On Marxist Anthropology

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Contents

Marx relied on anthropology in his logical and historical exposition, and anthropology has long existed in dialectic with Marxism. To study anthropology with Marxist categories or subject Marxism to ethnographic scrutiny, it makes sense to proceed chronologically – the importance of history is something anthropologists and Marxists now often agree on. In the process, we consider how philosophical idealism continues to interfere in efforts to build grounded ethnographic theory, yet how ethnography remains a uniquely useful tool to unsettle idealist abstractions that limit Marxist debate itself.

With attention to how ideas about ideology themselves exist in relation to particular material and historical circumstances, I begin by discussing Marx's treatment of anthropology in his project to historicize capitalism, then how Marxist theory influenced anthropology: by the middle of the twentieth century, the anthropological notion of society was no longer the integrated whole imagined within functionalism, but rather a field characterized by conflict and struggle. Following experiments in material and ecological determinisms, it was feminist and postcolonial revisionings of the 'class consciousness' concept that sparked an epistemological debate that informs the politics of ethnography to the present day – insights of the poststructuralist turn may transcend those of Marx, but they also contain them.

The same feminist and postcolonial interventions also influenced broader social science debates around 'intersectionality', and ultimately the everyday attributions of 'good politics' among the anarchist activists who were the focus of my own ethnographic research (Lagalisse, 2016). I present this research to suggest the utility of anthropology to resolve certain impasses in Marxist theory and practice. In my study of the ethnographic category 'good politics', it becomes clear that people concerned about oppressed identities are not necessarily looking for recognition (as opposed to engaging in 'class struggle') as some have claimed, yet insofar as identities are mobilized as property, no amount of intersectionality talk makes things better for the working class. The same research also exemplifies how cross-cultural analysis may continue to be useful to historicize and denaturalize the logic of capitalism. My ethnographic inspiration to explore the semiotic and legal senses of 'property' across culture helped elucidate how identity functions as property in the activities of anarchist activists, and among contemporary scholars. Transcendence is valued over immanence within the game of 'good politics', because successful identity-appropriation follows from successful self-appropriation.

The late twentieth-century deconstruction of truth, totality and structuralism within the discipline of anthropology was partly in response to feminist and postcolonial critiques, yet this very deconstruction has often been recuperated to interfere in feminist and postcolonial projects. My exposition may help us understand why. Beyond questions of history or justice, ones of property and propriety also lead anthropologists to ignore 'class' in preference for 'race'. Now, insofar as disciplinary priorities involve putting aside 'discourse' to consider 'ontology' once more, the intellectual tools of Marxism may help explain why anthropologists tend to avoid citing the

'material' at the same time. Insofar as this chapter is staged as an intervention, it is to remind twenty-first-century anthropologists of the material importance of knowing their (disciplinary) history, and to challenge the Marxist who still considers identity politics a conundrum to consider applying the materialist method of ethnography.

Sciences of Social Change

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels sought to historicize the logic of private property – if capitalism is the product of particular historical circumstances, then it can be overturned. The study of pre-capitalist societies was therefore important. In *The German Ideology* (Marx, 1978 [1932]) and *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels, 1978 [1848]), Marx and Engels' historical interest concerned feudalism, the period in European history immediately before capitalism. By 1858, however, they had begun discussing 'tribal society'. In Marx's early drafts of *Capital* (1990 [1867]), material later published as *The Grundrisse* (1993 [1858]) or in *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (1964 [1858]), we see his first elaborations on 'tribal', 'classical' and 'oriental' societies, a discussion further developed after 1880 when Marx and Engels discovered the work of anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–81).

Anthropology developed largely as an evolutionary science of human society, directly inspired by Darwin's work on biological evolution (see also Bloch, 1983: 4–6). Henry Morgan's work *Ancient Society* (1877) also proposed an evolutionary scheme, yet Morgan's work differed from that of his contemporaries in that he demonstrated more sympathy for 'primitives' than his peers, and beyond defining 'stages' of social evolution, he concerned himself with *why* one 'stage' should change to another. He proposed that a society passes from one stage to another when various subsystems stop working in complement and therefore come into conflict. Morgan's model of history, wherein evolution leads to the destruction of its own stages, resonates with the Hegelian one that Marx inherited and was working to reinvent (see e.g. Marx, 1978 [1932]) – the Hegelian dialectic is characterized by theses and antitheses that invite syntheses. While figures such as Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) presumed the same laws apply to biological evolution and human societies, Marx and Morgan did not consider human historical processes the same as those of natural selection, and worked to figure them out.

