam room, waiting to be invited in one by one. As we discovered the marks awarded from students leaving the exam room, we tried to detect trends in the mood of the professor. Well in advance of the viva, senior students took pleasure in recounting 'horror stories' from their generation. Thus informed of the difficulty of the exam, half of the students in my year did not even dare to show up to the normal exam scheduled in June, preferring to sacrifice the whole summer to learn thoroughly the impressive amount of information required (they had their viva in September). Of those who did try their chances in June, about 50% failed and 50% passed, albeit with very low scores.

The geomorphology course aside, many other 'in-between' geography courses (e.g. landscape geography, environmental geography, regional geography) had at their core a lot of geomorphology. Two examples are the courses on the Regional Geography of Continents, that insisted on regional geomorphology and palaeogeomorphology (both professors of regional geography have their PhDs in geomorphology), and the Physical Geography of Romania (three quarters of the lectures were about Romanian landforms). In order to better support the emphasis on geomorphology, in the second year we also had a compulsory course in General Geology and the Geology of Romania. A further course on Regional Geography of Romania emphasised landforms, rather than alternative criteria (historical, economic, political, cultural, etc.) as the principal basis for regional classification. In the first half of the course, we learned the Carpathian and Subcarpathian regions (taught by a geomorphologist), and in the second semester we studied from a regional perspective the Transylvanian Plateau and

the hills and plains that constitute the extra-Carpathian space (taught by a human geographer).

Why did geomorphology and geomorphologic determinism play such a prominent role in the Romanian mode of geography and in this Department in particular? The answer is, I suspect, a messy mixture of the country's political history, the intellectual histories of the national geographical school and of the department, and path dependency. In combination these all illustrate the second theoretical theme of this chapter: how contexts become 'texts' – how the norm to know well geomorphology as part of the regulative ideal of a good geographer has largely been induced by factors above or outside the department.

From the start, the influential philosophy of the discipline propounded by the founding father of Romanian geography, Simion Mehedinti placed the human realm in a peripheral position as a mere adjunct of the biosphere (Mehedinti, 1931). As already shown, his powerful position as the first professor of geography in Romania (appointed in 1900 in Bucharest) enabled him to impose this definition on Romanian geography with lasting consequences. All four geographers subsequently elected as members of the Romanian Academy in the twentieth century had principal research interests in geomorphology. One of them, George Valsan, was the first holder of the chair in geography at the University of Cluj-Napoca (1919). He placed physical geography, and most especially geomorphology, at the core of the Department. This was further strengthened by the inputs of a leading figure of French physical geography, Emmanuel de Martonne, who organised a series of geographical expeditions around Romania and trained the most promising members of staff in physical geography.

However, this intellectual legacy alone does not fully explain the type of geography practised in Romania, and at

Cluj-Napoca more specifically. The country's political context has also had a substantial impact. Indeed, the pressure on academia following the advent of the Communist regime (1947) has been well documented in the last decades by a number of historians and humanist intellectuals (e.g. Mungiu, 1995, Bozgan, 1998). The disciplines most affected were those in the social sciences and humanities, which the regime closely regulated in order to promote a correct political message, in agreement with the utopian imperatives of the new rulers. Geographers were privileged to have the intellectual history of their discipline more closely aligned with the hard sciences, and found refuge in this identity. Even today in Romania, geography is rarely perceived as having anything to do with the social sciences. In the national committees of academic assessment, geography is assigned to the 'natural sciences' group, together with geology and biology.

This specific political context and intellectual legacy led to the development of Romanian geography following a strikingly different path to its Anglo-American counterpart. One will not find in its history a quantitative revolution, or even a Marxist turn! More recently, attempts to turn away from Marxism and challenge geography's position within the natural sciences group, and to advocate 'a cultural turn', have been met with suspicion (Simandan, 2000a).

To know every bit of your homeland and to be as comprehensive as possible

In order to pass as a good, let alone brilliant, geographer at Cluj-Napoca it is very important to know in detail the geography of Romania. This encyclopaedic 'obsession' arises in part out of the recent and contested formation (Boia, 2001) of the Romanian 'national and unitary state', as the Constitution of 1991 states. Geography is seen as an

active contributor to the national project through its 'scientific' defence of the unitary character of the Romanian landscape; it is also the outcome of the communist regime, in that Ceausescu favoured a very nationalistic version of communism yet stimulated geography's retreat into natural science, far away from the kind of subversive critical geography that developed in parts of Anglo-American geography and unmasked the discipline's association with state interests.

The importance of 'political context / departmental text' is illustrated by the contemporary situation at Bristol. There, there is no separate course in the geography of the United Kingdom. Instead, what I think is distinctive in Bristol is the emphasis placed on knowing theory and methodology. These developments have roots in the quantitative revolution, when a general feeling of disciplinary parochialism and inadequacy stimulated a distinct theoretical turn, opening up geography to other disciplines and philosophies (Johnston, 2002b). Within the UK, Bristol played an especially prominent role in this movement and has retained its strength in conceptual geography ever since. This emphasis on theory and methodology has given Bristol a competitive edge in the contest for worldwide recognition (see Haggett, 1995). To be sure, research on these conceptual themes is likely to ensure a different mode and scale of connection with the discipline as a whole, in sharp contrast with Cluj-Napoca, where research has traditionally had a regional focus. The three top geography departments in the country have always had a tacit agreement concerning their region of research: Iasi handles Moldavia, Cluj-Napoca covers Transylvania, and Bucharest does the South. This tradition of regional specialisation is reinforced by cultural prejudices, economic constraints, and the strong premium put on the insider's perspective. What we see here is not

only the way in which the spatial regime of research (global-theoretical versus regional-empirical) of a department favours or undermines its attempts to build an international reputation but also how that spatial regime of research has been determined by 'internal' factors such as key figures (Thrift, 1995) and key texts (Barnes, 2002), and 'external' factors such as language (Short, 2001, Bradshaw, 1990) political freedom, financial resources, the cultural legacy of imperialism (Potter, 2001), and indeed how the norms of good research are unfairly biased towards certain spatial regimes of research. Most recently, Castree (2002) asks geographers to discuss the impacts of current RAE standards of academic excellence (a premium on theory production, methodological innovation, and international status) that, in their delineation of power relations, are neither fair nor necessarily productive, and might widen the gaps cleaved by imperialism and global capitalism.

At Cluj-Napoca, it is desirable to be competent in as many areas of geography as possible. Competence need not be assessed only in terms of research output; teaching is one way to prove it also. More generally, *comprehensiveness* is a regulative ideal for both students and academics. At Bristol, being *selective* is not only 'normal', but also in many cases the thing to go for. Of the many examples that could substantiate these observations, perhaps the most suggestive concerns the structure of the undergraduate curricula, for it *activates* a whole departmental philosophy of what makes a good geographer.

At Bristol, the single honours geography programme comprises a first 'foundation year in geography' with four common courses: Physical Geography (but without a distinct module in geomorphology), Human Geography, Geographical Methods, and Geographical Practices. These are followed by two more years of specialisation in human

geography (Space and Society), physical geography (Environmental Processes), or combined aspects of physical and human geography (Environment and Society). Students following these specialisations share a common course in Geographical Methods during their second year. At Cluj-Napoca, the single honours geography programme (see Table 2) comprises four years: the first two cover *techniques* and *analytical* geographies, the last two *in-between* or *synthetic* geographies (two-thirds of total study time) with the remaining third for specialisation (students have to choose one out of three from geomorphology-pedology, hydrology-meteorology, and human and regional geography).

From my own experience, I would argue that the explanation of this difference (synthesis and comprehensiveness at Cluj-Napoca, selectivity and analysis at Bristol) has to be framed in terms of historically and geographically specific developments. In Romanian geography, there is an uncontested understanding of the discipline as the ‘queenly science’, or as a ‘crossroads discipline’, and of the geographer as an *omnium gatherer*. By way of contrast, in British geography this view has lost some ground in the aftermath of the quantitative revolution, which shifted the emphasis from synthetic / integrative relations (linking culture and nature, and the social and ‘harder’ sciences) to specialist / analytical ones (Johnston, 2002b). But there is a risk of overgeneralization if we leave the explanation at the *national level*. It is important also to consider the particular traditions of departments (shaped by figures like Peter Haggett at Bristol) and their *policies of research* (e.g. to maintain its 5* RAE ranking, Bristol’s research is organised in clusters in which the Department has *already* built an international reputation). However, the Geography Benchmark Statement, an impressive concern for

environmental topics in many first degrees, or the blossoming literature in favour of a stronger emphasis on the integrative or synthetic theme (e.g. for physical geography see Douglas, 1986; Stoddart, 1987; Newson, 1992; K.J. Gregory 2000) are likely to provide substantial challenges for departments such as Bristol that have aligned themselves with the analytical approach.

At this point, I want to pause to highlight the *third* theoretical theme – how best to capture the relation between philosophies and practices of geography. I will begin with a confession. The most frequent critique my first supervisor made about my draft papers is that I was overly concerned with complete coverage of an issue (i.e. comprehensiveness) to the detriment of more detailed analysis. His all too frequent recommendation was ‘Try to make fewer points, and go into more depth with your analysis. Focus on your strengths’.¹¹ Added to this, at Cluj-Napoca the chief goal of exam questions was to check if each and every chapter taught had been satisfactorily assimilated, whereas, while working as an exam invigilator at Bristol, I had been surprised to notice that the students were given a choice of questions. There the message seems to be ‘pick the one you know best and show us how well you can do!’

The point worth noting here is not the reiteration of the different epistemic styles at work in the two traditions (comprehensive versus analytic approaches), but some less conspicuous (precisely because they are too obvious) means of disciplinary performance. Think of the feedback a research student receives from his or her supervisor, responses from editors and anonymous referees, think of the

¹¹ A similar message was often put across by the guest editors and the referees while I was writing and re-writing the earlier version of this chapter (published in *Area* 34, 3)!

exam questions and marking criteria, think yet more about the curricula, or about a job announcement for a lectureship in geography... All of these dwell in, and weave, the promiscuous space of encounter between theory and practice; they are all *practical texts* and *textual practices*; they are all implicated in, and implied by, the crude performance of an academic discipline; they are all material effects, signifiers, and machines that mediate the ways in which the normative meets the descriptive in scientific knowledge production. Reflections on the discipline of geography have favoured the analysis of capital texts (e.g. Hartshorne's 'The nature of geography' or Mehedinti's 'Terra: introduction to geography as a science') or the ways in which these have been reflected in disciplinary practices. This has the effect of separating, or 'purifying' (cf. Latour, 1993) theory and grand texts from practices, but overlooks the conspicuous fact that *most* of what makes a discipline populates the hybrid spaces between these two ends of the chain. In this chapter I have struggled to excavate the relativity of norms. The normative – in our case the regulative ideal of what it takes to be a good geographer – is not reducible to what exemplars demand, but is an *entanglement* of discursive and non-discursive practices, of written, uttered, felt, or performed things. To be sure, a discipline is more than 'to discipline', but disciplining its potential professional performers through varied *methods of becoming* – such as exercising the capacity to memorise, harnessing a fit body and inscribing mindsets through fieldwork, or concentrating on passing the threshold of the geomorphology exam – is at the core of the reproduction and growth of disciplinary repositories of knowledge. These include not only written texts, but also the embodied minds of their performers (in our case, of geographers) and those

difficult-to-grasp things, such as the knowledge to police a practice in order to generate desired effects.

Discussion

I have suggested that a focus on the reflexive practice of 'what it takes to be a good geographer' is a necessary complement to the well-established approach to our discipline as a tradition of thought, or extended conversation, in which, although the lives of individual geographers are not overlooked, the chief concern remains with the dynamic of ideas within and between different worldviews (Marxism, humanism, post-structuralism, etc.). Four main advantages make the study of the relativity of disciplinary norms salient for enquiries into the production of geographies.

First, the theme of what it takes to be a good geographer does not assume that the geographer has a stable identity. Instead, it sees identity as an *ongoing performance* (Butler, 1990, 1993), as a subject position thoroughly dependent on both the other subject positions of the same individual (e.g. gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) *and* the places where he or she learns what makes a geographer (the department, the conference hall, the field, the screen of the computer, the tiny space of a draft paper). This approach complicates the comfortable assumption that one becomes a professional geographer after having successfully completed postgraduate studies (e.g. Johnston, 1997, Ch. 1), thus qualifying to join in with the extended conversation on which the understanding of geography depends (Livingstone, 1992, Johnston, 1997, Peet, 1998).

Second, the same theme captures well the fluid and pervasive manner through which wider social, political, and cultural contexts shape the practice of geography. One way to grasp this manner is to note that the subject position of an

individual geographer is not insulated from his or her other subject positions, but develops in close relation to them. *We are never geographers only*; instead, our way of performing geography is unavoidably embedded in the other subject positions that make an individual. One other way to grasp this manner at a personal level is to look back at this argument and see how the contexts (regional, national, global) of my story seem to be collapsed within the unit of analysis (the two geography departments), and how *scale* might be defined exactly in these terms (as contexts collapsed within the unit of analysis; cf. Simandan, 2001a). Third, the theme of what it takes to be a good geographer undoes the theory / practice dichotomy and blurs the border that conventionally separates the normative from the descriptive. It does so by paying attention to *what we do every day in geography*. We might read exemplars and then try to apply their instructions, but we are more likely to find ourselves teaching within the framework set by the curricula, marking essays according to the departmental assessment criteria, reading post-structuralist philosophy in search for impressive quotations, rewriting a draft paper to make the gatekeepers (editors, referees, supervisors) let us in, looking for a job and writing letters of application that persuade the appointment committee how well we match the job announcement, etc. Most of what we do as geographers populates, it has been argued, the hybrid space between theory and practice. This approach to geography is significant in that it speaks volumes about what *average* geographers do. The approach to geography as extended conversation / tradition of thought is necessarily elitist: only those who wrote seminal papers are allowed to play out the script of geography. This type of (hi)story is the history of the chosen few, and occludes the story of how those chosen few are chosen.

Fourth, this theme brings space, place, and scale, to the forefront. This is not just an addition to the set of anodyne ‘discoveries’ that reiterate the core postulate of geography (‘that space matters’). The central interest of this story was on the ways in which space, place, and scale, co-produce geographical practices. It has been shown how various spaces (national, departmental) are entangled in the production of geographies; how specific spatial performances (fieldwork, passing an oral exam) are policed to shape one’s professional becoming; how what makes a good geographer depends on which spatial regime of research (international, regional) is favoured by the norms of quality research (e.g. the RAE); and how these very norms allow particular ways of seeing that underscore potentially problematic spatial imaginations (e.g. advanced geography versus parochial geography).

I would like to end this plea for alternative reflexive practices by hinting at the politics of geographical practice and the politics of conceptualising the paratextual dimension of geography. We are now in the awkward, yet fertile position, of thinking through the question of how we, as supposedly ‘good’ geographers, negotiate our differences. But if we are to do so in any kind of constructive fashion, we have to acknowledge that the laudable drive to make different geographical traditions speak to each other necessarily conjures up the spectre of self-centredness (e.g. from an Anglo-American perspective Romanian geography seems backward) and the intellectual poverty that follows from *poor conceptualisations* and from taking incommensurability – of thought and action – far too seriously. Instead, a perspective that sees ‘paradigms’ as configurations of epistemic gains and epistemic losses might prevent excessively general judgements of value, and so give birth to novel and profitable conversations. The next chapter

further enquires what other new ways can be opened in geography by delineating the vicious logic of epistemic neglect enacted in our conceptualisations.

