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SPACE AS CONCRETE ABSTRACTION

Hegel, Marx, and modern urbanism in Henri Lefebvre

Łukasz Stanek

INTRODUCTION

With the current success and proliferation of Henri Lefebvre's phrase "the production of space," it becomes increasingly necessary to oppose its banalization by revealing the philosophical sources of this concept and preventing the isolation of the thesis that space is socially produced from other dimensions of his theory. Of paramount import in this regard is Lefebvre's argument that space is a *concrete abstraction*.[1] In this chapter I would like to assert that the concept of concrete abstraction brings together the most vital elements of Lefebvre's theory of production of space, relating it to his rethinking of the philosophies of Hegel and Marx as well as studies of postwar French architecture and urbanism. In so doing, I wish to show in particular how Lefebvre's approach to space as a product of historically specific material, conceptual, and quotidian practices was facilitated by his use of the concept of concrete abstraction. This requires a brief discussion of its Hegelian origins, before examining three appropriations of concrete abstraction by Marx to highlight their mobilization in Lefebvre's theory.

I will first argue that Marx's definition of concrete abstraction as an "abstraction which became true in practice" was developed by Lefebvre into the claim that the space of capitalism is an abstraction that "became true" in social, economic, political,

and cultural practice. Next, I will show that Marx's understanding of concrete abstraction as a "sensual-suprasensual thing" inspired Lefebvre to theorize the paradoxical character of contemporary space as simultaneously homogeneous and fragmented. Finally, I will claim that Marx's analysis of concrete abstraction as "form" allows us to grasp Lefebvre's thesis on the dialectical "form" of space. Significantly, Marx proposed these three ways of defining concrete abstraction in order to analyze labor and commodity in the conditions of the nineteenth-century capitalist economy. Here I will show that Lefebvre's argument about space as concrete abstraction, formulated during his Nanterre professorship (1965–73), was contextualized likewise by his empirical studies of urbanization in the *trente glorieuses*, his critiques of postwar functionalist urbanism, and the revision of Modernist architecture in France in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

HEGEL'S *CONCRETE UNIVERSAL* AND LEFEBVRE'S *PRODUCTION OF SPACE*

In the first chapter of *The Production of Space* (1974), Lefebvre writes that his aim is to develop a theory that would grasp the unity between three "fields" of space: physical, mental, and social.[2] They are distinguished not only by disciplines such as philosophy, mathematics, and linguistics, but by functionalist urbanism, which assigns specialized zones to everyday activities such as work, housing, leisure, and transportation. Critically reacting to the post-structuralist rethinking of the tradition of Western philosophy, and writing in the wake of the urban crisis in the 1960s and 1970s, Lefebvre considers this fragmentation of space as a theoretical fallacy with practical ramifications and also a symptom of the economic, social, political, technological, and cultural reality of twentieth-century capitalism. With the envisaged "unitary theory" of space, he sought to theorize space as the shared aspect and outcome of all social practices, investigating what remains common to spaces differentiated by historically specific conditions of their production. Lefebvre suggests that these demands can be addressed by a theory based on Hegel's category of *concrete universal*: "Does what Hegel called the concrete universal still have any meaning? I hope to show that it does. What can be said without further ado is that the concepts of *production* and of the *act of producing* do have a certain concrete universality."[3]

The category of concrete universal stems from Hegel's distinction between the *abstract* and the *concrete*. In the instructive article "Wer denkt abstract [Who Thinks Abstractly]?"[4] (1807) Hegel addresses this distinction in a way that announces the intuitions developed in his subsequent philosophical work. He writes that those who think abstractly are the "common people": the saleswomen in the market thinks abstractly by considering the convicted criminal just as a murderer—that is, by one isolated feature of the individual in question; by contrast, the "knower of men"

thinks concretely, by considering the crime as a product of the conditions of the criminal's life—that is, his poor education, family, injustice he suffered, and so on. This initial distinction between the concrete, as embedded in a variety of relations, and the abstract, as impoverished, one-sided and isolated, can be applied to describe features of things, phenomena, thoughts, and experiences. It clearly influenced Lefebvre, who writes that spaces considered in isolation are "mere abstractions," while they "attain 'real' existence by virtue of networks and pathways, by virtue of bunches or clusters of relationships."[5]

In Hegel's philosophical writings there is an important line of development leading from this preliminary distinction between the concrete and the abstract to the theory of concrete and abstract universals. An *abstract universal* is an isolated feature shared by a collection of objects, while a concrete universal (*das konkrete Allgemeine*) refers to an essence of a thing considered as embedded into and constitutive of the world of related and interacting things: that is, dialectical totality.[6] This distinction was underscored by Hegel in his lectures on aesthetics where he describes a *concept* (*der Begriff*) as a concrete universal: "Now, as regards the nature of the Concept as such, it is not in itself an abstract unity at all over against the differences of reality; as Concept it is already the unity of specific differences and therefore a concrete totality."[7]

Michael Inwood explains the difference between those two types of universal by contrasting *redness* and *life*. Redness is a feature shared by all things red; this feature does not significantly influence the nature of a red thing and its relationships with other red things; thus it is an abstract universal. By contrast, life, as a concrete universal, "constitutes, in part, an essence of living things, directing their internal articulations, and living things are essentially related to each other in virtue of their life: different species feed off, and occasionally support, each other, and species reproduce themselves."[8] This understanding of the concrete universal—as the internal principle of development, or a driving force of an examined thing—will be crucial for Marx's unfolding of this concept.

