
Toward a philosophy of the urban: Henri Lefebvre's uncomfortable application of Bergsonism

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Abstract. Although Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) publicly and consistently eschewed the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859–1941), his writings in effect made great use of the latter's key ideas and method. Like Bergson's philosophy, Lefebvre's urban criticism denounced the spatialization of time and gave priority to lived experience over the abstractions employed by static intellectual or traditionally analytical models of experience. Throughout *The Urban Revolution*, *The Production of Space*, *The Critique of Everyday Life, Volumes 1–3*, and the writings posthumously collected in *Rhythmanalysis*, Lefebvre's urban philosophical project appropriated the ideas Bergson advanced in his three major works, *Time and Free Will*, *Matter and Memory*, and *Creative Evolution*, through their application to the problems of social life—a de facto collaboration that Bergson never lived to appreciate and that Lefebvre would never recognize. This connection is important not only as a corrective to the scant attention paid to Lefebvre's work by philosophers, but also because it reinforces both thinkers' own emphases on interdisciplinarity and on reconciling theories of knowledge with theories of life. The combined work of the two philosophers suggests a philosophical basis for the current emphasis of theory in both cultural studies and human geography in that it stresses the importance of acknowledging movement, process, and mobilities in approaches to the problems of urban life. The composite of Bergson–Lefebvre provides the basis for articulating a philosophy of the urban.

Introduction

“The philosopher and philosophy can do nothing by themselves, but what can we do without them? Shouldn't we make use of the entire realm of philosophy, along with scientific understanding, in our approach to the urban phenomenon?”

Henri Lefebvre (2003 [1970], page 64)

“The relation between time and space that confers absolute priority to space is in fact a social relationship inherent in a society in which a certain form of rationality governing duration predominates. This reduces and can even destroy, temporality.”

(2003 [1970], pages 73–74)

Henri Lefebvre's (1901–1991) early explicit rejection of Henri Bergson's (1859–1941) philosophy⁽¹⁾ might have one or many causes—the anti-Bergsonian bias of the time,⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Stuart Elden considers this early rejection, divulged in a work by Lefebvre himself, as important to the contextualization of Lefebvre's oeuvre, in two key locations drawing the reader's attention to it quite quickly: (a) in the “Introduction” to *Rhythmanalysis* (2006): “Lefebvre later recounted that they were concerned with challenging the dominant philosophy of Bergson” (page x) (from “Henri Lefebvre, *La somme et le reste*, Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 3e edition, 1989 [1959], pages 383–384”), and (b) in the “Introduction” to *Understanding Henri Lefebvre* (Elden, 2004): “This journal [*Philosophies*] was founded [by Lefebvre and others] with the belief that a challenge to the dominant philosophy of Bergson was necessary” (page 2), reference as above.

⁽²⁾ In the foreword to the second edition of the *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 1*, Lefebvre offers the following concise contextualization of the book's initial reception: “At that moment, in 1946, French philosophy had suffered a series of shocks from which it was only slowly recovering. The war and the Occupation had killed off several important currents of thought, notably Bergsonian anti-intellectualism, compromised by a vague relationship with German irrationalism, and Léon Brunschvicg's intellectualism, which was poorly equipped to resolve the new problems” (1991b [1947], page 5).

