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## Place as social space

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# PART ONE

## Chapter One : Place as Social Space

This chapter focuses on aspects of the work of two writers, the French cultural philosopher Henri Lefebvre and the British urban and cultural geographer, David Harvey. The discussion is prefaced by a brief consideration of aspects of Walter Benjamin's writing on cities. These writers present an approach to problems of commodification and homogenisation in urban life and social space which is primarily Marxist in character and focuses on issues of social emancipation, justice and equality.

### 1.1. Walter Benjamin's Cities

Walter Benjamin would in many ways seem to have been as interested in places, particularly cities and their streets and buildings, as in literary texts. Even Benjamin's earliest major work, *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*, includes a strongly architectural element, particularly towards the end where the ruins of an existing state of affairs are seen as having the potential to lead to a catastrophic breakdown that will lead to something better (Benjamin 1977).

This is a characteristic motif in Benjamin's work. As Susan Buck-Morss points out in her analysis of the Arcades Project, the early work on tragic drama has as much to say about the present as the past (Buck Morss 1991: 6). The baroque dramatists Benjamin discusses wander among a wilderness of signs, finding refuge from meaninglessness only in death and the hope of a better life beyond the earthly one. As Benjamin's later work shows, there are parallels here with the state of the modern capitalist economy which similarly disorients its consumers with a phantasmagoric, commodified second nature.

As Buck-Morss indicates, Benjamin's work on seventeenth century tragic drama gives off the feel of still being remain trapped within the interiors of a musty academia inside of which Benjamin ultimately felt incapable of remaining (Buck Morss 1991 :17). It is in the essays included in *One Way Street* that an escape begins to take place. This is evident in the overall form of 'One-Way Street' and particularly its opening section. (My subsequent allusions are to Benjamin 1979: 167–222; 293–346). The whole consists of a series of short pieces, mini-feuilletons — the verbal equivalent of exceptionally sophisticated picture postcards. These work like expanded slogans in contrast to the long, involved meditative continuity of the earlier book. The opening section is entitled 'Filling Station', a reference to something which is at once outside, a building, a piece of machinery, and an aid to movement. The piece does not describe an actual filling station but refers to the currently sterile state of life and culture and

the 'oil' of convictions and opinions, in contrast to essentially meaningless facts, that will be needed to get German social and cultural life going again. One of the longest sections in 'One-Way Street' is 'Imperial Panorama', an equally provocative analysis of the disastrous state of German society. The feeling of claustrophobia and the need for freedom is communicated with particular intensity in the paragraphs of this section and it is almost as if a later section 'Travel Souvenirs' allows its reader to escape from this situation, like a tourist on holiday from the crisis at home.

These perceptions are more powerfully interconnected in a series of essays on the cities of Naples, Moscow, Marseilles, Berlin and then in the unfinished project on Paris. Here we find Benjamin directly involved with a complexly impressionistic analysis of the meaning of the city in various contexts. The first essay, on Naples, is co-authored with Ajsa Lacis, to whom 'One-Way Street' is dedicated. It is as if escape needs to occur at a personal, emotional level as well as that of the intellect. Here the movement, swirl and transitivity of the city's life is emphasized as much as its poverty, backwardness, crime and superstition. In contrast to the Germany invoked in 'Imperial Panorama', people can communicate with one another in forms of porous collectivity where the private and the public intermingle:

True laboratories of this great process of intermingling are the cafes. Life is unable to sit down and stagnate in them. They are sober, open rooms resembling the political People's Cafe, and the opposite of everything Viennese, of the confined, bourgeois, literary world. (Benjamin 1979: 176)