5. Reflections on the Logic of Epistemic Neglect

This chapter takes further the theorisation of the past attempted in the discussion of the metaphor of recursive cartographies (Simandan, 2005). With that occasion, it has been emphasized that the cutting of the world into events, rhythms, and legacies is a discursive convention that serves particular epistemic purposes, and that the three aforementioned ontological categories are relational (they do not precede the interplay that constitutes them; they define their intelligibility in function of their relation with each other). It has also been argued that, against common sense, the past (legacy) is never really dead, but has active ontological agency in the shaping of the present. The stake of this latter contention is remarkably high for understanding the politics of disciplinary and interdisciplinary formations, and in what follows I will demonstrate this claim by looking at how two poor theorisations of the past (as ‘dead’; ‘left behind’) create discursive porosities through which dangerous politics travel unrestricted. I call the formation of these porosities *the logic of epistemic neglect*. The first theorisation belongs to the realm of paratextual geographies, and refers to Clive Barnett’s intervention calling for the abandonment of efforts to understand geography’s past. The second theorisation is from proper, ‘textual’ geography, and looks at how geographers have dwelled with the recent recycling of the old concept of ‘dwelling’.

5.1. Case Study 1: *The Past is a Foreign Country*

Barnett adopts a radical stance in his ‘Awakening the dead: who needs the history of geography?’ (1995), boldly stating that (pages 417 - 419):

I want to articulate some doubts I have about the value and relevance of expending energy studying the history of geography as a means of throwing light upon the state of the discipline today...what needs to be most urgently addressed by critical human geographers is not the distant past of geography but a set of questions about what all this theory is doing in geography, how it came to be here and what we can hope to do with it? ...What I really want to believe is that we would be better served if we simply let the dead bury their dead. In the hope that we can escape from academic rituals of parricide just long enough to allow something *other* to occur, might it not be possible actively to forget about the past and to act instead with no regard at all for what has gone before?

Surprisingly enough, the replies by Livingstone (1995b), Johnston (1997), and Doel (1999) have been quite underdeveloped, arguing around the idea that one cannot understand the present without understanding the past. One may suspect though, that Barnett's intention was precisely to make geographers problematise this over-used argument. In what follows, I expose a series of observations that, taken either individually or as a whole, undermine the persuasive power of Barnett's paper. Some of them reveal problems with the *logic, ethics, and rhetoric* of the argument, some others shed a different light on his *ideas*, counter-balancing them with alternative views. The overall effect of this critique will be a more sophisticated account of the active role played by the past of a discipline in its present dynamic; an account that extends the elaborations on the historicity of disciplinary formations from my previous books.

1. Barnett's argument enacts an *epistemic lock-in*, for to claim that the history of geography is not of too much help presupposes to know that history in the first place and to assume that your reading of that history is the correct reading. It is as if one says to the others (in a highly problematic way): 'Don't bother to study the

history of geography, for *I can tell you* it doesn't help too much.' In order to raise doubts about the usefulness of history, one has to know it; in order to raise doubts 'about the value and relevance of expending energy studying the history of geography' (Barnett, 1995, page 417) one has to operate under the assumption that his reading of that history is both comprehensive and correct.

One can read history in a variety of ways (genealogically, apologetically, etc.), but it can be argued that the *ethical-deontological* rule of mentioning in one's research the previous work done by other scientists in that area has its correspondence - at the broader level of a scientific discipline - in the ethical-deontological rule of mentioning that '*there were others before us*' (good or bad). The history of a discipline applies this rule within the discipline; it is a way of being civilised, without having to 'pay tribute' in apologetical textbook chronicles.

It is often the case that one's current research interest is not 'genuinely new', but has concerned other practitioners before him / her. Why then waste one's energy in *re-inventing the wheel*? Furthermore, by not acknowledging previous work on one's topic, one might be exposed to the risk of doubts within the scientific community over the originality of his/her work. In Ron Johnston's words (1997, p. XIX):

History constrains us in so many ways, but it also enables us - without appreciating it, the prospect of us independently coming up with something "genuinely new" is remote, because we would have no map on which to chart a voyage of discovery. Understanding our discipline's past and present does not allow us to anticipate its future form and content, of course, for geography is reproduced by 'Knowing individuals', but only by appreciating what they know (or

knew) can we understand why they chose to follow certain routes and reject others.

To put things differently, there is no such thing as a 'genuinely new' thing. The very category of 'new' carves and is carved by its relation with the past. In the recursive cartographies of a discipline, novelty arises out of the interplay of 'legacies' and present 'rhythms', and is assessed as 'novelty' against this backcloth. One can observe the ways in which 'novelty' appears as a relational achievement, by thinking back, for example, to the two big themes of geography, and to their dynamic as 'lips speaking together'. The signifiers constituting these big themes encompass at once legacies of past theorisations and potentials for new theorisations; they constrain and, therefore, enable the production of novel *geographical* research (difference-producing repetition and difference producing repetition).

Add to these the strong current in the history of science which claims that *the big ideas are very few*, and that what we frequently take to be genuinely new is nothing more than a revamping of older insights. The arguments provided by Derrida and literary theorists for intertextual approaches, or by the founder of the specialism 'the history of ideas', Arthur Lovejoy (1960), at a general level, could be raised for geography in particular: most of the big ideas which currently inform the geographical conversation were produced before the institutionalisation of geography as an established academic discipline, in the second half of the 19th century (Glacken, 1976). If this is the case - and there are grounds to believe it is - then studying geography's 'distant past' might prove to be quite interesting and relevant for the current debate. Barnett's (1995, page

419) suggestion 'that what needs to be most urgently addressed by critical human geographers is not the distant past of geography but a set of questions about what all this theory is doing in geography, how it came to be here and what we can hope to do with it' ignores the possibility that answers to those questions may be provided by addressing precisely geography's remote past.

2. Drawing insights from the *School of Sociology of Scientific Knowledge*, the basic idea of which is that scientists look after their interests rather than for 'Truth', Barnett asserts (1995, page 417) that:

If it is essential to understand the past in order to understand the present, perhaps this is for more mundane reasons than this work might lead one to suppose. All academics have a vested interest in the value of history - professional status, getting published and so on are all organised around discursive axes of historicity ...

Be that as it may, but then one can dismiss this argument in two ways:

- (a) If the SSK's idea is right, then it follows that mundane interests drive all geographers. Barnett cannot argue against the history of geography by unmasking the hypocrisy of its practitioners (their being driven by interests) since *the same* can be said about the practitioners of those areas of geography he pleads for.
- (b) The only way one could reject counter-argument (a) is by claiming that the history of geography has a particular status within the discipline, being an *easier way* to defend one's interests in geography. Unmasking it as an 'easier way' would help to diminish its status, making it less attractive, and, accordingly, favouring the concentration of the energies of geographers towards

parts of the discipline which, although more valuable, suffer because they have not been able to tempt geographers with the rewards the specialism ‘the history of geography’ has tempted them. However, Barnett does not seem to endorse this second view, or even if he does, he avoids in his paper to explicitly argue for the history of geography as an easier way. In both cases, his position is understandable, for one has to admit that it is very difficult to make a case for this ‘theory’ of the easier way. *First*, it can be rejected by noting that, if indeed the history of geography is an easier way, than it is hard to explain why so few geographers belong to this specialism. To be sure, in the Romanian geographical school there is at present no single individual who identifies himself/herself as an historian of geography only, and in the last few decades not a single book was written exclusively on this topic! *Second*, it would not be too hard to show that working in the history of geography is actually a difficult and uncomfortable task (not to mention how easily one can criticise any work in this field).

Adopting further the same SSK idea, Barnett unmasks the recent increased concern for the history of geography by arguing that it is a good excuse for being involved with ‘prestigious’ feminist and postcolonialist theories, now so *en vogue* among social scientists (1995, page 418):

Geographers are busy grabbing for their share of colonial guilt so as not to lose out on their share of the spoils of the most exciting and innovative realms of contemporary theory.

One can re-invoke here the previous observation, but, notwithstanding this, I believe Barnett is biased in seeing only the interest/opportunistic side (the sociological) of this transdisciplinary engagement,

without acknowledging its *epistemic and political dimensions*. Indeed, the study of the history of geography is helpful not only for geography, but in a broader respect: *first*, epistemologically, it helps *grounding* theoretical insights (from feminism, postcolonialism, etc.) in case studies, providing examples that back or qualify those theories; *second*, politically and ethically, it documents and supports the fight of oppressed categories (women, disabled, etc.) for the 'opening' of geography, for a less exclusionary discipline (see Rose, 1993, Binnie, 1997). Moreover, the fact that a geographer borrows up-to-date theories from outside and applies them to study the past / 'inside' of geography seems a very productive way for managing the problematic relation between one's tradition of scientific enquiry and one's need to fertilise (hybridise) that tradition with external inputs in order to produce new scientific artefacts. A healthy science works in this way.

Barnett overlooks also the fact that doing the history of geography *is much more* than raising questions about the past of the discipline. Even if the distant past were irrelevant for the contemporary discipline of geography, it would remain crucial for understanding the contemporary world (cf. Butler, 2000). In this context, it has to be underlined that *doing the history of geography is also doing historical geography*, in a way complementary to that of 'proper' historical geography. As Livingstone (1990, page 758) puts it:

If geographical thought and practice is in any sense the story of humanity's attempts to comprehend or control or change its natural and social environment, then the history of this enterprise is as much a history of the societies that produced geographical knowledge as a history of the geographical knowledge societies have produced.

3. One of the main features of contemporary science - broadly speaking - is the unprecedented emphasis put on reflexivity, on the *doing* of science and on the ways in which this doing shapes, and is shaped by, more general social relations (Couvalis, 1999, Tanesini, 1999). Pleading for the idea that the history of geography is not of too much help is then clearly against mainstream epistemology and the social studies of science, and looks like a naïve step back from what is now beyond discussion within these fields: the fact that *the historicity of science* is a key - if not *the* key, many would argue (Parvu, 1998) - element for its understanding. At the beginning of the 20th century, the standard model of science advanced by logical positivism paid no attention to history, to the dynamic of science. It was devastatingly criticised by Karl Popper (1934/1981) in his seminal 'Logic der Forschung' (The Logic of Scientific Discovery), which imposed a 'critical rationalist' model, which, although turning upside down the previous model (replacement of verification with falsification), still maintained a static perspective. Enfeebled by the Duhem-Quine hypothesis (the underdetermination of theory by experimental data) and by Hanson's thesis (observational data are theory-laden, Hanson, 1958), Popper's model (and with it, the static approach to science) irrevocably lost its credibility with Kuhn's revolutionary 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions' (1962), which marked a *historical turn* in epistemology. Models such as those of Thomas Kuhn, Werner Heisenberg, Stephen Toulmin (e.g. 1972), Imre Lakatos (e.g. 1978), the Starnberg School, etc., focus on the historical dynamic of science and take historicity to be the central element for understanding the ways in

which science works. The same belief led Livingstone to draw on Alisdair MacIntyre's model of tradition (Livingstone, 1995b, page 420):

What makes geography a tradition - a contested tradition - then, is precisely that it has a story, a history ... Indeed, I would go so far as to claim that it is only when we take the tradition seriously that we can appreciate how incoherences become evident, how new questions emerge and how older practices fail to provide the resources to deal with new issues.

These aside, consider the 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi, 1958) in which the (new) members of a scientific community are educated. It is one thing to research, acknowledge, and improve the 'model' of tacit knowledge delivered to the new members, and another thing to have the illusion that these previous strategies could make a scientific community avoid having a tacit knowledge at all. Given these, from an *educational* point of view, the study of the history of one's discipline, if done in a professional and honest way, proves to be very helpful. *Firstly*, it initiates (although not well enough) the becoming scientist in discovering the paratextual (metatheoretical) dimension of the scientific enterprise, the need to develop one's reflexivity about matters scientific. The contemporary epistemic sensibilities (Haraway, 1991) require that the reflective scientist double the practitioner scientist within the same individual. *Secondly*, it is a way (although not good enough) of learning or thinking about how science works, of approaching through the study of the history of geography issues from the history of ideas, history, epistemology, social studies of science, etc. *Thirdly*, it creates a common ground for members of a community who are very likely to have in their future careers very narrow, specific research interests. *Finally*, it is a way of

learning some geography through the backdoor, as, fortunately, it is impossible to study the past of geography without being confronted with non-paratextual geography, with issues beyond the rhetoric of what geography is.

4. The dismissal of the history of geography as a legitimate field of scientific enquiry on the grounds that its value and relevance are doubtful constitutes a dangerous strategy to the extent that contemporary social science, still marked by its obsession with the Marxist urge to fight social injustice and capitalism, has favoured the development of an *oppressive, narrow definition of what relevance is* (cf. Hamnett, 2000). The scientific endeavour has at least two broad purposes, each of them worthy and relevant: *first*, the strive to better approximate the ‘Truth’ (somehow abusively, this purpose is often expressed under the heading ‘fundamental research’); *second*, the strive to serve (more directly) humanity (‘applied research’), including here policy-oriented research, the unmasking of injustice, and the mundane improvements brought about by technological innovations. Given the fact that we cannot have un-mediated access to reality and thus the possibility to compare our discourses with the reality ‘out-there’, we have the alternative of precarious commensurability, of comparing our discourses within the broader conversations of science and reshaping them accordingly. This ‘compare-contrast-and-reshape’ strategy can be more effective if the diversity of perspectives is greater (Rorty, 1987, Haraway, 1991, Harding, 1998): research in as many areas (including the history of geography) as possible is the thing to go for. To this epistemological stance, add an *ethical*

imperative: to argue for the abandonment of a research area, in spite of the existence of scientists who are actively involved in (and enjoy doing) it, seems - to say the least - unfair, partly because it disregards the ideal of academic freedom, partly because it can be invoked by the makers of the policies of science in their implementation of neoliberal academic streamlining, partly because it presupposes lack of solidarity.

From a different perspective, Barnett is wrong in blaming the fertility of a field of study, instead of *blaming the styles and methods* through which researchers approach that domain. There are many arguments, some already raised, in favour of the idea that the history of geography may be(come) a fertile specialism, useful for contemporary geographical enquiry. The real issue to address is how to make it more productive. And, raising the question to a general level, are there boring or irrelevant topics of research? I believe not. It is not the topic *per se* that makes a research terrain look dusty and useless, but the way (theories, methods, styles) in which we approach it. In geography, there are areas (e.g. history of geography, regional geography, etc.) that have suffered because we do not fully acknowledge this last observation. At any event, if we accept the idea of progress in science, it has to be admitted that in the last twenty years the historiography of geography has witnessed considerable progress, due to names like David Stoddart, Ron Johnston, David Livingstone, Gillian Rose, Charles Withers, etc. Historians of the discipline have unmasked typical flaws of previous work (reviewed in Livingstone, 1992) - presentism, internalism, cumulativism, etc. - and have engaged in sustained theoretical debates about research strategies and methodologies (e.g. the debate in

Transactions, 1995, 20/4, around ‘encyclopaedia’, tradition, and genealogy as competing modes of historical enquiry, or that about the usefulness of Kuhn’s epistemology for geography, etc.). In sum, if we consider either the topic, or the new ways in which researchers have studied it, the history of geography appears to be anything but dusty or worthless.

5. *Barnett expects the history of geography to be precisely what it definitely should not be.* As shown in chapter two, there are grounds for criticizing Livingstone’s work, but those advanced by him are untenable. In his words, (1995, page 417):

‘Context’ disqualifies as illegitimate any sort of radical transformative intervention in the contemporary formation of the discipline. The logic is simple: because spatial science and postpositivist geography are not yet dead, they resist contextualization. Consequently, the adoption of any critical attitude in relation to this field (that is, taking sides) must be suspended indefinitely since it would involve a necessarily partial decision. So we are left with the deceptively polite-sounding pluralist formulation by which Livingstone allows that everyone can dance their own step to their own particular tune, just as long as each and every one of them respects the basic house rule - NO TOUCHING ... I want to take this opportunity to mark my dissent from this version of the revived historiography of geography and its model of academic responsibility, this being precisely the sort of action which ... this version seeks to squash.

