

## The Trialectics of Spatiality

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The "imaginary." This word becomes (or better: becomes again) magical. It fills the empty spaces of thought, much like the "unconscious" and "culture." ...

... After all, since two terms are not sufficient, it becomes necessary to introduce a third term. ... The third term is the *other*, with all that this term implies (*alterity*, the relation between the present/absent other, *alteration-alienation*).

Reflexive thought and hence philosophy has for a long time accentuated dyads. Those of the dry and the humid, the large and the small, the finite and the infinite, as in Greek antiquity. Then those that constituted the Western philosophical paradigm: subject-object, continuity-discontinuity, open-closed, etc. Finally, in the modern era there are the binary oppositions between signifier and signified, knowledge and non-knowledge, center and periphery. ... [But] is there ever a relation only between two terms...? One always has Three. There is always the Other.

(Henri Lefebvre, *La Présence et l'absence*, 1980: 225 and 143)

The recent English translation of *The Production of Space*, and the revived interest in Lefebvre's writings and ideas it has stimulated, presents new opportunities to reconsider Lefebvre's contributions to present-day debates on the theorization of space and social spatiality. In this chapter, I purposefully reappropriate *The Production of Space* to pull from its expansive depths a clearer understanding of the meaning and critical scope of what I have chosen to define as Thirdspace.

### Envisioning Thirdspace Through "The Aleph"

After re-reading *The Production of Space*, I find myself drawn once more to "The Aleph," a short story by Jorge Luis Borges, whose distinctive version of the rich Latin-American tradition of "magical realism" resounds so well with Lefebvre's fascination with concrete abstractions, his paradoxically materialist idealism, and his adventurous explorations into the simultaneous worlds of the real-and-imagined.<sup>1</sup> In *Postmodern Geographies*,<sup>2</sup> I used Borges' brilliant evocation of the Aleph as the place "where all places are" to provoke new ways of looking at and understanding contemporary Los Angeles. For the present work, its eye-opening perspective continues to serve a similar purpose, as an introduction and stimulus to the urban essays contained in chapters 7 through 9, each of which defines and redefines Los Angeles in different ways. Here I will use the Aleph again as a point of departure, or better, as a first "approximation" from which to reinterpret *The Production of Space* and re-compose its imbricated conceptualizations of Thirdspace.

"The Aleph" was published in Spanish in 1945 and appears in English as the first entry to *The Aleph and Other Stories: 1933-1969*, which also contains an autobiographical essay and commentaries by Borges on each story. On "The Aleph," Borges writes:

What eternity is to time, the Aleph is to space. In eternity, all time – past, present, and future – coexists simultaneously. In the Aleph, the sum total of the spatial universe is to be found in a tiny shining sphere barely over an inch across. (Borges, 1971: 189)

Borges introduces "The Aleph" with two classical quotations to amplify his intentions:

O God! I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a King of infinite space. (*Hamlet*, II, 2)

But they will teach us that Eternity is the Standing still of the Present Time, a *Nunc-stans* (as the Schools call it); which neither they, nor any else understand, no more than they would a *Hic-stans* for an Infinite greatness of Place. (*Leviathan*, IV, 46)

The story begins with the narrator (clearly Borges himself) strolling along the streets of Buenos Aires, reminiscing about the death of a

<sup>1</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, "The Aleph," in *The Aleph and Other Stories: 1933-1969*, New York: Bantam Books, 1971: 3-17.

<sup>2</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London and New York: Verso, 1989.

woman he loved. He soon meets a friend, Carlos Argentino Daneri, who excitedly tells him that in Daneri's cellar under the dining room there was an Aleph, "one of the points in space that contains all other points." His friend had discovered it as a child and was now anxious to share his discovery, for the house which contained the Aleph was scheduled for demolition, part of the burgeoning growth of the "pernicious metropolis" of Argentina, the critical urban setting of "The Aleph."

"One day when no one was home I started down in secret, but I stumbled and fell. When I opened my eyes, I saw the Aleph."

"The Aleph?" I repeated.

"Yes, the only place on earth where all places are – seen from every angle, each standing clear, without any confusion or blending. I kept the discovery to myself and went back every chance I got..."

I tried to reason with him. "But isn't the cellar very dark?" I said.

"Truth cannot penetrate a closed mind. If all places in the universe are in the Aleph, then all stars, all lamps, all sources of light are in it too."

"You wait there. I'll be right over to see it."

Then I saw the Aleph.

I arrive now at the ineffable core of my story. And here begins my despair as a writer. All language is a set of symbols whose use among its speakers assumes a shared past. How, then, can I translate into words the limitless Aleph, which my floundering mind can scarcely encompass? Mystics, faced with the same problem, fall back on symbols: to signify the godhead, one Persian speaks of a bird that is somehow all birds; Alanus de Insulis, of a sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference is nowhere; Ezekiel, of a four-faced angel who at one and the same time moves east and west, north and south. (Not in vain do I recall these inconceivable analogies; they bear some relation to the Aleph.) Perhaps the gods might grant me a similar metaphor, but then this account would become contaminated by literature, by fiction. Really what I want to do is impossible, for any listing of an endless series is doomed to be infinitesimal. In that single gigantic instant I saw millions of acts both delightful and awful; not one of them amazed me more than the fact that all of them occupied the same point in space, without overlapping or transparency. What my eyes beheld was simultaneous, but what I shall now write down will

be successive, because language is successive. Nonetheless, I'll try to recollect what I can.

... I saw a small iridescent sphere of almost unbearable brilliance. At first I thought it was revolving; then I realized that this movement was an illusion created by the dizzying world it bounded. The Aleph's diameter was probably little more than an inch, but all space was there, actual and undiminished. Each thing (a mirror's face, let us say) was infinite things, since I distinctly saw it from every angle of the universe. I saw the teeming sea; I saw daybreak and nightfall; I saw the multitudes of America; I saw a silvery cobweb in the center of a black pyramid; I saw a splintered labyrinth (it was London); I saw, close up, unending eyes watching themselves in me as in a mirror; I saw all the mirrors on earth and none of them reflected me; ... I saw bunches of grapes, snow, tobacco, loads of metal, steam; I saw convex equatorial deserts and each one of their grains of sand; I saw a woman in Inverness that I shall never forget; ... I saw a ring of baked mud on a sidewalk, where before there had been a tree; ... I saw my empty bedroom; I saw in a closet in Alkmaar a terrestrial globe between two mirrors that multiplied it endlessly; ... I saw the coupling of love and the modification of death; I saw the Aleph from every point and angle, and in the Aleph I saw the earth and in the earth the Aleph and in the Aleph the earth; I saw my own face and my own bowels; I saw your face; and I felt dizzy and wept, for my eyes had seen that secret and conjectured object whose name is common to all men but which no man has looked upon – the unimaginable universe. (1971: 10–14)

"The Aleph" is an invitation to exuberant adventure as well as a humbling and cautionary tale, an allegory on the infinite complexities of space and time. Attaching its meanings to Lefebvre's conceptualization of the production of space detonates the scope of spatial knowledge and reinforces the radical openness of what I am trying to convey as Thirdspace: the space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an "unimaginable universe," or as Lefebvre would put it, "the most general of products."

*Everything* comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the uncon-

scious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. Anything which fragments Thirdspace into separate specialized knowledges or exclusive domains – even on the pretext of handling its infinite complexity – destroys its meaning and openness. There is a close connection between this conceptualization of Thirdspace and Lefebvre's nomadic meta-Marxism. Each envisions a complex totality of potential knowledges but rejects any totalization that finitely encloses knowledge production in "permanent structures" or specialized compartments/disciplines. For Lefebvre (and for Borges), spatial knowledge, as a means "to thread through the complexities of the modern world," is achievable only through approximations, a constant search to move beyond (meta-) what is known. As Lefebvre notes, others have chosen alternative transdisciplinary perspectives – language and discourse theory, psychoanalysis and the window of the unconscious, literature and critical historiography – to thread through these complexities. Lefebvre, however, was the first to explicitly do so through space, or more specifically the (social) production of (social) spatiality.

