



# Between Marx and Heidegger: Politics, Philosophy and Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*

**Stuart Elden**

Department of Geography, University of Durham, Durham, UK;  
stuart.elden@durham.ac.uk

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This article argues that the work of Martin Heidegger is extremely important in understanding Henri Lefebvre's intellectual project. It suggests that Lefebvre's trio of influential thinkers—Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche—are partnered by Heidegger. But this is Heidegger read in a particular way, and subjected to a Marxist critique—turned back on his feet, grounded, made real.

This is pursued in detail through a rereading of Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*. The two terms in this title need to be examined, and while the importance of space develops a number of insights from Heidegger, the stress on production shows the political and Marxist nature of this research. *The Production of Space* is therefore situated, and needs to be read, between Marx and Heidegger. The article closes with some comments on the interrelation of history, space and politics, and offers the possibility of a left-Heideggerianism.

In an earlier piece for *Antipode* (Elden 2001c), I argued that much recent Anglo-American scholarship had read Henri Lefebvre in ways that seriously neglected the political and philosophical aspects of his work. My claim was that in doing this there was a danger that we missed much of what is interesting and important about Lefebvre. I suggested that Lefebvre's appropriation by disciplines such as geography and cultural studies had been at the expense of an analysis of his more theoretical and engaged work. This was pursued through critical readings of the work of Edward Soja and Rob Shields. This essay, building upon that critique of dominant English-language interpretations, continues the project of showing how Lefebvre's work can be profitably read as being explicitly political and inherently philosophical. Lefebvre was not just a Marxist, but a Marxist *philosopher*.<sup>1</sup> In other words, in this paper I make a claim for him as part of a much larger intellectual tradition.

It is immediately apparent from Lefebvre's writings that he did not merely criticise other currents of thought, but incorporated insights taken from other thinkers. Lefebvre saw Marx's work as important, indeed essential, to an understanding of our times, but not something that could stand alone (for example, 1988:76). In his book *Hegel, Marx,*

*Nietzsche ou le royaume des ombres*, Lefebvre suggests these thinkers provide three ways to take the modern world: Hegel thinks in terms of the state, Marx society, and Nietzsche civilisation (1975b:11; see 1970c:21–22). We can therefore view the modern world as Hegelian—a political theory of the nation state, the state engulfing and subordinating civil society, that is social relations; as Marxist—the relation of the working class to the nation state, industrial change and its consequences more important than ideas; and as Nietzschean—an assertion of life and the lived against political and economic processes; resistance through poetry, music and theatre; the hope of the extraordinary, the surreal and the supernatural (1975b:9–10). Each of these taken alone may not be paradoxical, he suggests, but when combined they are inherently paradoxical. However, each grasped something of the modern world, and shaped Lefebvre's own reflections accordingly (1975b:11–12).

This is not simply to acknowledge that Lefebvre was a “Hegelian” Marxist (see Kelly 1982), nor to note the role Nietzsche plays in his thought (see Merrifield 1995; Kofman and Lebas 1996), important as such analyses are.<sup>2</sup> Whilst I believe that Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche are indispensable to understanding his work, in this piece I am particularly interested in drawing some parallels and contrasts between Lefebvre's work and a fourth key thinker, Martin Heidegger. I recognise that this is a controversial reading of Lefebvre, for political as well as intellectual reasons. My central argument is that Lefebvre appropriated a number of ideas from Heidegger, whilst subjecting them to a Marxist critique. Whilst Heidegger has much to offer theoretically, it is not immediately apparent how his work can be applied practically.

Although I hold to my claim in the earlier piece that “not least among the contemporary problems is that his work on space is seen as his crowning achievement, and other interests as subordinate to it” (Elden 2001c:810), this piece illustrates the relation between Marx and Heidegger in Lefebvre's work through a reading of *The Production of Space*. Geographers have, in general, failed to avail themselves of the insights Heidegger's work provides. This is in large part because of the opacity of his presentation and the lack of directly applicable contexts, but also, significantly, because of his politics. However, as Marx famously remarks, “the mystification which the dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion in a comprehensive and conscious manner” (1976:103). I believe that a similar remark might be made of Lefebvre's reading and appropriation of Heidegger. Heidegger's conservative politics and the mystifications of his ontology should not obscure the valuable ideas that he presents, here especially concerning space.

## Reading Heidegger

In his 1946 polemic *L'existentialisme* Lefebvre notes that Heidegger had remarked that Sartre does not understand the difference between him and Husserl. Lefebvre agrees with this judgement, and adds that "it is also possible that M. Sartre does not clearly see the difference between Heidegger and Marx" (2001b:184 n. 1). Aside from its prescience, given that Marx is hardly mentioned in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, and that the later *Critique of Dialectical Reason* will be arguably concerned with precisely the articulation of this difference (see, for example, Sartre 1960:42; 1972), Lefebvre seems to be setting out the terrain on which his later work will take place. There is a difference—many differences—between Marx and Heidegger, but for Lefebvre, both are essential. As Kofman and Lebas have rightly noted, Heidegger was the twentieth century philosopher that Lefebvre most engaged with (1996:8). David Harvey has suggested that this combination of Marx and Heidegger is an area of useful future work, when he talks of "the possibility of somehow bridging the Marxian and Heideggerian conception within a new kind of radical politic" (1996:312). These insights and possibilities remain undeveloped in the literature.