Following Hegel, in *The Production of Space* Lefebvre wrote that a concrete universal is constituted by three "moments"—those of universality (or generality), particularity, and singularity.[9] They are called "moments" by Hegel in order to underscore that universality, particularity, and singularity cannot be sharply distinguished and to stress their logical, ontological, and epistemological interrelationships.[10] According to Hegel, the universal moment is the general principle of development of things of a certain type. The particular moment is determined by the universal moment, but at the same time it is a differentiation of the universal moment and thus, in Hegel's words, its negation. The singular moment is an individual thing that is concrete in the previously explained sense—it exists in a determinate embeddedness in the world. The singular is thus the final step in the differentiation of the universal moment and, simultaneously, its realization. That is why Hegel writes

that "the concrete is the universal in all of its determinations, and thus contains its other in itself":[11] the concrete is the differentiated, or *negated*, universal.

Lefebvre experiments with this understanding of the moments of universality (generality), particularity, and singularity in his theory of production of space.[12] Accordingly, he distinguishes the "level of singularities" on which space is experienced sensually by endowing places with opposing qualities, such as masculine and feminine, or favorable and unfavorable. Furthermore, the "level of generalities" relates to the control and distribution of bodies in space by dominant powers, often by mobilizing symbolic attributes. Finally, the "level of particularities" is linked to smaller social groups, such as families and to spaces "which are defined as permitted or forbidden."[13] In another attempt, Lefebvre divides space into "logical and mathematical generalities" (thus, representations elaborated by scientific disciplines), particular "descriptions" of space, and singular places "in their merely physical and sensory reality."[14] It is not easy to relate these two rather scarcely explained claims to each other, and their fluidity was noticed by Lefebvre himself, who argues that a literal application of Hegelian terms to the theory of space would lead to a "new fragmentation."[15] Thus, when Lefebvre uses the Hegelian term *moment* in his theory of production of space and invokes the perceived, conceived, and lived moments of space, he intends to stress their tight bond rather than their correspondence to the three moments of the concrete universal.

Lefebvre was especially influenced by Hegel's theorizing of the internal dynamics of the concrete universal, described as a development from the universal to the singular via the particular. This dynamic shaped Lefebvre's concept of production, and, specifically, of the production of space. Lefebvre explains this by referring to Hegel: "In Hegelianism, 'production' has a cardinal role: first, the (absolute) Idea produces the world; next, nature produces the human being; and the human being in turn, by dint of struggle and labour, produces at once history, knowledge and self-consciousness."[16] Thus, Hegel's concept of production refers to the development of the concrete universal from the universal moment through the particular to the singular moment. In Lefebvre's view, it is this broad scope of the concept of production, which is not restricted to manufacturing, that makes it most inspiring. He regrets that this breadth, openness, contingency, and lack of sharp borders between the three moments of the concrete universal were lost in some strands of Marxism.

It is this internal dynamic of the concrete universal that above all influenced Lefebvre's theorizing of space. It characterizes the description of the production of space in his short preface to Philippe Boudon's *Lived-in Architecture: Le Corbusier's Pessac Revisited* (1979 [1969]). Boudon's book is an empirical study about the Quartiers Modernes Frugès in Pessac, France, designed by Le Corbusier and opened to residents in 1926. Making a common cause with the critical rethinking and reevaluation of Modernist architecture after the death of Le Corbusier (1965), Boudon investigated the changes introduced to the neighborhood's houses by their

inhabitants, focusing on the relationship between the alterations of particular houses, their designs, and their positions in the district.[17] Accepting Boudon's results, Lefebvre stresses three levels on which space is produced in Pessac: in his view, the original Modernist project of the architect was initially transformed because of the site conditions and the requirements of the client, and then, after construction, appropriated by the inhabitants to their own purposes. The practice of appropriation, Lefebvre writes, manifests "a higher, more complex concrete rationality than the abstract rationality" of Modernism.[18] Significantly, as in Hegel's category of concrete universal, these steps from the abstract to the concrete are seen as a sequence of differentiations: Lefebvre writes explicitly that the inhabitants "produce differences in an undifferentiated space."[19]

The Production of Space credits Marx with discovering the "immanent rationality" of the Hegelian concept of production.[20] This "immanent rationality" allows the theorization of production neither as determined by a preexisting cause nor as teleologically guided, but as organizing "a sequence of actions with a certain 'objective' (i.e. the object to be produced) in view."[21] Lefebvre writes that even the most technologically developed system "cannot produce a space with a perfectly clear understanding of cause and effect, motive and implication."[22] These formulations may well have been inspired by Lefebvre's acquaintance with Boudon's research on Pessac: in the preface he underscores that the "concrete rationality" of production of space cannot be identified with the rationality of any one particular subject—the architect, the occupant, or the critic.