This all-inclusive simultaneity opens up endless worlds to explore and, at the same time, presents daunting challenges. Any attempt to capture this all-encompassing space in words and texts, for example, invokes an immediate sense of impossibility, a despair that the sequentiality of language and writing, of the narrative form and history-telling, can never do more than scratch the surface of Thirdspace's extraordinary simultaneities. *The Production of Space* is filled with Aleph-like references to the incapacity of language, texts, discourses, geographies and historiographies to capture fully the meanings of human spatiality, or what Borges, quoting from *Leviathan*, describes as "an Infinite greatness of Place." On the struggle to develop a rigorously analytical "science of space" to meet this daunting task, Lefebvre forcefully expressed his dissatisfaction and despair:

To date, work in this area has produced either mere descriptions which never achieve analytical, much less theoretical, status, or else fragments and cross-sections of space. There are plenty of reasons for thinking that descriptions and cross-sections of this kind, though they may well supply inventories of what exists in space, or even generate a discourse on space, cannot ever give rise to a knowledge of space. And, without such a knowledge, we are bound to transfer onto the level of discourse, of language *per se* – i.e. the level of mental space – a large portion of the attributes and "properties" of what is actually social space.

... When codes worked up from literary texts are applied to

spaces – to urban spaces, say – we remain, as may easily be shown, on the purely descriptive level. Any attempt to use such codes as a means of deciphering social space must surely reduce that space itself to the status of a *message*, and the inhabiting of it to the status of a *reading*. This is to evade both history and practice. . . .

As for the above-mentioned sections and fragments, they range from the ill-defined to the undefined – and thence, for that matter, to the undefinable. Indeed, talk of cross-sectioning, suggesting as it does a scientific technique (or “theoretical practice”) designed to help clarify and distinguish “elements” within the chaotic flux of phenomena, merely adds to the muddle. (1991a: 7–8)<sup>3</sup>

*The Production of Space* is, of course, itself a text, a sequential narrative subject to all the constraints of language and writing and, still further, to the unexpected aporia arising from its translation from French to English. It too is a “reading” rather than an “inhabiting,” a “discourse” rather than a practical “knowledge” of space. Like Borges, Lefebvre had to contend with the successive constraints of writing about simultaneities, about the repetitive and the differential, the known and the unknowable, at the same time. How then did Lefebvre attempt to defy some of these discursive inhibitions and to express the multifaceted inclusiveness and simultaneities of lived social space, the term that comes closest to conveying the meanings of Thirdspace? After contemplating this question and remembering his love of music, the rhapsodic, I have become convinced that Lefebvre wrote *The Production of Space* in the form of a fugue, a polyphonic composition based on distinct themes which are harmonized through counterpoint and introduced over and over again in different ways through the use of various contrapuntal devices. Read in this way, every one of the seven chapters is both a repetition and a distinctively different elaboration of the others. As if to emphasize the (counter)point, the fugue ends with “Conclusions” that are also “Openings” or *Ouvertures*.<sup>4</sup>

This makes *The Production of Space* very difficult to comprehend as a conventional text. The ideas are not developed in a straightforward sequential or linear fashion. If one misses the emphatic themes of the first chapter in particular, everything that follows seems to float independently or else seems to contradict erratically

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all quoted material is taken from Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> The chapters are, in sequence, Plan of the Present Work, Social Space, Spatial Architectonics, From Absolute Space to Abstract Space, Contradictory Space, From the Contradictions of Space to Differential Space, Openings and Conclusions.

what has gone before. Certain concepts clearly defined at one point either seem to disappear or become confusingly redefined in another way elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> The narrative is distinctly unruly, punctuated with seemingly spontaneous riffs on a range of subjects that is bound to offend the narrow specialist with its quick generalities while challenging even the most perspicacious polymath with its endless scope and specificity.

Like Borges's *Aleph*, Lefebvre's composition on the production of space, that most general of products, "recollects" a dizzying array of different kinds of spaces. In a recent appreciation of Lefebvre as a forerunner of critical postmodernism, Michael Dear lists these spaces alphabetically.<sup>6</sup> With many of my own additions, they include absolute, abstract, appropriated, architectonic, architectural, behavioral, body, capitalist, conceived, concrete, contradictory, cultural, differentiated, dominated, dramatized, epistemological, familial, fragmented, fresh, geometrical, global, hierarchical, historical, homogeneous, ideological, imagined, impossible, institutional, instrumental, leisure, lived, masculine, mental, natural, neutral, new, opaque, organic, original, perceived, physical, plural, political, possible, pure, real, "real," representational, repressive, sensory, social, socialist, socialized, state, traditional, transparent, true, urban, utopian, and women's space.

What then harmonizes this cacophony of spaces? What gives his composition its thematic structure? What moves *The Production of Space* beyond the string of eclectic recollections in Borges's *Aleph*? First of all, I suggest, there is Lefebvre's nomadic meta-Marxism and the explicit political and theoretical project – and choice – it engenders.

The path I shall be outlining here is thus bound up with a strategic hypothesis – that is to say, with a long range theoretical and practical project. Are we talking about a political project? Yes and no. It certainly embodies a politics of space, but at the same time goes beyond politics inasmuch as it presupposes a critical analysis of all spatial politics as of all politics in general. By seeking to point the way towards a different space,

<sup>5</sup> In his recent review essay on *The Production of Space*, Andy Merrifield makes a similar argument and suggests that Lefebvre, reflecting the strong influence of Nietzsche on his work, actually tries to subvert the coherence of the introductory chapter. "To my mind, he goes out of his way *not* to follow the "Plan" since he is wary of pinning himself down." See Merrifield, "Lefebvre, Anti-Logos and Nietzsche: An Alternative Reading of *The Production of Space*," *Antipode* 27 (1995), 294–303.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Dear, "Postmodern Bloodlines," in G. Benko and U. Strohmayer, eds, *Space and Social Theory: Geographic Interpretations of Postmodernity*, Cambridge, MA, and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996.

towards the space of a different (social) life and of a different mode of production, this project straddles the breach between science and utopia, reality and ideality, conceived and lived. It aspires to surmount these oppositions by exploring the dialectical relationship between "possible" and "impossible," and this both objectively and subjectively. (1991a: 60)

This project fixes Lefebvre in the present, no matter how far into the past he roams; and grounds his spatial politics even more inextricably in the social processes of production and reproduction, in the incessant theme that is summarily captured and intoned in that repeated phrase: the social production of social space.

But recognizing Lefebvre's theoretical and political project is not enough to comprehend the conceptualization of Thirdspace that flows through the pages of his contrapuntal text. To be sure, every chapter offers bits of sweet music to the ears of those (the present author included) who share a similar political project; and the force of his commitment helps to keep the text on track, giving its unruly composition and florescent detours a semblance of order and discipline amidst its radical openness and polyphony. To proceed further into a practical and theoretical understanding of Thirdspace, however, requires the exposition of an additional theme, one that is embedded deeply in *The Production of Space* but never systematically extrapolated for the reader. I call this, for want of a better term, a critical strategy of *thirling-as-Othering*, and suggest that it provides the keynote to Lefebvre's politicized fugue on the meanings and knowledges of Thirdspace.

### Thirling-as-Othering

For Lefebvre, reductionism in all its forms, including Marxist versions, begins with the lure of binarism, the compacting of meaning into a closed either/or opposition between two terms, concepts, or elements. Whenever faced with such binarized categories (subject-object, mental-material, natural-social, bourgeoisie-proletariat, local-global, center-periphery, agency-structure), Lefebvre persistently sought to crack them open by introducing an Other term, a third possibility or "moment" that partakes of the original pairing but is not just a simple combination or an "in between" position along some all-inclusive continuum. This critical *thirling-as-Othering* is the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either/or to the dialectically open logic of both/and also. . . .