the widespread misunderstanding of Bergson's ideas even among philosophical circles,⁽³⁾ Lefebvre's inability to see the value of philosophical work in itself,⁽⁴⁾ or perhaps the necessary and brute rebellion of youthful iconoclasm. Yet, whatever the cause, Lefebvre's facile explicit dismissal of Bergson's philosophy is at odds with his texts' implicit and uneasy relationship with Bergsonism's tenets. Lefebvre's later unacknowledged and unexplored application of the key ideas of Bergson's antiphilosophy, more than merely evident, deserves some scholarly attention. In fact, the fundamental position occupied by Bergson's methodological premise in Lefebvre's urban theories is simply astounding given Lefebvre's initial and explicit rejection of Bergson and the subsequent superficial dismissal of his philosophy. It is quite curious, indeed, that Lefebvre's approach to urban life rests solidly on such Bergsonian ideas as the rejection of 'the spatialization of time', the critique of the intellectual/analytical view of living processes and movement, the generally suspect nature of abstract thinking itself, the problem of confusing living and knowing, the insistence on multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches, and the qualitative nature of difference. Seeking a new relationship between space and time other than that offered by more traditional philosophy, both thinkers prized lived temporalities and worked to uproot the immobile intellectual (for Bergson) and analytical (for Lefebvre) representations of those complex realities. Both thus refused to cede terrain to that mode of conceptualization that reduces the heterogeneity of temporal experience to a unitary and homogeneous spatialization. Whereas Bergson struggled against the faulty premises of philosophy from within philosophy itself, it is Lefebvre who, in effect, appropriated Bergson's work in the act of *applying* it astutely to social life itself.

It must not be overlooked that "Lefebvre hated Bergson's guts" (2006, page 27), as Andy Merrifield puts it in a recent and laudable work, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*. As there is no reason to believe that Merrifield has overstated Lefebvre's contempt for Bergson,⁽⁵⁾ there is no other option except to suggest that Lefebvre's own hatred was misdirected—or at least more appropriately directed to a false idea of Bergsonism, one that nevertheless is entering its second century. Contemporary research into Bergson's ideas has proved them to be far more complex than previously understood, and more adaptable to other disciplines than Bergson himself was prepared to articulate (Antliff, 1993; Burwick and Douglass, 1992; Deleuze, 2002 [1966]; 2003a [1983]; 2003b [1985]; 2004; Grosz, 2004; 2005; Hatzenberger, 2003; Kennedy, 1987; Kumar, 1962; Linstead, 2003; Linstead and Mullarkey, 2003; McNamara, 1996; Mullarkey, 1999a; 1999b; Olkowski, 2002; Papanicolau and Gunter, 1987; Power, 2003; Watson, 2003). Lefebvre, in fact, falls prey to the common misconception that

⁽³⁾ Benjamin Fraser (2006) offers a concise if selective survey of the ways in which Bergson's work was misunderstood at the time.

⁽⁴⁾ David Harvey writes that, early on, Lefebvre "became one of a small group of *jeune philosophes* who, revolting against what they saw as the anachronistic and politically irrelevant establishment philosophy of the time (personified by Bergson), sought, largely through the pages of the radical journal, *Philosophies*, to redefine philosophical endeavors ... Lefebvre and his companions refused to see philosophy as an isolated or wholly specialized activity" (1991, page 426). Yet, while Bergson was content to engage with philosophy largely within traditional disciplinary boundaries, his philosophy itself was anything but traditional, and, in fact, as the reader will have the chance to assess, paved the way for Lefebvre's analyses of society and the urban, even if the latter chose not to acknowledge this connection.

⁽⁵⁾ As evidence, Merrifield cites Lefebvre's own autobiography: "In *La Somme et le Reste (Tome II, p.383)*, he writes, pulling no punches, 'If, during this period [1924–26], there was a thinker for whom we (the young philosophers group) professed without hesitation the most utter contempt, it was Bergson. This feeble and formless thinker, his pseudo-concepts without definition, his theory of fluidity and continuity, his exaltation of pure internality, made us physically sick'" (2006, pages 27–28, citing Lefebvre, 1989 [1959]).

takes Bergsonism to dispense with space altogether in a romantic exaltation of pure temporality—what amounts to the reduction of complex spatiotemporal multiplicities to a simple and untenable idealism or subjectivity—a view explicitly rejected by Bergson himself (1912 [1896], pages 14–17).

