1 Ways of Knowing and Ways of Doing Geographic Research

Stuart Aitken and Gill Valentine

This book is intended as an accessible introduction to the diverse ways of knowing in contemporary geography with the purpose of demonstrating important and strategic links between philosophies, theories, methodologies and practices. As such it builds on the other books in this series: *Key Concepts* (Holloway, Rice and Valentine, 2003); *Key Methods* (Clifford and Valentine, 2003); *Key Thinkers* (Hubbard, Kitchin and Valentine, 2004); and *Key Texts* (Hubbard, Kitchin and Valentine, 2008). The original edition of this book was published in 2006, and this new edition features updates and five new chapters. Our intention is to guide beginning students in the sometimes complex and convoluted links between ways of knowing and ways of doing geographical research. The book is a philosophical reader designed to be a practical and usable aid to establishing a basis for research projects, theses and dissertations. It is an attempt to lift the seemingly impenetrable veil that sometimes shrouds philosophical and theoretical issues, and to show how these issues are linked directly to methodologies and practices. The book highlights some intensely serviceable aspects of a diverse array of philosophical and theoretical underpinnings – what we are calling ways of knowing. It makes a case for embracing certain ways of knowing in terms of how they inform methods and practices. We believe that ways of knowing drive not only individual research projects but also the creative potential of geography as a discipline. Philosophies and theories, as ways of knowing, are not simply academic pursuits with little bearing on how we work and how we live our lives.

The book avoids jargon-laden, impenetrable language and concepts while not sacrificing the rigour and complexity of the ideas that underlie geographic knowledge and the ways that it is conflicted and contested. It is written for students who have not encountered philosophical or theoretical approaches before and, with this in mind, we see the book as a beginning guide to geographic research and practice. We believe that grounding research in philosophy and theory is essential for human geography research because it provides a hook for empirical work, it contextualizes literature reviews, it elaborates a corpus of knowledge around which the discipline grows, it energizes ideas, and it may legitimate social and political activism. In addition, and importantly, an understanding of philosophy and practice directs the discipline of geography conceptually and practically towards progressive social change by elaborating clearer understandings of the complexity of our spatial world.

The book is split into three parts: philosophies, people and practices. In the first part, leading academics make special and partial 'cases for' particular philosophies, and illustrate their argument with short examples. Although it is far from comprehensive, the first part covers a large swathe of philosophical perspectives and highlights some of the tensions between various ways of knowing. It is not intended to offer the student an all-inclusive guide to philosophies in geography (this is better achieved by more specialist texts such as Johnston, 1991; Cloke et al., 1991; Unwin, 1992; Hubbard et al., 2002; Castree et al., 2005; Henderson and Waterstone, 2009; Creswell 2013) but rather it offers practical insight into how philosophies inform work and how research questions are always based on assumptions and choices between different ways of knowing. The chapters do not resolve philosophical debates; instead they lead students to consider what choices and assumptions must be made when beginning a research project, and when choosing methodologies. The second part of the book places geographic thought amidst the complexity and struggle of people contextualized in places. Within contemporary human geography there is an emphasis on situated or contextual knowledges – which has its roots in the feminist belief that 'the personal is political' and critical feminist science's challenge to traditional conceptions of scientific practice as objective and disembodied (Haraway, 1991; Rose, 1997). Thus personal writing is seen by many as an important strategy to challenge the disembodied and dispassionate nature of previous academic writing (e.g. Moss, 2001). In the second part, several prominent geographers write about the people, places and events that shaped their personal ways of knowing. Finally, philosophy is often taught separately from methodology, which means that students sometimes fail to recognize the connections between theories and practices. The final part outlines some of these relationships and illustrates them with examples from a range of geographical studies.