Morgan's work informs Engels' approach in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (2010 [1893]), which proposes that matrilineality is overthrown because a developing system of animal domestication (which leads to material surplus) becomes incompatible with the existing system of inheritance. It was no coincidence that Marx and Engels followed Morgan here and generally concentrated their attentions on the 'family'. Following Hegel, however willingly or unwittingly, the society without private property was to be antithetical to their own and therefore without exploitation. Marx arranged 'kinship relations' and relations in the labour market as

semantic opposites – kinship relations are egalitarian and do not involve one group living off the other. For Marx, the gender division of labour is 'based on a purely physiological foundation' and/or capitalism levels the difference (Marx, 1990 [1867]: 471). Marx and Engels therefore reproduce categories of bourgeois ideology as well as Hegelian ones. The concept of a political public sphere, characterized by conflict and unnatural power, vs. a domestic private sphere, characterized by non-exploitative and natural cooperation, is enshrined in *The Origin* (2010 [1893]), the first Marxist book written with significant anthropological ambition, to then be carried forward in Marxist debate.[1]

A Matter of Perspective

By positing primitive societies as 'classless', Engels denied subsequent Marxists the use of certain sociological tools developed within Marx's work. Debates that disputed the revolutionary role of peasants (as 'primitives') vis-à-vis the proletariat during the Russian Revolution, for example, did not accord with the nuances of Marx's theory of ideology, wherein it is understood that either 'class consciousness' or 'false consciousness' will prevail among a subjugated group contingent on diverse questions of history – the 'ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas' (Marx, 1978 [1932]: 172), yet also 'the bourgeoisie produces its own gravediggers' (Marx and Engels, 1978 [1848]: 480). In a society characterized by power, one's own ideas are influenced by the interests of dominant groups, yet insofar as primitives were idealized as classless, their ideas could be held to reflect reality.

Figures such as Paul Lefargue (1842–1911), Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) and Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918) thus proceeded to treat pre-capitalist human history as an extension of biology, wherein society (including ideology) is a function of technological adaptation (see Bloch, 1983: chapter 4), even though Marx had rejected utilitarian explanations that directly adapted Darwin (1964 [1859]). During this same period, Marx's notion of the material and the ideal being indissoluble also becomes simplified into a two-stage model in which there is *first* material social life ('base') and *then* consciousness and its products ('superstructure' or ideology) – a mechanical materialist reversal of idealist dualism.[2] It is in this context that Gramsci's (1971) later qualification that cultural elements that have no 'necessary class-belonging', necessitating a 'war of position' (for hegemony), becomes relevant. Yet other problems followed: the fact that 'class consciousness' erupts unevenly was addressed by the French Structural school, following Althusser (2005 [1965]), by debating the 'relative autonomy' of superstructures, whereas the British Historical school, following Thompson (1963),

[1] *The German Ideology* (1978 [1932]) and *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (1964 [1858]) also discussed pre-capitalist societies, but only Engels' *Origin* was published at the time.

[2] The passages where Marx clearly separates 'base' and 'superstructure' (Marx 1972 [1859], 1978 [1852]) quickly become tacit truths within Marxist debate; see also Williams (1977: 61–77).

resolved the problem of determinism with the mitigating category of 'experience' (see e.g. Williams, 1980: 59–61).

These mid-century debates about conflict and perspective did not occur within the field of anthropology at the time. Georgi Plekhanov and Franz Boas (1858–1942), widely referred to as the 'father of American anthropology', had shared mentors, and Boas' own rejection of culture as 'adaptation' was key within the development of anthropological 'cultural relativism' (see Bloch, 1983: 105–8), yet during this period there remained strong parallels between the romanticized primitives of early twentieth-century anthropology and contemporary Marxism. Whether we speak of Boas' students in the USA, such as Ruth Benedict (1887–1948) or Margaret Mead (1901–78) who developed the 'culture and personality' school, or Alfred Kroeber (1876–1960) who is now associated with 'symbolic anthropology', or the 'functionalist' or 'structural functionalist' approaches in British anthropology that followed A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1966) and Bronisław Malinowski (1881–1942), anthropologists tended to view society as a cohesive system in equilibrium: cultural institutions exist because they meet the physical and psychological needs of a given people. The Manchester school (e.g. Gluckman, 1955; Turner, 1957) integrated a Marxist lens for conflict, yet much mid-century anthropology also carried forward the fancies of culture-as-adaptation: in the work of Leslie White (e.g. 2007 [1959]) and Julian Steward (e.g. 1955), structural Marxism constitutes a form of ecological determinism. The genealogy of anthropology and Marxism in French literature is largely bracketed here, yet we may note that the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example, is also in dialogue with Marx (see e.g. Lévi-Strauss, 1963: 333–7).