Barnett seems to disregard the subdiscipline ‘the history of geography’, whom he would want to play the role of *the housemaid* of contemporary debate in geography. But the history of geography is a scientific field of enquiry legitimate in itself, which has no assigned task or obligation to ‘serve’ contemporary debates, but which - as any scientific endeavour - has to be committed to the

regulative ideals of objectivity and accuracy. The problem with most of the older work in the history of geography is precisely that it is not scientific, but instrumentalised for the purpose of defending some present interest through the always highly regarded argument of historical legitimacy. The new historiography has named (and stigmatised) this flawed approach *presentism*. If the history of geography has no other 'task', but to serve in contemporary inter-paradigmatic wars, than presentism becomes acceptable...To this attitude endorsed by Barnett, I prefer viewing 'the history of geography' as a legitimate scientific field, which has to strive for objectivity and accuracy. Of course, any story telling is more or less biased and involves ethical choices, such as those imposed through the setting of 'beginnings', 'ends', and 'boundaries' to one's 'geography'. But I prefer this type of bias - unavoidable, unintended, acknowledged, thoroughly discussed - to those who deliberately lie / cut historical factishes (Latour, 1999) not only in order to capture the truth, but also (or mainly) to support, by manipulating the discourse of history, their personal views on what geography should be. When one reads a book called 'The Geographical Tradition', one expects to find there an account as objective-as-possible, (so that he / she can use it in building his / her own attitude towards the contemporary debates), and not Livingstone's plea for Marxism, humanism or the regional tradition, which inevitably would involve a *too-constructed* story. Take this to be another facet of relevance. If, as one can easily show, the distinction between producing a *theory* of geography, *defining* geography, and writing its *history* is, in a sense, artificial, one can say that the only type of definition an

historian of geography is permitted to use is a *descriptive* one. Therefore, I fully agree with Livingstone's approach of underlining the diversity of geographical traditions and even their incommensurability (although the latter is very tricky, as hinted at by Barnett). The strength of the discipline lies precisely in this tensioned coexistence of various theoretical and methodological positions, whilst its weakness comes from the lack of substantial conversation between them. In Livingstone's concluding words (1992, page 358):

Recognizing the intelligibility of these diverse discourses in their own terms is to acknowledge the essentially contested character of the geographical tradition...To disregard its contested character will mean sacrificing the history and future of geography to partisan apologists who strive to monopolize the conversation in order to serve their own sectarian interests.

Barnett *expects* the history of geography to play the game of normativity (to use the story of geography for arguing for certain contemporary positions), whereas I maintain that this would be: a) *damaging* for the quality and relevance of work done in this area, and b) *unnecessary* for the production of the discipline, as there are better and more fair tools (theories, manifestos, comments, etc.) for taking sides and expressing normative positions.

6. Barnett's critique of work in the history of geography relies on an *insufficient conceptual exploration of what context is or could be* (cf. Simandan, 2005). To be fair, he is right in criticising Livingstone's strategy of unproblematically endorsing the view that the secret for

a 'true' history of geography lies in its contextual understanding. In Barnett's words (1995, page 419):

'Context' has been invoked as a methodological mantra in recent histories of geography as if relevant historical or social contexts just present themselves naturally. This rhetoric of context indicates a search for a ground of certainty, which will secure the meaning of any given text outside of the contemporary construction of significance constitutive of all historical intelligibility. Determining contexts for readings always determines the forms of evaluation and judgement to which texts will be subjected. Making explicit rather than dissembling these contemporary grounds for the selection of contexts is the prerequisite for making visible the interests behind any reading, which is the same thing as taking responsibility for those readings.

However, by unmasking the subjective construction and 'cutting' of contexts according to the interests of a certain scientist (may it be an historian of geography), Barnett undermines his own plea against the history of geography, for part of this plea is grounded in the statement that 'the only context that really matters [is] the contemporary one' (Barnett, 1995, page 417). His argument is *circular*, for it demonstrates that we need to focus on the present (of geography) by invoking what is to be demonstrated: that the present is the only thing that really matters. Skilfully hiding behind the critique of Livingstone's comfortable use of context, Barnett forgets to mention that it is for him (his interests, to further follow the SSK) that the contemporary context is the only one that matters.

Leaving these matters behind, and, remembering my earlier theorisation of scale as contexts collapsed within the unit of analysis, I would like to suggest to the reader *an annoying exercise in making connections*: if a) any 'thing' is immersed in a 'context', b) any 'context' can be seen as a 'thing', and c) we admit the role played by

context in the making of any thing within it, it follows that *a better understanding* of a thing (let it be geography) cannot be achieved by merely situating it in its contemporary context, but by situating that context itself in its broader context. And I cannot think of a temporally identified context (the ‘contemporary one’) but being situated in an also temporally identified broader context, (the past and / or the future). Following the same - perhaps rudimentary – logic, one can finally arrive at the conclusion that one can achieve a better understanding of geography by studying its past ALSO (by contextualizing the contemporary context). Doel's (1999, page 114) refreshing rhetoric deployed in criticizing Barnett's taken-for-granted insulation of contexts is an alternative path for pointing to the same issue:

A context is never closed in on itself or settled into place. Like the unconscious, context is untimely. Finally, to earth something is not to settle it, but to short-circuit and discharge it. It is the same in geography as it is in electronics... Everything remains current and potentialized, so to speak: not by being insulated within the endless circumnavigation of closed circuits - the eternal return of the same - but by ceaselessly passing through the earth-what Deleuze and Guattari (1988) call the Body without Organs - as a difference-producing repetition. That which is current is therefore always already untimely: it will have been spectral (post modo) (his emphases).

7. It is useful for geographical enquiry to exploit the (apparently absurd) thesis that *Time is Space is Difference*. Let me elaborate it slowly, by first sending you back to my recursive cartographies (Simandan, 2005), and then applying its simple tools to further activate the past of our discipline. In the case of the

history of geography, what Barnett should not have overlooked in the first place is that, apart from the Anglo-American geographical traditions (the 'unit of analysis'), there are many other traditions, some of them with a prestigious history and a considerable number of practitioners (the French, Russian, German, Japanese, Chinese traditions, etc.). In the language of recursive cartographies, this overlooking enacts an *ontological lock-in*, fatal for the solidity of Barnett's argument.

At least since Hägerstrand (1952), geographers should have learned something about innovation diffusion and distance decay. Even if, because of language barriers and lack of sufficient available information, one is not able to know what geography is and how it is practiced in these *other* geographical schools, the fact that - because of the same type of reasons - an innovation done in a place might 'arrive' in the other geographical traditions with a considerable delay or might simply be unappealing to some of them, should have troubled one's certainties about what is the history of geography, about 'which bits' of it still matter, and, above all, about what is contemporary geography (Olds, 2001). Recursive cartographies assume that the world is relational, that rhythms, events, and legacies co-produce each other and *translate* onto each other. We defined geography as a generic name for a set of various scientific practices, loosely held together, and thus identifiable by their common and long-standing concern for the big themes of 'space' and 'earth's complexity', as well as by the networks generated by its having a distinct position in the academic division of labour. A due emphasis was put in my earlier contributions on the extent to which geographical practices are scattered over global space. If one *intersects* recursive cartographies with this

definition of geography, one will notice that this global space acts as the mediator of the aforementioned translatability between events, rhythms, and legacies: what is a *legacy* in the geography of the English-speaking world, may well translate – through space – into a *rhythm* in a more remote geographical tradition. A striking twist of meaning could apply to Barnett's writing that (1995, page 419):

Perhaps the loud insistence that the history of geography must be explored in order to throw light upon the contemporary state of the discipline is a way of avoiding looking at the most obvious places. If you want to understand the institution of academic geography as it is currently constituted, then maybe the best place to start is by actually examining the discipline as it exists in the here and now.

For whilst he wrote this to argue against the history of geography, one can use the very same passage - with just another word added - as a convincing plea for the history of geography. For Barnett, the most obvious place is the 'here' (the black rectangle, his 'unit of analysis'), which makes me a little bit sad, since, as Livingstone put it (1995a, page 1), 'geographers, of all people, should surely be aware of the significance of scale in matters spatial'. Had this been the case, the 'here' would have had to be accompanied by the 'there', which is here's other. The unit of analysis would have had to be exposed to the burden of scale, to the collapsing of its contexts (i.e. the other geographical traditions) onto it. Barnett elegantly adapts a formulation by Georges Canguilhem, saying that (1995, page 418):

The new contextual and critical histories of geography tend to assume too easily that all geography in the past is the past of today's geography.

When they write about 'geography', Anglo-American geographers tend to refer too easily to Anglo-American geography *only*, thus lapsing into an ontological lock-in that subverts from within the solidity and universality of their work. If this is the case, then one could turn upside down Canguilhem / Barnett's phrase, by arguing that [Anglo-American] geographers tend to assume too easily that all the past of today's [Anglo-American] geography is geography in the past. I am afraid (or rather glad) that Time is Space is Difference, and that, therefore, the famous formulation¹² '*The Past is a Foreign Country*' (cf. Lowenthal, 1985) is not only a metaphor, but a remarkably true geographical statement about how the legacies of 'here' translate over space into the 'rhythms' of 'there' and vice-versa .

Changing universities and geographical traditions, I was (and still am) personally reshaped by the agency of this translation in 2000: my coming from Romania to England was not just a three-hour voyage over space, but also a voyage in time, for much of what geography means there is what I read here to be Anglo-American geography's past (Johnston, 1997), sometimes even its 'distant past'. The technical training of an Anglo-American geographer consists mainly in GIS, remote sensing, and quantitative methods. Instead, during the four years of undergraduate studies (1996-2000) in Romania, we learned topography and cartography (not their critical history, à la Brian Harley (Harley, 1989), but precisely how to build a Mercator or a cylindrical projection). Whilst in the UK urban and regional policy tends to be a separate division in academia, in Romania it is an integral part of geography and the view of

¹² The original formulation is in Hartley, 1958.

geography as a strategic servant of those who take decisions is unproblematically endorsed (ethical issues, Marxist or Foucauldian critiques, are missing completely from the curricula).

In the case of environmental geography, landscape geography, and regional geography, people consider them all as being *between* physical geography and human geography, the contribution of the physical side being much more substantial than in British geography. As already suggested, this state of affairs is partly due to the fact that most geographers there would locate themselves on the axis environmental determinism-possibilism-voluntarism, as possibilists, appreciating the role of the physical environment to be at least as important as that of society. Actually, I feel that many of them just label themselves as possibilists, for the broader intellectual context considers environmental determinism unacceptable.

But if, beyond theoretical claims, we look at the discourses (Cutting, 2000) and texts they produce in fieldwork-based studies, it is obvious that many of them vigorously hold to a (flaccid) environmental determinism. In the English-speaking world, the debate around environmental determinism is very much behind, in the distant past (Ellen Churchill Semple, etc.). Arguments in favour of the decisive role of society, such as Nigel Thrift's seminal 'On the determination of social action in space and time' (1983) have contributed to the inclusion of regional geography in a broader human geography. To a certain extent, the study of environment followed a similar path: here in Anglo-America it is usually split between physical geography (or distinct departments of Environmental Studies or Earth Sciences) and human geography (which is concerned

with the political, ethical, cultural, and economic sides of environmental studies); there it functions as a distinct branch of geography, non-reducible to human or physical geography. Its theoretical level is also 'a distant past' as compared with the one here. Thus, geographers analyze the environment only as 'resource', and not also (like here) as 'laboratory' or 'woman'; the hegemonic paradigm is the 'natural modelling' of the 1960s, and not 'second nature', social nature, political ecology, 'cultural nature', or 'post-nature'. Whilst in Anglo-America, landscape geography has increasingly become a part of cultural geography (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988), in Romania it is a distinct branch, with a strong physical geography side.

The same situation is found in France (promoted by geographers such as George Bertrand or Pierre George, and by schools such as that of Besançon; see also Knafou, 1997; in the former Soviet Union, one can find the very influential Tbilisi school of landscape geography, concerned also only with the physical geography side, etc). Although rhetorically regional geography draws on the French Vidalian Tradition, at a more substantive level one can find numerous similarities with Herbertson's 'natural regions' tradition (e.g. the courses in Regional Geography of Romania separate the regions only on physical geography criteria). Besides, regional geography and physical geography (particularly geomorphology) constitute the core of the discipline. Human geography is rather parochial, largely because of the communist regime: economic geography resembles the commercial geography from the first decades of the 20th century in England, there are no feminist geographies, queer geographies or postcolonial studies, the first book on

cultural geography appeared no earlier than 2000. Some very recent attempts to use qualitative methods such as in-depth interviewing or focus-groups have not been well received and this happens because the concern there for doing 'proper' geography with the tools (concepts, theories, methods) of geography *only* is as strong as ever (except for imports from ecology, geology, and general systems theory; physical geography is better connected with western geographical schools).

The strength of nationalism in contemporary Romanian geography might seem curious to those who read Horacio Capel's (1981) 'Institutionalization of Geography and Strategies of Change' for he places this nationalistic obsession for the period when geography established itself as an academic discipline (the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century). The explanation of this much-too-long connection between geography and nationalism has to be explained by the multifarious contestation of the legitimacy of Romania's frontiers and of its invoked unitary character: Transylvania became an integral part of the country only in 1918, part of it being lost again between 1940-1944; there is a strong Hungarian minority (1.6 million); there still persist revisionist Hungarian political currents, and all these fuel strong nationalistic discourses even in academia. From the point of view of an historical geography of Romanian geography then, the link with the English-speaking world's geography has always been very weak. Instead, relations with the French tradition, the German tradition and the Russian tradition have been substantial, although their intensity has varied a lot over space and time (French and German connections dominated the first

half of the 20th century, Russian connections marked the second half).

Instead of mentioning *little about many* geographical traditions, I presented in some greater detail only the case of Romania (cf. also chapter 4), because it was sufficient to document my claim that in matters of the history of geography, 'the past is a foreign country' (legacies here translate into rhythms elsewhere) and that, therefore, the debate about the history of geography is much more related to 'contemporary' (real) geography than Barnett assumes. Note however that, since within the same continent so considerably different traditions co-exist, it is likely to find even more compelling examples at the global level (literally, more *distant* pasts). I shall turn now to systematize and connect with larger concerns some of the consequences of this activating of geography's (apparently) distant pasts, by insisting, as promised, on *the politics* that circulate in the porosities of our poor conceptualisations.

To begin with, ignoring the other, less conspicuous, geographical schools is a matter of *postcolonial attitude*. Speaking of 'geographies' instead of 'geography' seems more reasonable, as it acknowledges the value of marginal standpoints. In Sandra Harding's words (1998, page 20):

Cultures are not only 'prison houses' for the growth of scientific and technological knowledge, as they have usually been conceptualized. They are also 'toolboxes' for such projects. Cultures generate scientific and technological projects to serve distinctively local interests and needs in the first place. Moreover, the diversity of the cultural resources that they bring to such projects enables humanity ever to see yet more aspects of nature's order. Cultures' distinctive ways of organizing the production of knowledge produce distinctive repositories of knowledge and method.

To be sure, marginal standpoints are not necessarily superior to central ones (for instance, geography in the English-speaking world), as the theorizing of the idea of standpoint usually claims (Hartsock, 1987, Harding, 1987, 1991). Our favoured epistemology of gains and losses undermines the risk of theorising such anti-colonial epistemic hierarchies, since it claims that: a) the focusing on something implies the neglect of other issues (Haraway, 1991) and b) to the situatedness of knowledge one should always associate the necessary relation between ignorance and knowledge (Harding, 1998, page 68):

Systematic ignorance is always also produced along with systematic knowledge, and these patterns of ignorance are just as culturally distinctive as are a culture's patterns of knowledge.