Lefebvre read Heidegger in the 1920s, but was "immediately hostile" (Hess 1988:54–55, 188). Although Lefebvre's attitude to Heidegger is far from consistent in his career, a number of points can be drawn out. The most important is that while Lefebvre is extremely critical of existentialism, this is actually an opening toward Heidegger rather than an outright rejection of him. What is in danger of being missed is that by being critical of Sartre he is simultaneously being critical of a certain way in which Heidegger was presented to the French. At one point Lefebvre suggests that the label of existentialism has been stuck on Heidegger by "ill-informed readers" (1970a:160), noting that Heidegger was also extremely critical of this misappropriation of his ideas. For Lefebvre, existentialism was a shift from the objective idealism of Hegel to a subjective idealism. He condemned Sartre as "an idealistic subjectivist manufacturer of weapons against communism" (in *Action*, 8 June 1945, quoted in Hayman 1986:224). Sartre is thus doubly damned: for being an idealist without being a materialist; and for being a subjectivist rather than an objectivist. The latter of these two points is a relatively standard criticism of Sartre's reading of Heidegger, in that if Heidegger is treated as talking about subjects he is made more Cartesian: a common move for the French (see Lefebvre 1981:24; Heidegger 1998).<sup>3</sup> It is striking that throughout *L'existentialisme*, when Lefebvre is criticising Heidegger, it is often Sartre that is his real target. Points are more often illustrated by quotation from *Being and Nothingness* than *Being and Time*. It follows

from this that the Heidegger Lefebvre is interested in is rather different from the standard version of Heidegger that, even today in the Anglophone world, is often read through Sartrean lenses. This is a longer argument than is possible here, but it should be noted that Lefebvre's interest in Heidegger is in the Heidegger of the critique of subjectivity—there in *Being and Time*—but found throughout his destruction of the tradition in works throughout his career; the historical Heidegger; the Heidegger who accords equal weight to issues of space that is of most interest.

Another crucial issue is Heidegger's allegiance to the Nazi party. Heidegger was a member of the party from 1933 to 1945, and held office as Rector of Freiburg University between 1933 and 1934. One of the most contentious issues in the Heidegger literature is to what extent his thought can be said to be implicated in his political actions.<sup>4</sup> In 1946 Lefebvre is blunt, describing Heidegger's philosophy as "pro-fascist" (2001b:175). He is strongly critical of the importance of death in Heidegger's work, suggesting this is a turn away from life. He suggests that "mass graves are outlined on the horizon of Heideggerianism", and describes Heidegger's philosophy as the metaphysics of the Grand Guignol (a Parisian theatre specialising in horror plays),<sup>5</sup> which "can no longer be accepted now Europe has served as a field of experience for the sadists" (2001b:179). He argues that it is not Hitler's politics or racism that is found in Heidegger's philosophy, but Hitler's "style", that is, the SS. For Lefebvre, in Heidegger, the Hegelian dialectic of being and nothingness, of master and slave, becomes that of executioner and victim (2001b:180–181). However, in 1965, Lefebvre is content to dismiss Heidegger's politics as a "tendency toward German nationalism". This remarkable exculpation is all the more notable because in the previous line he had dismissed the Nazi interpretation of Nietzsche as faked, but omitted to mention Heidegger's party status. Indeed, he suggests that "one would easily find the same tendencies in French works which pass for significant. Moreover, the philosophico-political appreciation is out-of-date. It is worth no more for Heidegger than for Kafka, Joyce or Proust" (2001a:126).

In order to understand Lefebvre's argument, it is worth noting the important distinction that is now often drawn between "politics" [*la politique*, *die Politik*]*—*concrete policy-making, decisions and actions*—*and the "political" [*le politique*, *das Politische*]*—*the frame of reference within which "politics" occurs. For Lefebvre the distinction between *le politique* and *la politique* enables a distinction between the thinking of the political and political action. This is a distinction and not a disassociation; a distinction and not a separation. The political thinker and thought on the one side; the political human and action on the other (1986:89). With his favoured thinkers it enables him to turn their thought to political purposes other than those they favoured,

initiated or influenced (the Prussian state for Hegel, Stalinism for Marx, Hitler and Nazism for Nietzsche and Heidegger) (see 1975b:46–49). At one point Lefebvre notes that Marx's work differs as much from the Gulag as Christ's teachings do from Torquemada (1988:84). As Lefebvre would later claim, his 1939 *Nietzsche* "was the first book written to show that Nietzsche was not at all responsible for the fascist interpretation" (1975b:147 n. 5; see 46 n. 16; 1939). This book, destroyed following the occupation, was indeed several years ahead of mainstream scholarship, and would bear careful comparison with, for example, Heidegger's contemporaneous lectures (1991) and Kaufmann's influential study (1950). Equally it is worth noting Eduard Baumgarten's recollection that at one point "Heidegger was working through a pile of Marxist writings so that he would be in a position to reign as *der deutsche Philosoph* no matter who prevailed in the ensuing political struggle" (Luban 1996:109). This is a distinction between their thought and their action, not a disassociation. What it allows is a means of appropriating their thought against their action, or against the actions of those putatively informed by their thought. As demonstrations, witness the critique of Stalin in *Dialectical Materialism*, which continues in *De l'État*; and for early critiques of Nazism, see *La Conscience mystifiée*, *Le Nationalisme contre les nations* and *Hitler au pouvoir* (1968; 1976–1978; Guterman and Lefebvre 1999; Lefebvre 1937, 1938).

