

## Introduction

### **Culture: extensive and intensive**

Contemporary culture, today's capitalism – our global information society – is ever expanding, is ever more *extensive*. There are Starbucks's and McDonald's – indeed many Starbucks and many McDonalds – in not just London, Paris and Berlin, but in seemingly every district of Shanghai and Beijing, Delhi and Bombay, Johannesburg and Lagos, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Sao Paulo and Mexico City, and also increasingly in Chongqing and Wuhan, in Bangalore and Madras, in Nairobi and Cairo, Buenos Aires and Bogotá. Vodafone has subscribers in all continents, BP petrol stations are ubiquitous in the United States as much as England, Carrefour is everywhere in China and Latin America, Pepsi Cola and Nike are omnipresent in cityscapes around the world. Despite the meltdown of 2008–09, the general tendency is for finance to become ever more extensive. Capitalism, society, culture, politics are increasingly extensive. It is not only multinational corporations that are driving this increasing extensity of contemporary social relations. It is international intergovernmental organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, the International Labour Organization, and international non-governmental organizations such as Médecins sans Frontières, Amnesty International, Oxfam, CARE International and the Save the Children Alliance. This growing extensity is also 'regional'. Thus there are regional intergovernmental economic and political organizations such as the European Union, and extensive regional trade agreements such as NAFTA, ASEAN, Mercosul and SAFTA. Extensive also are intergovernmental military organizations like NATO, as is the worldwide distribution of US and NATO military bases. There are US Air Force bases in 15 countries, US Navy in 12, Marines in eight countries and army bases in four. All this documents the increasing extensity, the

extensive universalization of contemporary social relations, of contemporary culture. This growing extensity has meant, first, a gain in geographical spread. It has at the same time brought homogenization. Thus the urban homogenization based in Corbusier's identical units of habitation and the city grid model has spread from New York and Chicago to Shanghai and Guangzhou, to India and Africa and Latin America. These homogeneous units of space have run parallel to an effective homogenization of (Newtonian) time and the spread of homogeneous units of value in the commodity. And commoditization has surely been the major driver of this growing extensity of social relations.

Given this growing extensification of contemporary culture, on another level and at the same time, we seem to be experiencing a parallel phenomenon whose colours are other; they come in a different register and can only be characterized as *intensive*. The drug experience, the sexual relations, the sheer pace of life in the streets of today's mega-city would seem somehow to be intensive. The pace and volume of capital market transactions – despite the end-of-noughties credit crunch – is intensive. There is a longer-term process of intensification of culture and media – with laptops, iPhones, iPods, WiFi, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter and platforms for downloading and streaming of just about everything. Work experience is becoming more intensive. We once had life-long employment in rule-bound and hierarchical bureaucratic organizations. Now we work increasingly in often precarious 'project-networks', in intensive close personal relations of work groups for shorter periods of time bound by the length of the project, which itself is often a one-off to be patented or copyrighted. Our closest friendships may now be at a great distance and abetted by air travel, thus intensive and compressed into the shortest time. Instead of watching television over the extensivity of a weekly TV series, we may download or buy the DVD of a series like *The Wire* and watch with one or two intensively significant others the 14 episodes of a season over just a few days. If a city like Paris is organized around an extensive and open framework of Baron Haussmann's grand boulevards, there is at the same time another Paris around fractal and intensive nodes, such as the medieval Hôpital Salpêtrière of Charcot's infamous neurology experiments or, say, the interior of Oscar Niemeyer's Parti Communiste Français headquarters. The City of London may have financial tentacles all around the world yet the Square Mile has a density and intensity of people and work that makes even pedestrian traffic difficult and lends its pace and rhythm to the whole of

London. We may encounter a series of identical commodities rolled off Nike production lines, but the intensity of the brand Nike, compressed into the logo, is something we never see. If we encounter successions of extensive and metric figures on our laptop computer and mobile phone interfaces, there is another smaller group of intensive software codes or algorithms, which we may never see but yet generate these figures that we do encounter. This increasing global *extensity* has conquered not just space but also time – thus the spread of futures exchanges from the Chicago Board of Trade to China’s Dalian Commodity Exchange and the United Arab Emirates’ Dubai Mercantile Exchange. Indeed, the size of a global corporation is no longer measured in terms of its assets or its revenues but in terms of its market capitalization, its stock market value, which is its expected future profits. Despite the meltdown of neo-liberal banking, global capitalism over the long term will inexorably remain a still importantly financialized capitalism. And this financialization has brought an intensive economic temporality. In classical industrial capitalism you bought and sold commodities in a Newtonian temporality of the present, in which each moment is experienced as a succession of nows. But financial products and transactions have a longer-term temporality built in, in which past and especially the future are infolded into the present, in what amounts to an intensive time.

We live thus in a culture that is at the same time extensive and intensive. Indeed, the more globally stretched and extensive social relations become, the more they simultaneously seem to take on this intensity. This book is dedicated to the study of such *intensive culture*.