MARX'S *GRUNDRISSE* AND SPACE AS AN "ABSTRACTION TRUE IN PRACTICE"

Even though he tried to retrieve some of the initial features of Hegel's concrete universal that were lost in Marxism, Lefebvre shared Marx's critique of Hegel's stress on the intellectual characteristics of production.[23] Thus, following Hegel *and* Marx, Lefebvre develops a materialist interpretation of this concept that could be applied to space.[24] The need for a reconceptualization of space emerges from Lefebvre's empirical study on the new town of Lacq-Mourenx in the Pyrénées Atlantiques, which initiated his research about urban space.[25] The paper "Les nouveaux ensembles urbains," published in *La Revue Française de Sociologie* (1960), is based on interviews with the inhabitants carried out in 1959, two years after the construction of this city of 4,500 inhabitants. Pierre Merlin, in his 1969 book *Les villes nouvelles*, characterized the problems of Mourenx by noting the insufficiency of facilities, monotony of architecture, and separation of functions.[26] Lefebvre's text, however, goes beyond a critique of functionalist urbanism as it was emerging at that time in France in the publications of Pierre Francastel or the group around Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe.[27] He grappled with a statement of one of the interviewees—

"*ce n'est pas une ville, c'est une cité*"[28]—and speculated that the negative connotation of the term *cité* might resonate with the concept of the "workers' city" (*cité ouvrière*). Even if the specific meaning attributed to this opposition is ambiguous, the message given by the inhabitant was clear: Mourenx was not what a city was supposed to be. Lefebvre attributes this dissatisfaction to the meaninglessness of spaces in the city and the boredom of everyday lives deprived of any unexpected and ludic situations.These interviews demonstrate that it is not enough to distribute amenities in the city: the production of urban space also involves practices of representation of space as well as the appropriation of what Lefebvre later called "spaces of representation." Thus, his research about Mourenx can be read as an anticipation of the triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representation that Lefebvre formulated during his Nanterre professorship.

While the study of Mourenx inspired Lefebvre's subsequent theorizing of space as a product of heterogeneous, historically specific social practices, it was his reading of Marx's analysis of labor from the *Grundrisse* as an "abstraction which became true in practice" that provided him with a model for such a new concept of space.[29] Lefebvre's description of the emergence of the concept of space is analogous to Marx's theorization of labor, which considered every theoretical concept as a symptom of a larger social whole and related the emergence of the concept to the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts of its appearance. Although humankind has always been working, the emergence of the concept of labor is a historical fact: Marx writes that labor could have been conceptualized only when the general features conveyed by this concept became decisive in social practices, most importantly in economic reality. Thus, he claims, it is no accident that the concept of labor as a wealth-creating activity regardless of its specificity was "discovered" by Adam Smith in eighteenth-century Britain, where industry required labor to be reduced to its bare features and stripped of the personality of the worker. This type of labor—malleable, quantifiable, divisible, and measurable by time—was compatible with newly introduced machines and thus most efficient in the economic conditions of early industrialization. Marx writes that under such conditions "the abstraction of the category 'labour,' 'labour as such,' labour pure and simple, becomes true in practice [*praktisch wahr*]."[30] Thus, labor is seen as consisting of two aspects: the specific labor of a particular worker (in *Capital* it is called "concrete labour"—a "productive activity of a definite kind and exercised with a definite aim"[31]) and the non-specific "abstract labour," defined as "the expenditure of human labour in general."[32] Labor becoming "true in practice" is concrete abstraction: an abstraction "made every day in the social process of production," as Marx writes in the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859):

> The conversion of all commodities into labour-time is no greater an abstraction, and is no less real, than the resolution of all organic bodies into

> air. Labour, thus measured by time, does not seem, indeed, to be the labour of different persons, but on the contrary the different working individuals seem to be mere organs of this labour.[33]

This definition was borrowed by Lefebvre, who in *De l'État* (1977) defined concrete abstraction as an abstraction that "concretizes and realizes itself socially, in the social practice."[34] He adds that concrete abstraction is a "social abstraction," which "has a *real* existence, that is to say practical and not conventional, in the social relationships linked to practices."[35]

Analogous to Marx, Lefebvre looks for the "moment of emergence of an awareness of space and its production."[36] He sees this moment at the Bauhaus:

> For the Bauhaus did more than locate space in its real context or supply a new perspective on it: it developed a new conception, a global concept, of space. At that time, around 1920, just after the First World War, a link was discovered in the advanced countries (France, Germany, Russia, the United States), a link which had already been dealt with on the practical plane but which had not yet been rationally articulated: that between industrialization and urbanization, between workplaces and dwelling-places. No sooner had this link been incorporated into theoretical thought than it turned into a project, even into a programme.[37]

This discovery of a "global concept of space" was a recognition of the spatial interconnections between locations of work, habitation, and consumption in advanced capitalism. While Adam Smith demonstrated that different professions are facets of work in general, the architects, artists, and theorists gathered at the Bauhaus (particularly during the phase under Hannes Meyer's directorship) showed that different places are interrelated and are thus parts of one space.[38]

This project of designing space as a whole comprised of interdependent processes and locations was shared by progressive architects between the world wars. Ludwig Hilberseimer in his *Grossstadt Architektur* (1927) argued that every urban structure must be developed in relation to the whole city: "The architecture of the large city depends essentially on the solution given to two factors: the elementary cell of space and the urban organism as a whole."[39] Hilberseimer writes that the space of a single house should become a design determinant for the whole city, while the general plan of the city should influence the space of the house.[40] This continuity between all scales of a city was sought by the film *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1930), directed by Pierre Chenal with a script by Chenal and Le Corbusier. It developed a polemical narrative against the nineteenth-century city, suggesting the necessity of an organic link between the private house, represented by Le Corbusier's villas, the neigh-

borhood, epitomized by the Quartiers Modernes Frugès in Pessac, and the urban plan, exemplified by the Plan Voisin (1925).