Outside the academy, meanwhile, debates within Marxism and social movements continued and began to affect the discipline of anthropology in a new way. Controversy about the imputed revolutionary consciousness of the peasantry gave way to feminist and postcolonial theorists' own interventions with respect to the categories of 'class struggle' and 'class consciousness' – Marxist theorists produce their own gravediggers as well.

Feminist movements of the 1960s in Europe and North America likewise worked to challenge male domination by debating its historicity – just as private property needs not be an eternal truth, neither does the patriarchy. The feminist concern with historicity was partly in parallel with the Marxist method, and partly a result of adopting a then-established Marxist analytical framework, albeit applied to a different sort of class. Feminist debates also entered and changed anthropology, given their interest in the diversity of human societies across time and space. In some feminist anthropology, patriarchy emerges with agriculture (and economic surplus, à l'Engels), or with Western colonization (e.g. Etienne and Leacock, 1980); for others, 'domestic' vs. 'public' spheres are posited as universal across cultures (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974; cf. Rapp, 1975), yet patriarchy is nonetheless due for an overthrow (for an overview see Fraser and Nicholson, 1990; Moore, 1988). Either way, the social difference between

men and women is not natural (a function of biological adaptation) and is characterized by complex forms of ideology.

As feminist anthropology circulated within social movements and other academic disciplines, renovated Marxist concepts such as social (re)production and emotional labour provided new vocabularies to articulate gendered power (e.g. Federici, 2012; Ferguson and Folbre, 1981). The implications of Marxist 'class consciousness' pertaining to women as a category also facilitated the development of feminist standpoint theory, which adapts Marx's (1978 [1932]) notion of 'partial perspective', specifically 'class consciousness' as elaborated by Lukács (1971), in relation to gender: 'the experiences arising from the activities assigned to women' provide 'less distorted knowledge claims than do men's experiences' (Harding, 1990: 95). This notion is later mobilized and qualified in feminist theorizations of 'intersectionality', which highlight (epistemological) difference among women (see e.g. Collins, 2019; Haraway, 1990).

Notably, in standpoint theory, the analytical emphasis is on the privileged perspective (versus potential 'false consciousness') of the subjugated class. This is also the case in postcolonial theory developed during the same period, wherein contemporary anticolonial and nationalist resistance movements inspired arguments about the revolutionary role of the 'peasantry' once more. The subaltern studies school that focused on South Asian resistance (e.g. Prakash, 2000; Spivak, 1988), the literature on 'new social movements' (e.g. Álvarez and Escobar, 1992) and 'decoloniality' (e.g. Cusicanqui, 2006; Quijano and Ennis, 2000) from Latin America, and all those concerned with Orientalism (Said, 1978) suggested that racialized colonial subjects be granted specific epistemic privilege: capitalism has regularly found its 'sternest negation' from 'peoples organized according to a number of principles at once, including antiracism' (Gilmore, 2008: 39).

The Game of 'Good Politics'

Many celebrated the feminist and anticolonial interventions in their regard to multiple forms of 'difference'. Their moves worked to 'proliferate histories, cultures and identities arrested by previous essentializations' (Prakash, 2000: 185). In Chandra Mohanty's words, 'the particular standpoint of poor and indigenous Third World/South women provides the most inclusive viewing of systemic power' (2003: 232). If revolutionary 'class consciousness' has not yet enthusiastically erupted on a global scale, it is partially because Marxist theories of class do not comprehend the multiplicity of structures of oppression that capitalism relies on and exacerbates, such as those of gender or race. These are now familiar critiques.

Others have voiced concern that capitalism can easily manage 'multiple and competing claimants on the social surplus that it governs' instead of equality in 'the dimension of economic goods' (Ahmad, 1997: 63). There is a danger in accepting 'all the fetishisms of locality, place, or social grouping' while denying theory that can 'grasp the political

economic processes (money flows, international divisions of labour, financial markets, and the like) that are becoming ever more universalizing in their depth, intensity, reach and power over daily life' (Harvey, 1989: 116–17). These are now familiar responses.

Trying my own hand in this long-standing controversy, I suggest the conceptual impasse is partially related to a tendency to begin with abstract categories instead of material social relations, a disciplinary mistake for Marxists and anthropologists both:

> While anti-racist and anti-sexist struggle are guided by the striving for the full recognition of the other, the class struggle aims at overcoming and subduing, annihilating even, the other – even if not a direct physical annihilation, it aims at wiping out the other's socio-political role and function. In other words, while it is logical to say that anti-racism wants all races to be allowed to freely assert and deploy their cultural, political and economic strivings, it is obviously meaningless to say that the aim of the proletarian class struggle is to allow the bourgeoisie to fully assert its identity and goals. (Žižek, 2012: 33–4)