For Lefebvre, the question, and the danger, of Heidegger is rather different. Instead of being one of politics, it is one of eclecticism (2001a:126). Notably, this is the same potential he saw in the combination of Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche. Consequently, there are a number of places where Lefebvre strongly criticises Heidegger—for his mystification and abstraction, his ontology, his disguised theology and lack of dialectics (see, for example, Guterman and Lefebvre 1999:58, 143, 179; Lefebvre 1970c:153–154; 1975b:51–52; 1980b:239; 2001b:175–176). While Lefebvre praises his "admirable studies of *Logos*, *Aletheia*, *Physis*, etc." he suggests we need "to study *Praxis*, *Techne*, *Mimesis*, *Poesis*, etc. in the same manner" (2001a:78). As he notes, following an appreciation of Heidegger's work on difference and appropriation, "one may object that these still philosophical propositions are not of great importance in throwing light on praxis ..." (1970c:212–213). To take a particular example, Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* is criticised for its lack of sex, and Lefebvre suggests that the Freudian theory of the libido "is often richer and closer to the concrete" (2001a:136; see 1980b:239). This highlights the central tension—Heidegger is too abstract, too philosophical for Lefebvre, never concrete enough. At each stage, Lefebvre wants to ground Heidegger, to make his analyses more *real*.

A similar set of issues can be found in Lefebvre's concept of everyday life. Whilst everyday life is of course a broadening of the scope of

Marx's notion of alienation to areas outside the economic, it is equally very close to Lukács' and Heidegger's notion of *Alltäglichkeit* [everydayness] (see Lukács 1971; Heidegger 1962). It should not be forgotten that Lefebvre, especially with Guterman in *La conscience mystifiée* (1999), and his own *Le marxisme* (1948), gave "the first outright presentation in France of Marx as a theorist of alienation" (Judt 1986:180; see Anderson 1976:51). Guterman was also the first translator of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*, and their presentation by Lefebvre underlined the Hegelian heritage (see Guterman and Lefebvre 1934). Just as Marx turned Hegel's abstract notion of alienation into a concrete analysis of human reality, Lefebvre is critical of both Heidegger's abstraction, and the attribution of primitivity, triviality and anonymity to the notion of everyday life (see 1981:23–24; 2001a:132). Lefebvre sees Marx's *Capital* as making the abstract concepts of "man" and "humanity" concrete, into *praxis* (1971:112), and is strongly critical of phenomenology and existentialism for their devaluation of the everyday (i.e. concrete, real, life) "in favour of pure or tragic moments" such as angst and death (1958:98 n. 1). According to Lefebvre, existentialists condemn everyday life, the non-metaphysical, to banality and inauthenticity (1958:254). Lefebvre is therefore critical of Heidegger, but he is unconvincing in his denial of influence (1981:23). As with the previously mentioned examples, Heidegger's work is too abstract, it looks at everyday life theoretically, for what it shows of ontological issues. For Lefebvre, Heidegger's theory needs to be related to practice, to material conditions. Like Hegel, Heidegger needs to be stood on his feet.

For Lefebvre therefore, Heidegger shows "the best and the worst, the archaic and the visionary" (2001a:133). What this means is that, despite these criticisms, which are far from minor, there are a number of areas of Lefebvre's work that would benefit from a critical comparison with Heidegger. As well as those already mentioned, and the issue of space that will dominate this paper, we could also note the notion of metaphilosophy and its relation both to Heidegger's fundamental ontology—of which it is highly critical—and Heidegger's later *thought* of the *Überwinden* [overcoming] of metaphysics; and their understandings of being and moments. Lefebvre himself, though, whilst acknowledging the importance of Heidegger, did not think him as important as Hegel, Marx or Nietzsche. There are obvious reasons we might assume for this attempt to downplay a relation—apart from the political aspects, they were also contemporaries. Equally we should remember that certain works of Lefebvre's were written either on behalf of, or subject to censorship by, the French Communist Party. This was certainly the case with *L'existentialisme*: according to Trebitsch, the PCF saw Lefebvre as the only Communist philosopher capable of stemming the tide of existentialism (1991:xii, see Poster



1975:112–113). Despite this, it can, I believe, be convincingly shown that much of Lefebvre's work is closely related to Heidegger's work and that the two are complementary in the furtherance of a critical project in understanding the interrelation of politics, philosophy and geography.