Open, active movement is contrasted with the sedentary seductions of German, or in this case Austrian, bourgeois culture. Naples might be an old city but it offers possibilities for the future. The possibility of that future is glimpsed more fully in the essay on Moscow, revolutionary city of the future par excellence. Benjamin acknowledges his role as outside observer, but not in any negative sense: 'More quickly than Moscow itself, one gets to know Berlin through Moscow.' (177). This thought is expanded in terms of the relation of reading the 'image of the city and its people' in relation to 'the intellectual situation.' (177). This time the fullness and rapidity of life on the streets of Moscow is contrasted with the slowness and emptiness of Berlin (178). As with the visit to Naples, and as in sections of 'One Way Street', childhood is also revisited. In Moscow this is done in terms of walking: 'The instant one arrives the childhood stage begins. On the thick sheet of ice of the streets walking has to be relearned.' (179). The picture of revolutionary Moscow Benjamin paints amounts in many respects to what Henri Lefebvre terms a 'rhythmanalysis' (Lefebvre 1991: 205–207). This picture is conceived in fascination at an open laboratory of social experience where everything, at least for a while, seems to be possible — a street-car ride, for instance, teaches Benjamin about the intermingling of modes and speeds of peasant movement and those of recent technologies (Benjamin 1979: 190–191).

The next city to be considered is Marseilles. Here the first of two essays is preceded by a quotation from the work of Breton and one is reminded of the proximity of Benjamin's more futurist and Marxist approach in these essays to that of the surreal-

ism for which he had considerable admiration and to which he also devoted an essay (Benjamin 1979: 235–239). In the first essay we have a series of picture-postcard reflections, in the second, ‘Hashish in Marseilles’ a more specific experiment where Benjamin takes his escape a stage further, by smoking a limited amount of hashish and then wandering the streets of Marseilles. Here he is again able to find the sense of open movement and community lacking in his native land and city.

The final essay in this series is the longer and more reflective one on Berlin, ‘A Berlin Chronicle’. Here we seem to move back not merely to Berlin but to a past of ghosts and interiors. The opening sentence summons up spirits of the past while at the same time celebrating a discovery: ‘Now let me call back those who introduced me to the city.’ (293). We are again returned to childhood and learning not so much to walk as to gain a sense of direction and orientation. This line of thinking evolves into reflections on the fantasy of mapping life the way one might map a city: ‘I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out the sphere of life — bios — on a map.’ (295). One might suggest that this comes to partial fruition in the massive complex of configurations produced in Benjamin’s research into the streets and arcades of Paris. The essay on Berlin proceeds to a reflection on the work of Proust, a figure of Paris, but one here invoked in terms of his use of personal memory, with which this essay is so much concerned. In Berlin, we have, for the first time, a place with which Benjamin has long been intimately connected, to which he can relate the memories which stem from events and processes which occurred there and in which he was personally involved.

The essay on Berlin is no less impressive in the perceptive, precise and urbane communication of Benjamin’s fascinations with the city than are the other essays. It has, though, a considerably different modality, in the way that it is saturated with reflections on past, personal experiences. The melancholy of the earlier work reappears. At one point Benjamin even recalls sitting writing his book on tragic drama. We seem to move towards an archaeology of the various levels of the past buried in the history of cities, rather than a more simple celebration of their future possibilities. This continues in the examination of Baudelaire’s poetry and its contemporary relevance, as well as much else besides, in the writing on Paris and its arcades. The essay ends on an arrestingly enigmatic note and here it would seem pertinent to quote the last two sentences rather than just the final one:

But that evening I must have memorized my room and my bed, as one observes exactly a place where one feels dimly that one will later have to search for something one has forgotten there. Many years afterward I discovered what I had ‘forgotten’, a part of the news that my father had broken to me in that room: that the illness was called syphilis. (Benjamin 1979: 346)

The more intriguing sentence here is perhaps the first, which contains the generalisation that precedes the concrete actuality. Something is recorded unconsciously, felt ‘dimly’ but not articulated in conscious thought; relation to places is as much unconscious as conscious. Rather as with Benjamin’s analysis of contemporary German social trends, the thought is connected to death, disease and corruption.