Thirling-as-Othering is much more than a dialectical synthesis à la



Hegel or Marx, which is too predicated on the completeness and temporal sequencing of thesis/antithesis/synthesis. Thirling introduces a critical "other-than" choice that speaks and critiques through its otherness. That is to say, it does not derive simply from an additive combination of its binary antecedents but rather from a disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution of their presumed totalization producing an open alternative that is both similar and strikingly different. Thirling recomposes the dialectic through an intrusive disruption that explicitly spatializes dialectical reasoning along the lines of Lefebvre's observation quoted in chapter 1. The spatialized dialectic "no longer clings to historicity and historical time, or to a temporal mechanism such as thesis-antithesis-synthesis or affirmation-negation-negation of the negation." Thirling produces what might best be called a cumulative *trialectics* that is radically open to additional othernesses, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge.

Stated differently, asserting the third-as-Other begins an expanding chain of heuristic disruptions, strengthening defenses against totalizing closure and all "permanent constructions." Each thirling and each trialectic is thus an "approximation" that builds cumulatively on earlier approximations, producing a certain practical continuity of knowledge production that is an antidote to the hyperrelativism and "anything goes" philosophy often associated with such radical epistemological openness. The "third" term – and Thirdspace as a concept – is not sanctified in and of itself. The critique is not meant to stop at three, to construct a holy trinity, but to build further, to move on, to continuously expand the production of knowledge beyond what is presently known. Lefebvre organizes *The Production of Space* around just such a thirling of his own longstanding interest in the dialectic of the lived and the conceived, the "real" and the "imagined," the material world and our thoughts about it. He produces from this a trialectics of spatiality that at the same time is his most creative contribution to an understanding of social space and the source of an often bewildering confusion on the part of even his most sympathetic interpreters. I refer specifically here to the "conceptual triad" that "emerges" in the first chapter of *The Production of Space: SPATIAL PRACTICE, REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE, AND SPACES OF REPRESENTATION* (a better term than the "representational spaces" that is used in the English translation).

Lefebvre begins this provocative thirling-as-Othering with a different triad of "fields" that he describes as usually "apprehended separately, just as molecular, electromagnetic, and gravitational forces are in physics." This triad of fields is presented twice in one paragraph, in a (deliberately?) non-corresponding order, to suggest the possibility of constructing a "unitary theory" from the "mere bits

and pieces of knowledge," the fragments into which spatial knowledge has historically been broken.

The fields we are concerned with are, first, the *physical* – nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and thirdly, the *social*. In other words, we are concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols, and utopias. (1991a: 11–12)<sup>7</sup>

After this perplexing introduction, Lefebvre proceeds to fuse (objective) physical and (subjective) mental space into social space through a critique of what he called a "double illusion." This powerful attack on reductionism in spatial thinking is a vital part of the thirding process, working to break down the rigid object-subject binarism that has defined and confined the spatial imagination for centuries, while simultaneously maintaining the useful knowledges of space derived from both of these binary "fields." In this first round of thirding, social space takes on two different qualities. It serves both as a separable field, distinguishable from physical and mental space, and also as an approximation for an all-encompassing mode of spatial thinking. Lefebvre continued to use social space in both ways throughout the text. Thirdspace, as I have been defining it, retains the multiple meanings Lefebvre persistently ascribed to social space. It is both a space that is distinguishable from other spaces (physical and mental, or First and Second) and a transcending composite of all spaces (Thirdspace as Aleph).

In *Postmodern Geographies*, I simplified Lefebvre's critique of the double illusion into one of myopia (nearsightedness, seeing only what is right before your eyes and no further) and hypermetropia (farsightedness, seeing so far into the distance that what is immediately before you disappears); and then used these illusions to criticize the epistemological dualism of objectivist-materialist and subjectivist-idealist approaches that has dominated the modern dis-

<sup>7</sup> One of the confusions arising from this passage is the possibility that the last phrase, beginning with "including products of the imagination..." is attached directly to "the space occupied by sensory phenomena" – or what Lefebvre called spatial practice and *l'espace perçu*. The original French is somewhat clearer. Rather than implying that "*l'imaginaire, les projets et projections, les symboles, les utopies*" (listed quite differently from the English translation) are "included" within the space occupied by sensory phenomena ("*celui qu'occupent les phénomènes sensibles*"), the original seems to be saying that all three of these spaces together should not exclude ("*sans exclure*") these elements. In other words, all spaces should be seen as filled with the products of the imagination, with political projects and utopian dreams, with both sensory and symbolic realities.

cipline of Geography since its origins. Without describing it as such, I too was involved in a thirding-as-Othering that was similarly designed to break down and disorder a rigid dichotomy and create a Thirdspace, an alternative "postmodern geography" of political choice and radical openness attuned to making practical sense of the contemporary world. Lefebvre's critique, however, is much broader and far-ranging. It is useful to examine his treatment of the double illusion in greater detail.

The illusion of transparency, for Lefebvre, makes space appear "luminous," completely intelligible, open to the free play of human agency, willfulness, and imagination. It also appears innocent, free of traps or secret places, with nothing hidden or dissimulated, always capable of being "taken in by a single glance from that mental eye which illuminates whatever it contemplates"

(1991a: 28).

What happens in space lends a miraculous quality to thought, which becomes incarnate by means of a *design* (in both senses of the word). The design serves as a mediator – itself of great fidelity – between mental activity (invention) and social activity (realization); and it is deployed in space. (1991a: 27–8)

Approached this way, social space comes to be seen entirely as mental space, an "encrypted reality" that is decipherable in thoughts and utterances, speech and writing, in literature and language, in discourses and texts, in logical and epistemological ideation. Reality is confined to "thought things" (*res cogito*) and comprehended entirely through its representations. What is kept at a distance, unseen and untouched by this form of reductionism except through the medium of subjective "design," are actual social and spatial practices, the immediate material world of experience and realization.

This overly abstracted "transcendental" illusion is traceable throughout the entire history of philosophical idealism and post-Enlightenment rationalism. In many ways, it resembles what Marxists describe as fetishism, an obsessive fixation on ideas and ideation emanating from the presumably infinite powers of the Cartesian *cogito* or the Hegelian Spirit/Mind. It is also present in the visionary and creative arts among all those who see an immanent telos or "design" waiting to be discovered. Everything, including spatial knowledge, is condensed in communicable representations and re-presentations of the real world to the point that the representations substitute for the real world itself, the "incommunicable having no existence beyond that of an ever-pursued residual." Such subjectivism reduces spatial knowledge to a discourse on discourse that is rich in potential insights but at the same time filled with illu-

sive presumptions that what is imagined/represented defines the reality of social space.

In contrast, the realistic illusion oversubstantiates the world in a naturalistic or mechanistic materialism or empiricism, in which objective "things" have more reality than "thoughts." This illusion of "opacity," the disinclination to see much beyond the surface of things, fills the philosophy of history and the history of philosophy and science. Social space tends to be seen as either natural and naively given (the space of the sculptor or architect "working with nature," the space of the environmental or design determinist); or it is, equally naively, objectively and concretely there to be fully measured and accurately described (the space of the "geometer," the spatial systems analyst,\* the empirical scientist, the determinedly scientific socialist or social scientist, the idiographic historian or geographer).

The "real" in this realist illusion is reduced only to material or natural objects and their directly sensed relations; the "imagined" is unseen, unmeasurable, and therefore unknowable. For Marxists, who are themselves particularly prone to this illusion of opacity as historical materialists, this resonates with what Marx described as reification, the reduction of the real solely to material objects, to things in themselves. Here, too, one can trace these illusionary tendencies of empiricism, naturalism, economism, environmental and other more social and historical forms of material determinism throughout the fabric of Western philosophy and social theory.

In their purest expression, then, the illusions of transparency and opacity coincide respectively with deterministic forms of subjectivism-idealism and objectivism-materialism. Lefebvre, however, goes on to argue that the double illusion is not always composed in such rigidly antagonistic opposition, "after the fashion of philosophical systems, which armour themselves like battleships and seek to destroy one another." On the contrary, he argues that each illusion often embodies and nourishes the other.