## What is intensive culture?

### 1. *Homogeneity versus difference*

Extensive culture is a culture of the same: a culture of *equivalence*; while intensive culture is a culture of *difference*, of *inequivalence*. Things and beings in extensive culture are equivalent or consist of units of equivalence. The intensive, in contrast, consists of units of difference, of the one-off, of the singular. For example, the commodity – which is extensive – consists of equivalent, indeed identical units of value. The brand, in contradistinction, is intensive. Each brand constitutes itself as different from every other brand. The brand only has value, or adds value, in its difference from other

brands. The commodity takes on value as it incorporates greater quantities of homogeneous labour power or homogeneous units of market exchange. The value of the brand is inherent instead in this difference, in its inequivalence. In extensive politics, we have notions of citizenship, or 'the people' (*le peuple* in Rousseau's *Social Contract*, 1999) or the proletariat: each of these presumes equivalence. There is an equivalence of human beings as citizens, *peuple* or proletarians. This is an equivalence before the law, in which each person is the same as every other; an equivalence in collective struggle; or an equivalence of individuals constituting a body (*le peuple*) that is a party to the social contract with the state (or government). In contrast, the 'multitudes' (Hardt and Negri 2000) give us an intensive politics of difference. Each member of the self-organizing 'multitudes' is different from every other. Radical social movements over several decades have incorporated such a politics of singularity: one based on inequivalence and individuality, in which organization comes no longer from the outside – as in the classical Leninist party – but instead from the inside as self-organization. The bureaucratic and hierarchical corporation is engaged in extensive production in that it may produce a very large number of the same identical object. This stands in contrast to the intensive economy of today's project-networks, which come together for short periods of time to make one-off goods or services, in each case a different product. So at the heart of extensity are homogeneity, equivalence and identity; at the heart of intensity is heterogeneity and inequivalence, difference.

## **2. Actual and virtual (potential)**

We encounter commodities: they are thus actual. They are actualized. We do not encounter brands. We never see a brand itself. We see branded products. Brands (Lury 2004) actualize: they generate products or commodities that we do encounter. Brands in this sense are not actual but virtual. Brands are thus intensities that actualize into extensities. To be virtual is also to be in *potentia*, to be a potentiality. A potential has an inherent capacity for growth, development or coming into being. Potent means 'to be able to'. Its roots are in the Latin *potentia*, meaning power or force or, in a sense, potential energy. The point here is that extensities are actual. They are the things you encounter. Intensities are virtuals or potentialities. They generate what you encounter. Further, extensities are fixed, while intensities are always in process. They

are always in movement. This is movement not through space but the movement of change and instability in the intensity itself. Extensities have the stability of a system in equilibrium. Extensities thus are 'beings' while intensities are 'becomings'. An algorithm, i.e. software coding, is an intensity. The algorithm then generates the extensive figures and data on your computer screen. The figures encountered are actual; the algorithm is virtual. This is also the difference between material and immaterial labour (Lazzarato 2004). Immaterial labour produces difference. It produces virtuals that can generate actuals. These can be intensive goods, singular prototypes from research and development. These intensive goods are often the product of a 'design process'. These prototypes are then produced in thousands of extensive copies, in what Marx called the 'labour process'. Often these intensive designed goods are things we never encounter that produce other things we do see and buy. Thus virtual things produce actual things. The virtual things have a value in *potentia*, and the actual things have what Marx called exchange-value. That is an actual value, a price we pay for these things in a market. Things that are actual possess a figure. They *ex-tend* towards the viewer as a figure, to the hearer as a sound. Intensities, for their part, do not *ex-tend* towards us. They *in-tend* into themselves. Because they *in-tend*, we encounter no figure. *Extension* and *intension*: in *in-tension* there is compression and in *ex-tension* decompression.

### ***3. Thing-for-us, thing-in-itself: against instrumental reason***

There are two ways in which we can approach beings, whether human or non-human beings. Either we can approach them as extensities – that is in terms of how they *ex-tend* to us or how they are for us. Or we can approach them more as intensities, that is intrinsically: not *ex-trinsically* but *in-trinsically*. We can approach them as they *in-tend* or *in-tense* into themselves. As they *ex-tend* to us and thus are for us, we approach these things through our categories. As they *in-tend* into themselves, we approach the thing in its own terms. Take you, the reader, as an individual human being. Either someone else approaches you through general categories, such as ethnicity, gender, age, degree of beauty. Or he/she approaches you in your own singularity, as you are in yourself. You will say that the more he/she can know you the more he/she can approach you in your own singularity and not through these general categories. To be treated in your singularity is to be treated as