### Heidegger and Space

It is no easy task to summarise Heidegger's contribution to our understanding of space. I have tried to discuss this, in much greater detail, elsewhere (2001a, 2001b; see also Franck 1986; Casey 1997). Here, I will provide only a brief summary. Although in his early works Heidegger is more concerned with an analysis of time, he does occasionally make some penetrating remarks about understandings of space. In later works, beginning from around the mid-1930s, Heidegger starts to redress the balance and to treat questions of spatiality as equally important to those of temporality. The principal thrust of his argument is that space, like time, has been understood in a narrow, calculative, mathematical sense, which is divorced from our experience of space in our everyday dealings with the world. In the case of space, Descartes' understanding of *res extensa* is the central ontological break. Descartes' distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* means that the fundamental ontological determination of substance, material being, is that it is extended in three dimensions. Descartes importantly suggests that all problems in geometry can be reduced to the line of some straight lines, to the values of the roots of the equations (1954:2–3, 216–217), thereby turning space into something that is quantitatively measurable, calculable, numerical. In a number of striking examples—walking into a lecture room, the uses of a kitchen table, a bridge over a river—Heidegger takes issue with such a reductive analysis. Instead, he suggests that we deal with the world as a matter of concern, acting with and reacting to objects within it in a lived, experiential way, instead of abstracting from them in a Cartesian grid of coordinates.

Heidegger's later work introduces a term known as “poetic dwelling”, which derives from his lecture courses on Hölderlin in the 1930s and 1940s (1980, 1996), and is fully elaborated in later essays (1971). In a late poem, Hölderlin suggested that “poetically, man dwells on the earth” (1961:245–246). For Heidegger, this notion of dwelling, *wohnen*, is precisely this way of inhabiting the world in a lived, experienced manner instead of one of calculative planning (see, for example, 1971:213). Indeed, this notion of dwelling is the direct opposite of the understanding of technology that Heidegger thinks holds sway in the modern world. Technology, taking the world as a substance which can be ordered, planned, and worked upon—instead of worked with—is a direct consequence of Cartesian metaphysics, and is the condition of possibility for modern science, mechanised forms of agriculture, the holocaust, nuclear weapons and other modern forms

of control. Heidegger's critique of Nazism, such that it is, is principally grounded upon it being a continuation of, instead of a challenge to, this metaphysical understanding of the world (see Heidegger 1977; Elden 2003).

It could be contended that there are two principal things missing from Heidegger's work on space. Whilst he is exceptionally interesting in a historical reading of the philosophical tradition, he is less good on historical detail, with the illustrations often merely passing references. Equally, while he is penetrating in his analysis of the spatial aspects of the Greek *polis*, he often neglects the more explicitly political aspects of modern appropriations of space. As I have tried to show in *Mapping the Present*, Foucault is extremely important in taking Heideggerian ideas forward in an analysis of the relation between history and space (2001b). Here, I want to cover the other side of the matter. Lefebvre, building upon Heidegger's philosophical critique, is exceptionally powerful in looking at the relation between politics and space, especially in relation to modern capitalism. He does this through an analysis of the *production* of space. The bringing in of a Marxist concept, with all the political issues that implies, is tremendously important in understanding Lefebvre's distance from Heidegger, even as the emphasis on "space" is indebted to him. Lefebvre's work *The Production of Space* should be read between Marx and Heidegger.

## The Production of Space

Before *The Production of Space* Lefebvre had written a number of works that analysed the politics of the rural and the urban (for example, 1963, 1969, 1970a, 1970b, 1972, 1974a, 1996). In a conference given in 1970, Lefebvre broadened that analysis and argued that space is the ultimate locus and medium of struggle, and is therefore a crucial political issue. As he aphorises, "there is a politics of space because space is political" (1974a:192). For instance, where the space of town planners is seen as a scientific object, as pure and apolitical, Lefebvre argues that has been shaped and moulded by historical and natural elements, through a political process (1974a:188). Like Heidegger he realises the Cartesian understanding of space—which is part of Descartes' wider metaphysical view—allows social and technological domination (1972:152). Noting Heidegger's importance, Lefebvre suggests a distinction between the domination and appropriation of nature, with its technological domination leading to its destruction (1975b:52). This conflict takes place in space (1974b:396; 1991:343). Space is a social and political product. This is clearly why Lefebvre's main work on space is entitled *The Production of Space*. There are two terms in this title, both need to be critically examined (1974b:83; 1991:68).

Though Lefebvre has been accused of prioritising the early Marx's notion of alienation over the later idea of production, it is clear in the



work on space that the mode of production is essential to the analysis. The human effects, whilst considered forcefully, do not dominate. Lefebvre states that “(social) space is a (social) product” (1974b:35; 1991:26). This means that “every society (and therefore every mode of production with all its subvariants ...) produces a space, its own space” (1974b:40; 1991:31). The mechanistic understanding of the 1859 *Preface* regarding base and superstructure is not replicated, but he does recognise the causal efficacy of the forces and relations of production. He notes that there is not a strict correspondence, and that sometimes spaces are produced by the contradictions in the mode of production. Spaces are sometimes produced by the contradictions of the mode of production—such as the medieval town, which was produced in the feudal period out of the contradictions of feudalism, but eventually emerged victorious as the foundation for the new, capitalist, urban-based mode of production (1987:31; see 1974b:65; 1991:53; 1970b). Equally, though, in the strict Marxist tradition social space would be considered part of the superstructure, for Lefebvre it enters into the forces of production, the division of labour, and has relations with property. Social space and space itself escape the base–structure–superstructure model (2000:xxi). By production Lefebvre means both the strictly economic production of things, but also the larger philosophical concept, “the production of *oeuvres*, the production of knowledge, of institutions, of all that constitutes society”. This is the dual understanding found in Marx (Lefebvre 1975a:226), deriving from his reading of Hegel (Lefebvre 1974b:83–84, 86–87; 1991:68–69, 71; see 2000:xx), and comes close to Nietzsche’s sense of creation (Lefebvre 2000:xxii). Lefebvre is anxious to point out that “a social space is not a *socialised* space” (1974b:220; 1991:190), it did not exist beforehand as a non-social space, as a natural space: it is produced by social forces.