In Žižek's formulation, for example, the subject of action is anti-racism (or anti-sexism): 'Anti-racism wants...'. Yet words are not subjects of action. 'Anti-racism' does not want anything. Sometimes the person who talks about 'anti-racism' is seeking more evenly distributed recognition within the system, but sometimes they are organized in combative autonomist Zapatista or Black Power movements that are not about rights or recognition at all. This being said, Žižek's confusion is perhaps understandable, as the word 'identity' is currently used to connote tacit affinities, explicit affiliations, processes of differentiation, self-identification and identification by others (see Brubaker and Cooper, 2000) – the Marxist distinction between *class-in-itself* and *class-for-itself* is neglected. By starting with ethnographic research as opposed to the abstracted category, however, we may avoid this confusion by apprehending how it happens.

My own research of collaborating anarchist activists throughout Mexico, the USA and Canada (2005–15), which attended to the 'friction' of their encounter (Tsing, 2005), highlighted both a transnational 'anarchist culture' and the place-based 'cultures' that also inevitably inform local anarchist praxes (Lagalisse, 2016). In the process, the particular idiosyncrasies of the English-speaking North American left are thrown into relief, including their specific manoeuvres of self. These plays of self became clear as I studied intersecting structures of power inflecting anarchist movements, such as those of race, class, gender, before studying North American English-speaking anarchists' own particular operationalizations of 'intersectionality', a concept they themselves mobilize to address 'marginalization' in social movement spaces and the broader society. The ways in which activists cite intersectionality in meeting protocols, everyday life and formal trainings such as anti-oppression workshops, all invite certain relationships to, and (self)representations of, one's self and those of others.

Part of the reason the ethnographic method is productive to parse the 'class' vs. 'identity' debate is precisely because it requires approaching 'class' and 'identity' as

emic categories: how: are 'class' and 'identity' cited in everyday life by activists themselves? Further research questions are then to follow from answers to the first: why are persons (emically) understood as 'working class' cited as oppressive more often than others? Why are the activists who are university students the ones talking about their identities? Activists want to learn about 'classism' so they can 'respect working class identity' but cannot find working class facilitators to teach them the etiquette they desire – what is going on? I studied the body language in activist organizing meetings, analysed the games that quantify participants' pain in 'anti-oppression workshops', took note of which self-identities were successfully cited to silence others, counted how many people left the assembly, wrote down who felt 'unsafe', and wondered how they felt safe enough to say so.

I explore the story of Damian, for example, an activist from Mexico living in Montreal who is a person of colour as well as a refugee, yet was not, as a consequence, able to valorize himself as epistemologically privileged within his collective. Carlo, on the other hand, another Mexican refugee more acculturated within the Montreal anarchist scene, was able to mobilize both identity and the value of self-containment (manners) against Damian in one and the same gesture. 'That's why I was so mad about Carlo complaining about me yelling in that meeting – when you know the game and have the tools you can work it (*manejarlo*) as a way to get power'. I likewise present the experience of some Balkan anarchists in Toronto who attended a dance party fundraiser organized by No One is Illegal activists. When the DJ played Balkan music they started bouncing around, at which point they were interrupted by some women who asked if they were cops: they weren't dancing the way everyone else was. The men explained that this is how Balkan people dance to Balkan music but the activists were not impressed. The men's dancing was 'aggressive' and making queer women at the party 'feel unsafe in the space' – they had to leave.

I also invite readers to consider scenarios such as the following: an Egyptian refugee, two Canadian anarchists of colour and one queer white Canadian anarchist are chatting in the hallway of a community organization. The Egyptian says that 'Native Americans were primitives when they were colonized' whereas 'Egypt was a highly advanced civilization'. The Canadian people of colour laugh, exchange glances. (As no indigenous person is present they may laugh, but make sure to roll their eyes to indicate to each other and anyone watching that they did, in fact, recognize the presence of 'bad politics'.) The queer white person maintains a neutral expression until the two people of colour smile at her as well, then smiles back. (The queer white person follows their lead, because if she laughs and the people of colour decide *not* to, they may call *both* her and the Egyptian racist. Neither does the queer white person take initiative in challenging the Egyptian, because the people of colour may say that she is racist because she condescends to Egyptian refugees.)

The game of 'good politics' gradually begins to develop contours. We realize that the person with 'good politics' embodies restraint and deliberation, suppressing emotional and physical display, thus performing an overt display of objectivity and reflexivity.