In theory, a geographical conversation which involves the voices of these marginal standpoints is likely to be more provocative and productive (or less biased, if you prefer a representational regime of truth), than one arrogantly narrowed to those self-established at its 'centre', but the risks of the centre's 'opening' towards the others should make us vigilant about *how* we argue for this extension (cf. Minca, 2000). Otherwise, the centre might just 'eat' its Others and upgrade its current global prestige into a metastasis of global sameness (e.g. if in the conversation, the centre appears 'advanced' and the marginals 'backward', the nature of disciplinary formations will be such that the backwards will tend to get more advanced, and differences will melt into hegemonic sameness, etc.).

Most work in the history of geography in the English-speaking world involves a *blatant Eurocentrism and Americanocentrism*. If the postcolonial attitude broadly

refers to the systematic ignorance of peripheral geographical schools, including the European traditions (e.g. the Romanian school), ignorance fuelled and legitimated through the existence of linguistic barriers, through academic and publishing mechanisms, and through the universally acceptable excuse of 'lack of sufficient competence' in those particular fields, the 'Eurocentrism' criticized here points to the unproblematised acceptance of the idea that geography is a European tradition. Although Livingstone (1992) tacitly endorses it, it is the influential historian of geography David R. Stoddart that defended its most radical expression (see 'Geography-A European Science', 1982, and 'On Geography and Its History', 1985). To avoid misinterpretations, a sample quotation from Stoddart (1985, page 39) is illustrative:

Geography...emerged as Europe encountered the rest of the world...and all other geographical traditions are necessarily derivative and indeed imitative of it.

From his point of view, crucial in the emergence of geography was the intellectual shift from the theological deductive interpretation of the world, dominant up to the 17th century, to the scientific inductive - empiricist approach, established starting with the 18th century (he compares European attitudes to the discovery of America, with those to the discovery and exploration of Australia, two centuries later; in this sense, geography is one of the children of the Enlightenment project). To be sure, any history of geography involves the setting of some criteria of separation between what constitutes and what does not constitute geography. But Stoddart goes too far, for it leaves beyond the limits of *his* geography most of what geography has been. My claim is grounded at two levels, and is centred on a key debate

in any historiography: should geography refer only to those who identify themselves as geographers, or should it include all those who have been doing geographical work, without even knowing it? I previously argued that the ethical sensibility of our times supports *the imperative of inclusion*, partly due to the history of the European civilization (built on exclusion, hence the postmodern fight for acknowledging and valuing those-non-European, marginal, etc. - so far excluded), and partly to the appeal of recent theorisations of entities as open, fluid, processual, dynamic, etc. In the case of geography, for example, Livingstone includes within its boundaries explorers and cartographers, even though many of them would have *not* spoken of themselves as 'geographers'. If geography refers to all those who have done geographical work, then it clearly includes non-European traditions, some very well documented (in ancient China, ancient India, the Persian Empire, etc.). This first level of criticism (pertaining to a *lato sensu* understanding of geography) complements a *second* level: even if we consider a *stricto sensu* understanding and take for geographers only those who have identified themselves as such, Stoddart's thesis reveals its inadequacy. For 'geography' is a term coined by Eratosthenes, before our era, and various scientists labelled themselves 'geographers' well before Stoddart's celebrated 18th century. Moreover, its initial circulation was linked to the Mediterranean Basin, which is the point of convergence of three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia. Even if we work with this 'exclusionary' definition of geography, one can easily notice that there are no grounds for considering it a European tradition (at any case, setting the boundaries of geography in 18th century [TIME] Europe [SPACE] is far-fetched).

The reflection on Stoddart's thesis in the context of Barnett's study and, more specifically, of the argument for re-figuring the conceptualisation of 'the past' in geography exposes broader 'structures of complicity' (Spivak, 1990, 1999). Stoddart's ideas are representative of a whole line of historiographic thought which has inadequately shaped the tacit knowledge of geographers in the English-speaking world. In recent overviews of the discipline (e.g. Johnston et al, eds, 2000), the representatives of this line of thought still figure on 'the good side'. In this regard, I fully agree with Harding (1998, page 14) when she says that:

What is most startling, and disturbing, from such a perspective of institutional, societal, and civilizational eurocentrism is to realize that even individuals with the highest moral intentions, and with the most up-to-date, state-of-the-art, well-informed, rational standards according to the prevailing institutions and their larger cultures, can still be actively advancing institutional, societal, and philosophic eurocentrism. The prevailing institutional and cultural standards turn out themselves to be significant obstacles to identifying the eurocentrism, of institutional, societal, and civilizational beliefs and practices.

Geography in the English-speaking world has its own narrowness and those who claim its superiority- almost always in implicit ways (by not speaking of the other traditions) - make an unwarranted assumption. Instead, they should realize that (Harding, 1998, page 72):

One can never assume that any particular set of knowledge claims has escaped the local, for there will always be other cultures and practices from which it will become visible the localness of such claims.

By ignoring that the past is a foreign country, that time is space is difference, or, in other words, that the past of geography is largely the present of geography, positions

like that of Barnett (1995) involve eurocentrism and postcolonialism (see also Yeung, 2001). The question of how these affect geography remains, and, before turning to the next section, I shall suggest that they involve: a) waste, b) non-scientific behaviour, c) lack of geographical reasoning, and d) ethical issues.

- a) *Waste*: the community of geographers, at a global level, is quite small and unimportant when compared with other scientific communities. To make it more effective in defending its interests, to strengthen its fabric, it is fundamental that its various geographical schools *open to each other* in non-hierarchical encounters (although this will always be - at best - a regulative fiction). Different traditions have prioritized different research questions and, therefore, it is likely that, when comparing two geographical schools (cf. Kocka, 2003), one may be more sophisticated than the other in some fields, and, vice-versa. Re-inventing the wheel does not refer only to the history of a research tradition, but also - and even more intensely - to its geography;
- b) *Non-scientific behaviour*: at least theoretically, a scientist is supposed to look for the truth and to endeavour himself/herself to get as close to it as possible. Searching out what is happening in other geographical schools appears thereby as an elementary step to be taken by any geographer. By finding how others have answered one's research questions, one can situate himself/herself in 'the big picture', set up strategic alliances with those concerned with the same topics, etc. Not being interested in what others are doing is not scientific at all (Merton, 1973), for science is a collective enterprise.
- c) *Lack of geographical reasoning*: recently, the past president of the AAG, Reginald Golledge (Golledge,

2001) has appreciated that the main ground for the existence of geography is a particular type of reasoning - the geographical reasoning (also, others have spoken of a 'geographical imagination'). The idea underpinning these appreciations is that the geographer is the scientist who, above all, should pay attention to space and to the complexity of the Earth. Involved in too much debate about relative space and its production, some forget to see the obvious, the 'real' space out-there (in our case, the geography of geography);

- d) *Ethical issues*: speaking of geography by defining it very narrowly is unethical, as it disregards the work of other geographical communities. One might expect this type of sensibility to occur in any recent paper in paratextual geography, but, unfortunately, this is not the case (Samers and Sidaway, 2000). The way geographers have handled issues of eurocentrism and postcolonialism proves to be rather superficial, as it stops where perhaps it should have started. Whilst Gillian Rose (1995, pages 414 - 416) focuses on the unmasking of the taken-for-granted *transparency* of the terrain of the geographical tradition (she was interested in the historiography of the discipline), I am preoccupied with the lack of will for exploring what *is* transparent indeed in the geographical tradition, namely the *presentness of its 'past'*. I therefore agree with her saying (page 416) that:

We need to focus on the boundaries at which difference is constituted. We need to think about the boundaries of territorialization, the places at which some are included as the same and others are excluded as different. We need to consider this process of othering as it produces geography's outsiders.

5.2. Case study 2: Heidegger and the past of dwelling

In order for people to be heirs of a new way of thinking, more may be required than learning a new vocabulary. A paradigm shift does not occur by our reading books about it; nor does it happen when we set about to put into practice what we have heard preached. (Michael Zimmerman, 1985, p.248)

At every moment of our history the Occident has given itself over to the nostalgia for a more archaic community that has disappeared. (Jean-Luc Nancy, 1991, page 10)

The modern story of disenchantment leaves out important things, and it neglects crucial sources of ethical generosity in doing so. (Jane Bennett, 2001, page 174)

Only a genuine transformative passion can weave lost experience into the finding of a more liveable future. (Timothy Bewes, 2002, page 5)

In the terminology of recursive cartographies, Clive Barnett's paper was a *failed event*, in that it did not resonate with the existing disciplinary sensibilities and thus was incapable to translate into a rhythm (a broader current of thought, conspicuous in the present dynamic of our discipline). His argument emerged from his being immersed in a particular horizon of knowledge, one concerned with interdisciplinarity and the unsettling of the unproblematised field of the history of geography. This immersion might have caused an underestimation of the recent *legacy* of emancipatory social science, largely premised on an active rewriting of the past to shed light on the naughty present of injustice. In other words, the past is currently perceived as

far too important a domain to be 'left behind', given the strong testimonies that attest to its compelling ontological agency in the forging of our present times (Gregory, 1994, 1998).

The second case study of this chapter undertakes the same kind of task – mapping the logic of epistemic neglect by looking at the apparently banal concept of 'the past' – but this time by considering a *successful event of theory*, one that has translated in the late 1990s into a (sub)disciplinary *rhythm*. We are discussing the adoption in geography of the 'dwelling perspective', an adoption associated with the Bristol School of Cultural Geography broadly speaking, and with the names of Nigel Thrift (1996, 1999a), Sarah Whatmore (1997, 2002), and Paul Cloke (Cloke and Jones, 2001, 2002) in particular. This disciplinary metabolisation took place within a horizon of knowledge which has had an indelible mark on the critical human geography of the English-speaking world since the 1990s. It refers to the strong 'ontopolitical commitments' (Spivak, 1993, 1999) of many geographers in the direction of undoing the broader epistemic violences that have constituted the modern mindset. One of these violences concerns the dichotomous splitting of reality into 'society' and 'nature' (Latour, 1993) and 'the dwelling perspective' has largely been theorised in the effort to move beyond this particular conceptual split.

The epistemic gains of this 'environmental' horizon of knowledge have foreshadowed the epistemic losses of not analysing 'dwelling' within a 'political' horizon of knowledge. However, some of the aforementioned authors have tackled the latter, but with poor results. Thus, in his 'Steps to an ecology of place' (1999a) Thrift briefly mentions the association between 'dwelling' and the notorious political convictions of Martin Heidegger and

alerts his readers that he is using ‘dwelling’ without the baggage of dangerous archaic romanticism found in Heidegger’s original theorisation of the concept. Yet in this case study, I want to argue that this type of conceptual-cum-political delineation *does not work* and *cannot work* because it is premised on rendering passive and thus ‘manageable’ the past of a concept. Instead, I will make the case that the past of a concept is never dead and never fully separable from its present and, as such, haunts each and every present utterance of that particular concept. This undertaking opens the way for a *politics of paleonymy* that I see as fundamental for improving geography as a knowledge producer. To be sure, ‘paleonymy’ refers to ‘the taking on of the burden of the history of the meanings of the word in the language’ (Spivak, 1993, page 297) and reminds of de Saussure’s fundamental observation (Saussure, 1972) that language is ‘a system of differences without positive signs’. Derrida (1981, 1997) captured the latter into his concept of *trace*, which points to the fact that ‘the meaning exists in a given sign but only as a set of traces of all the other signs from which the sign differs’. This in turn entails that (Gearhart and de Man, 1983, page 78):

The historicity of all discourse is irreducible [and that] all terms ... are equally historical. That is, the critical force of any term derives from a given context, with the understanding that no single context, no matter how general, is ever all-determining with respect to a term’s meaning and strategic value.

In what follows, I will collapse the broader contexts of the theorisation of dwelling onto our unit of analysis (‘dwelling’ in geography), by means of a conceptual surgery that dissects the archaeology of ‘dwelling’ alongside its axes of *disciplinary formations*. This will then constitute a

springboard for theorising the risks of interdisciplinary trade in subsequent research.

The event (and then rhythm) of ‘dwelling’ in geography has been nourished by the theoretical *legacy* created by three *events* of theory, all of which are thoroughly problematic for either political or theoretical reasons. The dwelling perspective was initially theorised by German *philosopher* Martin Heidegger (1971; the philosophical event), then revamped by *anthropologist* Tim Ingold (cf. Ingold, 2000 for the most recent version; the anthropological event), and then advocated by *sociologists* Macnaghten and Urry (1998; the sociological event). I consider the textual thread of this philosophy as a ‘scriptural economy’ (Chambers, 2001) that hides within a conundrum of reactionary loci (see figure 8) pertaining to authenticity, purity, rootedness, exclusionary practices, localness, and ultimately fascism. The first part of this case study looks at the volume ‘Contested Natures’ (1998), by sociologists Macnaghten and Urry. They identified three ‘bad’ approaches to environmental issues – idealism, realism, instrumentalism – and proposed the dwelling perspective as the good approach. Yet, they fail to convincingly advocate this perspective, and that this is largely due to their seriously flawed reading of what dwelling means for Ingold *and* Heidegger.

In the second part, after claiming that there are differences between Ingold’s and Heidegger’s understanding of dwelling, I go further and take under close scrutiny the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold (2000) to unpack the significant lineages of his theory of dwelling. The third part is dedicated to Heidegger’s original theorising of dwelling and I reveal there, following a close reading of both his work, and that of his exegetes, that the dwelling perspective is a thoroughly vicious political concept, a foundation stone



in Heidegger's troubling political philosophy. What in sociology, anthropology, and geography has been lightly taken as a rather environmental matter, is at its very heart political¹³ and this political dimension haunts the present uses of the concept. And from here follows the final part of this section, where I sum up why one cannot 'clean' a dirty concept of its dark genealogy, and then unproblematically re-use it in novel theoretical melting pots. The practical consequence of this is that I express my criticisms even for the work of those geographers sensible at signalling the dangerous side of dwelling. I argue that we would do better without this concept, and that the putative advantages it brought with it for our enriched understanding of place and landscape have been overestimated and could have been achieved following alternative, 'cleaner' theoretical paths.

The sociological event

Macnaghten and Urry claim that the dwelling perspective 'enables us to begin to avoid the Scylla of environmental realism, and the Charybdis of environmental idealism'

¹³ The foundational role of dwelling in Heidegger's political philosophy has well been captured by Majid Yar (2000, page 23), who notes that: '...[Heidegger] holds out the possibility of conceiving the political as an opening or site of Being's disclosedness, in his characterisation of the 'pre-political [*vor-politische*] essence' of the *polis* as an 'open site' or 'dwelling place' [*offene Stätte*] out of which political possibilities emerge...'. In relation to this, Mark Blitz has also documented the political uses of Heideggerian ontologies. Thus, he remarks (Blitz, 2000, page 191) that '...not just Heidegger's politics but also his ontological understanding recommends supporting the Nazis, at least for his time. The reason is that his understanding of being and man's being sees the political community as excessively inclusive. He replaces what limits and moderates actual politics...with a certain kind of totality.'