The shifting back and forth between the two, and the flickering or oscillatory effect that it produces, are thus just as important as either of the illusions considered in isolation. . . . The rational is thus naturalized, while nature cloaks itself in nostalgias which supplant rationality. (1991a: 30)

Through his critical attack on the double illusion, Lefebvre opens the way to a trialectics of spatiality, always insisting that each mode of

\* The trenchantly unsystematic Lefebvre was particularly adamant about avoiding the use of systems analysis in thinking about spatiality and the production of social space. The last sentence of the book is quite clear: "And we are concerned with nothing that even remotely resembles a system" (1991a: 423).

thinking about space, each "field" of human spatiality – the physical, the mental, the social – be seen as simultaneously real and imagined, concrete and abstract, material and metaphorical. No one mode of spatial thinking is inherently privileged or intrinsically "better" than the others as long as each remains open to the re-combinations and simultaneities of the "real-and-imagined." This rebalanced and non-illusive trialectics of spatiality, however, is for Lefebvre more an anticipated and desired state than an achieved one. For the present moment, a temporary strategic privileging is necessary to break the hammerlock of binarist logic and to prevent any form of reductionism from constraining the free play of the creative spatial imagination. Lefebvre thus begins his critical thirthing-as-Othering by focusing attention on social space, first as a distinctively different way of thinking about space that has long been obscured by exclusive fixations on illusive materialist and/or idealist interpretations; and second, as an all-inclusive and radically open mode of defining the limitlessly expandable scope of the spatial imagination: the envisioning of social space as Aleph.

As I think of ways to make this crucial thirthing clearer to readers familiar with the epistemology of Marxism, I find it useful to recall that old shibboleth that asks: "Is it consciousness that produces the material world or the material world that produces consciousness?" The answer implied in Lefebvre's trialectics is "yes" to both alternatives, and/also something more: a combinatorial and unconfined third choice that is radically open to the accumulation of new insights, an alternative that goes beyond (meta) the mere acceptance of the dualized interrogative. This choice of an-Other alternative is strategically, not presuppositionally, privileged as a means of resisting binary closures. It is a thirthing that invites further expansion and extension, beyond not just the binary but beyond the third term as well.

The critique of the illusions of transparency and opacity lays the groundwork for the thematic trialectic that is so central to a re-reading of *The Production of Space*, that which inter-relates in a dialectically linked triad:

- Spatial Practice (*espace perçu*, perceived space);
- Representations of Space (*espace conçu*, conceived space);
- Spaces of Representation (*espace vécu*, lived space).

These "three moments of social space" are described twice in the introductory chapter, "Plan of the Present Work," both times as a numbered list with underlined emphasis. As always, Lefebvre modifies his descriptions as he moves along, and in subsequent chapters seems either to ignore his earlier formulations or to push them to

their limits, ever ready to move on to something else.<sup>9</sup> I will try to capture the meanings of at least his first chapter approximations of this thematic trialectic, referring back to the original French text whenever I think this will help.

(1) *Spatial practice* is defined as producing a spatiality that "embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations (*lieux spécifiés*) and spatial sets (*ensembles*) characteristic of each social formation." It "ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion" and "implies a guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*" (terms he borrows from linguistics but warns should not be seen as subordinating the knowledge of space to its disciplinary hegemony). The spatial practice of a society "secretes that society's space; it propounds (*le pose*) and presupposes it (*le suppose*), in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it." Spatial practice, as the process of producing the material form of social spatiality, is thus presented as both medium and outcome of human activity, behavior, and experience.

"From an analytical standpoint (*À l'analyse*), the spatial practice of a society is revealed (*se découvre*) through the deciphering of its space." To illustrate how this deciphering changes over time, Lefebvre adds a whole paragraph on "Modern" spatial practice under capitalism, which he links to the repetitive routines of everyday life (*la réalité quotidienne*); and to the routes, networks, workplaces, private life, and leisure enjoyments of the urban (*la réalité urbaine*). This materialized, socially produced, empirical space is described as *perceived space*, directly sensible and open, within limits, to accurate measurement and description. It is the traditional focus of attention in all the spatial disciplines and the material grounding for what I redescribe as Firstspace.

(2) Representations of space define a "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers

<sup>9</sup> This habitual nomadism has led many of the most sympathetic interpreters of Lefebvre to fix on other examples of the multitude of spaces he addresses in *The Production of Space*, often to the neglect of the keynote trialectic that encompasses them. Especially attractive, it appears, has been Lefebvre's discussion of absolute, relative (or relational), and abstract (or analogical) spaces and their developmental periodization in the history of capitalism. In Derek Gregory's *Geographical Imaginations* (1994), these spaces are listed specifically and in combination are given 34 page references in the Subject Index. Spatial practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation (or representational spaces) do not appear at all in the index, although they are mentioned on p. 403 and frame the much more extensive discussion of Abstract Space and Concrete Space that Gregory diagrams on p. 401. See also Neil Smith and Cindi Katz, "Grounding Metaphor: Toward a Spatialized Politics," in M. Keith and S. Pile, eds, *Place and the Politics of Identity*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993: 67-83, for a similar emphasis on Lefebvre's historiography of absolute, relative, and abstract space at the expense of the keynote triad.

(*'découpeurs' et 'agenceurs'*), as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived." This *conceived* space is also tied to the relations of production and, especially, to the order or design that they impose. Such order is constituted via control over knowledge, signs, and codes: over the means of deciphering spatial practice and hence over the production of spatial knowledge.

For Lefebvre, "this is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production)," a storehouse of epistemological power. This conceived space tends, with certain exceptions "towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs," again referring to language, discourse, texts, *logos*: the written and spoken word. In these "dominating" spaces of regulatory and "ruly" discourse, these mental spaces, are thus the representations of power and ideology, of control and surveillance. This Secondspace, as I term it, is also the primary space of utopian thought and vision, of the semiotician or decoder, and of the purely creative imagination of some artists and poets.

In a twist that would confuse (or be forgotten by) many readers, Lefebvre did not define the "dominated" space as that of material spatial practices. Instead, he turned to the third space of his triad to exemplify the controlling powers of conceived space.

(3) *Spaces of representation* are seen by Lefebvre both as distinct from the other two spaces and as encompassing them, following his strategic use of social space in his preliminary thirding. Spaces of representation embody "complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not." They are linked to the "clandestine or underground side of social life" and also to art, which Lefebvre described as a coding not of space more generally but specifically of the spaces of representation. Clearly an attempt is being made here to retain, if not emphasize, the partial unknowability, the mystery and secretiveness, the non-verbal subliminality, of spaces of representation; and to foreground the potential insightfulness of art versus science (or, for that matter, moral philosophy or semiotics), a key pillar of Lefebvre's metaphilosophy.

Here then is space as directly *lived*, with all its intractability intact, a space that stretches across the images and symbols that accompany it, the space of "inhabitants" and "users." But it is also, Lefebvre takes care to note, inhabited and used by artists, writers, and philosophers – to which he would later add ethnologists, anthropologists, psychoanalysts, and other "students of such representational spaces" – who seek only to *describe* rather than decipher and actively transform the worlds we live in. He follows these references with two key points. First: "this is the dominated – and hence passively

experienced (*subi*) or subjected – space which the imagination (verbal but especially non-verbal) seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays (*recouvre*) physical space, making symbolic use of its objects" and tends towards "more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs." Second: here we can find not just the spatial representations of power but the imposing and operational power of spatial representations. Combining the real and the imagined, things and thought on equal terms, or at least not privileging one over the other *a priori*, these lived spaces of representation are thus the terrain for the generation of "counterspaces," spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning. With its foregrounding of relations of dominance, subordination, and resistance; its subliminal mystery and limited knowability; its radical openness and teeming imagery, this third space of Lefebvre closely approximates what I am defining as Thirdspace.

Both Thirdspace and Lefebvre's most encompassing notion of social space are comprised of all three spatialities – perceived, conceived, and lived – with no one inherently privileged *a priori*. And yet, there is an implied preference in all of Lefebvre's (and my) spatial trialectics and thirdings that derives not from ontological privilege or priority but from that political choice that is so central to Lefebvre's spatial imagination. It is political choice, the impetus of an explicit political project, that gives special attention and particular contemporary relevance to the spaces of representation, to lived space as a strategic location from which to encompass, understand, and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously. Lived social space, more than any other, is Lefebvre's limitless Aleph, the space of all inclusive simultaneities, perils as well as possibilities: the space of radical openness, the space of social struggle.