The person with 'good politics' sees the self as something to be constructed, stylized and performed, and is a serious, self-contained, self-conscious person – one who represents the self in a 'choiceful' manner. Successful seekers of 'good politics' cannot allow conditions for someone to call them oppressive, which means keeping in mind who might draw on an oppressed identity to authorize themselves or others, and maintaining a careful, tentative stance, phrasing one's speech in such a way as to be able to reverse course if necessary depending on subtle cues. All of the bourgeois cultural traits of careful self-presentation and affective restraint characterize and are further encouraged by those seeking 'good politics'. Meanwhile, it also becomes ethnographically evident that identity as 'working class' cannot be mobilized to valorize the self of 'good politics' the way other politicized 'identities' can. Why should all of this be?

Analytical attention to activists' good manners and their logic of self-identity suggested their connection via the logic of property. The proximity of the words propriety and property was also a clue, yet it was attention to activists' everyday practice and to the body, as well as their self-reported abstract categories, that invited perception of a common morphology among activists' tendency to privilege words over action, their subcultural sanction against emotional expression (and its relation to 'safe space') and their abstraction of experience into fixed and bounded identity-categories: the *form* of one's utterance being valued over its content, and the abstraction of material oppression itself to neatly visible signifiers of the same, is homologous. In each instance, performance of transcendence is valued over a necessarily imperfect dialogic orientation, as is the abstract self over the relational body, which itself must be bounded and self-contained as much as possible. The reasons why Damian did not have the self-orientation to propertize himself with pain whereas Carlo did, the reasons why the violence suffered by the 'white' Balkan refugees could not be registered, and the reasons why middle class women were able to successfully mobilize both legible identity and the virtues of bodily containment to forbid their exuberance, are one and the same.

As my attention was gradually brought to consider the relevance of property in activist dynamics around 'identity', I proceeded to explore the cross-cultural relation between semiotic and legal property. I reproduce this discussion in part as well, as the material may suggest how cross-cultural analysis, however fraught, remains relevant to Marxist thought.

Property in Perspective

Across diverse cultures, words referencing 'property' often bundle three meanings. Property (1) can mean something that one controls and/or legally represents, but not necessarily exclusively, such as slaves or women whose activity may fall under the power of one or more people. Property (2) can also connote exclusion, i.e. the exclusion of others from the property or the exclusion of oneself from it. Excluding others from

one's property is familiar, intrinsic to Western private property rights where something is held 'against all the world'. Excluding *oneself* may not be as intuitive for us but is clarified by considering property in the semiotic mode (3), which makes something what it is, i.e. 'heat is the property of fire'. It is an extension of this usage when we refer to 'my' boss who I do not own in the way I do 'my' car. This third meaning is likewise in operation when aristocratic clans on the Lau Islands of Fiji are said to 'own' the species of animals, fish and trees that are associated with them, and which they do not control. Exclusion of oneself here interplays with property in the semiotic mode insofar as these species are tabu: the clan is forbidden to touch the things they are said to 'own'.

Here I follow Graeber (2007), who suggests these logics of property inhere within all social hierarchy insofar as the greater the purview of (political, legal) representatives, the more they themselves are set apart, considered a more 'exclusive' sort of person, and are spoken of in a way that makes them more abstract – they are not called by their individual name but rather by a kin term or title of the group they are seen to represent. This is true in Fiji as well as regarding the transcendental property of being the 'Queen of England'. The lack of respect involved by calling the Queen by her first name, touching her, or making reference to bodily functions in her presence are all connected insofar as a relation of avoidance and her constitution as 'property', in the dual sense of abstract and enclosed, are one and the same. Whether we speak of lineages, clans and tribes, or mayors, governors and presidents, in each case representatives are seen fit to engage in dialogue with others who share the same property as them, whereas those who they represent or 'include', those who constitute their property, must stand in a relation of avoidance.

Graeber (2007) highlights how the sanction against initiating physical contact with 'my' boss lines up with the logic of avoidance as found in the anthropological literature on 'joking' vs. 'avoidance' relations (e.g. Radcliffe-Brown, 1940), as well as Bakhtin's (1984) discussion of the carnivalesque – Bakhtin's 'classical body' (vs. the 'grotesque') suggests hierarchy and avoidance insofar as the superior party is constructed as self-contained, discrete and shut off rather than continuous with the material world around them (transcendent as opposed to immanent). Graeber (2007) emphasizes these connections to suggest that social hierarchy necessarily involves constructing superiors as abstract (transcendental) property/properties vs. the relative materiality (immanence) of others. Whether or not this phenomenon is entirely universal, Graeber's classical comparative method suggests that social hierarchy generally involves a combination of linear and taxonomic hierarchy, which is what Lévi-Strauss referred to as 'universalization' and 'particularization' (1966: 161), and what Dumont (1970) elaborated as higher categorical ranks 'encompassing' those beneath.[3] Graeber's (2007) qualification is that

[3] Dumont (1970) studies the Hindu caste system; this phenomenon may also apply within the logic of 'pollution' among many pre-colonial peoples, which, as Mary Douglas (1966) illustrates, has as much to do with mixing (abstract) categories as physical contamination.

hierarchies always involve exclusion as well as inclusion ('encompassment') wherein the higher rank is set apart from a residual category composed of all the others at the same time as it 'includes' them.