K. Michael Hays, in his *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject* (1992), argues that Hannes Meyer's aim was to design space as a whole that not only encompasses interrelated economic, social, and cultural processes but strives to make those relationships visible. Meyer's projects—such as the Palace of the League of Nations in Geneva (1927), the Petersschule in Basel (1927), and the school in Bernau (1928–30)—were designed as indexes that reflected the processes of their production and thus as machines of a new, performative perception, in which the functional diagrams of the building, the transformation of raw materials and their assembling in the processes of construction are visually reestablished. For Hays, Meyer's projects seek to move their viewers "to critically produce or (re)invent relationships among the architectural fact and the social, historical, and ideological subtexts from which it was never really separate to begin with."[41]

The emergence of space and labor as general concepts in the conditions of capitalism shows the intrinsic connections between them. Whereas Adam Smith "discovered" abstract work—the aspect of work that is conditioned by the capitalist mode of production and that facilitates the capitalist development—the intellectuals at the Bauhaus "discovered" abstract space—the space of developed capitalism. In *La pensée marxiste et la ville* (1972), a response to and unfolding of Marx's and Engels's theorizing of the city, Lefebvre described urban space and urban life as the place, tool, milieu, negotiator, and scene of the transition from feudalism to capitalism.[42] Elsewhere he developed a similar argument about the relationship between twentieth-century capitalism and abstract space. In his view, the new planning procedures and new systems of representing space invented at the Bauhaus were essential for the emergence of abstract space, the space of contemporary capitalism:

> If there is such a thing as the history of space, . . . then there is such a thing as a space characteristic of capitalism—that is, characteristic of that society which is run and dominated by the bourgeoisie. It is certainly arguable that the writings and works of the Bauhaus, of Mies van der Rohe among others, outlined, formulated and helped realize that particular space—the fact that the Bauhaus sought to be and proclaimed itself to be revolutionary notwithstanding.[43]

This argument was strengthened by the architectural theorist Manfredo Tafuri, whom Lefebvre met in person in the late 1960s during the activities of the Unité Pedagogique d'Architecture n°8 in Paris.[44] Tafuri linked the new understanding of space held by the most progressive Modernist architects to the capitalist reorganization of Europe. In *Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology* (1969) he underscores Hilberseimer's understanding that "once the true unity of the production cycle has

been identified in the city, the only task the architect can have is to *organize* that cycle."[45] Both Lefebvre and Tafuri recognize that this supposedly revolutionary way of producing space served the economic and political system.[46] This new unity of space was in fact accompanying and facilitating the unity of the processes of production, distribution, and consumption.

Abstract space and abstract labor are thus both the result of a series of economic, social, political, technological, and cultural developments. Marx and Lefebvre show that these developments were followed by a shift on an emotional and personal level: they are not only perceived and conceived but lived in the everyday. Marx describes the worker's feeling of "indifference" toward a specific type of work, which cannot provide him or her with personal identity any more.[47] A hundred years later, Lefebvre wrote that abstract space is not just a perceived product of capitalist spatial practices and a projection of the representations of space conceived by planners, but that the lived practices of those inhabiting this space are themselves abstract: his examples include the one-sided perception of space by a driver or the reductive use of space in functionalist urbanism.[48]

MARX'S *CAPITAL* AND SPACE AS A "SENSUAL–SUPRASENSUAL THING"

The emergence of abstract space meant not only the mobilization of space in the chain of production, distribution, and consumption, but a transformation of space itself into a commodity: produced, distributed, and consumed. The consequence of this is the twofold character of abstract space that Lefebvre examined as being at the same time homogeneous and fragmented—a description applied to Mourenx in his *Introduction to Modernity* (1995 [1962]).[49] This investigation of abstract space is based on Marx's analysis of another concrete abstraction—the commodity.

As with every commodity, space reflects the duality of the abstract and concrete aspects of labor by which it is produced. In *Capital* (1867), Marx theorizes this dual character of a commodity as a concrete abstraction—a "sensual–suprasensual thing" (*sinnlich–übersinnliches Ding*).[50] The concrete ("useful") labor produces the use value of a commodity, while its exchange value is determined by the amount of abstract labor socially necessary for its production.

In *Capital*, Marx writes: "As use values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use value."[51] Thus, the development of the commodity economy was conditioned by the development of universally accepted, practically applicable, and quantitative systems of representation and procedures which, applied to the goods, would allow for comparison between them.