(1998, page 168) but their claim is much more problematic than it has usually been assumed. My style of criticism always gets down to the very *specific* (words, sentences, etc.). After reading 'Contested Natures', I *photocopied* only those pages on which signifiers like 'dwelling', 'Heidegger', 'Ingold', or 'taskscape' occur, and proceeded to a detailed comparative re-reading of them. And with what results? I realised that the authors did not really understand either Ingold or Heidegger, erroneously assuming that they both share the very same conception of 'dwelling'. At pages 167 - 171, although they mention Heidegger once (suggesting us to read him), they present a comment on Ingold's essay 'The Temporality of the Landscape', observing that (page 168):

Ingold's analysis of the temporality of landscape in terms of the taskscapes generated by those dwelling in a given place is one which we will broadly deploy in the following chapters, particularly because of the way that it enables us to begin to avoid the Scylla of environmental realism and the Charybdis of environmental idealism.

However, two pages after this statement, we find out that they seek 'to elaborate a dwelling perspective more broadly focused on nature (rather than landscape)' (page 170) and that the 'concepts of dwelling, taskscape and landscape are nowadays enormously more complex than in Breugel the Elder's world of 1565' (page 170). They overlook the fact that those concepts are defined by Ingold (2000) for our times, and that he chooses Breugel's painting only to explain how those concepts work 'in practice'. Hence, his definitions for the aforementioned concepts, quintessential for what he understands by 'dwelling perspective', are distorted in such a way that their initial meaning is lost. To give an example, Macnaghten and Urry speak of 'the growth of an enormously powerful taskscape of science...whose consequences are often global' (page 170), while for Ingold

any taskscape 'presupposes the presence of an agent who watches and listens' (2000, page 199), being a matter of situatedness in a particular landscape. Ingold's insistence on this detail is very important, for he is particularly suspicious of 'global perspectives' and pleads for a local-experiential apprehension of the world.

Nevertheless, the *surprise* comes thirty pages later (pages 200 - 201), where, as they speak of 'dwelling' again, Urry and Macnaghten completely forget Ingold and invoke this time Heidegger only, without really building on any of his specific ideas. They do not delineate any difference between Ingold's dwelling and Heidegger's, and they do not really draw on either of their perspectives. The whole invocation of dwelling seems to operate rhetorically only, as a mere marker of theoretical novelty. This superficial use unavoidably entails a number of blunders of theorisation. Thus, they draw on Milton's distinction between land and landscape to say (page 201):

There is a lack of distance between people and things, an engagement which arises through the use of the land rather than through the distanced and detached relationships of landscape.

The problem is that thirty pages before, they drew on Ingold, whose conception of landscape is exactly the opposite. In the words of Macnaghten and Urry themselves (page 167):

Landscape is the world as known to those who have dwelt there, who do dwell there, who will dwell there, and those whose practical activities take them through its manifold sites and who journey along its multitudinous paths.

For Ingold (2000, page 190) 'land' is a mere quantitative-economic notion; a position which distinguishes him from both Milton and Heidegger. Furthermore, both Heidegger

and Ingold would be surprised to know that their dearest concept of ‘dwelling’ (so clearly suggesting localness, specificity, a spiritual dimension, etc.) has arrived for Urry and Macnaghten to be used in phrases like : ‘patterns of dwelling that are irreducibly internationalised’ (page 201), or ‘we set out the lineaments of dwellingness in a global context’ (page 201). There is no scope here to document all the problematic rhetorical manoeuvres through which ‘Contested Natures’ is built, but two of them may suggest the big picture:

Firstly, the authors invent *three environmental doctrines*, dubbed ‘realism’ (‘the environment is essentially a “real entity”, which, in and of itself is substantially separate from social practices and human experience, and has the power to produce unambiguous, observable and rectifiable outcomes’, page 1) ‘idealism’ (‘this doctrine holds that the way to analyse nature and the environment is through identifying, critiquing and realising various “values” which underpin or relate to the character, sense and quality of nature’, page 1), and ‘instrumentalism’ (‘...concerned to explain appropriate human motivation to engage in environmentally sustainable practices and hence the resulting environmental goods or bads’, page 1) depicted in such a way to be easily rejectable by a ‘reasonable reader’. These doctrines do not capture the infinite nuances and varieties of the existing environmentalist approaches, but are caricatures of (some of) them. Urry and Macnaghten avoid confronting the real currents of environmental thought and create an embarrassing situation, by saying, only three pages after they introduce their apparently comprehensive three-fold scheme, that (1998, page 4):

This book...has little to say about debates on shallow and deep ecology, Gaia, biocentrism, the ‘new age’, ecocentrism,

technocentrism, and other conceptualisations of new and more ecologically “benign” paradigms.

No wonder, then, that when they relate ‘real’ positions of environmental thought to their scheme, they run into trouble. Thus, at page 217 we are told that sustainable development ‘subscribes to the doctrine of environmental realism’, to find out at page 251 that it belongs to environmental instrumentalism.

Secondly, the invoked superiority of ‘the dwelling perspective’ is a rhetorical flourish under the heading of which Urry and Macnaghten develop a (*mere*) *sociological account*, with some more emphasises on practices. Yet, this account unwittingly reproduces a discursive formation permeated by problematic politics. Their use of the signifier ‘dwelling’ cannot escape the slippages of meaning that lead into Ingold and Heidegger’s accounts of dwelling. But why does Ingold’s account differ from Heidegger’s, even though the former says of the latter’s phrase (quoted in Ingold, 2000, page 186):

We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are dwellers...To build is in itself already to dwell...*Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.*

that ‘I take this to be the founding statement of the dwelling perspective.’(2000, page 186)? To clarify this hidden discontinuity of conceptualisation, it is time now to scrutinise the anthropological moment in the theorisation of dwelling.

The anthropological event

Ingold believes he is in a continuity of theoretical position with Heidegger, although this is not as straightforward as he

thinks. The only explanation one could find for his belief lies in that he had an over-selective and superficial encounter with Heidegger's work. Heidegger is a notoriously difficult philosopher, and this comes from an overlapping of three stances: *first*, he changed considerably his ideas, experts in Heidegger being at pains with identifying his 'periods', phases, and turns (he lived eighty-seven years). In order to understand one of his concepts, one has to follow with peculiar attention all the history of the becoming of that concept throughout his works. *Second*, not only did Heidegger advance a quite new set of concepts for speaking of the world, but he also had a poetic-metaphorical style of writing, which means that his words should not be naively taken at face value, but instead should be seen as mere openings to the underpinning metaphors. *Third*, one cannot really grasp his changing intellectual and political beliefs without a thorough understanding of the political and cultural context of Germany at that time.

In Ingold's work, there is a *subtle interplay of two different meanings* of 'dwelling':

a) A 'dwelling perspective': from the introductory chapter to his collections of essays (Ingold, 2000) we find out that Ingold's main ambition as a professional anthropologist has been to provide a unified account of the 'human', bridging the gap between social-cultural anthropology and biological-physical anthropology. His main theoretical 'enemy' has been the idea from cultural anthropology that humans have or acquire mental schemata through which they relate to and interpret the world. The brute reality is inaccessible as such to humans; their 'contact' with the world is always mediated by the mental schemata, which literally inscribe the world with meaning. It is to label this despised position that Ingold borrowed from Heidegger the term 'building

perspective'. He then used the opposite 'label' - 'dwelling perspective' - for naming his original, 'Ingoldian' brand of anthropology, which is synergetic and non-representational. In so doing, he ignored most of the dimensions Heidegger attached to 'dwelling', retaining only the idea of immersion-in-the-world, co-production, and synergism. Ingold's alternative anthropology has as main intellectual roots Gibson's ecological psychology, developmental biology, as well as some phenomenological insights from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. The key point here is that 'dwelling PERSPECTIVE' is a *position for scientists to adopt*, as a different paradigm to standard anthropology. Ingold admits more than once (page 154, page 171, etc.) that one of his chief concerns is how to articulate a research program around it.

b) *A poetics of dwelling*: here and there along his essays, Ingold ceases to argue against standard dichotomous discourses and in favour of his 'dwelling perspective', and uses the signifier 'dwelling' in a different sense: for *describing* how *certain* 'primitive' communities actually live in their environments, in a sort of harmony with the nonhuman (e.g. chapter 6-'A circumpolar night's dream'). This is implicitly contrasted with the 'normal', modern, 'non-dwelling-like' way of living (but see Rosaldo, 1986). If the 'dwelling perspective' was a matter of *universal* (all humans dwell) scientific theory (how to approach / represent the world: the need to replace dichotomous-'building' Grand Theory with a synergetic-'dwelling' Grand Theory), the 'normal' use of the verb 'to dwell' as a synonym for 'to live in harmony' is a matter of how things are in certain places only (*not all* humans dwell). The subtle difference can be grasped in the following phrase about Ojibwa, a Canadian indigenous population: '...what Ojibwa have arrived at is

not *an alternative science of nature*, but a *poetics of dwelling*' (Ingold, 2000, page 11; my emphasis).

The philosophical event

What Heidegger wanted – something that was not a calculation of means to ends, not power madness – was under his nose all the time. It was the new world which began to emerge with the French Revolution – a world in which future-oriented politics, romantic poetry, and irreligious art made social practices possible in which Heidegger never joined. He never joined them because he never looked outside of philosophy books...He was never able to see politics or art as more than epiphenomenal – never able to shake off the philosophy professor's conviction that everything else stands to philosophy as superstructure to base. (Richard Rorty, 1991, pages 48 – 49)

In what follows, I will bring evidence to support the idea that Heidegger's conception of dwelling has nothing to do with a scientific perspective (Ingold's anthropological theory) except for the fact that it is clearly directed against any scientific perspective. For Heidegger, 'dwelling' is a *normative social ontology* for which we should all strive; this ontology is the alternative he offers to Cartesian ontology, on which the idea of science is built. Moreover, although Ingold's second meaning of 'dwelling' (poetics of ~) is much closer to Heidegger's project than the scientific 'dwelling perspective', it differs from it in a crucial respect: for Ingold, 'dwelling' is used in a *descriptive* sense (some communities actually arrive to dwell), whilst for Heidegger the term is *normative* (to dwell is a continuous learning of being as mortals, a never-fully-achievable strive). As I have had doubts about my understanding of Heidegger, I also crosschecked it against alternative interpretations provided

by established scholars (e.g. Bourdieu, 1991, Dreyfus, 1993, Seamon & Mugerauer, 1985, Elden, 2000, 2001, etc.).

Heidegger pleaded all his life against Cartesian ontology and epistemology, on which the scientific enterprise had been grounded. His position was clearly against the project of modernity, with all its outcomes, including industry, science, technology ('the unbridled beast'). From a very early age, he was strongly influenced by *religion* and Rhineland *mysticism*, particularly by Pauline eschatology, Luther (he once declared he wanted to be a 'new Luther'...), Kierkegaard, Meister Eckhart (from whom he took the idea of god as 'nothingness'), Angelus Silesius (a German mystic theorising 'acausal origination' and phenomenal ontology). Later, he became very interested in *East Asian* thought, particularly Buddhism and Taoism. In this biographical light, if one thinks again of Macnaghten and Urry's three-fold classification, one could include Heidegger's 'dwelling' within the doctrines of environmental idealism, rather than posit it as distinct from them. To be more specific, Caputo (1993) speaks of three turns in Heidegger's philosophy, the third one (the threshold is between 1936 - 1938) marking a move 'beyond voluntarism toward the "thought of Being"' (1993, page 287). It is after this threshold that he extensively developed the concept of dwelling and, in close relation, the plea for an anti-scientific and mystical apprehension of the world¹⁴. As Zimmerman (1993, pages 256 - 257) has put it:

¹⁴ In a recent fascinating study, Michael Allen Gillespie has excavated the genealogy of the idea of *phronesis* from Aristotle to Heidegger. He identifies continuities between Heidegger's initial theorising of *phronesis*, and his later focus on a more 'poietic' approach (that includes the dwelling perspective). Thus, 'In his later thought...he came to believe that *phronesis* arises...in listening to the poetic voices that speak out of the midnight hours of coming gods'. (Michael Allen Gillespie, 2000, page 160). Then he adds that 'Heidegger's turn from *phronesis* to *poiesis* is

We may be somewhat less familiar with later Heidegger's claim that release may be cultivated by meditative practices, by proper breathing, and by contemplating paradoxical questions ... All of these practices are designed to bring one to the utter silence and stillness needed to become attuned to the openness or nothingness pervading all things...later Heidegger and Buddhism both *discount the primacy of causality* in their account of "reality" (emphasis added).

As I have already mentioned, for Heidegger 'dwelling' is *not* the description of how pre-modern communities live in harmony with their environments (as in Ingold's descriptive use), but rather a normative concept (even when at the literal level he seems to use it for describing - here lies the danger of taking phrases out of their context and of not paying attention to underlying metaphors), which is never 'achieved'. Thus, Heidegger (1971, page 151) writes: 'Mortals dwell in that *they initiate their own nature - their being capable of death as death* - into the use and practice of this capacity, so that there may be a good death' (my emphasis). He adds, even more strikingly (1971, page 161):

The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that *they must ever learn to dwell*. What if man's (sic) homelessness consisted in this, that man (sic) still does not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling *as the plight*? Yet as soon as man (sic) *gives thought*

important in too many ways...However, it makes little difference politically since in either case political life remains dependent on a mystical insight into the abyss of Being. (page 161) and goes on to say: 'Heidegger remarked in 1934 that the "we" of the authentic community does not have unconditional precedence because there are many decisive things that come from the ruling force and solitude of a single man. (page 166). These recent developments in the Heideggerian exegesis support further the thesis defended here: that dwelling is at its very heart a normative political concept, at the centre of Heidegger's political philosophy. It is not a matter of theorising society – nature relations.

to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that *calls* mortals into their dwelling. (emphasis in the orig.).

Guignon (1993, page 36) also quotes a phrase from Heidegger, this time from another essay ('The Thing'): 'from among "the measureless mass of men (sic) as living beings" there may be some "living beings (who can) first *become* mortals.'"

Besides these differences, whereas Ingold tries to undo the culture / nature divide, Heidegger defends a certain *distinctiveness of humans* (see Hodge, 1995, page 112; Vilella-Petit, 1996, page 150; Buttimer, 1985, page 259); also, whilst Ingold celebrates the *everydayness* (2000, page 216 - 217), Guignon (1993, page 30) argues that Heidegger despised it; or, to give a final example, whereas Ingold might be interpreted as supporting *anthropocentrism* (he uses the sphere metaphor for describing the human's apprehension of the world - 2000, page 155, pages 208 - 218), Heidegger hated it, as well as the *sphere* metaphor (see Hodge, 1995, pages 110 - 111, Vilella-Petit, 1996, page 150, Zimmerman, 1986), etc.

However, despite these theoretical differences, all the aforementioned *variants* of 'dwelling' are very difficult to accept, given that both Ingold and Heidegger can be accused (at different levels, though) of lack of rigorous critical distance and consistent ethical commitment. It is Heidegger who wrote (quoted by Elden, 2000, page 7) that 'agriculture is now a motorised food industry, in its essence the same thing as the production of corpses in the gas chambers and extermination camps'. It is he who declared, in his last interview, suggestively entitled '*Only a god can save us now*', that (quoted in Poggeler, 1996, pages 216 - 217; my emphasis):

It is a decisive question for me today how and which political system can be related to the technological age. *I have no answer to this question. I am not convinced it is democracy.*

In the context of the emancipatory project of social science, this political load of ‘dwelling’ places it in the realm of an untenable theoretical position. With Ingold, the issue is more complex, yet not very complicated. As Guignon (1993, page 36) has put it:

Given Heidegger’s actions, and given his own firm belief that those actions followed quite naturally from his philosophy, there is no way to buy into his philosophy without reflecting deeply on its moral and political implications. We must keep in mind that ... there is no way to make Heidegger’s thought consonant with our own deepest democratic sentiments without distorting it.