an intensity: to be treated as different from every other being. To be approached through these general categories is to be treated like an 'atom': like any other of the tens of thousands of atoms that fit into these categories. Immanuel Kant called the extensive thing, as you approach it through your or general categories, the 'thing-for-us' or the 'thing-for-itself'. It is a thing for itself, if you can imagine the thing as external to itself and approaching itself through these general categories. The intensive thing that you approach as a singularity and through effectively its own categories is the thing-*in-itself*. It is how the thing *in-tends*. Kant (1929: 266ff.) called the for-itself or the extensive thing the 'phenomenon' and the thing intrinsically or intensively the 'noumenon'. He held that we can only know phenomena. This book, contra Kant, is about knowledge of things in themselves. Knowledge of the thing-*in-itself* is intensive knowledge. To know the thing, not in terms of our own, extrinsic categories but in terms of its own intrinsic categories, is such intensive knowledge. To know the thing extensively in terms of our categories is also to know the thing, for example nature, *instrumentally*: as an instrument we can use for our own purposes. To know nature in terms of its own categories, to know it intensively, means a fundamental break with such instrumental knowledge. Intensive culture is intrinsically a critique of such instrumental reason.

#### **4. Life versus mechanism**

Extensities – like the bodies in Newtonian physics – do not have their own energy. They need to be acted upon from without. They are in need of external force. Intensities, for their part, possess their own sources of energy. Extensities are mechanical while intensities incorporate 'life' and are vital. Thus intensive culture is not mechanistic but vitalist. The material body in Descartes, Galileo or Newton is mechanistic. The body for Friedrich Nietzsche, in contrast, is vital. Nietzsche spoke of power not primarily acting on bodies from the outside, but of bodies having their own 'will-to-power'. Against Newtonian mechanism, Nietzsche's (1966b) will to power was life itself. All beings – human, organic and inorganic – have such a will to power. Nietzsche's will to power, his vitalism, appear again as the notion of 'desire' in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. These authors (1984: 5–6) write about 'desiring machines' in which the intensive and the material come together, in which inorganic machines

themselves become vital. For Michel Foucault (2008), power is not just something that is exercised externally from above. Power is not just repressive. For him, life and intensity become also a principle of domination, in what he calls 'bio-power'. Bio-power is not a mechanistic but vitalist mode of domination, which seizes subjects through the capillaries of the living body itself. If energy is internally generated, then causation itself is no longer external but instead internal. Systems are no longer caused or organized from the outside, but instead become self-organizing. Mechanistic systems are organized from elsewhere as cause or force or energy starts as external to the system. Once the force ends, these linear systems move back to equilibrium. Vitalist, intensive systems are self-organizing, the internally generated energy tending to drive the system to far-from-equilibrium states, hence change is the byword. To self-organize – whether for systems or for individuals or indeed communities – is to be *reflexive*. At stake in intensive politics, for example, is not just mechanistic domination, domination through the mechanistic commodity and resistance through non-linear intensity. Domination itself takes on non-linear colours. Domination itself comes about through difference. If extensive culture is painted in Cartesian colours, vitalist intensive culture is very much Nietzschean.

### Ontology and religion

There is in these times a lot of talk about 'ontology'. People speak about an 'ontological turn' in, for example, sociology, anthropology, geography and politics. But there is an alarming looseness to the notion of ontology that is banded about. The concept is used to cover just about anything. If everything is ontological, then the concept has little analytic purchase: indeed, it has little value in any sense. This book takes ontology very seriously, and will take it seriously not just on the level of philosophy but on the level of social theory more generally, for all the social sciences. You hear a lot about an idea of 'realist ontology'. Scholars who say they subscribe to a realist ontology insist that there is a reality outside the observer and that the observer can know this reality. This book indeed holds that there is a reality outside us. The problem is that *ontology* is not a doctrine of reality but a question of *being*. 'Realism' speaks of knowledge of reality as comprised of actual things or beings that we encounter. Ontology looks beyond the actual beings or things

we encounter to the *being* of those things, to the *being* of those beings. Realist 'ontology' looks at those actual things or beings through the categories of the observer. Ontology will look at the singular and even processual nature of those beings, i.e. the being of those beings, through those beings' own ontological structures. Realist ontology, in the above sense, is thus a question of what is described above in terms of the thing-for-us; it is a question of extensive knowledge. Ontology is at the heart of intensive knowledge and intensive culture. So we want to make a first analytic distinction in terms of what is not ontological. Here such a realist doctrine of knowledge, or any doctrine of knowledge in which an observer who is separated from the world of things that she studies and understands those things in terms of our world and our categories, is *epistemological*. Intensive knowledge, in which the observer is placed in the world with the things or beings that she studies, in terms of their own world, and through their own categories, is *ontological*.