For Lefebvre, the spaces of representation teem with symbols, hence the tendency of some to see him primarily as a semiologist and to describe lived space as "symbolic" space. These spaces are also vitally filled with politics and ideology, with the real and the imagined intertwined, and with capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and other material spatial practices that concretize the social relations of production, reproduction, exploitation, domination, and subjection. They are the "dominated spaces," the spaces of the peripheries, the margins and the marginalized, the "Third Worlds" that can be found at all scales, in the corpo-reality of the body and mind, in sexuality and subjectivity, in individual and collective identities from the most local to the most global. They are the chosen spaces for struggle, liberation, emancipation.



Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel (*noyau*) or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action, of lived situations, and this immediately implies time. Consequently it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic. (1991a: 42)

Spaces of representation contain all other real and imagined spaces simultaneously. In different ways, appropriately understood, so too do spatial practices and representations of space, but only in so far as one can escape from the double illusion of objectivism and subjectivism that weakens their insights into the workings of power.<sup>10</sup> Lefebvre never made explicit his strategic "preference" for the spaces of representation, in part, I believe, because he either assumed it would be implicitly understood; or avoided an explicit recognition of it for fear that it would be construed as unchallengeably fixed, a complete answer, a permanent construction that would divert too much attention away from other modes of spatial thinking (the more likely explanation).

Lefebvre was always preparing himself to move on, and move on he did after 1974, never again elaborating his spatial approximation so thoroughly yet keeping it alive in promises of further adventures, such as the *rhythmanalyse* that he proposed would complete his exposition on the production of space. In *La Présence et l'absence* (1980), however, Lefebvre's most extensive discussion and critique of the theory of representations, there are not only further explanations for his emphasis on the power-filled spaces of representation but also a veritable fountain of triplicities similar to that described for social space. In what he called a *Tableau des Triades (associées)*, he divides his list of triads into *Libido* and *Pensée*, and separates them with a mediating row described as *Représentant-Représenté-Représentation*, or roughly Representing-Represented-Representation, a triad (or trialectic) that is close to signifier-signified-signification, with the third term different yet encompassing and partially dependent upon the other two. Lefebvre refused to tabularize his triads into neat First, Second, and Third columns or to present them in triangular form, but instead lists them vertically. The following is a translated selection from the *Tableau*. Each one can be read as a model of trialectical thirding – and as a summation of most of the arguments presented in this chapter.

<sup>10</sup> How these spaces of representation are echoed in the heterotopias and heterotology of Michel Foucault is discussed in chapter 5.

TOTALITY	CENTRALITY	DISPLACEMENT	HOMOGENEITY
CONTRADICTION	PERIPHERY	SUBSTITUTION	FRAGMENTATION
POSSIBILITY	MEDIATION	REPRESENTATION	HIERARCHY
THING- <i>chose</i>	PRESENCE	SUBJECT	IDENTITY
PRODUCT- <i>produit</i>	ABSENCE	OBJECT	CONTRADICTION
WORK- <i>oeuvre</i>	REPRESENTATION	UNITY	DIFFERENCE
FIRST NATURE	HISTORY	MELODY	PHILOSOPHY
SECOND NATURE	SPACE	RHYTHM	SCIENTISM etc.
PRODUCTION	GLOBALITY	HARMONY	METAPHILOSOPHY

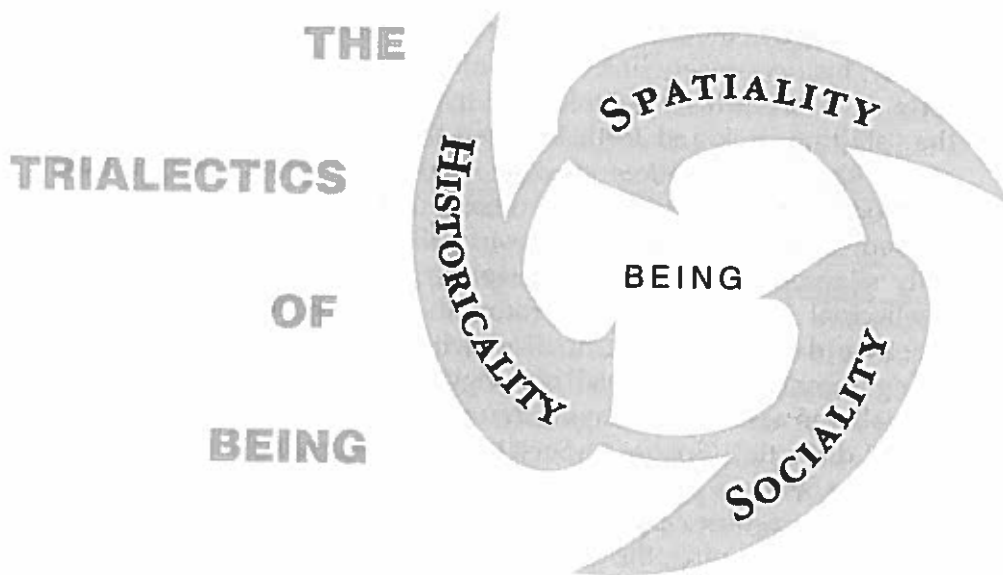
Discomforted by this table (a form he rarely used), Lefebvre immediately follows with one of the many poems to life, death, love, and his nomadic travels that are sprinkled throughout the book (which begins with a long unsent letter to Octavio Paz).

His discomfort aside, Lefebvre's trialectics are infused with increasing power in this galaxy of triads, each with its strategic preference for the third term but always as a transcending inclusion of the other two. The third term never stands alone, totally separate from its precedents or given absolute precedence on its own. This is the key point of Lefebvre's "dialectics of triplicity" and of what I have chosen to describe as trialectical thinking and, more specifically, the trialectics of spatiality.

### Summarizing Again/Before Moving On

Thinking trialectically is a necessary part of understanding Thirdspace as a limitless composition of lifeworlds that are radically open and openly radicalizable; that are all-inclusive and transdisciplinary in scope yet politically focused and susceptible to strategic choice; that are never completely knowable but whose knowledge none the less guides our search for emancipatory change and freedom from domination. Trialectical thinking is difficult, for it challenges all conventional modes of thought and taken-for-granted epistemologies. It is disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable in permanent constructions.

With these warnings in mind, the first two chapters of *Thirdspace* can be graphically summarized around two simplified diagrams that serve as convenient road maps to all the journeys that will follow. The first presents an *ontological trialectic*, a statement of what the world must be like in order for us to have knowledge of it. It is a crude picture of the nature of social being, of human existence, and also of the search for practical knowledge and understanding.



Although primarily an ontological assertion, the trialectics of Spatiality, Historicality, and Sociality (summary terms for the social production of Space, Time, and Being-in-the-world) apply at all levels of knowledge formation, from ontology to epistemology, theory building, empirical analysis, and social practice. At all these levels, however, there has been a persistent tendency during at least the past century to over-privilege, in another "double illusion," the dynamic relations between the "making" of Historicality and the "constitution" of social practices or Sociality. Built into the arguments of *The Production of Space* as I have excavated them is a critical thirding-as-Othering that involves the reassertion of Spatiality against this pronounced tendency in Western philosophy, science, historiography, and social theory (including its most critical variants) to bifocalize on the interactive Historicality and Sociality of being.<sup>11</sup>

When the Trialectics of Being is reduced to the relations between Historicality and Sociality, Spatiality tends to be peripheralized into the background as reflection, container, stage, environment, or external constraint upon human behavior and social action. Muted efforts to reactivate space more centrally can be found in the writings of many critical philosophers, from Kant and Hegel to Heidegger and Sartre; and in the work of critical social theorists (Simmel, Kracauer, Benjamin, Giddens, Harvey, to name only a few). But no one has so

<sup>11</sup> Chapter 6 contains a more detailed discussion of this over-privileging of Historicality and Sociality.

forcefully and successfully activated Spatiality and rebalanced the trialectic as Henri Lefebvre.