An analysis of production in the modern world shows that “we have passed from the *production of things in space* to the *production of space itself*” (1974a:227). Both of these need to be considered (1974b:244; 1991:212). One of the key factors to take into account is, as already mentioned, technology. Scott Kirsch has pointed out that this is sometimes neglected in an analysis of Lefebvre’s work: “In addition to its significance to production *in* space, technology also plays a mediating role in the production *of* space”. Kirsch also cautions against “resorting to the rather cartoonish shrinking world metaphor”, which risks losing sight of the complex relations between capital, *technology*, and space. Space is not “shrinking”, but must rather be perpetually recast (Kirsch 1995:533, 544).<sup>6</sup> We might wish to modify and rephrase this last sentence. Space is not shrinking, it is being perpetually recast, but we *perceive* it to be shrinking.

This highlights an important point. Lefebvre not only corrected the modernist imbalance of time over space, but also, *contra* Kant,

emphasised the historicity of their experience. No longer the Kantian empty formal containers, no longer *categories* of experience, time and space could be experienced *as such*, and their experience was directly related to the historical conditions they were experienced within.<sup>7</sup> For Lefebvre, of course, these historical conditions are directly linked to the mode of production: hence the *production* of space. Lefebvre therefore wished to make two main moves in his work. First to put space up with and alongside time in considerations of social theory, and in doing so correct the vacuity of the Kantian experiential containers. Spatiality is as important as, but must not obscure considerations of, temporality and history: "space and time appear and manifest themselves as different yet inseparable" (1974b:204; 1991:175). Secondly he wished to use this new critical understanding to examine the (modern) world in which he was writing. This is accomplished through an analysis of how space is produced, and how it is experienced. Space is produced in two ways, as a social formation (mode of production), and as a mental construction (conception).

As Massey sensibly warns, "space" and "spatial" are regularly used as if their meaning was clear, but writers generally fail to realise that they have many different interpretations. She accepts that Lefebvre realised this (see Lefebvre 1974b:9–10; 1991:3–4), and that he is fairly explicit in his understanding of these problematic terms (Massey 1992: 66). The French word *espace* has of course a wider range of meanings than the English "space". In English these different meanings could be understood as close to our terms of "area", "zone" or even "place". Lefebvre begins *The Production of Space* by suggesting that up until recently one view of space dominated. This was the view of space based on the Descartes' division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Space was formulated on the basis of extension, thought of in terms of co-ordinates, lines and planes, as "Euclidean" geometry. Kant further complicated the picture by conceiving of space and time as *a priori* absolute categories, structuring all experience (1974b:7–8; 1991:1–2). We have already seen how Lefebvre's emphasis on the production of space historicises this experience; the critique of Cartesian formulations still needs to be achieved.

As early as 1939, Lefebvre had described geometric space as abstractive, and had likened it to clock time in its abstraction of the concrete (1968:122, 133). This can be usefully related to Heidegger's critique of geometric space in *Being and Time* and other works. For Heidegger, in a way similar to our dealings with equipment, we encounter space geometrically only when we pause to think about it, when we conceptualise it.<sup>8</sup> For Lefebvre, absolute space has dimensions, but these are left and right, and high and low rather than the dimensions of abstract, geometric, space (Lefebvre 1974b:273; 1991:236). Our mode of reaction to space is not geometric, only our mode of abstraction is.

There is an opposition established between our *conception* of space—abstract, mental and geometric—and our *perception* of space—concrete, material and physical. The latter takes as its initial point of departure the body, which Lefebvre sees as the site of resistance within the discourse of Power in space (1973:123–124). Abstract, decorporalised space is, he suggests, still another aspect of alienation.

In order to make progress in understanding space, we need to grasp the concrete and the abstract together. As Lefebvre argued in his early *Dialectical Materialism*, if only one is grasped and turned into an absolute, a partial truth becomes an error: “By rejecting a part of the content it gives sanction to and aggravates the dispersion of the elements of the real” (1968:167; see Guterman and Lefebvre 1999:210). Just as Lefebvre described the state as a “realised abstraction” (1958:223), space too is a realised (in both senses of the word, that is, comprehended and actualised) abstraction. Here there is a balance struck—a dialectical relation—between idealism and materialism. Space is a mental *and* material construct. This provides us with a third term between the poles of conception and perception, the notion of the lived. Lefebvre argues that human space and human time lie half in nature, and half in abstraction. His example of time is instructive: “It is obvious ... that the human rhythms (biological, psychological and social time-scales—the time-scale of our own organism and that of the clock) determine the way in which we perceive and conceive of the world and even the laws we discover in it” (1968:142). Socially lived space and time, socially produced, depend on physical and mental constructs. It is from this that Lefebvre derives his conceptual triad of spatial practice; representations of space; and spaces of representation.