Martin Heidegger is the lynchpin of modern ontology. He formulated this very much as a student against the dominant positivist and neo-Kantian (indeed 'realist') epistemology of his teachers. These neo-Kantians, like Kant, advocated notions of extensive and epistemological knowledge. Heidegger wanted to go beyond epistemology and the knowing of beings through the observer's categories to the study of being itself. For this the very young Heidegger (Sheehan 1988: 70–1) went back to Aristotle. Aristotle did speak of categorical knowledge. But one of Aristotle's categories, 'substance', was unlike all the others. The others could describe things in terms of their external characteristics, but substance went to the heart of the being, the intrinsic being of things. To look at substance is one very important way of understanding the being of things. Most modern philosophical ontologies break with the concept of substance. But all ontologies, ancient, modern and postmodern all inquire into the being of things (beings). Thus ontology normally harkens back to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (Loux 2003: 166–7). Aristotle's ontology was based in a more or less linguistic ontology, formed in his re-reading of the grammar of classical rhetoricians. Here his idea of substance took the role of subject of an expression and the other categories were its predicates. Say the sentence 'Susan is middle aged, female, an architect, of oriental extraction and Chinese speaking'. Here Susan is the subject and all of her characteristics are her predicates. Susan's or the subject's intrinsic being is her substance, quite apart from her



extrinsic categories. But other ancient Greek thinkers, like Plato, rejected the rhetoric formulations of the Sophists altogether and did not have such a linguistic mediation between the beings that we encounter and the ideas that are their truth. This too is an ontology, a doctrine of the truth of beings, of the being of beings. For Pythagoras even earlier, this truth lay in a doctrine of number. So we can have ancient and modern mathematical ontologies, for example in the work of Alain Badiou (2005: 31–2). Here I want to lay down another marker in terms of what is ontology. Ontology is in some sense fundamentally ‘Greek’. We Westerners are in a very important sense fundamentally Greek. Greek thought and its successors have focused on the *truth* of the being of beings. Eastern thought, on the other hand, which gives priority to *conduct*, is not in this sense ontological. Chinese thought, for example, works in terms of abstraction, but it thematizes the way and conduct and not the truth of being (Lloyd and Sivin 2002: 158–9).

Ontology is not just a question for philosophers. It is a question for social science in the very broadest sense too. For social scientists, ontology comes to us through one of the various forms of phenomenology. Thus Heidegger’s ontology emerged from the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. Phenomenology broke with Kant’s focus on things as they are for the objective observer and went to study the being of things as they were in themselves (Husserl 1993: 48–9). Social science positivism has its roots in such extensive knowledge and the epistemological knowledge of things as they are for us. Positivists will thus study the extrinsic categories of beings such as gender, income, ethnicity, social stratification, income, etc., and they will look at correlations and regressions of how these variables work. Phenomenology will, in contrast, look at the nature of social being, at the forms of life that are at the core of say certain working-class cultures. Positivism and epistemological knowledge presumes that the observer is objective: that he/she is outside of the world that he/she studies. In phenomenological or ontological knowledge, inquiry takes place as much as possible from being in the same social world as those whom we study. Or at least from situating ourselves within our world and establishing links of communication and interpretation between this and the world of those we study.

*Religion* is in a very important sense at the heart of critical theory. It is there not just as a break with epistemology, but also as a critique of ontology. Here I am referring to the *messianic* ethos of Judaism and important traditions in Christianity – in particular,

the diasporic Christianity of, for example, Martin Luther King. In critical theory, Jacques Derrida (1967: 166–7) formulates his notions of deconstruction and difference as a critique of ontology partly from the point of view of Messianic Judaism. He criticizes Heidegger's 'Greek' ontology from the viewpoint of the unknowable Jewish and messianic 'to-come'. If Heidegger's Greek ontology, and for that matter mainstream Christianity, for whom the saviour and the good news has already come, are about the 'already-there', then messianic thought is about what is not already there but yet to come. Thus Derrida counterposes the 'Greek' of ontology with the 'Jew' of religion. Both of these are for us – unlike extensive epistemology and positivism – part and parcel of intensive culture. Critical theory begins with Kant's (1784) essay 'What is Enlightenment?' Here Kant speaks of the three dimensions of Enlightenment: of the 'What can I know?', the question of knowledge; of the 'What should I do?' which is the question of ethics; and of the 'What can I hope?' Critical theory is based neither primarily in matters of knowledge nor ethics, but in the question of the to-come, of the 'What can I hope?' This messianism of the what-can-I-hope is at the core of the critical theory of not just Derrida but Walter Benjamin, Giorgio Agamben, Emmanuel Levinas and of course Karl Marx. Marxism and critical theory are inevitably messianic.

Derrida (1967) says that we are ultimately condemned to be 'Jew-Greeks' and 'Greek-Jews'. That we must be epistemological in our need to express ourselves in categories and the subject–predicate logic of propositions. And we must, if we want to be critical thinkers, think in terms of a more or less messianic to-come. Indeed, in a more straightforward sense, the Western tradition is indissolubly a question of Jerusalem and Athens. Mainstream functionalist sociology of, say, Talcott Parsons has been explicit about this. So has Max Weber, for whom rationalization is about both Greek reason and (Christian) religion. Now, just as 'Greek' reason has two sides, one which is intensive – substance, the idea, Pythagorean number – and the other which is extensive – Aristotle's categories, Plato's material world – so does religion. The Christianity of Weber's Protestant ethic, which constitutes part of Weber's formal rationality, is extensive. It is based on rule-following deeds. These are general rules that the Protestant entrepreneur must follow if he is to achieve grace (Whimster 2007: 56–7). They also contribute to the extensive individualism of capitalism. This is possessive individualism of any capitalist in general; it is not the intensive individualism of the singularity of the artist or

Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Weber's Protestant entrepreneur also shares the extensive Christianity of the first three Gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke focus on Jesus' good works – the implication is that salvation comes through works. Salvation through rule-bound good works can apply to anyone. In St Paul, however, and in the Fourth Gospel John, salvation is based not on good works but instead on faith. It is outside the extensive rules of good works, and instead a question of the engagement of the singular soul with the singular Christ. The same is true for Judaism. In Judaism there is, on the one hand, the intensity of messianism and, on the other, the rule-bound extensity of Pharisaic Law.