Applying Lefebvre's critique, the Historicity-Sociality, or more simply, history-society link has too often been conceptualized in the form of an all-inclusive ontological and epistemological dyad, with the "shifting back and forth between the two" and the "flickering effect" that this produces creating often illusory knowledges that "embody" and "nourish" each other. In the wake of this circumscribed oscillation, Spatiality in nearly all its forms is unproblematically silenced, pushed to the periphery, to the margins of critical intellectual inquiry. With a profound voice from the periphery, Lefebvre deconstructs the dualism with an-Other term, and in so doing reconstitutes a social ontology that is radically opened to Spatiality in at least two ways: through what I once called the "socio-spatial dialectic" (Spatiality-Sociality) and through the problematic interplay between space and time, the making of historical geographies or geohistories (Spatiality-Historicity).

In the first opening, the social and the spatial are seen as mutually constructed, with neither deterministically privileged *a priori*. Sociality, both routinely and problematically, produces spatiality, and *vice versa*, putting to the forefront of critical inquiry a dynamic socio-spatial dialectic that by definition is also intrinsically historical. A similar trialectical logic infuses the spatio-temporal structuration of Sociality. Historicity and Spatiality, or more familiarly history and geography, intertwine in a simultaneously routine and problem-filled relation that evokes another crucial field of inquiry and interpretation in the spatio-temporal or geohistorical dialectic. The Trialectics of Being thus generates three ontological fields of knowledge formation from what for so long has only been one (Historicity-Sociality).

★ The three moments of the ontological trialectic thus contain each other; they cannot successfully be understood in isolation or epistemologically privileged separately, although they are all too frequently studied and conceptualized this way, in compartmentalized disciplines and discourses. Here again, however, the third term, Spatiality, obtains a strategic positioning to defend against any form of binary reductionism or totalization. The assertion of Spatiality opens the Historicity and Sociality of human lifeworlds to interpretations and knowledges that many of its most disciplined observers never imagined, while simultaneously maintaining the rich insights they provide for understanding the production of lived space. It is in this sense that Lefebvre's trialectics contains a deep, if indirect, critique of historicism (the excessive confinement in knowledge production that arises from interpreting the world only through its Historicity); and the similar overemphasis on the evolutionary and

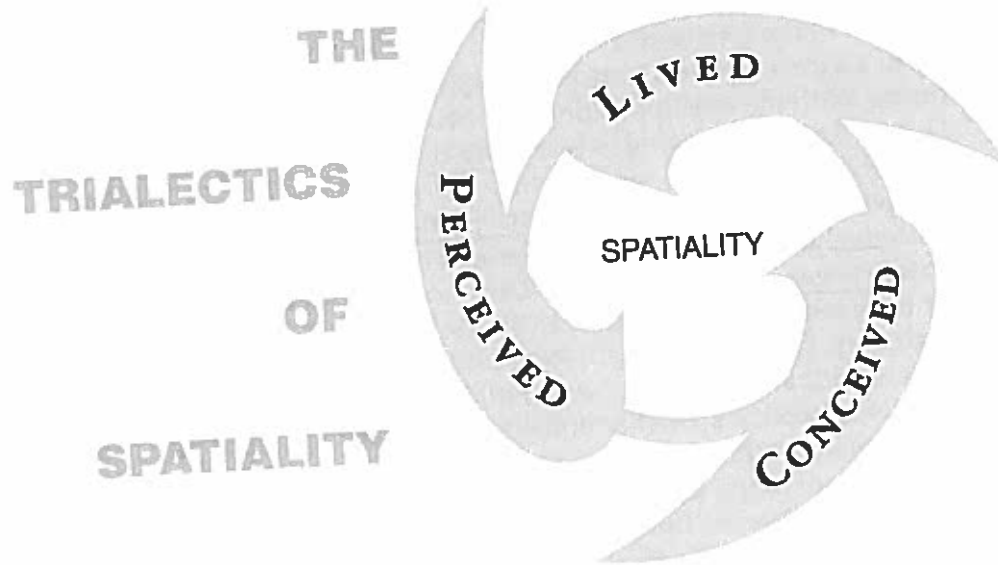
revolutionary power of social will and political consciousness (freed from spatial or environmental constraints) that enveloped both the liberal social sciences and radical scientific socialism beginning in the last half of the 19th century.<sup>12</sup>

All excursions into Thirdspace begin with this ontological restructuring, with the presupposition that being-in-the-world, Heidegger's *Dasein*, Sartre's *être-là*, is existentially definable as being simultaneously historical, social, and spatial. We are first and always historical-social-spatial beings, actively participating individually and collectively in the construction/production — the "becoming" — of histories, geographies, societies. Our essential historicity and sociality have long been recognized in all the human sciences. The project begun by Lefebvre in the 1960s, and only now beginning to be understood and realized, was nothing less than to reassert the equally existential spatiality of life in a balanced trialectic that ranges from ontology through to a consciousness and *praxis* that are also simultaneously and presuppositionally social, historical, and spatial.<sup>13</sup>

A second diagram (triagram?), building off the first, moves us further into the multiple meanings of Thirdspace. Here the emphasis shifts from an existential ontology (statements about what the world must be like in order for us to exist as social beings) to a more specific discussion of the epistemology of space (how we can obtain accurate and practicable knowledge of our existential spatiality). Again, for at least the past century, there has been a "double illusion" bracketing the accumulation of spatial knowledge within the

<sup>12</sup> Still the best treatment of the origins of the liberal (or "bourgeois") social sciences is H. S. Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reconstruction of European Thought, 1890–1930*, New York: Knopf, 1958.

<sup>13</sup> Much of the contemporary literature interpreting Lefebvre's work seems incapable of engaging in this balanced form of trialectical thinking. Instead, one form or another of rigidly categorical logic is applied to argue that Lefebvre was fundamentally a sociologist or a geographer or a historian. In their recent reappropriation of Lefebvre as an urban sociologist, for example, Kofman and Lebas distinguish his *Writings on Cities* from his more "purely spatial" theorizing, missing in this misconstrual not only Lefebvre's presuppositional definition of the urban as spatial but also his insistence that space should never be theorized purely, apart from its historicity and sociality (and so too for history and sociology). Similarly, they take his sensitivity to time and history as a sign of his supposedly deeper prioritization of historicity versus spatiality and chide me and other "Anglo-American geographers" for falsely appropriating Lefebvre to "dethrone" history and "crown" geography as the master discipline, "at the expense of an impoverished historical understanding and simplification of the richness of temporalities and their significance for lived experience" (1996: 47–8). Derek Gregory, in his *Geographical Imaginations* (1994: 359–60), goes even further to label Lefebvre a "historicist," a secretive Hegelian using spatial tropes to construct a determinative "history of the present." This sort of categorical labelling and construction of neat either/or oppositions between spatiality, historicity, and sociality seriously distorts Lefebvre's nomadic metaphilosophy of approximations and his assiduously historical and social interpretation of the production of space.



oscillation between two contrasting epistemes, two distinctive modes of producing spatial knowledge. Lefebvre's trialectics help us to break open this dualism to a third alternative, to other ways of making practical sense of the spatiality of social life.

Figure 2b is, of course, deceptively simplified. As with the ontological trialectic in figure 2a, each term appropriately contains the other two, although each is distinguishable and can be studied in splendidly specialized isolation. No one of the three forms of spatial knowledge is given a priori or ontological privilege, but again there is a strategic privileging of the third term, in this case Thirdspace, as a means of combating the longstanding tendency to confine spatial knowledge to Firstspace and Secondspace epistemologies and their associated theorizations, empirical analyses, and social practices. At the risk of oversimplification, each of these modes of accumulating spatial knowledge and what might be called their characteristic "mentalities" can now be briefly and tentatively described.