It is here perhaps, above all, that we can see Heidegger’s influence. The spatial notion of poetic dwelling, a notion of lived experience of everyday life is enormously important. Lefebvre’s use of *habiter*, which we might translate as “to inhabit”, or “to dwell”, is a direct translation of Heidegger’s *wohnen*, which is usually translated as “to dwell”, or, in French, as *habiter* (Lefebvre 1970b:240; 1974b:143–144; 1991:121–122).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in a number of places, Lefebvre cites Hölderlin’s “poetically man dwells”, and mentions Heidegger’s discussion positively (1970a:160; 1970b:111; 1974b:362; 1991:314). Lefebvre’s suggestion that inhabiting [*habiter*] has been reduced to the notion of habitat [*habitat*] (1996:79; 1974b:362; 1991:314) parallels Heidegger’s notion of a crisis in dwelling (1971:161). As Lefebvre notes, explicitly following Heidegger, this crisis “springs from a strange kind of excess: a rage for measurement and calculation” (1970a:161). In this view of lived space, Cartesian-Kantian notions of space are not necessarily wrong—they can be perfectly reasonable approximations—but they

are approximations (see Harvey 1996:267). To repeat, they are approximations that begin at the level of abstraction, crucially one level away from the initial level of lived reaction. Dwelling has a more directly rooted understanding of space or place, one that is closer to lived reaction.

Lefebvre is not uncritical of Heidegger and Hölderlin's concept of dwelling. For one thing he notes that for centuries this idea would have had no meaning outside the aristocracy (1974b:362; 1991:314). This is clearly a criticism of the politics of the idea, suggesting that it is elitist and class based. Heidegger is also censured for his reliance on the rural (Lefebvre 2001a:127–128), though in response, making this notion more relevant to modern, urbanised capitalism, Lefebvre did not solely concentrate on the city. His work on the sociology of the Pyrenees which predated his work on the urban, and his understanding of the shift from the rural to the urban—both in historical terms, and in his own work—enable him to escape the accusations that suggest that there is a strong urban bias in much continental theory (see 1963, 1970a). As Margaret Fitzsimmons notes, compared to Marx, Weber, Althusser, Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, only Lefebvre escapes the “obsession with *la vie urbaine*, *la vie parisienne*, as the only civilised manifestation of *la vie quotidienne*” (1997:188). Lefebvre's understanding of the rural and urban together rather than in isolation is one of his key points: the over-emphasis on the urban is one of his criticisms of the Situationists (1995:345–346); whilst the neglect of the problems of urbanisation is seen as a fault with Marcuse (1969:33).

Also, as should be expected, he suggests that Heidegger's notion is insufficiently concrete (2001a:288):

Heidegger, now, shows us a world ravaged by technology, that through its ravages leads towards another dream, another (as yet unperceived) world. He warns us: a lodging built on the basis of economic or technological dictates is as far removed from dwelling as the language of machines is from poetry. He does not tell us how to construct, “here and now”, buildings and cities. (Lefebvre 1971a:161)

However, as he suggested in *La révolution urbaine*, “even if this ‘poetic’ critique of “habitat” and industrial space appears as a critique from the right, nostalgic, “old-fashioned [*passéiste*]”, it did nothing less than inaugurate the problematic of space” (1970b:111–112).

For Lefebvre, then, the construction, or production, of spaces owes as much to conceptual realms as to material activities. An example of a space that incorporates both mental and material constructs is a cloister, where “a gestural space has succeeded in grounding a mental space—one of contemplation and theological abstraction—thus allowing it to express itself, to symbolise itself and to come into practice” (1974b:250; 1991:217). One of Lefebvre's criticisms of Heidegger is

that he failed to understand the notion of production in sufficient detail. Heidegger's conception of production is seen as "restrained and restrictive", as he envisages it as a "making-appear, an arising [*un surgissement*] which brings forth a thing, as a thing present among things already-present" (1974b:144; 1991:122).<sup>10</sup> Lefebvre's reading of space is heavily indebted to Heidegger, even as his understanding of production is a taking forward of Marx. What is involved, therefore, is a *social* and *political* production of space.