## Overview

Chapter 2 opens our explorations into intensive culture through Georg Simmel's vitalist sociology. Here we see Simmel in a critique of positivism through sociological notions of 'life' and vitalism. Simmel opens up a life-infused notion of sociality that he understands literally as metaphysical. He does so in an argument against neo-Kantian and positivist understandings of the social 'Das Soziale'. Here he endorses Nietzsche and a vitalist reading of Goethe against the a priori epistemology of the Kantian categories. The young Simmel was a neo-Kantian and positivist. It was only later in his writings that Simmel took on this sociological vitalism. The early Simmel drew on Kantian cognition to develop a (positivist) idea of the social. Kant's theory of cognition, as developed in his first critique, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, was importantly influenced by mechanistic assumptions drawn from Isaac Newton. Simmel transplants these into a Darwinian and functionalist idea of society. Kant asks the epistemological question of how is knowledge possible, and Simmel the sociological question of how is society possible. Thus Kant addresses the epistemological a priori, while Simmel addresses the social a priori. These turn out both to be questions of 'form'. Kant's a priori forms are the cognitive categories. Simmel asks the same question: what social forms are the condition of possibility of society? In the young Simmel's neo-Darwinian positivism, form takes on the colours of function. Standing in radical counterposition to form, for Simmel, is *substance*. Simmel understands such substance as life itself, as the flux, the *élan vital*, of life. We see how Simmel's life-substance is grounded in the assumptions of Leibniz's monad; the monad, we shall see, is simple substance. And every simple substance is different from every other. Hence the monad, or

vitalist simple substance, is at the same time difference. Simmelian simple substance is self-organizing. It is conceived on the lines of not Cartesian *res extensa*, but the intensity of *res cogitans*. The monad as simple life-substance is possessed with memory as trace; it is comprised of relations of perception; it is reflexive. We consider the impetus from Nietzsche and Henri Bergson in Simmel's shift from Darwinian atomistic evolution to his substantialist 'creative evolution'. We compare Marx's labour theory of value with Simmel's 'life theory of value'. For Marx, labour is the content of (value) substance; for Simmel, it is life. We examine Simmel's core notion of life as *social* substance: as a primordial intersubjectivity of flux. We conclude with a contrast of such 'flux' and flow: of such a flux of 'becoming' and invention in contrast to the flows of domination of today's global capitalism.

Chapter 3 searches for a philosophical basis of such an intensive sociology in the work of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Leibniz's monad is, for this book, the fundamental unit of intensity. Each monad is different from every other monad because each monad has a different world. The monad is ontology's thing-in-itself. And this in-itself, the intrinsic nature of the monad, is the monad's world. That is, you are different from every other being because your world is different from each one of theirs. In other words, each monad is a different point of view of the world. In that your point of view is different from mine, so is your world, and so is your intensive being. Let us go back to knowledge. I can either know you positivistically or epistemologically through my categories or ontologically (intensively) through your world. We study Leibniz in this chapter to see how indeed your world is at the same time your categories. This is also Leibniz's philosophy of language. As for Aristotle, for Leibniz these categories are predicates. For Leibniz and Aristotle the only category that is not a predicate is substance. Substance is also the grammatical subject and the categories are the predicate modifiers of this subject (substance). I can regard you epistemologically in terms of a semantics I attach to you, such as very general notions of gender, ethnicity and class. In this case, these predicates are *external* to you as a subject. But I can also, and this is Leibniz's great innovation, look at you ontologically. If I do this, then I am understanding you in terms of the predicates that are *internal* to you as a subject. To study you in terms of these predicates that are internal to you as subject is a question of intensive knowledge. To engage with you intensively, in terms of your internal predicates, in terms of your world, is to engage with you

as, not a generality, but a singularity. It is to engage with you in your being. This chapter deals with Leibniz's grammar and further looks at how this ontology of predication is also a basis for Leibniz's differential calculus. Here the subject is the function,  $y = f(x)$ . And any actual instantaneous point along the curve of  $y = f(x)$  is the actual predicate of this (virtual) function. Thus the derivative  $dx/dy$  at any point on this curve, the instantaneous acceleration at any moment, is the predicate. Finally, we look at Leibniz's contrast of substance and mechanism. Leibniz understood such Galilean (and Newtonian) mechanism as 'system'. Such system works through collisions and mutual causation of equivalent atoms and their exchange – the exchange of equivalents. Substance, for its part, is far from equilibrium. It works not through cause but representation and predication: each substance is different from every other. In positivism, we understand society as system. As positivists we use our categories and our predications to analyse the mechanistic causes of social atoms. There is another choice though. It is to treat those social atoms as themselves doing the predicating, doing the representing. In doing their own predication, those social atoms take on difference, establish themselves as differences: the atoms become Leibniz's monads.