Accordingly, in order to become a commodity, space must have been subjected to systems of representation and procedures that allow it to be divided, measured,

and compared.[52] Thus—as in Marx's example of abstract labor measured by time—the historical process of the commodification of space was paralleled by an implementation of a system of representation, which would depict different "pieces of space" as distinct and endowed with comparable features. Represented by this system, a "piece of space" must radically differ from the "place" traditionally understood as characterized by blurred borders, and qualitatively defined by identity, natural peculiarities, topography, authority, religion, tradition, and history. An early symptom of this transition "from nature to abstraction" is the evolution of systems of measurements, which proceeded from measuring space with parts of the body to universal, quantitative, and homogeneous systems.[53] These requirements were fulfilled by the system within which a point in space can be determined by three coordinates, as developed over the centuries by philosophers and mathematicians, most famously by Descartes. Lefebvre writes that the space of developed capitalism "has analogical affinity with the space of the philosophical, and more specifically the Cartesian tradition."[54]

The reductionism of the Cartesian system of representation (the very cause of its practical success), which became "practically true" in the social practice of capitalism, endowed space with a simultaneous tendency towards homogenization and fragmentation. In his diagnosis of abstract space, Lefebvre writes:

> Formal boundaries are gone between town and country, between centre and periphery, between suburbs and city centres, between the domain of automobiles and the domain of people . . . And yet everything ("public facilities," blocks of flats, "environments of living") is separated, assigned in isolated fashion to unconnected "sites" and "tracts"; the spaces themselves are specialized just as operations are in the social and technical division of labour.[55]

Lefebvre argues that these two tendencies are interdependent: "It is impossible to overemphasize either the mutual inherence or the contradictoriness of these two aspects of space . . . For space 'is' whole and broken, global and fractured, at one and the same time."[56] Abstract space, writes Lefebvre, "takes account of the connections and links between those elements that it keeps, paradoxically, united yet disunited, joined yet detached from one another, at once torn apart and squeezed together.'[57]

This simultaneity of homogeneity and fragmentation is determined by features intrinsic to the Cartesian model itself: homogeneity results in fragmentation, and fragmentation determines homogeneity. As a system of representation, it is unable to give an account of any other features of "pieces of space" than their location expressed with three coordinates of the analytic geometry; areas or volumes differing in location differ in "everything," have "nothing in common" besides being part of the "entirety of space." Thus, space appears as fragmented: it is an

aggregate of independent, distinct areas or volumes. At the same time this system of representation offers no intrinsic criteria for delineating areas or volumes of space; by eliminating "existing differences and peculiarities[58] this system does not suggest any intrinsic differentiation. Thus, it lends itself to *any* parceling required by land speculation, functionalist zoning, or segregation by the state. Deprived of intrinsic differentiations, the "entirety of space" is endowed with a "geometric homogeneity,"[59] which means both a representation and a practical attitude to the management of space. These descriptions of space as simultaneously homogeneous and fragmented are clearly inspired by other concrete abstractions discussed by Lefebvre: money, capital, and the market.[60]

The process of erasing differences—of homogenizing space—may be executed only by force.[61] That is why Lefebvre claims that "*there is a violence intrinsic to abstraction*, and to abstraction's practical (social) use."[62] For Lefebvre, abstraction supported by science and technology is a tool to develop oppressive, *classificatory*, and phallic space.[63] At the same time, in *De l'État*, Lefebvre adds one more characteristic of postwar space: this space is characterized not only by a homogeneity of interchangeable places and by a fragmentation of allotments caused by real-estate speculation but by hierarchization: sensitized by the recent gentrification of the Marais and Quartier Les Halles in Paris, Lefebvre writes that the distinction between center and periphery becomes translated into social hierarchy.[64]

MARX'S *FORM OF VALUE* AND LEFEBVRE'S *FORM OF SPACE*

The historically specific analysis of abstract space—the space of capitalism—is developed in *The Production of Space* into a wider project of addressing the shared characteristics of all spaces, produced in various historical conditions by various social practices. This argument is facilitated by Lefebvre's concept of space as a concrete abstraction and by his application of the method Marx developed in *Capital* in order to describe the universal characteristics of all commodities.

According to Marx, the feature shared by every commodity is its twofold character consisting of use and exchange value. In *Capital* he writes:

> A commodity is a use value or object of utility, and a value. It manifests itself as this twofold thing, that it is, as soon as its value assumes an independent form—viz., the form of exchange value. It never assumes this form when isolated, but only when placed in a value or exchange relation with another commodity of a different kind.[65]

Marx arrives at the definition of the "general form of value" (*allgemeine Wertform*) and explains it with the example of linen: its general form of value "expresses the values of the whole world of commodities in terms of a single commodity set apart

for the purpose, namely, the linen, and thus represents to us their values by means of their equality with linen."[66] Thus, the exchange value of a commodity is established in relation not to some specific commodities but precisely to all of them, and it becomes manifest only in the context of all other commodities.

According to Marx, the principle of development of capitalism is the contradiction between use value and exchange value, which characterizes every commodity and every act of exchange. In the act of exchange, the owner of one of the exchanged objects considers his or her object as deprived of use value (otherwise the owner would not exchange it) but endowed only with exchange value, while considering the object of the other owner as having only use value but no exchange value; an analogous view is held by the owner of the second exchanged object. There is a contradiction between the empirical fact of substituting the exchange and use values and the theoretical impossibility of combining both value forms in one commodity. For Marx, this contradiction points to the real impossibility of a precise measurement of value in bartering.[67]

Marx's method is to investigate how this contradiction is dealt with in social practice. He concludes that the introduction of money should be interpreted as an attempt to mediate between use and exchange values. Money is the "means by which use value begins to transform itself into exchange value, and vice versa."[68] However, the initial contradiction is not solved by money, but dialectically preserved and internalized in commodities (and generating more mediating links, like labor power, a unique commodity whose use value consists precisely in the fact that in the course of its consumption it is transformed into its counterpart—exchange value); in Marx's view this contradiction can be resolved only by the socialist revolution.[69]

Just like a commodity characterized by the general form of value, space for Lefebvre is defined by its *form*. Whereas the form of the commodity characterizes all commodities regardless of their specific features, the form of space is the most general relationship between locations that can be attributed to every location independently of the differences between them. Lefebvre describes the form of the commodity as the possibility of exchange conceived independently of what is exchanged, while the form of space is defined as the possibility of encounter, assembly, and simultaneous gathering regardless of what—or who—is gathered. Lefebvre writes that socially produced space "implies actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point."[70] This fundamental feature of such space is called *centrality*.