This is Ingold’s problem: after Auschwitz, theoretical positions that ignore the matter of ethics are anti-ethical. And Ingold ignores it: nowhere in his book does he attempt to clarify his relation with the dirty side of his ‘intellectual predecessor’. And this is a ‘shocking and resonating silence’ (Hodge, 1995, page 82), for ‘dwelling’ is a concept deeply involved in the scriptural economy of that dirty side (see Vilella-Petit, 1996, page 155, Harvey, 1996, pages 314-315, Zimmerman, 1993, pages 257-258). To give just one example, Heidegger said that:

We are plants which—whether we like to admit it to ourselves or not—must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether and bear fruit (quoted in Harvey, 1996, page 301).

The learning of dwelling refers precisely to (re)-discovering one’s roots, and thus escaping ‘homelessness’. People who do not have roots, who are pilgrims around the world – Jews,

Gypsies, etc. - appear then as degenerate, not worthy of their humanity.

But what I find most disturbing is the (possible) *psychoanalytical commonality of vision* between Heidegger and Ingold, their exclusive concern for, and celebration of, the rural, pre-modern, autarchic communities, their denigration of modernity, and their obsession with rhythms, cycles, resonance, 'orchestras', 'poetical' living, the organicist metaphor, unison, harmony, revelations, sensory attunement, repetitive patterns, stability, purity, authenticity, place, embeddedness, roots, etc (cf. Buttimer, 1985). These terms weave a peculiar discursive formation, a *scriptural economy of wholesome space and wholesome existence* fuelled by the *sick interplay* between the *myth of the Golden Age* and the *myth of Decadence*. Needless to remind that this discursive interplay accompanied all the bloody episodes of the 20th century (Nazism, communism, resurgent nationalisms).

Ingold's account of 'dwelling' is unconvincing because it is the result of a major epistemic fallacy: that of arranging the facts to fit the model, instead of arranging the model to fit the facts. Two issues are at stake: *first*, the model is exemplified *only* by analysing local, pre-modern communities, ignoring the reality of our times (urbanisation, capitalism, poverty, commodification, increased amount and speed of 'circulation', hybridisation, expert systems, wars and conflicts, industry, population growth, famine, social and cultural inequalities, intense change), in which those 'ideal' communities are the exception and not the rule. To put it another way, consider the following distinction made by Boaventura de Sousa – Santos (de Sousa Santos, 1998, page 403):

I want to understand roots in terms of a combination of a) long duration time and time *au ralenti*; b) cyclical time, the time that *danse sur place*; c) belated time (*temps en retard sur lui meme*), time whose unfolding keeps itself in wait. Options, on the other hand, are characterised by a combination of a) accelerated time (*temps en avance sur lui meme*), the time of contingency and discontinuity; b) explosive time, the time without past or present and only with future...one does not have the option not to think in terms of roots and options.

If, as he argues, options *and* roots are inextricably linked, Ingold's project suffers from considering only the 'roots' of the society-nature saga. Half of the real world (the options), so to say, is erased.

Second, even within the limited case of such ideal autarchic communities, Ingold offers a *biased, superficial, romanticised* account of how things 'really' are. He draws on phenomenology, biology and ecological psychology, but ignores the huge literature (psychoanalysis, feminist theory, queer theory, postcolonial theory, political theory, cultural studies, critical geography, post-modern theory) which reveals the *dark side* of place formations: stigmatisation, exclusion, oppression, injustice, imprisonment (roots are also chains...see Seamon, 1985), staleness, narrowness, nationalism, etc.

Discussion

Thinking the event of thinking in a world in which thinking both occurs and occludes, I am compelled to subscribe to a sense of place that exceeds the restrictive connotations of the 'local', the 'historical', and the 'traditional'...To insist on the ontological consequences of thinking the local, of thinking place and dwelling, is to insist on the enabling *limits* of an executive space in which not merely the language, history and tradition that constitutes me as a 'subject' is enacted. For here in the flesh, my sexual, gendered, ethnic and social identity is

both located, mobilised, disciplined, *and* exceeded. In a response to my being that is in debt but irreducible to those individual categories, this historical 'I' is constituted within limits that configure but do not hold me prisoner. In this proposal there does not exist a new, and 'better', subjectivity or universalism, but rather the intersection of that desire for the whole and the complete by the question of dwelling, by the instance in which space, institutions and languages are translated and in-corporated in a particular body and a precarious place. This propels me into another space – neither 'original' nor imitative. (Iain Chambers, 2001, page 197)

We have suggested that Macnaghten and Urry's account of dwelling (1998) is *inconsistent* and difficult to grasp, for it is built on a series of internal *contradictions* which reveal a superficial theoretical construction that reproduces the signifier 'dwelling' just to mark a claim to theoretical novelty in sociology. As for the other two events of theory, although there are clear theoretical *differences* between Ingold and Heidegger's perspectives on 'dwelling', they both *share* a problematic underpinning sensibility that romanticises the rural pre-modern way of living (with the implicit demonising of non-authentic ways of living). Heidegger's perspective is *intended* anti-rational and anti-scientific, and its 'idealist' configuration makes it incompatible with either academia (*science*) or the real world (celebrating *democracy* and the project of *modernity*, more broadly). This incompatibility is also reproduced in qualified appropriations of Heidegger's insights, given the play of paleonymy and its obvious *openness* toward unethical interpretation and use. In this light, Ingold's perspective, although more 'scientific', remains *problematic* for its lack of ethical delineation from Heidegger, and *unconvincing* for it is built through a major epistemic fallacy (the erasure of options, to use de Sousa – Santos' terminology), which, at its turn, raises ethical issues.

The historicity of language actively shapes its present uses and this burden of paleonymy haunts the attempts to recycle the concept of ‘dwelling’ as well. ‘Dwelling’ is too dangerous a concept to be revamped. The associations, either implicit or explicit, that go with it are politically scarring and epistemologically inadequate. The big point is to look for something ‘genuinely’ new, that goes beyond the seduction of seeing harmony in places (instead of conflict and hegemonic landscapes) and that can satisfactorily describe our messy, rapidly – changing world. We easily fall victims of narratives of genuine harmony and nostalgia. Martha Nussbaum explains our predisposition for buying into such dangerous narratives of wholesome existence (Nussbaum, 2000, pages 10 – 11):

There is sometimes a tone of disdain and superiority toward those who want to live routine lives, even when they do not try to impose their ways on others...But most people need routines and even conformity, most of the time; and every person needs, at the least, a lot of parts of life that are not being called into question at every moment...Habit dulls perception and hobbles thought, but we need a lot of habit in order to live. Otherwise we would die from the pain of seeing. If there are some people who find improvisational lives more tolerable than others, they should not look down on those others who cannot stand so much uncertainty.

Nevertheless, as critical social scientists we should pay attention to the fact that all accounts that do not ‘see’ our world, but deliver instead the drug of harmony are reactionary. I wonder myself about the big problem of getting used to living without conceiving harmony. Are we all within the presuppositional framework of agonistic democracy (conflict is at the heart of social relations)? Or

are there unproblematic harmonies? I suspect there are not. But I hope one day to be shown the contrary.

The 'dwelling perspective' has been used after Heidegger with different goals, but in what follows I will maintain that each and every one of these goals has either been achieved through a mis-reading of Heidegger's investment in the concept, or could have been better achieved by using theoretical paths other than the dwelling perspective. This brings to the forefront the simple epistemological framework outlined in the introductory chapter: if any theorisation is a *configuration of epistemic gains and epistemic losses*, a careful plea for abandoning a theorisation (in our case, the argument for leaving behind the 'dwelling' perspective) will consider not only the losses inherent to that theorisation (e.g. the dirty paleonymy of dwelling) but also the extent to which its putative gains can be retained from other, 'cleaner' theorisations as well.

In Macnaghten and Urry's book, 'dwelling' is invoked as a better *normative way of conceptualising society – nature relations*. Nevertheless, the arguments developed in this section support the observation that the dwelling perspective is not that different from the group of doctrines labelled 'environmental idealism' – group that the two sociologists do not like at all.

For Tim Ingold (2000) and Cloke and Jones (2001, 2002), 'dwelling' is used as a way for *describing the intimacy of society – nature relations*, but this is a very partial description, valid for rural, archaic communities. What about urban natures, the tiny, non-ornamental presences of nature within the industrialised landscapes of modern civilisations? Here the dwelling perspective with all its romantic and idyllic flavour has little to offer. But this is not a tragedy. There are already powerful alternative languages for

describing the intimacy of society-nature interactions. Think for example, of Gil 's (1998) powerful concept of 'exfoliation', of Actor-Network Theory, or even of the metaphor of recursive cartographies.

Third, in both Ingold (2000) and Thrift (1999a), 'dwelling' is celebrated as a better way of understanding the world, as opposed to the traditional *building perspective*, that presupposes a strong Cartesian subjecthood, with the sharp divide between subject and object. Nevertheless, the recent developments in social theory that have replaced the Cartesian subject with an archipelago of dividual selves, produced through power relations (Foucault, Lacan, Althusser, Derrida, Butler), as well as Derrida's concept of the 'constitutive outside', are strong theoretical tools for doing away with the building perspective, without *the high cost* of bringing in the concept of dwelling.

Fourth, in Thrift (1999a) and Cloke and Jones (2001, 2002), 'dwelling' is used for its emphasis on *everyday practice*, as opposed to elitist representations. But caution is necessary here. On the one hand, Heidegger hated everydayness and used dwelling in a normative sense, as something for which we should strive. On the other hand, the real question is how much does 'dwelling' actually help us to understand everyday practice. From reading Ingold's descriptions of landscape with the help of this concept, I had a sense of superficial, aestheticised, and romanticised account of a world that to me seemed to be clearly structured by exploitative and unjust power relations (I refer here to Breugel's painting). 'Dwelling', it seems, occludes rather than reveals. And then, the language for describing practices is already quite rich, so why the concept of dwelling?

Fifth, Thrift (1999a) and Cloke and Jones (2001, 2002) claim that 'dwelling' is particularly useful for capturing

place formation, a claim with which I thoroughly disagree. At one level, they invoke dwelling for giving a strong sense of the *temporality of place*, but I would answer by saying that one does not need to give a sense of the temporality of place, because temporality is constitutive of what we mean by the concept of place in the first place. We speak of space and place, and by the second term we always mean a specific portion of space, with a given identity *and* historicity. At another level, I wonder how is it morally acceptable to put at the very heart of the theory of place the concept of dwelling, given that: a) place is by far the most political concept geography is operating with; b) 'dwelling' is itself a concept pertaining directly to politics, but certainly not to the type of politics figures like Thrift, Cloke, and Jones would like to have their names associated with. I suspect they bought into this concept because they underestimated its centrality for a certain vision of politics. In addition, the solutions they propose to the risk of political misabuse are themselves dangerous. Thus, Cloke and Jones endeavour to rework the concept of authenticity – a key term in the scriptural economy of wholesome space, of which 'dwelling' is a part – by speaking of '*dynamic authenticity*'. This new term would be, the argument goes, better than mere 'authenticity' because it is not static and past-oriented. However, my reading of 'dynamic authenticity' is that it is still a reactionary concept: something (a landscape) is authentic if it grows and changes organically, slowly, smoothly...in other words the radical political imagination necessary for a transformational politics is something incompatible with this theoretical celebration of decent, piecemeal change! They succeeded in giving dynamism to authenticity, but it is the dynamism of mere social reproduction, with all its baggage of injustice and perpetuation of the status quo.

Sixth, Cloke and Jones (2001, 2002) also hold dear the concept of 'dwelling' because they believe it helps their *epistemic goal* of offering a more rich description of landscape. They go on to say how they were immersed in that orchard of Somerset, how their gaze was different from one corner to the other, how they felt the smells of the fruits and the noise of the bees, and so on, all these being arguments for grasping the landscape in a way superior to the detached Cartesian perspectivalism of the traditional social scientist. But, at the heart of their logic, still lies a representational notion of truth (Rorty, 1979), with which poststructural social science is very much at unease. Nevertheless, still assuming the fruitfulness of reflecting on older concepts of truth, I wonder how much difference the dwelling perspective really makes in this respect. After all, they speak from within a landscape without belonging to it, they have a set of experiences of the Other that then are re-presented. Is the illusion of sensory immersion sufficient to claim better epistemic coverage of the object investigated? I suspect not. The same problems of re-presentation confront Cloke and Jones as any other traditional social scientist. The dwelling perspective is not a passport to the world of doing better social science.

If deconstruction is about *reversal* and *reinscription*, and if the *past of a concept* is never really dead, I would like to end this conceptual surgery by bringing forward Iain Chambers' spectacular observation about the pre-Heideggerian paleonymy of dwelling (Chambers, 2001, page 194):

Apart from the common connection from Old Norse to house and shelter, 'dwelling' in Old English also referred to the idea of being led astray, into error and hereticism, and thus, paradoxically, to the idea of wandering.

Now turn these back to one of Heidegger's observation ('Language is the house of people. In its home man [sic] dwells')...One can detect here a sort of irony, but also a political way forward, away from the *roots* associated with the established understanding of dwelling, and closer to the *routes* emancipatory social science is trying to shift emphasis on. I argued all along, that, despite the good intentions of those who have tried to re-cycle the concept of dwelling, we are caught in a disadvantageous constellation of alleged epistemic gains and powerful epistemic (and political) losses: dwelling is too dangerous a concept to be worth working with, and the advantages it allegedly brings (enhanced understanding of society-nature relations, place and landscape formations, everyday practices, etc.) can be arrived at by following alternative theoretical paths, with a lighter paleonymic burden.

* * *

This last chapter has brought together under the *unifying theme* of an alternative conceptualisation of the past two close readings and critiques of a paratextual discourse (Barnett, 1995) and then of a 'textual' discourse (the dwelling perspective). The deliberate setting of this *bizarre discursive collision* was underpinned by a research attitude that takes seriously the recent observation that '...the best way to dissolve the islands [of practice in geography] is a methodological program to create a more synthetic approach that consciously integrates multiple aspects of the critical project' (Purcell, 2003, page 317). In other words, I tried to undo the purification of geography into a paratextual (reflexive) dimension and a textual (substantive) dimension, by showing through these two readings that both dimensions are often haunted by political residuals of *epistemic neglect* that undermine their otherwise welcome agendas. The

metaphor of ‘recursive cartographies’ was used throughout the chapter to capture the relation between discourse, power, materiality, and (a particular reading of) historicity, indebted to Derrida (2001, page 319):

The concept of historicity will no longer be regulated by the scheme of progression or of regression, thus by a scheme of teleological process, but rather by that of the event, or occurrence, thus by the singularity of the “one time only”. This value of occurrence links historicity not to time, as is usually thought, nor to the temporal process but...to power, to the language *of* power, and to language *as* power. Hence the necessity to take into account performativity, which defines precisely the power *of* language and power *as* language, the excess of the language of power or of the power of language over constative or cognitive language.

It has been shown how problematic one’s assertions can be if one’s discourse ignores the active ontological agency of the past, which, ironically, enables the utterance of that very discourse. Having said these, I still have to make further use of recursive cartographies by putting myself in the ‘map’ of this chapter. In a number of ways, I am a *migrant hybrid*, born in a peripheral location (see Antohi, 1996, 1999, Boia, 2001) and travelling across places instead of dwelling in a particular place. This political identity must have influenced my choice of the two sample discourses dissected in this chapter. Indeed, in a sense, what (also) relates Barnett’s paratextual theorisation with dwelling’s scriptural economy is their *common neglect of the Other*. Barnett neglects the peripheral geographical traditions (and I was socialised in one of them) while the theorisation of dwelling neglects (erases?) those who refuse to dwell (and I take great pleasure in doing so). To put it differently, this chapter has been about *the politics of recognition*, or, if you want it, about the ways in which the latter *hides* in theoretical work that

apparently has nothing to do with the politics of recognition. In plain words, it manages to hide with the help of the taken-for-granted of a given discourse, with the significant detail that in both textual and paratextual geography *'the past' is almost always a part of this taken-for-grantedness*. The alternative conceptualisation of the past that I have tried to bring forward in my reading of the two discourses has been premised in an understanding of *theory* as opportunity for enhancing our apprehension of the world, of ourselves, and of our possibilities for change. As Wendy Brown (2002, pages 573-574) has recently put it:

Theory does not simply decipher the meanings of the world but recodes and rearranges meanings to reveal something about the meanings and incoherences that we live with...Theory's most important political offering is this opening of a breathing space between the world of common meanings and the world of alternative ones, a space for potential renewal for thought, desire, and action.