If the modern West is not to be positioned outside of human history – contra Dumont (1970) – then is it possible, I wondered, that Macpherson's 'possessive individualism' (1962) references the dynamic of exclusion and encompassment within liberal democracy? After all, modern subjective rights are modelled on property rights. Whereas rights had been reciprocal (with one person's specific right connoting another's specific obligation), with the rise of modern liberalism rights were reconceived as something identified with, and owned by, the person – a property of the person in both the semiotic and legal sense (see Tuck, 1981). Macpherson (1962) traces this 'possessive individual' of modern rights to the capitalist reorganization of social life in seventeenth-century Britain. The relation of ownership, having increasingly become the critically important relation determining one's freedom of activity, was read back onto the individual who was considered to be free insofar as they were proprietor of their own person and capacities. Women, slaves, servants and workers were thus denied legal personhood on the conceptual basis of being 'dependent on the wills of others' (Macpherson, 1962: 15), that is, unable to transcend their material entanglements to make 'rational' decisions.

Stallybrass and White (1986) study the same time period that concerns Macpherson (1962) to find that the bourgeois subject defines itself through the exclusion of the 'low', wherein the 'low' is the racialized other, the female and the dirty masses all at once. These are constructed as polluted by mutual association and by the metonymic association of each with filth, the lower stratum of the body and materiality simply put – the bourgeois deny their carnality by projecting their immanence onto the 'hedonistic' masses. Stallybrass and White's (1986) historical particularist and psychoanalytical method is in certain tension with Graeber's comparative one, yet their studies dovetail insofar as a logic of encompassment/exclusion may be observed at work in the attribution of 'immanence' (vs. 'transcendence') to the women, slaves, servants and workers who cannot be property-holders on account of their materially entangled nature (significantly, neither could they represent themselves – being relegated to class-in-itself). That the patriarchs of the proletariat managed to distinguish themselves as 'individuals' first is no coincidence; their elevation was one and the same with 'owning' and representing their women, and servants or slaves if they had any. And, to the extent that women did propertize themselves, it was at the expense of servant, slave and proletariat women who were made to do the dirtiest work. When the white underclass propertized itself in turn, it was in contradistinction to racialized others, hence 'whiteness as property' (Harris, 1993). This material is now fairly familiar, yet what has not been sufficiently contemplated is how identity-based rights involve the same combination of encompassment and exclusion as the original franchise.

Property, Identity, Class

Beverley Skeggs (2004) also asks: how does propriety become property? and discovers by another method, a study of contemporary class in Britain, that claiming selfhood not only brings 'into effect entitlements denied to others, it is reliant on others being made available both as a resource and constitutive limit' (Skeggs, 2004: 152). In so doing, she intervenes in Bourdieu's (1984) theorization of class 'distinction', attending to the co-constitution of race, class and gender throughout her work. She points to the advent of liberal multiculturalism as a particular historical moment when new forms of property (and its exchange) were created, yet only for those with prior forms of entitlement who could mobilize the culture (of themselves or others) as a resource (property) in self-formation (see also Davies, 1994; Strathern, 1999). At this moment, historical exclusion from property becomes rights-bearing property in itself, yet a residual underclass is nonetheless created, a constitutive limit being nonetheless required.

The anarchists in my own research are against the state and its politics of representation, yet the logic and subjectivity of legal rights have become culturally mobile in activists' concern about diverse persons being 'excluded' versus 'represented' in social movement spaces. Skeggs' (2004) insights are also relevant in this milieu: the degree to which a person enjoys material wealth and power, is master of their own activities, and may relate to the self as does the 'possessive individual', determines the extent to which a person may access forums to speak their pain in search of compensation, be recognized as worthy of having that pain, or be willing and able to identify with pain (make it their defining property) in the first place (Skeggs, 2004: 57–60). Beyond the question of material resources necessary to mobilize 'identity' in one's favour, people who do not experience suffering as exceptional do not have the subjectivity necessary to propertize themselves via experience of pain. As a consequence, identity-claimants who enjoy substantial material resources, and thus successfully activate identity-related rights, effectively encompass and exclude materially disadvantaged would-be claimants from identity-related rights in the process (e.g. working class women, queers, trans people and people of colour).