Drawing an analogy to the form of the commodity, which is characterized by a dialectical contradiction between use and exchange value, Lefebvre describes centrality as dialectical: there is a dialectic of centrality "because there is a connection between space and the dialectic."[71] The "dialectical movement of centrality" consists of gathering "everything" in space and of the simultaneity of "everything."[72] Lefebvre's work on space and the urban society from the late 1960s and early 1970s can be read as unfolding, developing, and differentiating this claim. In *The Urban*

Revolution (1970) he writes that in a city characterized by centrality, things, objects, people, and situations "are mutually exclusive because they are diverse, but inclusive because they are brought together and imply their mutual presence."[73] He adds that conflicts in urban space arise from differences, which recognize and test each other.[74] Thus, centrality consists of a collection of contradictory and mutually conditioned elements.

In *The Production of Space* yet another aspect of the dialectic of centrality is addressed. The process of centralization is described as conditioned by the process of dispersion: "the centre gathers things together only to the extent that it pushes them away and disperses them."[75] On the same page Lefebvre uses different wording to describe this interdependence: centrality "is based on simultaneous inclusion and exclusion precipitated by a specific spatial factor."[76] Thus, the "dialectic of centrality" consists not only of the contradictory interdependence between the objects gathered but of the opposition between center and periphery, gathering and dispersion, inclusion (to center) and exclusion (to periphery).

The descriptions of centrality from *The Production of Space* and *The Urban Revolution* resemble Lefebvre's depiction of Paris from his text "The Other Parises," published originally in *Espaces et Sociétés* (1974/5), the journal he co-founded with Anatole Kopp in 1970.[77] In this text, the various centers of Paris are addressed as gathering and dispersing living beings, things, ideas, signs, symbols, representations, projects, and ways of life.[78] The social practices of gathering and dispersion can be seen as practices of producing space—transforming the physical environment, representing space, and appropriating it in everyday life. Material practices may include or exclude not only by building bridges or walls but by making strategic investments in the built environment that render particular areas in the city central while excluding others. Representational practices develop new theories of space and set some of them in the center of public attention, damning others to library back shelves. Practices of everyday life appropriate places and ideas—giving meaning to some, while rendering others obsolete.

Lefebvre's discovery of the form of urban space as dialectical parallels the transition in his thinking from an early review "Utopie expérimentale: pour un nouvel urbanisme" (1961) to his writings in the late 1960s. Published in *La Revue Française de Sociologie*, it sympathetically discusses an urbanistic project for a new city in the Furttal valley near Zürich.[79] The authors of the project, presented in the book *Die neue Stadt* (1961), express the ambition to develop a paradigmatic solution for the problems of congestion, traffic, and housing and to tackle the aesthetic challenge of inscribing modern architecture into the Swiss landscape. The main principle of the design is the concept of a balance that regulates the social, economic, emotional, political, and aesthetic aspects of the new city.[80] In his review Lefebvre embraces this principle, praising the project for proposing "an equilibrium, at the same time stable and vivid, a sort of self-regulation."[81] This support for the project, which exposed

Lefebvre to the accusation of reformism by the *Internationale Situationniste*,[82] was soon withdrawn. In "Humanisme et urbanisme: quelques propositions" (1968), he notes that it is deceptive to envisage a perfect equilibrium between architectural concepts,[83] and in *The Urban Revolution* he claims that the concept of a "programmed" and "structured" equilibrium, as proposed by the planners, is an even greater risk for a city than chaos.[84] This revision in Lefebvre's thinking might have been influenced not only by his reevaluation of the postwar urbanism in France and an examination of the urban crisis of the 1960s but by the development of his theoretical interests: his critique of the functionalist concept of needs, his adherence to the ludic and the unforeseen as necessary aspects of urban space, his research on the Paris Commune,[85] and his rethinking of the concept of concrete abstraction.

The analysis of the form of urban space as dialectical allows Lefebvre to sharpen his claims about the role of space in the processes of capitalist production, distribution, and consumption. Whereas the contradiction between use and exchange values was shown by Marx to be the engine of the development of capitalism, Lefebvre enriches this picture by describing the contradictions inherent to space also as contributing to this development.[86] The method of both Marx and Lefebvre is based on the rather counterintuitive assumption that the principle of capitalism is preserved throughout its whole development, becoming manifest in its most advanced and complex stage. The Soviet philosopher Evald Ilyenkov demonstrated that this method is made possible by the structural features of the concept of concrete abstraction. By assuming the commodity as a concrete abstraction, Marx was able to consider it as the universal expression of the specific nature of capital, and, at the same time, as an empirical fact: a commodity exchanged in a particular act. In "Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Marx's *Capital*" (1960), Ilyenkov writes that the historically necessary conditions of emergence of every concrete abstraction are "preserved in its structure throughout its development"; thus, the development of capitalism is conceived as a reproduction of its original principle.[87] Similarly, centrality as a form of space is considered by Lefebvre as a feature of a particular location, and, at the same time, as a facilitator of economic, social, political, and cultural development.