*Firstspace epistemologies* and ways of thinking have dominated the accumulation of spatial knowledge for centuries. They can be defined as focusing their primary attention on the "analytical deciphering" of what Lefebvre called Spatial Practice or perceived space, a material and materialized "physical" spatiality that is directly comprehended in empirically measurable configurations: in the absolute and relative locations of things and activities, sites and situations; in patterns of distribution, designs, and the differentiation of a multitude of materialized phenomena across spaces and places; in the

concrete and mappable geographies of our lifeworlds, ranging from the emotional and behavioral space "bubbles" which invisibly surround our bodies to the complex spatial organization of social practices that shape our "action spaces" in households, buildings, neighborhoods, villages, cities, regions, nations, states, the world economy, and global geopolitics.

Firstspace epistemologies tend to privilege objectivity and materiality, and to aim toward a formal science of space. The human occupancy of the surface of the earth, the relations between society and nature, the architectonics and resultant geographies of the human "built environment," provide the almost naively given sources for the accumulation of (First)spatial knowledge. Spatiality thus takes on the qualities of a substantial text to be carefully read, digested, and understood in all its details. As an empirical text, Firstspace is conventionally read at two different levels, one which concentrates on the accurate description of surface appearances (an indigenous mode of spatial analysis), and the other which searches for spatial explanation in primarily exogenous social, psychological, and biophysical processes.

Over the years, various schemas have been indigenously devised in the spatial disciplines to describe the virtually limitless factual scope and "scape" of Firstspace knowledge. One that I remember from my own education as a geographer consisted of two matrices, with the rows of both representing locations or places. In the first matrix, the columns itemized a potentially endless list of "attributes;" while the columns of the second matrix contained an also potentially endless list of "interactions" or flows connecting different places. Spatial analysis would then consist of quantitative measurement, pattern recognition, and correlative modeling of the row and column variables and their "regional" configurations. Another memorable schema for Firstspatial analysis defined five nested tiers of pattern finding, from the flowing "movements" of people, goods, and information, to the formation of regular "networks" of such movements, to the growth of "nodes" in these networks, to the hierarchical patterning of these nodes of different sizes and functions, and finally to composite "surfaces" that summarize the uneven development over space of all these patternings together.

In the field of Geography, these and other schemas coagulated to form the conceptual foundation for a fundamentally positivist "spatial science" based primarily on the quantitative and mathematical description of these spatial data patternings of Firstspace. Mathematical functions were "fit" into the point patterns of settlement nodes to explain their distributional configuration; a form of "social physics" based on the gravity model and other measures of the "friction of distance" was used to describe human interactions

over space and the concentric zoning of land uses in cities and around markets; graph theory and mathematical topology was applied to measure accessibility levels in transportation and communications networks; multivariate statistical ecologies were employed to describe complex urban and regional geographies; two- and three-dimensional languages and shape grammars were developed to describe all sorts of spatial forms, structures, and designs.<sup>14</sup>

Today, spatial science is being increasingly focused on Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing by satellite photography to collect and organize massive data banks describing the empirical content of Firstspace. Many of these techniques have proved useful in such fields as architecture and urban planning, archeology and anthropology, petroleum geology and military science. What these techniques provide are more sophisticated and objectively accurate ways to do what most geographers, spatial analysts, and, for that matter, the colonial adventurers and cartographers in the Age of Exploration, had been doing all along: accumulating and mapping what was presumed to be increasingly accurate "factual" knowledge about places and the relations between places over the surface of the earth. The key difference brought about by this so-called quantitative "revolution" in geography was the presumption that these increasingly accurate empirical descriptions of geographical "reality" also contained the intrinsic sources of spatial theory.

When captivated by such realist illusions and impelled by the presumptions of scientism, Firstspace epistemologies become fixated on the material form of things in space: with human spatiality seen primarily as outcome or *product*. Explanation and theory-building in turn derived essentially from the material form and covariation of spatial patterns, with one or more "independent" geographical configurations "explaining" the "dependent" configuration or outcome in increasingly complex equations and causal chains. In Geography as well as in the more scientific approaches to other spatial disciplines, this positivist epistemology, in one form or another, continues to dominate mainstream spatial thinking and analysis.

Responding to the epistemological confinement of spatial science, more advanced (and less illusory) forms of Firstspace analysis have developed well beyond such descriptive matrices to explore the historicity and sociality of spatial forms. In this more exogenous mode of Firstspatial analysis, human spatiality continues to be defined primarily by and in its material configurations, but explana-

<sup>14</sup> My own doctoral dissertation was inspired by this spatial science and its enhancements of more traditional approaches to geographical research. See Edward W. Soja, *The Geography of Modernization in Kenya*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1968.



tion shifts away from these surface plottings themselves to an inquiry into how they are socially produced. A rich tradition of historical geography, for example, relocates the sources of geographical understanding and explanation from positivist science to the powers of the historical imagination and narrative historiography. The social production of Firstspace is treated as a historical unfolding, an evolving sequence of changing geographies that result from the dynamic relations between human beings and their constructed as well as natural environments.

Relatively new fields of behavioral and/or critical human geography – often significantly influenced by the varied forms of structuralism that have developed in the 20th century – seek their sources of understanding the social production of Firstspace either in individual and collective psychologies or, more directly, in the social processes and practices presumed to be underlying and structuring the production of material spatialities. Marxist geographers of Firstspace, for example, explain the material worlds of human geography and geographically uneven development through appeals to class analysis, the labor theory of value, and the evolving historical effects of the interplay between social relations of production and the development of the productive forces. The normal operations of the market, backed by the presumption of rational profit-seeking or cost-minimizing behavior, are used by other economic geographers and spatial economists to explain the same spatial outcomes; while more humanistic cultural geographers, drawing upon phenomenology and hermeneutics, seek to root the material patternings of space in the imprint of cultural beliefs and commitments and the free play of human nature.

In these and other attempts to study and understand the production of Firstspace exogenously, explanation and theory-building tend to derive from presumably non-spatial variables, behaviors, and social activity such as historical development, class consciousness, cultural preferences, and rational economic choice. The flow of causality in this epistemology thus tends to run primarily in one direction, from historicity and sociality to the spatial practices and configurations. This has resulted in an increasingly rigorous and insightful understanding of how Firstspace is socially produced, as well as a welcome exploration by geographers and other spatial analysts of a wide range of "non-spatial" disciplines and ideas.

For many different reasons, however, relatively little attention is given to the causal flow in the other direction, that is, to how material geographies and spatial practices shape and affect subjectivity, consciousness, rationality, historicity, and sociality. The impact of Firstspace on history and society in the broadest sense has either been ignored by those who seek "external" and presumably

non-spatial explanations of material spatial configurations; or else it is consciously avoided for fear that Firstspatial analysis will fall prey to the presumed dangers of environmental or spatial determinism. Such Firstspace determinisms were rampant within the spatial disciplines in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and played an important role in the formation of the liberal social sciences and Marxian scientific socialism (as well as related critical theories of history and society) that were explicitly constructed to free social will and social consciousness from such "external" Firstspatial determinations. Although various forms of spatial causality with regard to the sociality and historicity of life are suggestively implied in more contemporary Firstspatial analyses, there continues to be a prevalent inhibition that constrains attempts to explore the trialectics of spatiality-historicity-sociality in its fullest complexity and interdependency. This ontological confinement is only one of the reasons why Firstspace epistemologies, despite their broad purview and impressive accumulation of accurate spatial knowledge, are fundamentally incomplete and partial.

In the long history of spatial thinking, *Secondspace epistemologies* have tended to arise in reaction to the excessive closure and enforced objectivity of mainstream Firstspace analysis, pitting the artist versus the scientist or engineer, the idealist versus the materialist, the subjective versus the objective interpretation. In part through these ideational and epistemological critiques of Firstspace approaches, the boundaries between First- and Secondspace knowledge have become increasingly blurred, especially with the intermixing of positivist, structuralist, poststructuralist, existential, phenomenological, and hermeneutic ideas and methods. Firstspace analysts now frequently adopt Secondspace epistemologies for their purposes, and Secondspace interpretations often extend themselves specifically to address actual material spatial forms.