A number of general points can be made in relation to the significance of Benjamin's work for the subsequent discussion. His approach involves not merely writing about culture beyond the literary text and getting out into the transitive actualities of the streets of cities, but also adopting a complexly impressionistic style which is capable of picking up the mosaic of surface details. He eventually forces these into a configuration that offers the hope, if not the promise, of a fuller chaos that will produce redemption from the organised second nature of commercial capitalism. The writings considered here are generally more optimistic in this respect, in their jubilantly modernist celebration of glimpses of the city as a place of active, transitive community, but the later work becomes more darkly meditative as Benjamin returns to the more sombre and thoroughly familiar world of his native city. The emphasis on flow and transitivity as real, authentic social intercourse rather than the cynically limited version encouraged by forces of capital accumulation is a theme that emerges in other writers to be considered here. In addition, the darkly baroque world of Benjamin's earlier writing, and perhaps much of his later work, can be compared with Iain Sinclair's *London*, where ways of escape from a labyrinthine condition of meaningless degradation play a significant role. Sinclair does not, like Benjamin, directly refer to notions of redemption, but neither does Raymond Williams whose long history of place involves a steady, slow negotiation of elements, human and otherwise, which can both benefit and threaten the continuation and development of its human inhabitants. What Benjamin does seem to share with Williams and Henri Lefebvre is a belief in the significance of a cultural politics of everyday life where the ordinary details of everyday practices and transactions are at least as significant as the exceptional achievements of exceptional individuals.

Like many of the writers discussed here, Benjamin resorts to the reflective walk as an inspirational source of observation. The only writers who do not obviously share this characteristic with him are the other, Marxist, writers discussed in this chapter. It is worth considering how much this is due to a relatively totalising approach to the conceptualisation of social space, an issue we will return to in Michel de Certeau's distinction between the 'map' and the 'tour' in the next chapter. Benjamin himself notes in 'The Storyteller' that the story is being replaced by the more totalising and informational practice of the novel (Benjamin 1992). It can be observed in this context that both Williams's *People of the Black Mountains* and Sinclair's *Downriver* display a form which comprises a suite of tales rather than the main-narrative-stem-with-subordinate-branches type of narrative structure that tends to characterise more conventional novels. It is this type of structure that is challenged in various ways by Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between arboreal and rhizomatic forms of thinking, which is discussed in the next chapter.

## 1.2. Lefebvre and the social production of space

*The Production of Space* (1991) is one of Lefebvre's later works in a long and prolific writing career. This was devoted, among other things, to an analysis of the nature of modernity, to an exploration of the functions and potential of the modern city and to the development of a liberating cultural politics of everyday life. His writings have been a major influence on the work of numerous British sociologists, geographers, and political and cultural theorists. The opening part of *The Production of Space* is taken up with a hostile analysis of ways in which writers, such as Kristeva, Derrida and Barthes, associated with semiotics-based approaches to cultural issues fail to disentangle themselves from what Lefebvre sees as an essentially mentalistic notion of space:

This school, whose growing renown may have something to do with its growing dogmatism, is forever promoting the basic sophistry whereby the philosophico-epistemological notion of space is fetishized and the mental realm comes to envelop the social and physical ones. (Lefebvre 1991:15)

Of particular interest is the distinction Lefebvre makes between the mental, associated with thought, language, abstraction, sophistry, on the one hand, and the social and the physical on the other. He offers in place of this a 'unitary theory' (11) which will encounter what he terms the 'truth of space' in contrast to the 'true space' constructed by the representations of current thinking in philosophy and spatial science (9). Lefebvre's approach is totalising in the Hegelian and Marxist aspects of its attempt to produce a deeper level of explanatory adequacy in relation to notions of space and in the way in which it resorts to a broad, philosophical history of the space it characterises in order to do so. At the same time, Nietzschean notions of difference emerge increasingly as his history reaches the present.