Here, the double movement of exclusion and encompassment is generally obfuscated by a slip of statistics and reality invited by (top-down) state governance, compounded by the presumption that one's subjective identification as 'oppressed' will correspond in a linear fashion with one's objective circumstances. For example, both the fact that 'women' experience psychological and physical violence that is specific to women (e.g. misogynist rape) and also *on average* earn less money than men are mobilized to claim specific rights for 'women'. Since wealthy women who experience relatively less material violence inevitably benefit more from these rights than less well-off ones, because they enjoy the institutional resources and subjectivity required to activate such rights, they thus appropriate the suffering, pain and exclusion of women-on-average when garnering compensation for it, at the expense of working class women. The same thing happens

when 'racism' comes to stand in not only for violence that is ontologically racial, like being murdered by police on the specific (however unacknowledged) basis of being black, but also for the experience of poverty that is experienced by people of colour *on average.*

Thinkers such as Wendy Brown (1995) and Lauren Leve (2011) have already explored how the mutual constitution of identities is often imagined away as a relationship between an individual and their history and pain, just as material property is a social relation confused with the relationship between an owner and an object. My qualification is that not only is identity-as-property a social relationship vis-à-vis 'all the world' excluded from that identity yet confused with a relationship to one's individual history (as property), it is also a social relationship with all those *encompassed* by the identity, which is confused with a relationship to a collective history that is constructed as shared via compounded confusions of reality and statistics.[4] In the process, materially impoverished subjects who do not identify with pain themselves, yet who arguably experience relatively greater quantities of pain and material suffering, are effectively encompassed to constitute the semiotic and legal property (entitlement) of identity-claimants.

It is here we come to the long-controversial proposition of the 'particularity of class'. Levelling race, class and gender as of the same order is not a problem because class struggle is 'objective' (and seeks to destroy an antagonist) whereas identity formation is 'subjective' (and necessarily concerned with seeking recognition), but rather because most other politicized oppression categories besides class are semantically organized around a body feature or practice that is *not* inherently painful (having black skin does not sting one's face), yet which translates into painful experience and treatment by others in the current social order. 'Class' oppression, on the other hand, does not refer to an immutable (semiotic) property, but simply refers to material exploitation, lack and pain.

'Races' will not actually survive the demise of 'racism' (contra Žižek), yet people's bodies will still include different colour skin and diverse genitals, facial hair, and other previously charged markers after the fall of white supremacy and patriarchy. Feminists and anti-racists do not want these attributes (properties) to cease to exist, but simply for them to stop organizing the way others treat them, i.e., they want them to be meaningless, or to take on new positive meanings. The question may be of marked practices instead of marked body parts, yet the logic still holds: queer and trans people do not want their marked practices to stop happening either. When it comes to class the equivalent is not true. People do not want to continue working long hours for low pay yet have this take on a positive or neutral connotation. The notion of 'classism', an imagined equivalent to racism or sexism, involves the notion that the working class should be able to fully assert its identity and goals in a way parallel to how 'women'

[4] Brown (1995) comments in a footnote (60, fn. 11) that politicized identities come to include poverty and class-based violence, which is the point I develop.

or 'people of colour' can or should, even though if they did, they wouldn't be working class anymore. If class is particular it is not because the 'working class' uniquely seeks to annihilate its *other*, but rather that it alone seeks to annihilate it-*self*, and this, we might note, is not particularly conducive to the performances of self-valorization and containment that 'good politics' requires.

There do remain features – marked practices – of 'working-class-ness' that working class people value, and imagine taking with them when building a post-capitalist society, such as 'sincerity', 'solidarity' and 'sharing' (see also Skeggs, 2011). Crucially, these are collective value practices rather than values that can be imagined as embodied by one individual. Also crucially, these use-values, which have no exchange-value in the bourgeois arena, may also be found within indigenous, black or other racialized groups, or within networks of reciprocity among neighbourhood women. As collective value practices within these groups, they cannot cross the threshold into exchange value in the bourgeois sphere either. The fact that the immutable properties that come to stand in for 'woman' or 'person of colour' can, however, mean that within relevant fields of exchange, these properties can be recuperated to stand in for the practices themselves in order to valorize the self. The (processual) *practice* of sincerity cannot have exchange value, but a (reified) *symbol* for it can, which is what we see happening in the game of 'good politics' wherein (legibility as) 'woman' comes to stand in for 'superior communication style', or (legibility as) 'indigenous' comes to stand in for 'superior relationship to the land'. To use the activist lingo, oppressed groups may indeed be characterized by 'cultures of resistance', yet the potentially subversive content of these 'cultures' (the sincerity or sharing itself) is necessarily liquidated at one and the same time as group members adopt 'sharing' or 'sincerity' as a property of their individual persons. This is especially true if they then proceed to valorize themselves vis-à-vis one another by similarly reifying as many other use-values as possible, which is what the epistemological regime cum logic of exchange in their anti-oppression workshops encourages them to do.