Students beginning a research project in geography encounter a mind-boggling array of methodologies and practices. These methodologies and practices are linked in complex ways to theories and philosophies. Geographical research comprising a cloudy web of methodologies, theories, philosophies and practices ultimately elaborates geographical knowledge. We have tried to represent this complexity in Figure 1.1, and yet this diagram structures and represents our concerns too simply. Ways of doing are not attached to static ways of knowing but rather are changing as one set of ideas is challenged and informed by others. How we come to approach the world through theories and philosophies – our ways of knowing – is constantly refined, challenged, rejected and/or transformed. Customarily, theoretical traditions (positivism, humanism, Marxism, feminism, etc.) have been understood to emerge and dominate geographical thinking at particular times for a particular period. In other words, they have become what Kuhn (1962) termed 'dominant paradigms'. As such, some writers have mapped out the development and adoption of different philosophic approaches within the discipline of geography (e.g. Johnston, 1991; Unwin, 1992), highlighting paradigm shifts – when new philosophical approaches emerge to challenge previous ways of thinking. Johnston (1996) suggests that paradigm shifts are a result of generational transitions. New ways of thinking are taken up at first by younger academics; as this generation becomes established, and takes on editing journals and writing textbooks, so their ways of thinking come to the fore. A paradigmatic approach to geography began in the 1950s when positivistic spatial science emerged to challenge and supersede the regional tradition in geography. In turn the positivist paradigm is understood to have been overturned in the 1970s by other approaches,

Philosophies

Ways of Knowing

Methodologies

Geographic Research

Geographic Knowledge

Theories

Ways of Doing

Practices

Figure 1.1   Ways of knowing and ways of doing

such as humanistic geography, and radical approaches including Marxism and feminism. In the 1990s a paradigmatic perspective would understand poststructuralism as displacing these ways of thinking.

Yet, while sometimes a whole set of ideas is thrown out in light of perceived shortcomings, usually part of the thinking continues in one form or another (see Figure 1.2). The institutional framework of geography – professional organizations, journals and departmental cultures – may privilege or reinforce particular fashionable ways of thinking, but there are always dissenting voices. In reality, most ways of knowing are partial and are in flux; they continue to change as geographers examine and re-examine their strengths and weaknesses and as new ideas come along as a challenge. The discipline always includes a range of generations, and scholars who don't act their age! The linear narrative of the development of unified paradigms thus falsely creates a sense of sequential progress when consensus is rarely complete or stable. Although the chapters in this book are loosely ordered in relation to the genealogy of their emergence in the discipline, it is not our intention to suggest that one displaced another. Rather, our intention is to show how each approach to geography (positivistic geography, humanistic geography, Marxism, feminism and so on) contains within it multiple trajectories of thought and how each has continued to evolve whatever its paradigmatic status. Part of the

excitement of doing geographical research is the continual struggle to make sense of these changing perspectives and their connections.
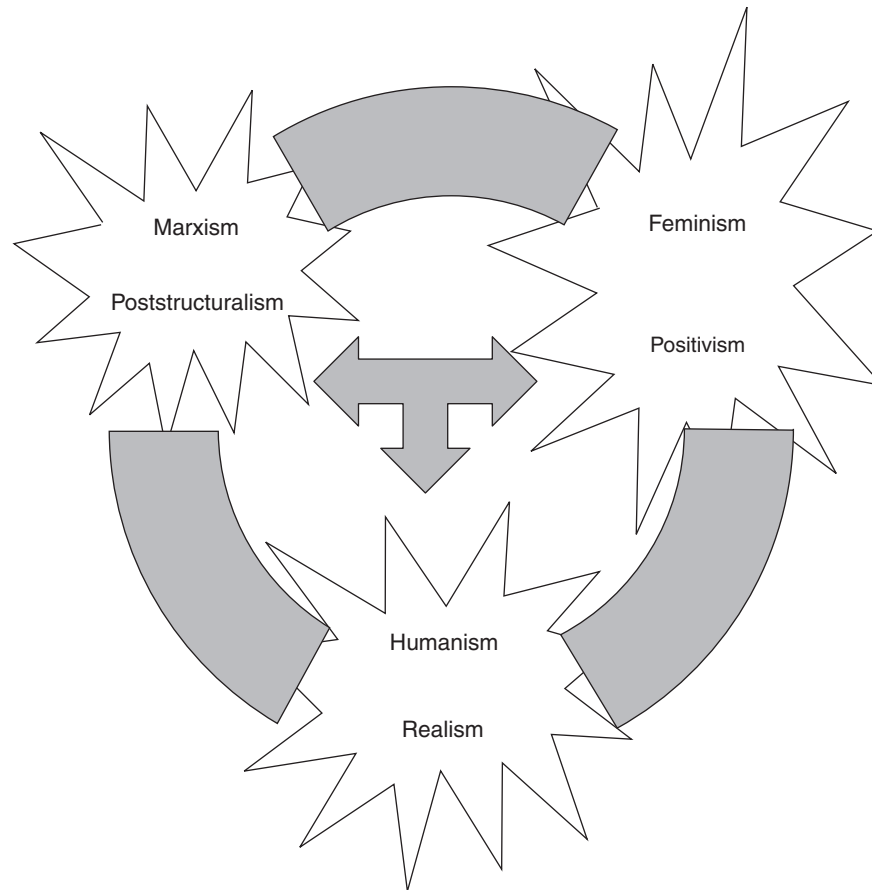