Lefebvre's primary conceptual tool is the triadic distinction between 'spatial practice', 'representations of space', and 'representational space', (characterised as 'the perceived', 'the conceived' and 'the lived' in more general as opposed to specifically spatial terms) what Edward Soja refers to as his trialectics of space, providing his own interpretation of its significance in the second chapter of his book *Third-space* (Soja 1996). Lefebvre's conceptual triad is used in relation to a categorization of historico-spatial epochs, moving from 'absolute space' through 'abstract' space and 'contradictory space' to 'differential space', though Michael Dear makes note of a long list of premodifying adjectives which appear in combination with 'space' in Lefebvre's book (Dear 1997:49). Here Lefebvre attempts not merely to describe the world but to change it by providing an analytical universal history of space which can also function as a programme to challenge the repressions imposed by what he terms a 'dominant space' through other, tactical 'appropriations' of that space. Again, we can see similar tactics employed by the writers discussed in the next chapter.

Lefebvre's is not only an aggressively political type of analytical history, it is also a 'long' history, a characteristic it shares not only with approaches such as that, perhaps most famously, of Braudel, but also a great number of the writers discussed

in this dissertation (Lefebvre 1991: 16). The earlier part of this history concerns itself with the way in which earlier forms of space are dominated and abstracted into something more exploitative. Here, for instance, Lefebvre discusses the origins of absolute space:

The cradle of absolute space — its origin, if we are to use that term — is a fragment of agro-pastoral space, a set of places named and exploited by peasants, or by nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists. A moment comes when, through the actions of masters or conquerors, a part of this space is assigned a new role, and henceforward appears as transcendent, as sacred...(234)

This passage is cited partly because it is relevant to some of the major preoccupations of Raymond Williams' *The People of the Black Mountains*. One of the more interesting observations made in the later part of Lefebvre's book is the way in which modern social relations are characterised as producing an abstractly fragmented and exploitative, as opposed to more genuinely differential, form of social space. The body is 'pulverized' into sufficiently manipulable parts and then reconstituted in a deceptive mirror-like world of commercialised fragmentation, closely comparable to Benjamin's characterisation of a cynically exploitative second nature. Like Deleuze and Guattari, in *Anti-Oedipus*, Lefebvre sees this as a socio-historically produced more than a natural, universal human condition. He then turns to an analysis of the underlying contradictions embodied in such a space. Here again the primary concern is with challenging the 'true space' of intellectual theorising which currently, in Lefebvre's view, succeeds only in reinforcing the compartmentalising priorities of capital accumulation and which 'swallows' the 'representational space' that people occupy and reproduce in their day to day lives. The real challenge to this domination can only be provided by uncovering the 'truth of space' whose theoretical analysis can reconnect people's behaviour to their full bodily desire and to difference, as opposed to the limited differences or 'needs' afforded by that social space which currently dominates and encloses human behaviour. In his conclusion, Lefebvre suggests that this 'truth of space' involves acceptance of the replacement of the notion of 'totality' by that of 'centrality', where the latter concept refers to: 'A momentary centre.' (399):

The notion of *centrality* replaces the notion of *totality*, repositioning it, relativizing it, and rendering it dialectical. Any centrality, once established, is destined to suffer dispersal, dissolve or explode from the effects of saturation, attrition, outside aggressions, and so on. This means that the 'real' can never become completely fixed, that it is constantly in a state of mobilization. It also means that a general *figure* (that of the centre and 'decentring') is in play, which leaves room for both repetition and difference, for both time and juxtaposition. (399).

Lefebvre's thinking here comes close to that of two perspectives to be discussed later in this book, those of Deleuze and Guattari and Arran Gare. Lefebvre does not appear to demand a total explosion of difference but a more traditional dialectic between

centripetal and centrifugal tendencies in social organization. Gare offers something similar in relation to theoretical elements of an ecologically sensitive regional politics, while Deleuze and Guattari push further in the direction of a politics of difference by apparently refusing any kind of centre in their espousal of rhizomatics.