### History, Space, Politics

As I have previously noted, Marx's own analysis of space—whilst not nearly as limited as his critics claim—never really takes centre stage in his work (Elden 2001c:813). In his 1980 summary of the current state of Marxism, Lefebvre noted that "space presented itself to Marx only as the sum of the places of production, the location [*territoire*] of the various stages. The city did not yet pose major problems, except for the question of housing (which was treated by Engels)" (1980a:149; see, for example, Marx 1978; Engels 1955, 1958; Martins 1982: 161–163). Lefebvre's solution to this apparent neglect is to suggest that "although space is not analysed in *Capital*, certain concepts, such as exchange value and use value, today apply to space" (1974a:245; see 1974b:119–121; 1991:100–102). He argues that in the past there were shortages of bread, and never a shortage of space, but that now corn is plentiful (at least in the developed world), whilst space is in short supply: Like all economies, the political economy of space is based on the idea of scarcity.<sup>11</sup> There are a number of passages in *Capital* that are concerned with this issue (ie Marx 1976:442, 444, 596–598, 612; 1981:185–190; see 1973:174, 257). Lefebvre suggests that "the overcrowding of highly industrialised countries is especially pronounced in the larger towns and cities" (1971:52; 1974a:192). Indeed, in *The Production of Space*, he argues that it only makes sense to talk of spatial scarcity in urban *centres* (1974b:381; 1991:330–331). We therefore need a more nuanced approach than simply one of scarcity. Social space is allocated according to class, social planning reproduces the class structure. This is either on the basis of too much space for the rich and too little for the poor, or because of uneven development in the quality of places, or indeed both. There are also important issues around marginality and segregation. For Lefebvre, "today more than ever, the class struggle is inscribed in space" (1974b:68; 1991:55). "Space permits the economic to be integrated into the political" (1974b:370; 1991:321). There are at least two ways to take this forward: either to develop a political economy of space, where space is yet another commodity examined, or to take this forward in thinking through a politics of space.<sup>12</sup>

How then should an analysis of space proceed? Just as the social is historically shaped, so too is it spatially shaped. Equally the spatial is

historically and socially configured. The three elements of the social, spatial and temporal shape and are shaped by each other. "Social relations, concrete abstractions, only have real existence in and through space. *Their support is spatial*" (1974b:465; 1991:404). And yet space is not merely "the passive locus [*lieu*] of social relations" (1974b:18; 1991:11). Searching for a name for this new approach, Lefebvre toys with spatio-analysis or spatio-logy, but accepts there is a problem with these, as we need an analysis of the *production of space* (1974b:465; 1991:404). Equally such an analysis would risk missing the importance of an analysis of rhythms, a rhythmanalysis, "which would complete the exposition of the production of space" (1974b:465; 1991:405). An analysis of the *production of space*, given that this is clearly informed by Lefebvre's reworking of dialectics and historical materialism, would be a useful step in taking Lefebvre's work forward (see Elden 2001c: 812, 817–818). Lefebvre does not see the analysis of space as a replacement of other analyses, and recognises that we also need to look at the production of population and class structure. Despite the way he has sometimes been appropriated, the analysis must also be historical—it is not something static (1975a:238), it must take into account rhythm, through the human body (1974b:465; 1991:405; see 1974b:236–238; 1991:205–207; 1975b:191–192, 195–196; 1992). Space and time are interrelated and dependent on each other (1975a:240).

Lefebvre's work then can be understood as more than simply a history of space. It would, I believe, also be a step forward in the project of a spatial history, where the concept of space is not simply an object of analysis, but a constituent part of the analysis itself. In other words, space is deployed as a tool of analysis within a historical study (see Elden 2001b; 2001c:817). In Lefebvre's work we could point to his readings of two significant Parisian events—those of March 1871 and May 1968 (1965, 1969). In the latter he talks of the special significance of "urban phenomena" (1969:136), which gives a hint of how a spatial history can be conducted. Histories need to be written with attention paid to the where rather than just the when, with location and landscape central parts of the analysis. The impact of the production and regulation of space on those who pass through it needs to be taken into account; the reverse is of course also true. Power relations are played out within a spatial field, struggle always happens somewhere.

Such a project of a spatial history is therefore inherently political. Lefebvre suggests that "there is a politics of space because space is political" (1974a:192). Following Heidegger, I have argued that there is a politics of space because politics is spatial (Elden 2000:419; 2001b:151). The political, as the ontological foundation of politics, is where politics *takes place* (Elden 2001b:74). But we should go one stage further. There is a politics of space, but not simply because there are political disputes over space, that space and spatial relations



cannot be understood without a political context. There is a politics of space, but it is similarly not enough—though I hope it is a useful step—to suggest that politics must play out in a spatial frame. There is a politics of space, most fundamentally, because space is constitutive of the political. Our very definition of the political—the framework within which, or the ground upon which, anything that bears the name of politics occurs—must be able to take account of the constitutive relations of the social, historical and spatial.

### **Toward a Left-Heideggerianism**

Lefebvre's formative political and philosophical years were the 1920s and 1930s. He is dismissive of his own work of the 1920s, and realises that it was only somewhat later that he reached a mature view (2001b; Lévy 1995; Burkhard 2000). Two central texts appeared at the turn of the decade—Heidegger's *Being and Time* in 1927, and Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* in 1932. Lefebvre explicitly notes the way in which the publication of the latter was both in competition and confrontation with Heidegger's work (1986:143). This is of central importance to understanding the formation of Lefebvre's political and philosophical views. Lefebvre's work was self-framed as building upon Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche. I am suggesting that Heidegger is the often unspoken fourth figure. As I have suggested, this utilisation of Heidegger is directly parallel to Marx's own appropriation and critique of Hegel. Because of his abstraction and mystification, Heidegger needs to be constantly stood on his feet, grounded, rooted in material reality.