Figure 1.2   Ways of knowing clash, connect and change

When writing a research proposal, choices must be made about appropriate ways of knowing and doing. Students must be aware of the assumptions of particular ways of knowing, how they help raise appropriate questions and their adequacy for addressing those questions. Ultimately, all researchers must be able to justify the answers they give to their research questions, and that justification cannot avoid philosophical and theoretical ways of knowing. In this sense, philosophy is a form of communicating not only what we know but also how we know it. Understanding philosophical processes as forms of communication suggests an important pedagogical metaphor. Elspeth Graham argues that 'philosophy is to research as grammar is to language ... just as we cannot speak a language without certain grammatical rules, so we cannot conduct a successful piece of research without making certain philosophical choices' (1997: 8). Philosophy helps contextualize and justify the answers to our research questions in ways that communicate what we know. We can

still speak and write without awareness of grammar, but it is always there. Grammar is a useful metaphor for understanding the role of philosophy in research projects because it suggests that the more we know about philosophical underpinnings, the better we appreciate how influential they are to our work. If doing research is like the grammatical foundations of a language then, Graham (1997) notes, pushing the metaphor further, the beginning researcher must learn the appropriate vocabulary and terms. This involves reading and learning the vocabulary and the grammar and syntax of the speech community you wish to join. Just as Mexican Spanish and the practice of Mexican culture are intimately tied together, and are quite different from Scottish English and the practice of Scottish culture, then so too are philosophies differentiated. Marxist geographers use terms like production, social reproduction, class, superstructure and dialectics; positivist geographers use terms like paradigms, hypotheses, laws and verifiability; feminists and queer theorists use terms like patriarchy, bodies, sexualities and performativity; humanistic and experiential geographers use terms like essences, taken-for-grantedness and nihilism (these terms and others are defined and explained in Johnston et al., 2000 and McDowell and Sharp, 1999). Built around these language differences are systems of meaning, and so the beginning researcher must master more than just the terms: she must also engage associated cultures and practices. A positivist researcher engaging the practice of falsification, for example, might follow the rules of hypothesis testing; a feminist researcher engaging in the practice of positionality might want to understand fully her own personal politics and situatedness. And just as aspects of Scottish and Mexican cultures and practices collide and meld, so too do aspects of humanism, Marxism, feminism, queer theory and positivism. The connections and conflicts are at once daunting and exhilarating. Exhilarating because this is the stuff of creative debates and purposeful practices; daunting because students reading this book are being asked to gain a working knowledge of many languages at once.

Ways of knowing are, of course, quite different from grammar in that they are at once more fundamental, and they are often more convoluted. Philosophy as a way of knowing elaborates the structures and essences of our existence. This is known as ontology. Ontology comprises theories, or sets of theories, which seek to answer questions about what the world must be like for knowledge to be possible. Philosophy also investigates the origin, methods and limits of our knowledge about existence. That is, it establishes what is accepted as valid knowledge. This is known as epistemology.

In the tradition of Greek Enlightenment, logic and reason are touted as the basis for all epistemologies. From this western perspective, it is assumed that minds are essentially rational and have similar experiences of the world (Peet, 1998: 5). It is also assumed that ideas can be abstracted from the material world, and it is the purpose of philosophy to organize these ideas into coherent patterns and then evaluate the knowledge derived from those ways of knowing. Once thought of, these patterns are spoken of and written about so that they may be understood as axioms around which aspects of existence revolve, or they may be criticized and rejected. In its strictest form, the assumption that all minds work in the same way suggests that there can be one unitary and all-encompassing philosophy. An alternative set of philosophical traditions hold that how we think is a social construction rather than derived from some innate, universal logic. From this social constructivist perspective the distinctions between different philosophies are derived from different political and cultural milieu and then imposed upon the minds of those who are part of that context. This position accepts

that ontology is grounded in epistemology and that all epistemologies are embedded in social practice.

abstracted from the work or grounded in it?

