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PERHAPS HERETICAL

First off I feel obliged to thank Matteo Marconi for this chance to reply to his article and to share it with Marcello Tanca. Both of us have been called into question and associated by our need to use conceptual tools alien to our purely geographical scope, defined as we are as “young authors” who practice an eccentric geography and follow a heretical path whose limit lies both in our total disregard for the logical continuity between modernity and post-modernity – between the subject of modern metaphysics and the post-modern perspective. As for my so-called heretical path, my suspicion is that the subversive force of the “culturalist” turn is compromised by a regime of production of truth akin, by logic and operation, to that of the modern era.

Every suspect is plied with questions, and Matteo Marconi’s four are truly flattering in assigning to me in the geographical debate a position I didn’t expect to occupy. Nevertheless, as my text functions for starters as “food for thought,” I will hazard an answer, albeit a brief one. As a “heretical” geographer, in some ways a misused label, I answer by citing an irreverent lesson that narrates the line and object of my geographical imagination:

It might have been a lecture on Mathematics. Hell, beneath our feet, bounded, - Heaven, above our pates, unbounded. [...] Thus -[...] - may each point of Heaven be mapp’d, or projected, upon each point of Hell, and vice versa. And what intercepts the Projection, about mid-way (reckon’d logarithmically) between? Why, this very Earth, and our lives upon it. We only think we occupy only a solid, Brick-and-Timber City, - in Reality, we live upon a Map. Perhaps even our Lives are but representations of Truer Lives, pursued above and below [...].

The line evokes the philosophy (or its cartographic equivalent), and the object indicates the Earth – the surface where the relentless representations of value that regulate our lives get fleshed out. The genealogy of the quotation depends instead on Olsson’s lesson. To continue with Thomas Pynchon’s terms, what cultural geography tries to do is take account of what lies between *the Heaven above us and the Hell beneath us*. Such a calculation cannot be reduced to Kant’s humiliating moral law by occupying a worldly point of view whose first move is to wonder who this new emerging entity (point) is. Where does it speak from? The second, to see that *this Earth, and our lives on it* are not at all extensive matter but an intensive, furrowed worldly space of capital, scarcely higher than Hell. No tautological subjectivism

– no silent sign regulating equality – nor production of a rhetorical system of geographical truth, but rather an attempt to strategically develop an authentically human geographical theory and practice. My aim, in short, is not to intercept postmodernism, but to draw the lines of the worldly space, or at least decipher its movement. Stated differently, any geographical representation ascribable to the “culturalist” turn always gives the location from which the subject speaks and writes, and few are the feckless who cannot tell the difference between the subject who enunciates and the subject of the enunciation. Just as very few are those who do not intercept those *Truer Existences* above and below us that enable the production and representation of *our Lives*. A supplement to my summary line (of defense) about the discontinuity of modernity: the title David Livingstone chose for his 1992 history of geographical thought is there to remind us that the fracture lines within modernity are already accredited among geographers so as to become the essential feature of the geographical tradition itself. A final consideration. Michael Curry attributes to geographers an insatiable hunger for the so-called *philosophical niceties*, while Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift recognize their systematic indifference to geography and their lack of recognition of the geographical character of the terms and models that are widely used in critical theory and, more generally, in philosophy. Noting such an asymmetry and recognizing a radical insignificance as compared to other forms of knowledge means taking stock of the epistemological urgency to produce truly visible discourses and practices beyond the bounds of geography. And the critical suggestion that concludes Matteo Marconi’s article, while signalling this urgency, completely misses the point: it is precisely the inexhaustible heritage of geographical knowledge that is the authentic place of origin to explore, as Franco Farinelli’s lesson systematically teaches. Olsson’s is instead a good viaticum for Matteo Marconi:

No wonder that people sometimes get lost. Not, however, because we are all mad (although that happens too), but because our navigational tools have become badly outdated, ordering directives designed for another time and another place, politics itself a clandestine case of anamorphic art.

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Abstract - This is a brief reply to Matteo Marconi's article. I have been challenged along with Marcello Tanca with the criticism of practicing a geography that is eccentric but unaware of the logical continuity between modernity and postmodernity. The suspicion is that the subversive impact of the "culturalist" turning point is in fact compromised by a system of production of truth akin by logic, operation and subject to that of the modern era. I have therefore attempted to formulate a possible answer to these comments and to the critical insights of Matteo Marconi, whom I thank for having requested a response to his writing.

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