Using Lefebvre's words again, there are times when these two epistemological worlds "armour themselves like battleships and seek to destroy one another;" but there are also times when each "embodies and nourishes the other," with shiftings back and forth marking the historical relations between Firstspace and Secondspace. Buried beneath these oscillations, however, has been a presumption of epistemological completeness that channels the accumulation of spatial knowledge into two main streams or some selective combination of both. Little room is left for a lateral glance beyond the long-established parameters and perimeters that map the overlapping terrains of Firstspace and Secondspace.

Despite these overlappings, Secondspace epistemologies are immediately distinguishable by their explanatory concentration on conceived rather than perceived space and their implicit assumption

that spatial knowledge is primarily produced through discursively devised representations of space, through the spatial workings of the mind. In its purest form, Secondspace is entirely ideational, made up of projections into the empirical world from conceived or imagined geographies. This does not mean that there is no material reality, no Firstspace, but rather that the knowledge of this material reality is comprehended essentially through thought, as *res cogito*, literally "thought things." In so empowering the mind, explanation becomes more reflexive, subjective, introspective, philosophical, and individualized.

Secondspace is the interpretive locale of the creative artist and artful architect, visually or literally re-presenting the world in the image of their subjective imaginaries; the utopian urbanist seeking social and spatial justice through the application of better ideas, good intentions, and improved social learning; the philosophical geographer contemplating the world through the visionary power of scientific epistemologies or the Kantian envisioning of geography as way of thinking or the more imaginative "poetics" of space; the spatial semilogist reconstituting Secondspace as "Symbolic" space, a world of rationally interpretable signification; the design theorist seeking to capture the meanings of spatial form in abstract mental concepts. Also located here are the grand debates about the "essence" of space, whether it is "absolute" or "relative" and "relational," abstract or concrete, a way of thinking or a material reality.

However its essence is defined, in Secondspace the imagined geography tends to become the "real" geography, with the image or representation coming to define and order the reality. Actual material forms recede into the distance as fixed, dead signifiers emitting signals that are processed, and thus understood and explained when deemed necessary, through the rational (and at times irrational) workings of the human mind. Here too, as with Firstspace, there are at least two levels of conceptualization, one introverted and indigenous and the other more extroverted and exogenous in its perspective.

The more internal or indigenous approaches to Secondspace knowledge – ranging from the egocentric, self-explanatory genius of the "starchitect" as masterful creator of spaces to the mental mappers of human spatial cognition and the epistemological referees enforcing their control over spatial knowledge production – are particularly subject to illusory insights. To illustrate, I remember an intense flurry of interest in Geography over the elucidation of "cognitive maps," mental images of space that we all carry with us in our daily lives. Many studies were done to elicit such mental maps across gender, race, and class lines by asking individuals to draw maps of the city in which they lived. Various techniques were used

to summarize these imagined urban depictions and the resultant composite mappings were then compared.

Often, some very interesting insights about human spatiality were produced. But equally often the interpretation abruptly ended with naive categorical idealizations, such as "men's mental maps are extensive, detailed, and relatively accurate" while women's were "domicentric" (centered on the home), more compact, and less accurate in terms of urban details; or, the poor have highly localized mental maps in contrast to the wealthy, whose mental maps come close to reproducing a good road map from the gas station. Readers were left with the impression that the conceived space defined an urban reality on its own terms, the mental defined and indeed produced and explained the material and social worlds better than precise empirical descriptions. In such illusions of transparency, as Lefebvre called them, Firstspace collapses entirely into Secondspace. The difference between them disappears. Even more significantly, also lost in the transparency of space are its fundamental historicity and sociality, any real sense of how these cognitive imageries are themselves socially produced and implicated in the relations between space, power, and knowledge.

The more advanced and exogenous approaches to Secondspace derive either directly from idealist philosophies (e.g. Hegelianism) or from what might be called the idealization of epistemology, its confident representation as a masterful and complete ordering of reality. Lefebvre was particularly concerned with the hegemonic power often ascribed to (and by) this idealized and elevated spatial epistemology. More than anything else, it made the Representations of (Second)Space what he called the dominant space, surveying and controlling both spatial practices and the lived spaces of representation.

Looking back over the past three decades, this seemingly overdrawn concentration on the power of epistemology and on the "dominance" of Secondspace explanatory perspectives (which in so many other ways were much less important in the spatial disciplines than was Firstspace analysis) makes much more sense. Here was the most powerful blockage to the creative rethinking of spatiality, to the trialectical reassertion of Spatiality in ontological conjunction with Sociality and Historicity, to the struggle against all forms of spatial reductionism and disciplinary fragmentation. The broader philosophical hegemony of what I will call modernist epistemologies and their tacit silencing of other knowledges would become the primary focus for a series of post-prefixed (postmodern, poststructuralist, post-Marxist, postcolonial) and related feminist critiques of modernism more generally. Lefebvre's targeting of Secondspace epistemologies as dominant and dominating was thus an important

precursor to these more recent developments, which will be explored at greater length in later chapters.

*Thirdspace epistemologies* can now be briefly re-described as arising from the sympathetic deconstruction and heuristic reconstitution of the Firstspace-Secondspace duality, another example of what I have called *thirling-as-Othering*. Such *thirling* is designed not just to critique Firstspace and Secondspace modes of thought, but also to *rein-vigorate their approaches to spatial knowledge with new possibilities heretofore unthought of inside the traditional spatial disciplines*. Thirdspace becomes not only the limitless Aleph but also what Lefebvre once called the city, a "possibilities machine;" or, recasting Proust, a madeleine for a *recherche des espaces perdus*, a remembrance-rethinking-recovery of spaces lost ... or never sighted at all.<sup>15</sup>

The starting-point for this strategic re-opening and rethinking of new possibilities is the provocative shift back from epistemology to ontology and specifically to the ontological trialectic of Spatiality-Historicity-Sociality. This *ontological rebalancing act* induces a radical skepticism toward all established epistemologies, *all traditional ways of confidently obtaining knowledge of the world*. Many, especially in the explicitly postmodern discourse, have reacted to this epistemological crisis by unleashing a free-wheeling anything-goes eclecticism or hyperrelativism, almost always without addressing the new ontological issues being raised. Addressing them directly, seeking to rebalance the ontological foundations of knowledge formation, however, makes a significant difference. Such ontological restructuring, at least for the present moment, re-centers

<sup>15</sup> The reference to Proust brings to mind an interesting passage in Joseph Frank's "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," originally published in 1945 (*Sewanee Review* 53) and reissued in *The Idea of Spatial Form* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991). Against the grain of most literary treatments of Proust as infatuated with time *per se*, Frank writes:

To experience the passage of time, Proust had learned, it was necessary to rise above it and to grasp both past and present simultaneously in a moment of what he called "pure time." But "pure time," obviously, is not time at all – it is perception in a moment of time, that is to say, space. And by the discontinuous presentation of character Proust forces the reader to juxtapose disparate images spatially, in a moment of time, so that the experience of time's passage is communicated directly to his sensibility. Ramon Fernandez has acutely stressed this point in some remarks on Proust and Bergson. "Much attention has been given to the importance of time in Proust's work ... but perhaps it has not been sufficiently noted that he gives time the value and characteristics of space. ... [T]he reactions of his intelligence on his sensibility, which determine the trajectory of his work, would orient him rather toward a *spatialisation* of time and memory." (1991: 26-7)

Remember these words, for their meaning will re-appear in a different guise in chapter 6.

knowledge formation first around the long-submerged and subordinated spatiality of existential being and becoming, and then in the spatialization of historicity and sociality in theory-formation, empirical analysis, critical inquiry, and social practice.

This far-reaching spatialization, I believe, was Lefebvre's primary intent in *The Production of Space*. As he persistently demonstrated, such knowledge is not obtained in permanent constructions confidently built around formalized and closed epistemologies, but through an endless series of theoretical and practical approximations, a critical and inquisitive nomadism in which the journeying to new ground never ceases. Accordingly, I leave the discussion of Thirdspace epistemologies radically open. We must always be moving on to new possibilities and places.