Chapter 4 is a study of Walter Benjamin on language. Whereas Leibniz gives us a theory of intensive language, Benjamin, we will see, gives us a realm that mediates between the intensive and extensive, between the transcendental and empirical. In Benjamin, language becomes a mediator, a partly autonomous linguistic sphere of mediation. This said, Benjamin distinguishes between two types of language. These are, first, a language as 'means' or extensive mediation. This is juxtaposed to intensive language, in which language is not an instrument but a medium, an end-in-itself. Further, he displaces intensive language from ontology on to religion, on to a messianic language. Here the Jew, Benjamin, shares a certain Kabbalism with the Christian, Leibniz. We study Benjamin's essay on 'Language in General and the Language of Man'. In this essay Benjamin understands intensive language, i.e. the language of difference and singularity, in terms of the language of 'the name'. Here we see extensive language as a classificatory language of the common noun, which for Benjamin is also a language of judgement and the law. The language of the name is, in contrast, an intensive language of the singular proper noun. God gave such intensive language to man in order to name things. God names man in his singularity so that man can name things in their singularity. This again is not ontological but

religious. It is religious in the sense of the messianic to-come. Benjamin contrasts the language of man with the language of things. For him, things have their own proper language, the difference being that man's language takes place through *symbols* while things speak in *images*. Thus God bequeathed to man the symbolic and to things the imaginary. We then turn to Benjamin's most prominent methodological statement in the 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue' to his *Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1977b). Here Benjamin takes his distance from Nietzsche, in an effectively religious critique of Nietzschean ontology. Benjamin thus explicitly displaces Nietzsche's 'aesthetic theory' with his own religious theory of tragedy. In Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* (1966a) an 'epistemological' Apollonian aesthetic of form is rejected for an ontological and Dionysian aesthetics of life. For Benjamin, after the Fall from Paradise, which is also modernity's fall into commoditization, life is drained from tragedy and other forms of art. Thus aesthetic value, and indeed life itself, must be displaced to a messianic to-come of the singular name. Here we find a double displacement of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. First, there is the decidedly *untermenschlich* and messianic hope of the Jew, the Black, the displaced for the to-come. Secondly, we also see the *unterdinglich* from the language of things. This subordinate and indeed subterranean language of things will inform the 'street-life imaginary' in Benjamin's world of more popular culture.

For Benjamin, capitalism worked through the extensity of the commodity. Chapter 5 outlines a possible shift in the economy from an extensive to a contemporary intensive capitalism. Marxian exchange-value shares assumptions of extensity with Newtonian physics. For both there is a move from concrete things to abstract units of analysis. There are assumptions of equivalence in Marx's units of exchange and for Newton in the make-up of physical bodies. For both there are assumptions of external causation. In classical Marxist exchange-value, both the labour that goes into producing value and the politics are comprised of equivalents, of atom-like equivalents. What Chapter 5 understands as intensive capitalism is more closely connected with Aristotle's or Leibniz's metaphysics. This is a capitalism of difference, in which, like Aristotle's substance and Leibniz's monad, each thing is different from every other. This difference extends to the labour that goes into producing these things. Heidegger, in the 'Question Concerning Technology' (1954), rethought technology via the four Aristotelian (efficient, material, formal and final) causes. I draw on these causes to reflect on Marxian

value in an attempt to develop a theoretical basis for intensive capitalism. The second part of the chapter attempts more empirically to understand intensive capitalism in terms of the 'externalities' generated from what might be today's terminal crisis of neo-liberalism. I do this through a critique of Ronald Coase's neo-liberal transaction costs economics. Intensive capitalism entails a dominant role for finance. I finish the chapter with an analysis of financialization and its crisis.

Chapter 6 on intensive politics argues that a new regime of intensive power is developing in contemporary capitalism. In this chapter we contrast a previous *extensive* regime of capitalist power that is based in a politics of hegemony with a contemporary regime of *intensive* politics. I will trace the shift from hegemony or extensive politics to such an intensive politics in terms of: (1) a transition to an ontological regime of power, from a regime that in important respects is 'epistemological'; (2) a shift in power from the hegemonic mode of 'power over' to an intensive notion of power from within (including domination from within) and power as generative force; (3) a shift from power and politics in terms of normativity to a regime of power much more based in what can be understood as a 'facticity'. This points to a general transition from norm to fact in politics, from hegemonic norm to what we will see are intensive facts. The fourth section of this chapter will look at this shift through a change from an extensive (and hegemonic) regime of representation to an intensive regime of communications, and the final section considers the implications for cultural studies.