CONCLUSION: LEFEBVRE'S THEORETICO-EMPIRICAL METHOD

This chapter has argued that Lefebvre's theory of production of space is structurally based on the concept of concrete abstraction developed by Hegel in his theorization of the concrete universal and further developed by Marx. Lefebvre refers to Hegel's dynamic and open-ended concrete universal in order to theorize space as a dynamic entity produced by historically contingent social practices. Following Marx's theorization of labor as a concrete abstraction, Lefebvre demonstrates that space is

an "abstraction which became true in practice"—produced by material, political, theoretical, cultural, and quotidian practices. In analogy with Marx's analysis of abstract labor as conditioned by capitalist development and facilitating its further success, Lefebvre sees abstract space as enabling the capitalist processes of production, distribution, and consumption. In the course of the development of capitalism, space itself was turned into a commodity—a concrete abstraction described by Marx as a "sensual–suprasensual thing"—becoming at the same time homogeneous and fragmented. Like the commodity that in its most developed and differentiated stage reveals its most universal characteristics, the space of the capitalist city manifests a fundamental dialectic between the processes of centralization and dispersion, inclusion, and exclusion. This concept of space as a concrete abstraction—socially produced and thus historically contingent and yet characterized by a universal feature called centrality—is the basis of the "unitary theory of space" envisaged by Lefebvre at the beginning of *The Production of Space*.

Significantly, this argument that Lefebvre developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s was prepared and informed by his earlier empirical studies as well as critiques of urbanistic and architectural projects. Ilyenkov demonstrated that Marx's method in *Capital* mobilized both theoretical and empirical research and the procedures of induction and deduction.[88] In Lefebvre's writings one can find a similar approach, albeit not as rigorous as that of Ilyenkov. His theorization of space as concrete abstraction—developed by a close reading and appropriation of the philosophical sources in Hegel and Marx—was not merely accompanied, informed, and inspired by his texts on Mourenx, Furttal, Pessac, and Paris but *questioned* by them.

NOTES

All internet references for this chapter were accessed and checked on May 12, 2007.

1. Henri Lefebvre's thesis of space as a concrete abstraction is stated several times in *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991 [1974]), 15, 86, 100, 341. This thesis is underresearched by Lefebvre's interpreters, even if it has been noticed by most of them (Gottdiener, Shields, Elden); in particular Harvey and Schmid have paid attention to its complexity. See Mark Gottdiener, *The Social Production of Urban Space* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); "A Marx for Our Time: Henri Lefèbvre [*sic*] and *The Production of Space*," *AnArchitektur*, <http://www.anarchitektur.com/aa01-lefebvre/gottdiener.html>; Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*: Spatial Dialectics (London: Routledge, 1999); Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (London: Continuum, 2004); David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Christian Schmid, *Stadt, Raum und Gesellschaft: Henri Lefebvre und die Theorie der Produktion des Raumes* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005).
2. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 11.
3. Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 1986), 23. Note that the English translation of this passage in Lefebvre, *Production of Space* (15)—where "*l'universalité concrete*" is rendered as "abstract universality"—is utterly misleading.

4. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Wer denkt Abstrakt?," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. M. Baum, K. R. Meist (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998 [1807]), 5: 381–7. For an English translation see: <www.Marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/se/abstract.htm>.
5. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 86.
6. See John W. Burbidge, *Historical Dictionary of Hegelian Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2001); Michael James Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992).
7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1: 108.
8. Inwood, *Hegel Dictionary*, 31.
9. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 15–16.
10. Inwood, *Hegel Dictionary*, 304.
11. See Dieter Wandschneider, "Zur Struktur dialektischer Begriffsentwicklung," *Philosophisches Institut der RWTH Aachen*, <http://www.phil-inst.rwth-aachen.de/lehrenden/texte/wandschneider/wandschneider%20-%201997%20b%20-%20zur%20struktur%20dialektischer%20begriffsentwicklung.pdf>. Moreover, Hegel applies the triad of universality, particularity, and singularity to types of judgment: a universal judgment refers to all entities of a given type, for example "all men are wise"; a particular judgment concerns some of those entities, for example "some men are wise"; while a singular judgment refers to one entity, for example "Socrates is wise." Inwood notices that both the universal and the singular judgment refer to the whole of a subject and not to a part of it (as is the case with a particular judgment); this contributed to Hegel's view that singularity is a restoration of universality on a higher level (Inwood, *Hegel Dictionary*, 303).
12. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 15–16 and 226–7. For a discussion, see Edward Dimendberg, "Henri Lefebvre on Abstract Space," in *The Production of Public Space*, ed. A. Light and J. Smith (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 17–47.
13. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 226–7.
14. *Ibid*., 15–16.
15. *Ibid*., 15.
16. *Ibid*., 68.
17. Philippe Boudon, *Lived-in Architecture: Le Corbusier's Pessac Revisited*, trans. G. Onn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979 [1969]).
18. Lefebvre, preface to *ibid*.: n.p.
19. *Ibid*.
20. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 71.
21. *Ibid*.
22. *Ibid*., 37.
23. Shlomo Avineri writes that for Hegel "[p]roduction is a vehicle of reason's actualization of itself in the world," *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 90.
24. For a discussion, see Schmid, *Stadt, Raum und Gesellschaft*, 85ff.
25. Henri Lefebvre, *Le temps des méprises* (Paris: Stock, 1975), 222.
26. Pierre Merlin, *Les villes nouvelles: urbanisme régional et aménagement* (Paris: PUF, 1969), 255.
27. Pierre Francastel, *Arts and Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, trans. R. Cherry (New York: Zone Books, 2003 [1956]), and Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, *Paris: essais de sociologie* (Paris: Éditions Ouvrières, 1965).