This realisation does more than illuminate Lefebvre's work. In showing how questions of space in Heidegger's work are inherently political issues, Lefebvre simultaneously demonstrates how Heidegger's work can be appropriated for political purposes Heidegger himself would have opposed. In this reading and utilisation of Heidegger effectively against himself, Lefebvre—along with Foucault—demonstrates the crucial importance of Heidegger to contemporary debates to questions of spatiality, and the relation of these questions to ones of politics and history. What is crucially there in Heidegger, and missing in both Lefebvre and Foucault, is the careful theoretical working through of issues of spatiality and their understanding in the philosophical tradition. What is there in Foucault, and only occasionally in Lefebvre, is the deployment of these issues in historical studies—spatial histories of madness, medicine and discipline. What is there in Lefebvre, and not in Heidegger and Foucault, is the ability to turn these analyses to the contemporary period of capitalism—the spaces of the modern world. Reading Heidegger alongside Lefebvre and Foucault will theoretically reinforce the work of the two more practically orientated thinkers. To appropriate the Frenchmen without regard for the German is to have work on space that is simultaneously theoretically impoverished and

politically blind: politically blind because it appropriates Heideggerian insights without regard for the political critique Lefebvre and Foucault had to employ in order to turn them to their different purposes. This, again, is comparable to the way in which Marx turned Hegel against himself—the theorist of the state instrumental in the struggle against the state (see Lefebvre 1975c:11; 1976–1978:III, 61–62).

Left-Hegelianism was a label used to describe some of the more radical followers of Hegel. Marx was part of this circle himself, before breaking with them in the mid-1840s. They were critical of Hegel's theology, his conservatism and accommodation with the Prussian state. Some of them, notably Feuerbach, were materialist rather than idealist. One of the standard ways to read Marx is that alone of the left-Hegelians he married a dialectical approach to a materialist outlook. Although this is somewhat reductive, it seems clear that Marx's work is both a political radicalisation and a concretisation of Hegel's work. On the model of left-Hegelianism, Lefebvre suggests that there is both a left-Nietzscheanism, and a right-Nietzscheanism (2001b:124). Following this we could tentatively suggest that Lefebvre's work demonstrates the possibility and possibilities of a left-Heideggerianism.<sup>13</sup> Understanding the insights Heidegger's work provides, while simultaneously recognising the political constraints of a straightforward appropriation, would, I believe, be a valuable contribution to the theorisation of space. Lefebvre, by applying a Marxist critique to Heidegger's work and grounding him more concretely, is invaluable in showing some of the ways in which this can be done. Lefebvre can therefore profitably be read on a political and philosophical level as operating between Marx and Heidegger.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For earlier presentations of Lefebvre as a Marxist, with some recognition of his wider context, see, among others, Soubise (1967), Poster (1975), Kelly (1982) and Judt (1986). The recent collection of Lefebvre's writings (2003), sets up his Marxism and philosophy as the key to his work.

<sup>2</sup> The broader agenda of situating Lefebvre's work as a whole in this wider context is developed in the first two chapters of Elden (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Sartre's famous formulation of existentialism as believing that "existence precedes essence—or, if you like, that we must begin with the subjective" (1996:26), is criticised by Heidegger in the *Letter on Humanism* (1998). I am therefore resistant to Kurzweil's suggestion (1980:57), that Lefebvre remained faithful to existential notions of subjectivity.

<sup>4</sup> For a small sampling of the debate, see Fariás (1989), Janicaud (1990), Wolin (1993), Ott (1993) and de Beistegui (1998). My own view is found in much greater detail in Elden (2000, 2001b, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> "Guignol" is a puppet, like the French equivalent of Punch. On the *Grand Guignol* theatre see Gordon (1997).

<sup>6</sup> The critique of the shrinking world metaphor is expressly directed at David Harvey's work (1989). Kirsch suggests that the metaphorical space of the shrinking world takes material space out of geography, and is therefore akin to a fetishism of space. It is suggested that Lefebvre's space, a concrete abstraction, cannot be divorced from its

materiality. Technology is important for Lefebvre, something this paper cannot address in sufficient detail. Lefebvre is strongly influenced by Axelos' blend of Marx and Heidegger (1974). For a discussion, see Elden (2004).

<sup>7</sup> For Heidegger's reading of Kant, see, above all (1997, 1967) (a 1935–1936 lecture course first published in 1962).

<sup>8</sup> Many references could be given here, but see for example, Heidegger (1962:143–144, 412–413; 1982:162–166) and Elden (2001a, 2001b, ch 1–3).

<sup>9</sup> Bachelard (1969) is also important.

<sup>10</sup> This criticism is preceded by others, including the claims that space for Heidegger is “nothing more and nothing other than ‘being-there’, than beings, than *Dasein*”; and that “time counts for more than space; Being has a history, and history is only the History of Being” (1974b: 144; 1991:121). Both of these claims are contestable. See Elden 2001b.

<sup>11</sup> On this, and other aspects of Lefebvre and space, see Martins (1982).

<sup>12</sup> See for the former, for example, Quaini (1982) and Harvey (1999). There are some remarks in the last of these on a politics of space, which are developed in many of his other writings.

<sup>13</sup> The phrase “left-Heideggerian” has been previously used to describe Paul Virilio (Kellner 2000:118), and the *Tel Quel* circle (Jameson 1972:176). I am grateful to Michael Pennamacoor for the second reference.

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