Chapters 4, 7 and 8 are fundamentally about religion. Chapter 4, as we saw, addresses Judaism, Chapter 7 addresses early, tribal religion and Chapter 8's focus is on Christianity. More specifically, Chapter 4 is Benjamin's Judaism, Chapter 7 looks at Durkheim on the very earliest 'primitive' religion and Chapter 8 examines Philip K. Dick on Christianity. Yes, Philip K. Dick, the science fiction writer: author of *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*. Dick's very last novels registered his apocalyptic conversion to Christianity. They are science fiction but at the same time fundamentally theological. They are also a theology of the distant future, indeed an *information theology*. These three thinkers bring religion into a very significant juxtaposition with ontology. For Benjamin, religion and the messianic, the language of man, are for all practical purposes a critique of ontology. Not so for Durkheim and Dick, for whom religion is quintessentially ontological. Durkheim's *Elementary*

*Forms of Religious Life* (1995) addresses 'elementary' religion as experienced in *totemism*. It is the totem that is at the heart of the birth of the sacred and indeed the origins of society for Durkheim. The totem is the symbolic basis of the clan, a given number of which comprise a tribe. For a tribe, the system of individual clan-totems is the basis of 'the sacred'. This sacred is born in ritual, in totem-based, often orgiastic rituals and rites. For Durkheim, the primary condition of possibility of society is the symbol. The totems are the original symbols. They also generate an energy, a vital energy that is the primal source of motivation for social life. Thus our theme of an intensive sociological vitalism is pursued from Simmel through Durkheim. This is neither natural energy nor even psychic energy (*libido*), as proposed by Durkheim's contemporary, Sigmund Freud. It is instead *social* energy. Whereas Freud's *libido* is produced in the unconscious mind (not brain), the fount of Durkheim's social energy is the sacred. Please note here that Freudian energy and Durkheimian energy are less material than spiritual. In each case at stake is less the physical than the metaphysical.

In the sacred, the totem works through a principle of difference – each totem is singular and different from every other totem. But once the orgiastic rites come to an end in the cold light of day, these same tribes enter the world of the profane. In the profane, those totems lose their energy and become the forms, the categories of classification of knowledge. Here they are no longer singular and based on difference, but generic and become common nouns or adjectives. Readers will have encountered notions of the symbolic and its counterpart, the imaginary, in the work of Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek or Judith Butler. The origins of the symbolic trace a lineage in French thought from Lacan back through Lévi-Strauss to Marcel Mauss and in Durkheim's account of religion. The elementary form of religious life is the original symbol, the totem. Durkheim argues systematically against contemporaneous English empiricist anthropology, which would substitute empiricism's image in place of Durkheim's rationalist symbol. For Durkheim, before the birth of the sacred and the social, man, like animals, operated in the register of images and the imaginary. Only with the birth of religion does man move into the register of the symbol. For him, as for Benjamin, the symbol is what makes us humans distinctively human, while the images are very much the language of non-humans or, in the case of children, proto-humans. Chapter 7 further addresses the origins of Durkheim's notion of the 'social fact'. Though this idea is later taken



up by positivism and empiricism, for Durkheim, again the original social fact is the totem: the totem in the realm of the sacred. This social fact is not static but processual and incorporates vital energy. We can straight away see the parallels with Aristotle and ontology. Durkheim's singular, different and processual, life-infused social facts are indeed ontological facts. Durkheim speaks of the totems in the sacred in terms of 'substance', and in the profane in terms of 'forms'. Durkheim's sacred becomes Aristotelian ontology, the profane the predicates of epistemology – the sacred intensity, the profane extensity.

For Philip K. Dick in his novels *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1991) and *Valis* (2001), religion is again ontological. For him, the religious is not the to-come of messianic Judaism but the 'ontological' already-there of Christianity, in which, of course, salvation has already happened. Dick is a Pauline. Paul's Damascus saw him break with Pharisaic Jewish Law for the faith, the passion of an engagement with Christ. This is not the 'epistemological' Christ, of good deeds of the first three gospels and Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic*, but the death-and-resurrection Christ of John, the Fourth Gospel. This critique of, on the one hand, rule-bound, and in this sense legal, Christianity and, on the other, Pharasaic Law, is at the same time also a critique of Roman Law. Paul is not a rule follower, but attains grace through coming face-to-face with Jesus Christ. Dick's Christianity is also not one of rules but immediate and intensive communication. This communication, in an age of planetary time-space compression, comes through divine invasion by a laser beam from a distant planet. This McLuhanite beam of light carries to Dick a God who is Valis, a vast, active, living intelligence (information) system. Such an immaterial divine invasion apprises Dick (and his protagonist) that he was in an earlier incarnation a first-century Christian, locked in a Roman prison. Christ Himself is an incarnation of God as this Valis, this non-linear system of differences. Christ was invaded by Valis and so is Dick. What is at stake here is not Benjaminian or Leibniz's Kabbalism. Valis instead incorporates a Gnostic God, opposed to the mainstream Judaeo-Christian God of Creation, whom Dick and Gnosticism see as blind and mechanistic. The Creation God's blind mechanism is repeated in Pharasaic and Roman Law for St Paul and Dick. It is repeated again for Dick in the corrupt, commoditized, modern American society of the 1960s and 1970s. Valis is the antidote. Again we have the battle of extensity and intensity. And again intensity is profoundly spiritual. In Durkheim, it is the