This particular definition of theory (cf. Culler, 1997) underwrites my desire to further my research in the direction of proper, 'textual' geographies, with the hope that the analytical skills of a paratextual geographer will help unravelling the pernicious 'habits of the soul' (Lucas, 2002) that hinder geography's chances at becoming a better producer of knowledge.

Final Thoughts

Under the influence of idealism social analysis nearly always 'goes too far back' and so, in consequence, be the mode of explanation realism or social constructivism, misses or destroys precisely what it sets out to study...all these modes share the basic presupposition that cultural activity is 'guided' by or is the 'realisation' of rules which lie behind actual events and thereby determine conduct in situ: rules which when uncovered or unmasked would serve to explain the constitution of meaningful activity *as* meaningful.
Paul Harrison, (2002, pages 490 – 491)

I have often wondered about the *claimed* identity of certain intellectuals born in the 'third world'. They now live in the West, earn their generous stipends here, marry Western women or men, carry Western passports, speak, read, write Western languages, profess Western knowledge, and assume Western critical values even as they criticise the West. Whom, then, do they 'represent'? And exactly what 'identity' do they possess?
Ihab Hassan, (1994, page 630)

I would like to take the claim that the past has active ontological agency and haunts the present in significant ways and apply it to the final act of this book, which will render apparent the threads that have woven it and their own historicity. The burden of paleonymy begins with the very title of my doctoral dissertation, out of which the present book emerged. 'A structural theory of geography' was chosen in 1999, as I was fascinated at the time with the work of Romanian epistemologist Ilie Parvu (Parvu, 1998), who had tried to revamp the older insights of the Starnberg

School in the philosophy of science. The latter was particularly concerned with the historical unfolding of disciplines and argued that the peak of maturity in the evolution of a discipline is the development of over-arching theories called 'structural theories'. I grew up in the family of a Romanian philosopher, who, after the Anticommunist Revolution of 1989, had to 'detoxify' his polluted communist mindset and start practising philosophy in non-Marxist ways. My 'family' task in the 1990s was to read the manuscripts of his books and detect his unacknowledged patterns of outdated (i.e. Marxist – Leninist) philosophical thinking. This family affair later put me in the unusual position of studying geography with some philosophical baggage.

My first research papers as an undergraduate student enquired about precisely the under-researched space between philosophy and geography. If this is seen in the context of the fact that the last 'theory of geography' in Romania was published as early as 1968, then you will understand my enthusiasm at the time about starting a PhD that would provide a new 'theory of geography', in accord with what the Starnberg School was saying about the maturity stage of a scientific discipline. Yet geography in Romania is heavily policed and I was told that it was not appropriate for somebody that young to venture into the domain of geographical metatheory. But I could not imagine myself researching something else, and, in order to taste the forbidden fruit of metatheory, I went to do the PhD abroad. It is in those three years abroad that I realised that ambition is not always a good thing, and that, as a scientist, one does not fight the monster of ignorance on one's own terms and then return to the village of his fellow scientists to collect acclaims. The business of science is more about social psychology than revolutionary paradigmatic shifts. And I

have learned, with some pain, how science is a collective enterprise that moves only slowly, in endless negotiation, in the process of writing the dissertation, of publishing a journal article, and of securing an academic job. I said with 'some pain' because it has implied scaling down my too big ego and redrawing the boundaries of my self-esteem, as well as the expectations for the impact of my research.

The move from Romanian geography to British geography and then to Canadian geography generated three clashes and this book is nothing more but their trace.

The linguistic clash is the most apparent: in five years, Romanian has changed status from 'rhythm' to 'legacy' although it remains ontologically very active by wounding my new linguistic rhythm (English) with innumerable problems of grammar, spelling, and pronunciation. Yet my hosts accept these sins, for they are the price to pay for having first hand access to the 'native informant', to the alleged novelty the Other is presumed to bring.

The paradigmatic clash has doubled this 'linguistic unease' (Riley, 2000). Whereas in Romania my approach to metatheoretical research in geography was heavily indebted to traditional philosophy (epistemology and the philosophy of science), in England I had to rethink my approach significantly. It all began in the last months of 2000, when the clash took three distinct forms: i) the intensive training in social theory, poststructuralism, and cultural studies, as attendant on a number of required postgraduate courses; ii) the weekly meetings with my first supervisor (we struggled for three months to find some common ground); and iii) my independent readings for the literature review. The difficulty of 'conversion' from a traditional philosophical mode to a social and cultural theory mode resulted from my being already a postgraduate (with the baggage of firm convictions from my undergraduate years) and from the fact that I had

already published in the field at the time (and one tends to hold dear the tenets of one's published work, no matter how strong the voices against it).

The conclusion of a book is the place where to brag about its alleged substantive original contributions and claims to distinctiveness. Yet, I am the victim of my own theoretical claim – that there is no such thing as 'genuine novelty'. To illustrate this, let us consider the 'original' propositions of the second part of the book (*New Ways*), conceived as an answer to the question 'What can be done to improve geography as a knowledge producer?'

The proposed new ways built on the underlying idea of the first part of the book (*Old Ways*): the strength of a discipline depends on the perceived quality of its products and that quality critically depends on performing well within given protocols of enquiry and norms of good research. The latter can be strengthened by provoking disciplinary innovations that raise the awareness of how we do research in geography and of how we obey particular paratextual apparatuses. And all the three changes proposed were of *that* innovative kind. Thus, beginning at the *macro-level* (inter-disciplinary commerce) I advocated a turn to traditional metaphysics, a discipline that epitomises the peak of the concern for the careful construction and analysis of academic arguments. In the light of geography in the English-speaking world, this is original and distinctive, given that it is against the 'new orthodoxy' (Thrift, 2000b) of culturally informed critical human geography. There have been a number of voices (e.g. Barnett, 2003a) deploring the 'cut-and-paste' like style of social theory: texts full of jargon and obscure phrases marked with the politically-correct emblems of theoretical affiliation (Foucault, Butler, etc.). They pay little attention to either the ideal of wider intelligibility or the careful construction of the argument, but at the same time develop

strategies that justify these forms of neglect (e.g. jargon is needed for theoretical sophistication, argument-building reproduces the oppressive hegemony of certain systems of logic, premised on exclusionary principles, etc.). One of the remarkable insights of deconstruction (Spivak and Celestin, 2002) is that the structures we criticise are the very structures that allow us to speak. We are their prisoners and it is this particular relation that renders the act of deconstruction possible. I apply this insight to our commitments to emancipatory politics, by saying the following: subscription to emancipatory politics is not a substitute for 'proper' science, because we do emancipatory politics in our role (quality) as 'scientists'. This is the position we are speaking from. 'Science' is the structure that allows us to speak. In other words, as critical geographers, we have to understand that it is the quality of our 'emancipatory' scientific claims that makes geography an important actor in the fight for a better world, and not the declarative commitment to the right political cause.

To persuade the others (politicians, businesses, etc.) that a better world is needed, we have to produce good quality, old-fashioned scientific reasoning, and traditional metaphysics can teach us this in a better way than other disciplines. It is wrong to say that social theory and cultural studies are 'progressive', whilst traditional metaphysics is 'reactionary' because of its neglect of the political. This line of thought justifies a damaging neglect of the epistemic insights of 'reactionary' areas of enquiry. Instead, in a deconstructive spirit, I argued that the best way to beat the reactionary is by fighting them with their own weapons, by appropriating the tools of metaphysics and use them to reveal how politics is hidden under all appearances of everydayness. Otherwise, the critical project will never succeed (cf. Boyer, 1990). The reactionary will always laugh

at us and dismiss us for the pretence of scientificity attached to our mere political agendas. They will have no difficulty in this task. They will show our lack of proper argumentation, our obscure elitist phrases that 'say nothing', our lack of conceptual clarity, and so on. If we want to succeed, we have to dance to their tune, but dance so well so as to win the competition.

To be sure, I do not want to commit an epistemic lock-in and avoid the requirement to place myself in this picture. You read this book and you notice that most of it is guilty of the very sins of the discourse of culturally-oriented critical geography: too many value-judgements and assertions stand for proper arguments, too many paragraphs indulge in poststructuralist jargon, etc.

As an outsider into the geography of the English-speaking world, I learned the new hegemonic theories here and fell in love with many of them. I tried my hand at writing in their mode, yet, in so doing, I remembered the essential observation of the epistemology outlined in my previous books: *any achievement comes with a loss*. The new rhythm I was adopting with the enthusiasm and zeal of the new convert pushed the older rhythm of traditional philosophy into obsolescence and labelled it 'old-fashioned'. As one of the tasks of my research was to bring forward new fruitful directions for geography, I revamped this older commitment and proposed it as a new *turn*, with the conviction that a collision between the horizon of knowledge of social theory and the horizon of knowledge of metaphysics will benefit the discipline in the long run.

My newly achieved status as a scholar in a different geographical tradition led me to problematise a further assumption in the discourse of culturally informed critical geography, namely the idea that we need to open the geographical conversation and invite other geographical

traditions to participate. To elaborate on this, I now need to mention the third clash I have been through in the 2000-2005 'transition': the *clash between protocols of enquiry*. I realised that the things that assured my status as 'good geographer' in Romania do not coincide with the things that make a good geographer here, and that, therefore, I have to learn to obey the new protocols of enquiry found here.

This legacy of personal redefinition underpins the second 'innovation' advocated in chapter four: if we are to open the geographical conversation in a truly democratic and effective way, we have to complement our paratextual focus on the metaphor of science-as-conversation with the additional focus of what it takes to be a good geographer in different geographical traditions. The latter concern conditions the extent to which the opened conversation will work, in that it enquires what could make *commensurable* different repositories of knowledge. It also conditions our awareness of the *heavy load of politics* activated through a would-be extended conversation. The global political and cultural hegemony of Anglo-America (Harvey, 2003; cf. Pemberton, 2001) would very likely translate into a geographical conversation where the protocols of enquiry and dominant paradigms of Anglo-American geography literally eat the minor geographical traditions. So, why extend the geographical conversation?

This innovative reflexive practice is concerned with the *meso-level* of the proposed disciplinary revamping, occupying the middle ground between the argument for a broader disciplinary turn (the macro-level of inter-disciplinary commerce) and the argument for careful theoretical construction at the *micro-level* of our concepts. The core premise of the latter is that culturally informed critical geography frequently undermines its own emancipatory commitments by activating discourses that

aim to be emancipatory, but which actually unwittingly reproduce the seeds of reactionary thought. The all-pervasive plea for doing socially relevant research (Martin, 2001, Martin and Sunley, 2001, etc.) is one of the things that I did not find in Romanian geography. Whereas there I felt uncomfortable doing metatheoretical work because it was something reserved for the elderly, here I felt the same discomfort, but because of the discursive premium put on research that directly contributes to social well-being.

The claim of the third proposed change – alternative conceptualisations through attention to the logic of epistemic neglect – was that ‘blue-skies’ paratextual research is in no way less relevant than ‘socially relevant’ research because the quality of the latter necessarily depends on the mastery of the former. In order to illustrate this broad observation, I took the case of how the past is conceptualised in geography and analysed the issue across the alleged gulf between paratextual research (the case study on Clive Barnett’s approach to the past of our discipline) and ‘textual’, proper research (the case study on the appropriation in cultural environmental geographies of a concept with a problematic past – ‘dwelling’).

The deconstructive reading of these discourses reversed the understanding of the past as ‘dead’ and reinscribed the past as a legacy that continues to have *politically relevant* ontological agency. This brutal contrasting of two discourses in a book that apparently concerns just one of them (the paratextual) aimed to subvert the discursive fantasy on which the separation between socially-relevant research and ‘blue-skies’ research is premised. By observing the theorisation of the past in both discourses, I have outlined just one example of *epistemic neglect* that undermines both metatheoretical research and ‘proper’ research. Hence, I made the implicit case that careful metatheoretical

engagement is necessary even for socially relevant research and thus I revenged the aforementioned discomfort I felt for not doing much socially relevant research.

All the three disciplinary transformations proposed in the second part apply the lesson learned from our modest epistemology: we tend to be caught in a certain horizon of knowledge and in so doing we miss the opportunity of many other fruitful epistemic encounters. If one considers the new orthodoxy of critical geography in the English-speaking world, one can say that it unfolds in a horizon of knowledge that tends to over-recite *two ideals of research*: the first is the *disciplinary ideal* of contributing to broader social science by developing novel theorisations of space and place; the second is the *emancipatory ideal* of building a politically-aggressive geography, especially by absorbing into our discipline insights, concepts, and practices from Leftist social theory, poststructuralism, and cultural studies. The three answers given to the question ‘What can be done to improve geography as a knowledge producer?’ try to undo the epistemic lock-in of this new orthodoxy, by alerting geographers to the fact that it is worth considering new ways that might shed a different light on these very two ideals of research.

Instead of turning to cultural studies, I turned to reactionary metaphysics, instead of bringing forward yet another theorisation of space, I advocated a novel theorisation of the category of the past in geographical discourses, and instead of over-inviting disconnected geographers to have a seat at the table of geography-as-conversation, I told them to first consider the politics of their own positionality and the positionality of their own politics, by looking at the relativity of norms (what makes a good geographer) in different traditions of research.

However, this informed passion for the ‘out-of-fashion’ permeates not only the present book, but my work as a whole, including the reactionary thesis that disciplines are not outdated modes of organising scientific research. Consider, for example, the twin of this book, *Pragmatic Scepticism and the Possibilities of Knowledge*, where I tried to answer ‘what is geography?’ in a different way. In Romania, this is a valid research question, but in the UK and Canada, it is no longer so. When I told various geographers here the type of research questions addressed in my books, they smiled politely. Indeed, the subscription to interdisciplinarity and to a broader engagement with the neoliberal politics of academe (RAE, etc.) has rendered the once-decent question ‘what is geography?’ somehow hilarious and inadequate. In a sense, it was also politically incorrect because the act of definition is blamed nowadays for its violence and arrogance, for its psychotic desire to place in a secure cage the free-floating meaning of signifiers. Nevertheless, the re-figuring of geography undertaken in that previous book proved to be pivotal for the present study and demonstrated the worthiness of returning to the roots, of asking those naïve questions that nobody dares to ask any more.

Indeed, the *outdated* question ‘what is geography?’ was instrumental in the subsequent asking (in the first part of this book) of an *outrageous* question - ‘is geography worth keeping?’ It was outrageous in that it went further than the usual disciplinary discourse about *why* geography is worth keeping and dissected the problem into two distinct facets. The first facet was the questioning of disciplinarity in general, whilst the second narrowed down the enquiry and looked at the worthiness of the discipline of geography in particular. The results of this questioning are subversive in a number of ways, such as the disenchantment of the fantasy

of interdisciplinarity, by showing that the working of academic disciplines is in itself already interdisciplinary, or the anti-foundationalist manoeuvre of dismissing all attempts at grounding the worthiness of a discipline outside the uncomfortable process of continuous peer assessment of the perceived quality of work done in that particular discipline.