Anthropology and Property

By now, valuable aspects of historical materialist analysis have been integrated within the discipline of anthropology to the extent that these are taken for granted – anthropologists refer only to trimmings of the beard if identifying as 'post-Marxist', as many do. It is therefore important to understand slips of semiotic and legal property for more reasons than one: beyond ordering the activities of anarchist militants, the dynamics of identity as property arguably influence the activities of anthropologists. This will be my final provocation.

As feminist and postcolonial revisionings of 'class consciousness' politicized the positionality of the ethnographer, those engaged in the debate around 'writing culture' suggested we now learn by shifting back and forth between different lenses provided by

differently positioned researchers and theoretical analyses, in lieu of seeking a singular method (Marxism included) for uncovering a static and accessible objective truth (see Behar and Gordon, 1995; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Mascia-Lees et al., 1989). My own method in this piece is partially inspired by this directive. Grappling with this new epistemology, new challenges presented themselves: both anthropologists and the (often) indigenous activists they sought to support cited 'identity' as both end and means, wherein other anthropologists such as Leve (2011) began calling on disciplinary peers to question their involvement in a neoliberal 'identity machine'. Many anthropologists continue to feel a strong responsibility to respect the 'self-identity' of research participants and researchers both, however. Others construct an epistemological space where plural 'ontologies' serve to resolve the problem(s) of truth and perspective (consider e.g. Graeber, 2015; Todd, 2016). Still others mobilize 'affect' as a category to reintroduce the material (see e.g. Gregg and Seigworth, 2007) – yet the new materialism struggles to avoid the word.

In other words, most anthropologists now rightly reject deterministic forms of Marxism, yet at the same time may entertain some of Marxism's most 'vulgar' formulations insofar as they advance the notion that the only valid representation is the self-representation of insiders – an especially pernicious notion in an economy where possessive individual selves have privileged access to identity as property. Marx's strong theory of ideology, wherein ideas exist in complex relation to the competing interests of power blocs, is thus foregone for the simplicity of utilitarian explanations previously reserved for 'primitives', wherein one's ideas are imagined to directly reflect reality. Indeed, the very fact that Marx's concept of *revolutionary* class consciousness vs. *false* consciousness is carried forward to pertain to oppressed identities should be the subject of further study – and I suggest this study be ethnographic.

Ethnography was my process, but it is not the only road to Rome. Jacqui Alexander's (2005: 6) argument that the 'will to divide and separate' resides in the 'archeologies of dominance' resonates with my own, as does Holloway (2005) in his critique of Marx's own fetish (the 'working class'): we 'overflow the bounds of any concept' (Holloway, 2005: 151). Even Foucault, known for a different sensibility, suggests that the challenge today 'is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are' (Foucault, 1983: 216). Much of what I point to is not new, yet broad interdisciplinary oversight with respect to the important role of property in the interdisciplinary 'class' vs. 'identity' debate is arguably due to the failure of diverse theoreticians to enter into conversation with one another and recognize where *they* connect – another threatening dialogical engagement. Perhaps it is only by sacrificing the property that is mobilized by each theorist to speak for and above the others according to the logic of academic knowledge production (e.g. 'sociology', 'anthropology', 'class', 'race', 'intersectionality') that may we hope to move through (not transcend) the 'class vs. identity' impasse.

Whether or not anthropologists participate in the 'identity machine', valorizing themselves and others with identity as property much like the activists involved in my study, they are nonetheless caught up with their own exclusive disciplinary property.

The holistic and dynamic rendering of 'class' within anthropology continues to function as an important corrective to other, more reductive approaches, yet it is possible that anthropologists also have other, less noble reasons to de-prioritize (economic) 'class' as an analytical category. After all, anthropology's own double-movement of exclusion and encompassment – its pretensions to transcend all other disciplines and subsume them as lesser beings at once – encourages us to look down on 'class' (and the sociologists that study it). Culture is higher up the taxonomic hierarchy than class: we anthropologists have a more transcendent view and are interested in more overarching questions. Culture – now often euphemized as 'subjectivity' – is *our* property, in all three senses of the word: culture is what makes us what we are, what authorizes us to speak and represent truth just as it subsumes other categories, and our trading in these representations (as property) is what makes us a living. Culture is also arguably a thinly veiled reiteration of 'race', which became 'ethnicity', which became 'identity' – a performance of (and in contradistinction to) 'class' all the way down. Touching this is, of course, taboo.

Dedication

In memory of David Graeber (1961–2020). This one is for you (and the 'grand tradition') David, may we argue for years to come.

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