In his final chapter Lefebvre again appeals to notions of the body, the senses and an analysis of rhythms as the way forward to a more effective spatial politics: 'The passive body (the senses) and the active body (labour) converge in space. The analysis of rhythms must serve the necessary and inevitable restoration of the total body.' (405) It has already been observed that an approach of this kind is to be found in aspects of Benjamin's writings on cities. Lefebvre seems to provide here a more totalised abstract analysis of space as socially produced, in partial contrast to Benjamin's more strikingly impressionistic and concretised illustrations of the city in motion. A powerful series of speculations and analyses is presented concerning the significance and historical development of space as a social concept, space as a place in which the origins of thought and behaviour are nurtured and which is always crucial to their formation. Space is presented not as something that can be dealt with separately in convenient forms of technical and academic compartmentalisation but as fundamental, pervasive and not easy to get at in terms of an effective critical analysis.

### **1: 3 David Harvey: place, space and postmodernity**

David Harvey is a writer who clearly acknowledges the influence of Lefebvre on his work. In *Social Justice and the City* (Harvey 1973) he describes the development he made from a liberal, descriptive geographer to one who wanted to intervene decisively in processes of social injustice. In *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Harvey 1990), on which we shall focus here, he produces a work which is in many ways as broad in scope and decisively innovatory as Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*. The book is divided into four main parts. The first provides a discussion of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism as forms of socio-cultural development, looking for elements not merely of difference but also of continuity in relation to each. Harvey expresses an attitude of scepticism towards more playfully anarchic forms of postmodernist cultural theorising and activity, as the following extract indicates:

(...) postmodernism, with its emphasis upon the ephemerality of *jouissance*, its insistence upon the impenetrability of the other, its concentration on the text rather than the work, its penchant for deconstruction bordering on nihilism, its preference for aesthetics over ethics, takes matters too far. It takes them beyond the point where any coherent politics are left, while that wing of it that seeks a shameless accommodation with the market puts it firmly in the tracks of an entrepreneurial culture that is the hallmark of reactionary neo-conservatism. Postmodernist philosophers tell us not only to accept but to revel in the fragmentations and the cacophony of voices through which the dilemmas of the modern world are understood.

Obsessed with deconstructing and delegitimizing every form of argument they encounter, they can end only in condemning their own validity claims to the point where nothing remains for any basis of reasoned action. Postmodernism has us accepting the reifications and partitionings, actually celebrating the activity of masking and cover-up, all the fetishisms of locality, place, or social grouping, while denying that kind of meta-theory which can grasp the political-economic processes (money flows, international divisions of labour, financial markets and the like) that are becoming ever more universal in their depth, intensity, reach and power over daily life.

(Harvey 1990: 116–117)

In this passage the attitude to postmodern culture and philosophising is reminiscent of that of Lefebvre towards earlier aspects of cultural theorising. The 'difference' perceived by postmodernists is seen as collaboration in a process of 'fragmentation' by Harvey. The criticism is not made in the name of any immediate appeal to the truth of a deeper structural analysis but in terms of a 'coherent politics' which still sufficiently adheres to reason. The later charges push postmodernism further into the characterisation of an obfuscating neoconservatism which has relieved itself of any real responsibility with regard to the critical analysis of existing socio-cultural conditions. A paragraph later, 'the rhetoric of postmodernism', specifically that of Lyotard, author of *The Postmodern Condition* (1984), comes under attack. In some ways, this would seem a little ironic in that the passage of invective quoted would seem to be rhetoric with a vengeance.

Just how effective Harvey's rhetoric might be is difficult to gauge, but the narrative of his book moves, in its second and third parts, to consideration of economic and then spatial factors in the rise of postmodernism. The second part provides an account of the transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist economy which organizes its production through a regime of 'flexible accumulation', a process which is more highly sensitive to minor qualitative differences in location and therefore to the significance of place, though for manipulative and cynical reasons connected with commercial profit (Harvey 1990:141–172).