Most of the authors in this book do not view philosophy as a basis of knowledge that is completely abstracted from people and the places they work. Rather, they assume it to be the driving force that connects us with others, and that contextualizes who we are, what we know and what we do. Nor do most of the authors believe that philosophy and theory need to employ only logic and reasoning to organize knowledge into formal systems of understanding. ==Some believe that knowledge comes also from less reasoned and less representable ways of knowing derived from emotions such as anger, passion, love, joy and fear.== Ways of knowing are at least in part derived from these and other emotions that are sometimes difficult to write about and represent in a logical form. Philosophy as outlined in the chapters in this book is seen as a social, political and cultural construction that contains elements of rationality and irrationality. And so, some of the authors argue that the rationality so valued by Greek Enlightenment thinkers is influenced by irrational beliefs and meanings derived from our bodies and our emotions, as well as cultural meanings and the places where we work and live.

Theories as Ways of Knowing and Being

Theory can be less heady than philosophy but it is equally important as a way of knowing. If philosophy encompasses larger ways of knowing that connect us to the beliefs, values and meanings of others (sometimes known as metaphysics) and systematize what we know, then theory extends this to the experiences of everyday life. As Richard Peet (1998: 5) points out, theory 'has a more direct contact with the occur-rences, events, and practices of lived reality' than philosophy. He argues that theory is derived inductively (working from the specific to the general) and primarily from empirical sources (those derived directly from experience). He goes on to suggest that theory looks 'for commonalities or similarities, but also (perhaps) systems of difference or, maybe, just difference'. Theories are also deductive (working from the general to the specific) because they often speculate from one aspect of difference and uniqueness to others.

philosophy > theory > practice

==Whereas philosophy engages larger systems and webs of meaning, theory engages a more specific sphere of understanding and being in the world. In the field of the empirical sciences, hypotheses are constructed as systems of theories that are tested against experience by observation and experiment.== In the humanities and social sciences, social or critical theories deal directly with understanding social, political and cultural perspectives and characteristics as they relate to transformations within societies and the day-to-day lives of people.

Practices as Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing

Practices are ways of knowing in action. Academics are engaged in the production of knowledge and its dissemination. Philosophies help articulate the ontological and epistemological bases of that production. Theories help elaborate the production of knowledge from experience and experimentation, and they sometimes challenge conventional

wisdom. As such, theories are not impartial or neutral but, rather, they are instruments of persuasion backed by experience. For some, they suggest action. This practice may play out in day-to-day lives or it may take the form of social and political activism. Teaching and research practices are also modes of doing, and are charged with political will and intent that are sometimes explicit and sometimes veiled. For some academics, doing is not just about teaching and writing, it is also about taking their values and beliefs, their philosophies and theories, out into the world from which they are derived in an attempt to transform that world for the better.

Research, like social and political activism, is almost always intensely political. It reacts to, and informs, the larger contexts of societal crisis, injustice and wellbeing. Within this realm, disciplines and subdisciplines clash and contend with each other in their attempts to respond to social crises and injustices. These internal struggles within academia can become vitriolic given limited access to finite resources and money. While touting a quest for truth or a better world, academic debate is also about status, power and control of resources. These struggles sometimes delimit boundaries between different discourses and sometimes transgress them; they often inflame passionate struggles between seemingly rival ways of knowing. In sum, teaching, researching, writing and practising geography open a myriad of different ways of knowing that often clash.

We believe that diverse ways of knowing and practising geography are the basis of the discipline. When they collide and lock horns, as they often do, a creative energy is unleashed that questions assumptions and pushes thinking forward, often in intriguing, innovative and exciting ways.