And this brings me back to the burden of paleonymy carried by the title of my doctoral dissertation, from which this book was developed. Initially chosen because of my readings of the Starnberg School in the philosophy of science, the title remained an adequate description for the content because of two related things. *The first* refers to my reinscription of its initial meaning, by going back to the Latin roots of 'structural' and finding that it originates in the verb *struo*, *struere* which means 'to build'. This reflected the broader aim of the project, namely to build with unconventional tools a more vibrant geography. That building was carried on, however, in the rhythms of deconstruction, by appropriating older research problems (e.g. what is geography, the worthiness of geography), reverting them from within, and reinscribing them in the act of negotiating my own paradigmatic clash between the initial involvement with traditional epistemology and philosophy of science and the subsequent infatuation with poststructuralism and social theory.

The second refers to the slippage of meaning that easily emerges at the first hearing of the utterance 'structural', namely its association with 'structuralist' and hence with 'out-of-fashion' (I still remember being told at a seminar by a fellow PhD student that what I was doing was really interesting, but that I should have changed the title because it sounded so strongly out-of-fashion). This second thing is an excellent signifier for the work of rethinking the relation

between the past (legacy), the present, and the 'novelty' of the future, rethinking that has always been at the heart of my work. Novelty hurts. And it hurts in two ways. On the one hand, it unsettles the rhythms (routines, habits) that make personal and academic lives liveable and forces us to accommodate it in the already existing fabric of relations. On the other hand, it terrorises us because it is not readily apparent how that novelty accrued at the intersection of past rhythms and events. We know that it cannot be genuinely new, but we have difficulties in going beyond this first observation.

My work over the past five years has translated these difficulties onto its own research questions, unpacking historicity from the level of disciplinary formations (the temporal dynamic of the two big themes of geography - space and Earth's complexity - with their difference-producing repetition), through the level of concepts (the historicity of the very concept of the 'past', analysed as it corrupts the historicity of other concepts such as 'geography' or 'dwelling'), to the level of its own *presence* in the form of two connected books (*Pragmatic Scepticism and the Possibilities of Knowledge* and *New Ways in Geography*). What makes a publication record coherent? In Latin, 'co' refers to 'togetherness' and this exposes the meaning of co-here-nce as the simultaneous *presence* of all the parts involved. One might get uncomfortable because another's discourse has exceeded the recitations that have interpellated one so far. Co-here-nce is the simultaneous presence of all the parts involved, but I want to exceed the reduction of this to the standard norm of good research that says that a given discourse should have a logical flow between its parts to such an extent as to generate the overall image of a well rounded (w)hole (there is an absence in any

presence). What is one to make of the ‘logical flow’? Whose logic and whose flow?

In recursive cartographies, the ‘logical flow’ of things refers to how we cope with the relation between legacies, rhythms, and, events. As we go along, we have to render this relation intelligible by producing narratives (Berlant, 2001) that weave together not only the three elements, but also their onto-epistemic contexts (collapsing them into our unit of analysis). And the two aforementioned books are nothing more but the reification of such a logical flow: the weaving together and bringing into presence of *clashes* between languages (Romanian *versus* English; plain language *versus* jargon, my discourse *versus* the discourses of my quotations), paradigms (mainstream epistemology and philosophy of science *versus* poststructuralisms and Leftist social theory), and protocols of enquiry (using ‘we’ *versus* using ‘I’, classic chapter-based structure *versus* research questions –based structure, comprehensiveness *versus* analytical depth, lists of arguments *versus* rhetorically-linked arguments, devastating criticism *versus* ‘constructive’ criticism, a Bolshevik desire to police the discipline *versus* modest hopes for peer recognition, etc.).

This understanding of coherence as ‘rendering intelligible’ through a narrative of the initially disconnected bits that compound an authorial voice destabilises the hegemonic understanding. This is important for assessing a research project (with the resulting twin books) that escapes the total appropriation by a particular tradition of research. It escapes it in that it was practised at the intersection of protocols of enquiry that are neither synonymous nor co-extensive and that, as such, shed light on each other’s parochialism and hegemonic, unproblematised, epistemic power. If one sees my work as an ‘object’ to be assessed against the norms of good research of a certain epistemic parish, one misses,

firstly, the extent to which a paratextual piece of research might question those very norms, and, secondly, the epistemic paradox observed by Foucault and more clearly outlined by Paul Veyne. In the latter's formulation (Veyne, 1997, pages 160 – 161, my emphasis):

Everything hinges on a paradox, one that is Foucault's central and most original thesis. *What is made, the object, is explained by what went into its making at each moment of history; we are wrong to imagine that the making, the practice, is explained on the basis of what is made...The whole difficulty arises from the illusion that allows us to 'reify' objectivizations as if they were natural objects.* We mistake the end result for a goal; we take the place where a projectile happens to land as its intentionally chosen target. Instead of grasping the problem at its true center, which is the practice, we start from the periphery, which is the object, in such a way that successive practices resemble reactions to a single object, whether 'material' or rational, that is taken as the starting point, as a given...we end up fastening the two ends of the chain together with a bit of string called ideology. And, more seriously still, we take the points of impact of successive practices to be preexisting objects that these practices were aiming for: their targets.

Yet, I want to go further than this mere reinscription of 'coherence' in the light of recursive cartographies because, as it appears now, it allows an inattentive reader to confound one's search for discursive intelligibility with one's construction of the self through the narratives he / she purportedly creates, and both of these with a distinct subject who narcissistically indulges his / her situatedness of his / her knowledge claims (Haraway, 1991, 1997; cf. Haraway, 2000). This two-fold confusion dramatises the author and romanticises his fractured history in three distinct geographical traditions, and, in so doing, occludes the peculiar *politics of subject formation* that precedes and exceeds the given name, family name, and physical appearance of a particular subject. These observations allow

a reading of the coherence of this research project centred not upon a narcissistic individual history, but upon the traces a certain ‘turning’ (Benhabib et al, 1995; Butler, 1997a-b) has left. Disch’s explanation of the latter concept is needed here (Disch, 1999, page 551 - 552):

To Butler, it is no answer to propose that the subject is ‘situated’ in the relations it claims to know and to criticise. Insofar as theorists of the situated subject accord it a vantage point from which to ‘preside over the positions that have constituted [it]’, they resurrect the fantasy of autonomy. Butler counters that critical vantage is an impossible fantasy, for subjectivity is not a location but a ‘transfer point’ of attachments, dependencies, and losses without which no subject can emerge but that ‘no subject, in the course of its transformation, can ever afford fully to “see”’. Butler counters the vantage-point metaphor with a figure of speech that is often used to characterise the inauguration of subjectivity, the ‘figure of turning, a turning back upon oneself or even a turning on oneself’...The significance of this metaphor to Butler is that it exemplifies how reflexivity, the capacity that we take to be the condition of autonomous subjectivity, is of a piece with internalisation, the process by which we subjugate ourselves to the authorities (persons, norms, principles) on whom we depend for recognition. We should understand this ‘turn’ not as an activity of the subject (for if turning inaugurates the subject then there is no subject to make the turn) but as a ‘trope’ by which we not only conceive of generation but perform it: we ‘turn’ a phrase that enables us to speak about the subject’s generation with due respect for its twofold relationship to power.

Butler’s insight reminds one of the re-definition of scale as contexts collapsed within the unit of analysis and of the role that re-definition has played in my previous work for capturing the ‘irreducible textuality’ (Spivak, 1990, 1993, 1999) of the subject and thus opening the way for a distinctive brand of a *political ontoepistemology* that we labelled ‘recursive cartographies’.

To be sure, much of poststructuralism and social theory endeavours to rework the relation between epistemology and ontology, especially by rendering apparent their indelible relationality and their myriad entanglements with a third term, namely *politics*. Although the chief concern of this book has been with the discipline of geography (our ‘unit of analysis’), I collapsed onto it the grid of the aforementioned political ontoepistemology, whose distinctiveness stands on its *simplicity*. In the twin book *Pragmatic Scepticism and the Possibilities of Knowledge*, I labelled myself a ‘*pragmatic scepticist*’ because the reworking of the relation between ontology, epistemology, and politics was grounded in a simple political decision: we cannot know for sure whether we can or cannot get to know the truth, and therefore the best thing to do or conception to adopt should be decided as a function of its *fruitfulness* for achieving a particular task. This opportunistic attitude prevents epistemic dogmatism and accepts that for particular epistemic communities even ‘outdated’ epistemological tenets might work (e.g. operating with an understanding of truth as ‘mirroring’ the world, etc.).

However, I did not limit to this building block the metatheoretical work undertaken, but went further to elaborate a *simple epistemology of ‘horizons of knowledge’* that captures at once a sense of the *situatedness* of our knowledge claims, a sense of *modesty* that emerges from noticing that any (epistemic) achievement comes with a loss, as well as a sense of the *risk of lock-ins* that appear as we over-indulge within a particular horizon.

The next move consisted in using the label ‘*recursive cartographies*’ for designating the constellation of epistemology, ontology, and politics that is enacted in the production of scientific knowledge. This move was further strengthened by the theorisation of the shift from *science-in-*

the-abstract to *the mundane spaces of science* and emphasised: a) the relationality of the world (*'recursiveness'*; things or objects are the 'result' of relations; they do not have causal precedence) and b) that any possible imagination of the 'world out-there' (ontology) has already into it our epistemology and our politics (in that sense, the crafting of worlds out-there resembles the political ontoepistemology enacted in each and every *cartography*). This step was crucial in that it marked a clear departure from the mainstream modern scientific imagination of what Heidegger called 'the world-as-exhibition'. In Deutsche's words (Deutsche, 1995, page 171):

This [modern scientific] imagination stages the world-as-exhibition and, at the same time, is fabricated by the picture it creates. But it is also constituted by disavowing its dependence on the image. Adopting an objectifying epistemology that endows objects of study with an independent existence, the [scientific] imagination puts aside the discourse-object and subject-object relationship and thereby separates itself from the picture. The subject's purported ability to see the world as a whole is an effect, then, of not seeing the continuity between itself and the visual field, or, put differently, of disclaiming its non-continuity with itself...the world-as-exhibition has been inhabited from its inception by a radical uncertainty, an instability produced by the image's constitutive exclusions. These exclusions betray the incompleteness of every meaning and position, making the perception of a comprehensive space inseparable from a sense of what threatens that space.

My brand of political ontoepistemology accounted for 'the image's constitutive exclusions' by introducing an understanding of *scale* as contexts collapsed within one's unit of analysis and by theorising three simple concepts: a) a *unit of analysis*, b) *epistemic lock-in* (i.e. forgetting to put ourselves in the 'map' we research), and c) *ontological lock-in* (i.e. forgetting to study how the things outside the unit of

analysis shape it, how the outside is constitutive of the inside).

Yet, 'recursive cartographies' also displaced the mainstream ontological model of Western thought premised on the major dichotomy between society and nature, and the subsequent delineation of realms (economic, political, cultural) within the first term of this dichotomy. Instead, it divides the world into *rhythms*, *events*, and *legacies*, whilst at the same time underlying their *co-production* and the processes through which they *translate* onto one another. This simple division has served and can serve three major political and epistemic purposes. The *first* is that it undoes the *politics of stratified ontologies* entailed by the purification (Latour, 1993) of the world into 'culture' and 'nature' and offers a way of thinking beyond the paucity of this modern binary. This contribution adds to the recent struggles of critical geographers (Whatmore, 2002, Castree, 2003) to theorise the world in non-modern ways and is significant to the extent that, unlike them, it does not allow *modern* allegories of reading to undermine its reworking (e.g. the rhetoric of hybridity might be read in a modern way, as presupposing the ontological precedence of the pure poles out of the interaction of which hybrids emerge).

The *second* purpose served refers to the *politics of subject formation*, in that it pushes the subject outside the foreground, to underline how it is an effect of social formations that exceed it: rhythms (language, laws, moral codes, economic organisation), legacies (education, dependence on previous critical choices), and events (successions of what Deleuze called happy or unhappy encounters). This emphasis on the subject's 'negative agency' (McNay, 2000) is still needed in the context of the all-to-frequent reification and epistemic fetishisation of the subject in geographical discourse. Finally, the third *purpose*

of the three-fold model, and the one of paramount importance for the present book, concerned the reworking of our understanding of the relation between past, present, and future, by an *account of historicity* that is co-extensive with any imagination of the world out-there: there is nothing outside the relation between past things (legacies) and the present of constancy (rhythms) and disruption (events). This particular way of cutting the world brings the historicity of things to the foreground, undoes the fantasy of genuine novelty, insists on the fact that the relation between rhythms, legacies, and events precedes them, and pays attention to how that relation depends, at its turn, on the subject's relation with it (i.e. how the epistemological is already into our ontology; how a certain reading of a text authorises a particular system of interpretation).

This political ontoepistemology provided an account of the relation between epistemology, ontology, and politics that is *simple* to grasp, detail which distinguishes it from more sophisticated brands from contemporary social theory. It has served our analysis of geography well and can help in other (non-paratextual) contexts, too (Simandan, 2001b, 2003a-c). However, it would be unfortunate if this insistence on the relation between epistemology, ontology, and politics leaves in the background another relation theorised in the twin books of my research project: that between the *paratextual* (the ensemble of discourses about what geography is, what it should be about, how it works, how it should work, etc.) and the *textual* (the geographical discourses concerned not with the discipline in itself, but with the 'real' world out-there – e.g. 'substantive' work in economic geography, electoral geography, environmental geography, etc.) of geography. In my previous book, I have argued that traditional scientific disciplines in general and geography in particular are *traces*

of the intercourse between the textual and the paratextual, and this strong claim entailed a number of observations.

To begin with, unlike recent academic hybrids, traditional disciplines possess a tradition of reflexivity that has actively shaped their research agendas, their paradigmatic affiliations, and their strategy within the politics of academe. In a sense, they represent sites of epistemodiversity that would be lost in a post-disciplinary organisation of scientific labour. *Secondly*, the particular dynamics of each of the two terms *and* of their intercourse is such that traditional disciplines are inherently interdisciplinary. This refers both to their self-definition in function of their 'public' performance at the table of science-as-conversation, and to the continuous inter-disciplinary commerce with concepts (e.g. 'dwelling'), methods, and theories, that travel as they are marked with the signifiers of the respective disciplines.

Finally, reflections and research on the working of a particular discipline, on its dynamic of paradigms and protocols of enquiry, and on its reproduction of particular assemblages of assumptions are in no way 'blue-skies' endeavours that serve nothing more but advancing the careers of lazy geographers. Instead, I have tried to explain that the good quality of proper 'textual' geography is largely derived from the strength of this paratextual geography, and that the latter necessarily haunts each and every piece of proper geography (cf. the two case studies in the chapter 'Reflections on the logic of epistemic neglect'). This observation destroys the *fantasy of relevance* upon which intra-disciplinary hierarchies and allocations of merit tend to operate. To be sure, the fantasy of relevance takes on a peculiar manifestation in the discourses of critical geography in that, apart from putting a premium on research that directly serves social well being, it also occludes how the relevance of something is inescapably a function of the

structures from which one speaks. In other words, geography serves social well-being through its scientific research, and, as such, its social relevance is primarily a function of the perceived quality of that scientific research. Relevance does not come, then, from the mere engagement with a visibly 'relevant' topic (AIDS, industrial decline, gender inequality) but from the quality of that engagement as assessed against various protocols of enquiry and norms of good research. This reinscription of relevance further breaks the classification of academic disciplines and subdisciplines into reactionary (metaphysics, economics, etc.) and progressive (cultural studies, social theory). This happens because a better quality of a discipline's research can be achieved by appropriating the tools of the 'reactionary' and using them for the right political cause. And it is this manoeuvre that was attempted in my analysis of three new ways that can be opened to improve geography as a knowledge producer.

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