The third part of the book focuses on spatial issues, adapting aspects of the work of Bourdieu as well as Lefebvre in order to characterise the spatial aspects of the transition from modernity to postmodernity. What emerges from this is Harvey's celebrated notion of 'time-space compression' but also, perhaps, particularly given the extent of the economic analysis, the impression that the base and superstructure model of Marxist socio-cultural analysis is far from defunct, if in need of a spatial component. The fear expressed in Harvey's seventeenth chapter, on time-space compression and the postmodern condition, is of an increasing tendency towards a reactionary and essentialistic notion of place prompted by bewilderment and insecurity at the speed of late twentieth century socio-economic and technological developments (Harvey 1990: 241–307).

Harvey's aim in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, as both geographer and cultural analyst is to: '(...) pull the condition of postmodernity into the range of a condition accessible to historical materialist analysis and interpretation.'(307). This involves

regarding it as one of a series of waves of 'time-space compression', if one of exceptional intensity and magnitude. It also involves, in the fourth and final part of the book, the announcement of a crisis in historical materialism. Here Harvey criticises the New Left for abandoning some of what he considers to be the crucial elements of historical materialism, particularly the role of the proletariat, and, in focusing on the characterisation and significance of cultural epochs such as modernism and post-modernism, sacrificing the ability to analyse and interpret 'deeper transformations in the culture of capitalism' (306). At the same time, he recommends more openness to categories of difference, to the significance of the media and the image-based nature of much cultural production, as well as to issues of space, and a generally more open-ended approach rather than the more totalising earlier perspectives.

Again, there would seem to be a difficulty here. Harvey's own book is replete with charts and accompanying commentaries on the distinction between modernity and postmodernity, modernism and postmodernism. To be fair, his intention is to challenge the notion of a complete break and to replace it with one of continuity between two different but successive phases of the adjustment of a socio-economic regime to its accumulative requirements. Harvey insists on retaining a Marxist hermeneutic that can read off the significance of socio-cultural developments from a primarily economic base. In this he is perhaps more direct in his approach than Jameson, but provides, at least in principle, a relatively clear form of the 'cognitive mapping' that Jameson calls for. His approach is both direct and aggressive and openly treats factors pertaining to the organization of production as fundamental, as in the second part of the book. In this respect, he would seem to follow the approach of Lefebvre but also to provide an even more directly contentious and less abstract analysis of current developments in his attack on what he sees as the irresponsible excesses of postmodernist thinking. Whether his final section provides a way through the dilemmas he poses, beyond acknowledging a difficult situation and opting for a deep, clarifying, rational analysis in opposition to the surface 'voodoo' of postmodernist culture and Reaganomics, is, however, questionable.

In a slightly later paper, *From space to place and back again* (Harvey 1993), Harvey continues where he left off in suggesting modifications to current approaches in historical materialism and debates the problematic nature of place as a form of difference. He notes the almost endless range of meanings attributable to place but then suggests that 'some underlying unity' (4) may be accessible among this confusing richness of possible significance and then proposes to focus on a 'territorial' sense of place in relation to other possible connotations. His initial emphasis is on the social production and organization of space through processes of capital accumulation and on the perception of place in relation to this process. Harvey observes that: 'The geographical landscape that results is not evenly developed but strongly differentiated. 'Difference' and 'otherness' is *produced* in space through the simple logic of uneven capital investment and a proliferating geographical division of labour.' (Harvey 1993: 6). He then moves to another list of four factors in this production. These boil