A number of years ago a panel at the annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers positioned advocates of two seemingly competing philosophies – humanism and positivism – in formal debate. The auditorium was packed with geographers anxious to see some intellectual giants do battle. Battle was not the intention of the organizers of the plenary session who, in the session abstract, elaborated the possibility of a common ground between humanism and positivism. The debate began politely enough as the moderator articulated her desire to use this forum as a basis for moving a common ground forward towards synthesis. While accepting the possibility of a basis for discussion, the protagonists presented diverse cases for their respective philosophical leanings in very particular ways. In making their respective cases, the speakers either used rhetoric that politely accepted alternative ways of knowing but only as perspectives that could be subsumed within the practice of their particular philosophical leaning, or attacked the premises of their opponents as untenable. Humanistic philosophies, for example, were positioned as the basis of being and consciousness from which mathematical analysis and logical deduction were derived as merely abstract ways of knowing. Alternatively, positivism and scientific perspectives were seen as the logical end point of humanistic assessments that merely provided qualitative data from which quantitative categories could be built. After the presentations a debate ensued that was quite vitriolic. Scholars who had built their careers on a particular philosophy were loath to accept the possibility that their way of knowing was either subservient to or less practical than another way of knowing, and they definitely did not accept the possibility that their way of knowing was flawed. In the past innumerable years other conflicts have arisen between diverse philosophies in most of the major geography meetings around the world and also in published work. Using a variety of rhetorical devices, structuralism has been pitted against poststructuralism;

Marxism against poststructuralism or feminism; ideography against nomotheticism; postcolonialism against environmentalism; environmentalism against feminism; possibilism against probabilism; relational approaches against theories of structuration; and so forth. Sometimes the debates become intensely myopic and perhaps a little impenetrable when, for example, queer theory challenges feminism or behaviouralism admonishes behaviourism. And yet, in each interaction of ideas and practices, there is the creative potential for change.

Although the rhetoric changes, the terms of these clashes often revolve around what a set of philosophies and theories proposes as a basis for geographic knowledge and how practical those philosophies and theories are in delivering that knowledge. We purposefully list some 'isms' above without definition because we argue that the meat is in the process of debate: that is where the passion lies! This is not to suggest that intensely practical ways of knowing set the tone for subsequent scholarship. Nor is this about philosophical fads and the current 'ism' of the day. For example, the debates between particularity (ideography) and generality (nomotheticism) that popularly smattered the pages of academic geography in the 1950s returned in different forms throughout the last half-century with critiques of metanarratives, discussions about the merits of humanistic, poststructural and relativistic approaches, and so forth. The context of the discussion changes in different times and in different places. The point is not just what is contested, but that there is contestation that is creatively adopted and used to propel geographical ways of knowing.

Geographical Ways of Knowing

When first confronted with the literature on how human geographers construct their world intellectually, the new student is faced with a bewildering set of apparent alternatives. As a named discipline, geography is an ancient form of intellectual inquiry, predating Greek classicism and its notions of rational thinking. And yet there is little agreement about how the discipline is constituted, what it studies and how it should go about that study. Certainly what is thought of as geographic inquiry has changed significantly over the millennia, and the last half-century in particular has resulted in an increasingly conflicted and contradictory set of arguments for how the discipline is constituted and practiced.

This book attempts to uncover ways of knowing geography (how it is thought about) and the practice of geography (thought expressed in action) without sacrificing people and places as an important part of that practice. It attempts to capture contemporary geography as a known and practised discipline that is internally differentiated and contested. Knowledge is always partial and practice is often infused with passion. The book does not attempt to elaborate the entire corpus of knowledge that comprises contemporary human geographic thought, but rather it brings to light the contested and hotly debated nature of diverse ways of knowing.

Disciplinary boundaries are not cast in stone; they are fuzzy and chameleon-like, changing before our eyes as we focus deeper. Subdisciplinary boundaries are even more difficult to tie down, and yet each embraces an accepted body of knowledge that legitimizes practice. Embracing a particular way of knowing distinguishes a thesis or dissertation, enabling some degree of classification. It is what examiners and reviewers focus on as they try to place the work; the success or failure of a particular study often

resides with its ability to contextualize itself in a larger corpus of knowledge. For example, thesis or dissertation abstracts that announce respectively a postcolonial approach to the development of squatter settlement, a humanistic appraisal of belonging and being-at-homeness, an econometric appraisal of regional housing demand or a feminist critique of suburban spatial entrapment suggest diverse and perhaps contradictory ways of establishing academic credibility. Postcolonialism, humanism, econometrics and feminism are three sets of methods and practices with their own assumptions, values and ways of proceeding. Each are legitimate geographic ways of knowing that leave a new student struggling to place them amongst dozens of others and to get a sense of how they might relate to each other, as well as to the student's own interests and passions. There is nothing absolute or sacred about any particular way of knowing; each is elaborated upon and argued about, and there is no single set of criteria by which one way of knowing legitimizes itself over another. The clash of knowledge, the lack of boundaries and absolutes, the tension between ways of knowing are at once confusing and exhilarating. They are confusing because each philosophy presents a laudable case for its own existence, leaving difficult choices for students seeking to legitimize their own interests, and exhilarating because the creative tension between different ways of knowing engenders passion amongst adherents. And passion is always stimulating.