distant past of the totem; in Dick the distant future of an informational utopia. The debates around St Paul have been central to cultural and social theory in the past half-decade. They have counterposed Giorgio Agamben's (2006) messianic Paul and Badiou's (2003) more mainstream Christian Paul. Badiou's Paul is very much like Dick's, though Badiou does not take on Dick's Gnostic opposition to Law. There is another parallel between Dick and Badiou. Agamben and Benjamin's critique of ontology is fundamentally linguistic. It is a critique, as is Derrida's, of Aristotelian ontology. Badiou is not an Aristotelian, but a Platonist. His being and his ontology are Platonist. He is not interested in substance and the categories as subject and predicate. Instead, like Plato, language is not the fundamental mediator between beings and ideas. Instead, Badiou looks for the ontological in mathematics, in set theory. Dick is equally Platonist. He speaks correspondingly of the pure idea and understands knowledge in terms of Platonic anamnesis or un-forgetting. The medium of such un-forgetting, though, is primarily neither language nor the mathematical, but information.

### Social theory

Let me add a coda to indicate that this book is a study in *social* theory. It may address intensive *culture*, but it is *social* theory. It is not empirical sociology, though empirical sociologists will be able to draw on it. Instead of an empirical comment on, say, post-secular movements, we carry out a social-theoretical exploration into the nature of the religious. It may address a number of questions addressed by philosophy, but it does so differently. And, for example, consider the notion of substance. Most all modern philosophers reject notions of substance and indeed metaphysics. As a social theorist, I am less interested in systematic arguments against Aristotelian substance, and more interested in how we can use the notion to understand social and cultural processes. Thus Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel all had notions of substance. Marx spoke of value-substance, Weber of substantive rationality, Durkheim of the substance of religious life and Simmel of life-substance. In each case, substance is a question of intensive culture while form is a question of extensive culture. Thus, for Marx, value-form was exchange-value and the commodity; Weber spoke of bureaucracy in terms of formal rationalization; Durkheim of forms of religious life; and Simmel of social forms.

There is also an implicit theory of social change in this book. My view, with Marilyn Strathern (1992) and *pace* Durkheim, is that the earliest cultures were not intensive. This is because intensive cultures are fundamentally individualistic, while the earliest cultures are not individualistic but instead somehow relational. Even with modernization not all cultures have developed in the intensive/extensive frame. Chinese culture, for example, even though attaining very high levels of abstract thought and a rationalized bureaucratic state, never primarily entered into the Western dialectic – and this indeed *was* Hegel's dialectic – of extensity and intensity. Chinese culture remained primarily relational and never took on the agonism – of competitive scholars, dramatists and politicians – of the Greek tradition. Even though Chinese culture moved, as did Western cultures, from the clan to ever more universal political and cultural, it does not take on Western transcendental individualism. With Max Weber, I do think this comes from a very specific conjunction of Athens and Jerusalem that infused the West. It was the extensive rationalization of Weber's bureaucratic state and Marx's commodity that Habermas and critical theory understood as 'system' that stood in juxtaposition to the 'life-world', the intensive sphere of family, private life, sexuality and art.

In this context of the separation of intensity from extensity, I would like to signal two processes that will be increasingly pervasive in twenty-first-century culture. The first of these concerns the rise of China and India and other non-Western cultures. These are constituted largely exterior to the intensity/extensity dialectic. Their often relational cultures will increasingly challenge Western hegemony and increasingly pervade Western culture. The second is in recent decades an implosion, a coming together, a de-differentiation of intensity and extensity. 'System', previously extensive as it becomes self-organizing and processual, takes on intensive colours. The 'life-world' for its part is commoditized, branded and turned outward on to its external surface. Power, itself previously extensive through the commodity and the bureaucratic state, becomes intensive in new non-linear forms of domination. Whereas, previously, intensity was in some sense spiritual and extensity in, say, the commodity was material, now there is a new indifference in what might be called the *intensive material*. Capitalism itself becomes more or less metaphysical, while simultaneously remaining material. Information is on the one side mind, and on the other matter: it too is thus intensive-material. A lot of this was more or less foreseen some 38 years ago in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*

(1972). This critique of Freudo-Marxism famously inaugurated the notions of 'desiring machines' and the 'body without organs'. Here desire, previously intensive and born in the unconscious mind (*esprit*, *Geist*), now merges with the materiality of the machine. Likewise, the machine and Marx's material commodity take on an intensive flux. The body, previously the home of Cartesian materialist extensity, loses its physical organs and takes on the intensive topology of the virtual.