down to: 1) greater feelings of insecurity of place since around 1970 with the decline in power of large urban-industrial centres; 2) the greater geographical mobility of capital due to diminished transport costs; 3) a much greater active desire on the part of local inhabitants to differentiate their place from others in view of the increased sensitivity to qualitative aspects of places as sites of investment; 4) the rise of speculative place construction as a means of absorbing excess capital. Having made this primarily economic point, which refuses place any great significance other than as a marker of trends in capital investment, Harvey then concedes that the significance people attach to the places they live in is not simply a matter of economic survival. In this context he returns to Heidegger's thinking on place in relation to industrial and technological development and back to the point of a feeling of 'homelessness' (Harvey 1993:11) which is close to that of the placelessness described by Relph. Relph is in fact briefly referred to here in the context of a sceptical summary of notions of authenticity and dwelling but this scepticism is balanced by sympathetic references to writers of a more Marxist orientation, such as Juergen Habermas and Raymond Williams, who also pay attention to the significance of place.

This leads Harvey to explore the significance of place in terms of a comparison of Marxist and Heideggerian approaches. The international and communicative elements of Marxism are stressed but its potential insensitivity to local differences noted (13). The dangerously 'exclusionary and parochialist' (14) aspects of Heidegger's thinking are again focused on but what the approaches of both Heidegger and Marx are claimed to have in common is the characteristic of ' (...) seeing authentic communities as materially and physically rooted in particular places through dwelling, rather than as being constructed solely, as so frequently happens in postmodern rhetoric, in the realms of discourse.' (14). Whether or not this claim is valid, the attack on postmodernism as a form of discourse-based perspective which takes little account of sensuous, physical reality in contrast to the modernist thinking of both Marx and Heidegger, is again indicative of an even stronger tendency in Harvey than in Lefebvre to establish a divide between the base of material realities and the superstructure of verbal ones.

This in itself can be seen as part of an emphasis on ways of resisting rather than merely reproducing the excesses of late twentieth century capital's 'desperate speculative gamble' (27) to produce a space sufficiently conducive to the requirements of sufficiently high levels of accumulation. Consequently, a modified form of Heidegger's thinking, one combined with a greater degree of emphasis on traditional Marxist approaches to capital accumulation, is included in Harvey's thinking as an element of the 'treatment of difference' that we have been told at the beginning of the essay must become a fundamental aspect of Marxist thinking (5).

Harvey seems to opt for a Marxism with a degree of 'difference' and Heideggerian appeals to the significance of place, though in a slightly more uneasy fashion than Lefebvre. As with Lefebvre, Harvey seems to strive for a modified dialectical approach to questions of space and place, but also to seek for a more directly practical and empirical approach to actual instances which illustrate the nature of broader

processes. This involves him in a rather more embattled discussion of the problems of dealing with the exploitative features of the space of accumulative capital, particularly that of the last fifteen years dividing the publication of his book from that of Lefebvre. In both Lefebvre's and Harvey's approaches there is a degree of uncertainty regarding the possibility of integrating a respect for multiplicity and difference with a sufficiently incisive analysis of the manipulations of an organised social space. Lefebvre produces an impressive account of the nature of a society's space and the problems of coming to grips with the extent of its hold over our thought and behaviour. At the same time, he still insists on a considerably dualistic distinction between centre and periphery in the form of relations between momentary centres and the edges they bring into contact. Harvey focuses on the more immediate implications of Lefebvre's comparably theoretical programme by essentially applying it to the developments of the last twenty five years. Harvey's problem is to find a way of maintaining a progressive version of the social without surrendering the particularities of difference. His criticism of postmodern culture emphasises its tendency to over-essentialise place and other forms of difference, thereby producing a pseudo-mystical notion of difference which merely collaborates with forms of manipulative social fragmentation, presenting them as a mysterious form of 'being' rather than a constantly developing form of 'becoming' open to contestation from a variety of perspectives. At the same time, Harvey is not completely critical of writers associated with post-structuralism and postmodernism and the next chapter examines aspects of the work of de Certeau and Deleuze and Guattari to see if there may not be some common ground in their approaches to difference, place and the social production and organisation of space.