Constructing Geographical Knowledge and Practice

The passion of academic debate is sometimes disregarded as the synthesizers of geographic knowledge tackle through simplification the myriad arguments and accounts that make up the discipline. Traditionally, geographic knowledge has been constructed in five ways.

First, confusion is bypassed and underlying philosophies are disregarded simply by suggesting that geography is primarily what geographers do (Gould, 1985; Johnson, 1991). This perspective relies on geographers' self-definitions and focuses on disciplinary practices. Referring to actions and activities rather than underpinning structures of knowledge emphasizes output, productivity, utility and problem-solving above all else. From this perspective, academic geographers attract students to their departments by teaching something that is seen as useful and of some interest to those who study it. It has been argued that they also are inclined to do research that is of interest to, and is tied in with, the agendas of financial sponsors (Unwin, 1992: 6). It might be argued further that constructing the corpus of geographic knowledge in this way ties it most successfully to societal needs, but this argument presupposes that 'doing' and productivity through problem-solving are always useful and can be divorced from larger ways of knowing. It neglects the fundamental issues of how problem-solving and utility are constructed and for whom.

The second way of synthesizing geographic ways of knowing is methodological (see Clifford and Valentine, 2003 for a guide to methods in human and physical geography). Many geography degree programmes offer methodological and technical options as tracks or even as full-blown diplomas. A unique set of tools – such as those comprised in and defined by spatial analysis or environmental modelling – delimits and justifies disciplinary boundaries (see chapters in Part 3). The tools can be learnt and applied to different spatial and environmental phenomena. It may be argued that a

large part of the recent success of geography in technological societies may be attributed to geographical information systems, which manage and analyse spatially referenced data through sophisticated computer software programs. The recent change in name and orientation from geographic information *systems* to geographic information *science* suggests an appreciation of the limitations of technological systems that are not energized by ideas and frameworks of knowledge.

A third attempt to tie down human geography is by identifying a subject matter around what the discipline studies and how it is studied. Such definitions delimit certain objects as legitimately geographic and others as not. For example, in a famous and influential essay, Norman Fenneman (1919) described the circumference of geography as best defined by the region, arguing that its use would serve to focus the discipline and prevent its absorption by other sciences. And, at around the same time, American cultural geographer Carl Sauer stated simply that 'we are not concerned in geography with energy, customs or beliefs of man [*sic*] but with man's [*sic*] record on the landscape' (1928: 342). Key concepts (see Holloway et al., 2003) and terms such as landscape, region, environment, space, place, culture, scale and so forth are often adhered to specific categories of knowledge in various ways, changing and transforming as the ideas about them are tugged in different directions by different philosophical bents (cf. Earle et al., 1996). These objects of geographical analysis are often uncritically accepted as part of a particular way of knowing comprising uniform categories, sometimes referred to as stable referents within a particular philosophy. Geographic knowledge produced for a particular audience constitutes these categories. Language operates to establish social and natural worlds through signifying or discursive practices that generate and organize signs or discourse into particular geographical knowledge or 'ways of seeing' such as those proposed by Fenneman and Sauer. In its attempt to sort out the complexity, this framework provides a seemingly neutral way of engaging geographic knowledge.

A fourth strategy may acknowledge other ways of knowing but usually positions them as less consequential or subsumes them as precursors to a dominant way of knowing. For example, coming from a positivist and quantitative perspective, Brian Berry (1964) argued that all geographic patterns and processes could be accessed through establishing a huge matrix of variables across time. Alternatively, in the 1980s Larry Ford (1984) argued that geography has its origins in how the landscape is observed and all other methods and practices follow. Michael Goodchild and Don Janelle (1988) used multidimensional scaling techniques on data from speciality group membership amongst members of the Association of American Geographers to argue a practical and dynamic core for the discipline in those specialty groups that were most connected. And later that decade, Michael Dear (1988) defined a core of human geography quite differently in terms of social theory development. He argued for the discipline's pivotal role in the social sciences with its focus on three primary processes that structure what he calls the fabric of time–space: the political, the economic and the social. These strategies are important to the extent that they gain favour with geographers, and all are agenda-based. Most of the authors cited above are willing to acknowledge those agendas, but with nonetheless convincing arguments they also provide a singular way forward that smooths out or disregards tensions and conflicts.