28. Henri Lefebvre, "Les nouveaux ensembles urbains," *La Revue Française de Sociologie* 1, no. 2 (1960): 197.
29. Hiroshi Uchida, *Marx's Grundrisse and Hegel's Logic* (London: Routledge, 1988) shows that the introduction to *Grundrisse* reflects Hegel's theory of the concept. In particular, Marx theorizes production by applying Hegel's category of concrete universal with its three moments of universality, particularity, and singularity.
30. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin [GDR]: Dietz, 1953), 25; "Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy," Marxist Internet Archive, <http://www.Marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch01.htm>. Here "true in practice" could also be rendered as "practical-truth."
31. Karl Marx, "Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie," in *Ökonomische Schriften*, ed. H. J. Lieber and B. Kautsky (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1962), 1: 12; "Capital," Marxist Internet Archive, <http://www.Marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#S2>.
32. *Ibid*., 14.
33. Karl Marx, "Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie," in *Ökonomische Schriften*, ed. H. J. Lieber and B. Kautsky (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1962), 3: 847; "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," Marxist Internet Archive, <http://www.Marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/ch01.htm>.
34. Henri Lefebvre, *De l'État tome III* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977), 59.
35. *Ibid*.
36. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 123.
37. *Ibid*., 124.
38. *Ibid*.
39. Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Grossstadt Architektur* (Stuttgart: Hoffmann, 1927), 100.
40. *Ibid*.
41. K. Michael Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 146.
42. Henri Lefebvre, *La pensée marxiste et la ville* (Paris: Casterman, 1972), 33, 71.
43. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 126.
44. Łukasz Stanek, Interview with Henri Raymond, Paris, December 2006.
45. Manfredo Tafuri, "Towards a Critique of Architectural Ideology," in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, ed. K. Michael Hays (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 22.
46. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 124.
47. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 25.
48. See Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 313, 232ff. These practices became "real abstractions," as described by the Marxist philosopher Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Geistige und körperliche Arbeit* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1989).
49. Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes*, trans. J. Moore (London: Verso, 1995 [1962]), 121ff.
50. Marx, "Das Kapital," 46.
51. *Ibid*., 6.
52. See Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 338–9.
53. *Ibid*., 110–11.
54. *Ibid*., 200.
55. *Ibid*., 97–8. However, in *Production of Space* one can find claims that "abstract space *is not* homogeneous; it simply *has* homogeneity as its goal, its orientation, its 'lens.' And indeed it renders homogeneous" (ibid., 287, see also 308). Thus, homogenization and fragmentation are tendencies of development of space rather than its stable features.

This apparent contradiction can be solved by referring to the fact that Lefebvre understands space as a concrete abstraction that can be named by its principle of development even if it did not reach this level of development yet.

56. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 355–6.
57. *Ibid*., 366.
58. *Ibid*., 52.
59. *Ibid*., 288.
60. *Ibid*., 306–7.
61. *Ibid*., 308.
62. *Ibid*., 289.
63. *Ibid*., 280–2, 285–7, 375.
64. Lefebvre, *De l'État*, III, 309.
65. Marx, "Das Kapital," 34.
66. *Ibid*., 40.
67. Evald Ilyenkov, "Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Marx's Capital," Evald Ilyenkov Archive, <http://Marxists.org/archive/ilyenkov/works/abstract/>.
68. *Ibid*.
69. *Ibid*.
70. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 101.
71. *Ibid*., 331.
72. *Ibid*.
73. Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. R. Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003 [1970]), 119.
74. *Ibid*., 96.
75. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 386.
76. *Ibid*.
77. Henri Lefebvre, "The Other Parises" [1974/5], in *Key Writings*, ed. S. Elden, E. Lebas, and E. Kofman (New York: Continuum, 2003), 151–9.
78. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 101. See also Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, ch. 6.
79. Henri Lefebvre, "Utopie expérimentale: pour un nouvel urbanisme," *La Revue Française de Sociologie* 2, no. 3 (1961): 191–8.
80. Ernst Egli *et al*., *Die neue Stadt. Eine Studie für das Furttal* (Zürich: Verlag Bauen + Wohnen, 1961).
81. Lefebvre, "Utopie expérimentale," 194.
82. See "Critique of Urbanism," *Internationale Situationniste* 6, trans. J. Shepley. Available at: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/critique.html> (accessed May 12, 2007). For a discussion of the relationship between Lefebvre and the Situationists, see Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).
83. Henri Lefebvre, "Humanisme et urbanisme: quelque propositions," *Architecture, Formes, Fonctions* 14 (1968), 22–6.
84. Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, 97.
85. See Henri Lefebvre, *La proclamation de la Commune, 26 mars 1871* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965).
86. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).
87. Ilyenkov, "Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete."
88. *Ibid*.