A fifth way of coming to terms with complex and divergent ways of knowing is also inclined to smooth out tensions and conflicts. This strategy offers a synthesis that relies on understandings that change through time (Johnston, 1991; Livingston, 1992).

This way of approaching philosophy in geography attempts to provide a linear and relatively objective and impartial appraisal of how knowledge is built and transformed. There is what might be thought of as a patterned sequence to how geographers have come to know the world. In this formulation, the discipline's so-called paradigms or 'isms' stretch back over time and help define what comes after. This way of structuring knowledge is essentially about lumping philosophies into categories that may begin, for example, with environmental determinism in the early twentieth century and then flow through possibilism, regionalism, the quantitative revolution, structuralism, realism, humanism, Marxism, feminism, queer geographies and postcolonialism, to end, perhaps, with poststructuralism or the latest intellectual fad. It is a common practice of textbook writers to smooth out and generalize the connections between different philosophies in this way because it is deemed too hard for beginning students to get their minds around all these debates. Too often texts on geographic thought neglect the contested nature of the world and our knowledge of it by supplying a relatively linear set of approaches melding into each other and ending with a professor's preferred way of knowing. No wonder students are put off by this plethora of 'isms' and the challenges that they hold out to each other.

The 'isms' suggest abstract knowledge that is extracted and simplified from a very complex set of interactions between people, places and intellectual movements (see Part 2). For today's students, they often suggest a way of structuring knowledge that has little bearing on research projects and is, rather, an interpretation of dead or barely alive geographers' ways of thinking that has only a remote connection with today's world. The fact that most of the existing books and articles on philosophy and human geography are either written by a single author or presented to the reader in one voice means that the outline of each philosophy is very balanced, neutral and even. As a consequence students often fail to grasp the contested nature of the discipline and regard the approaches as pick 'n' mix alternatives rather than recognizing the tensions between those who adopt different philosophical positions or the possibilities of collaboration between those who have different ways of thinking. Those tensions often arise from a body of literature that is adopted and elaborated by geographers. Particular people writing from particular places at particular times also often spur them (see Moss, 2001 or Gould and Pitts, 2002 for autobiographical accounts of the intellectual development of geographers; or Hubbard et al., 2004 for a biographical approach to understanding key thinking on space and place). The energy of a social movement or an individual's ideas, or the culture of a specific academic department, will enhance certain ways of knowing over others. Johnston (2004), for example, highlights the significance of individuals' networks and the career trajectories from which geography develops by tracing the path taken by David Smith – the connections he forged, and the influences on his decision-making as he made the switch from a spatial analysis tradition to other paradigms. Thus instead of assuming a geographic imaginary that organizes itself around an ordered timeline of ideas, what happens if we say it is ordered around different sets of people, places and contexts for the ideas? What if we openly acknowledge the political and moral connections, and the personal and social stories, that give the ideas life? What if we probe the ways that philosophical approaches are energized by conflict, critique and career advancement? What kinds of lessons do we glean from documenting encounters between scholarship and practice? How does the way we live our lives, the way we connect with social and political struggles and the seemingly random opportunities that come our way, affect our geographical imagination? These questions drive

the chapters in this book. The chapter authors do not try to explain or smooth out tensions between their preferred way of knowing and others.

The chapters in this book provide accessible accounts of the ways different philosophies and theories intersect with and scrunch against each other. Rather than searching for a common ground, we accept that knowledge is contested, controversial and partial; that it is about power and career enhancement as much as it is about a search for enlightenment; that it is about moral integrity and a need to understand more fully social and spatial injustices; but that it is also about the academic culture of particular places and particular times. Further, this book provides a new way of encountering geographical thought because it ties it intimately with methodologies and practices. We dismiss past pedagogies that abstract thought from people, places and their practices. We do not disengage from the conflict that arises between ideas and factions that compete for control of geography as an intellectual resource that helps make sense of the world. Rather, we engage intellectual conflict and tension as the harbingers of change and social engagement through practice. Ultimately geography, like all academic pursuits, is about changing the world for the better and, as such, it is not a neat and ordered practice.

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