It is perhaps a uniquely obstinate error of Lefebvre's misreading to conclude that Bergson's notion of time was easily equated with the homogeneous and continuous narrative of history. This error is most apparent in Lefebvre's own articulation of his theory of moments (2002 [1961], page 342), and even in Merrifield's understandably Lefebvrian misreading of Bergsonian time as 'linear' (2006, pages 27–28).⁽⁶⁾ What Lefebvre denounces as Bergsonian time is, in fact, what Bergson himself denounces as the spatialization of time—that is, time understood as linear, a continuous historical narrative in which one event follows another, a plane of homogeneity ripe for partitioning by human thought. Time, for Bergson, is neither linear, nor homogeneous, nor reducible to periods. It is not unitary in the simple sense, an erroneous conception of Bergsonism shared by Lefebvre and Gaston Bachelard,⁽⁷⁾ but only unitary by means of difference (see Bergson, 2001 [1889]). All this while Lefebvre had much in common with Bergson: both decried philosophical finalism (Bergson, 1998 [1907], especially pages 39–53; Lefebvre, 2003 [1970], pages 67–68);⁽⁸⁾ both dismissed the idea of space as a container (Bergson, 1970 [1889, chapter 2]; 1912 [1896], especially pages 307–309; 1998 [1907], especially page 157; Lefebvre, 2003 [1970], page 40); both denounced the static character of human thought (Bergson, 2001 [1889]; 1998 [1907, chapter 4]; Lefebvre, 2006 [1992], especially pages 20–21), both rejected any attempt to articulate time without reference to space (Bergson, 2001 [1889]; 1998 [1907]; Lefebvre, 1991a [1974]); and both exposed the objectionable consequences of spatializing time, even if these were explicitly political for Lefebvre and only virtually so for Bergson (Bergson, 1970 [1889]; 1912 [1896]; 1998 [1907]; Lefebvre, 1991b [1947]; 2002 [1961]; 2005 [1981]; 2006 [1992]).⁽⁹⁾

⁽⁶⁾ Merrifield refers to Bergson's use of the example of the arrow's path in supporting this idea that time, for Bergson, is linear. Nevertheless, the path of the arrow that Merrifield refers to, much like the example of Achilles and the tortoise which this paper will discuss below, is used by Bergson not to show the linear nature of time, but rather to show the problems of the intellect upon reducing real movement—that is, temporality—to the space this movement covers. It is space, for Bergson, that is linear, while it is time that is undirected creativity, thus the title of one of his works, *Creative Evolution* (1998 [1907]). Each exists with the other. Lefebvre's intent to praise the discontinuities, the possibility inherent in his exploration of the 'moment', is what Bergson expressed in his dictum that "Time is invention or it is nothing at all" (1998 [1907], page 341). Bergson also explores the philosophical error inherent in the concept of linear time in his essay "The possible and the real", published in *The Creative Mind* (2002 [1903], pages 91–106).

⁽⁷⁾ Elden (2006) explains that Bachelard's "*Dialectic of Duration*, though, is the book where Bachelard discusses rhythms most explicitly. Here Bachelard suggests that the notion of duration made famous by Bergson, is never as unitary and cohesive as Bergson suggested, but fragmentary and made up of disparate elements. It is the notion of continuity above all that Bachelard wishes to critique. Lefebvre took much from this critique" (page xiii). This view of Bergson's philosophy (Bachelard's view) is reductive. One does not have to have read Gilles Deleuze's (2002 [1966]) formulation of Bergsonism to disagree; the evidence is there in Bergson's own texts: *Time and Free Will* (2001 [1889]), *Matter and Memory* (1912 [1896]), *Creative Evolution* (1998 [1907]) present a complex articulation of space and time, quantity and quality. This has rarely been understood by Bergson's excessively numerous critics.

⁽⁸⁾ Bergson decried finalism quite extensively along with mechanism.

⁽⁹⁾ It should be noted that György Lukács (1885–1971) incorporated Bergson's critique of the spatialization of time while being overtly critical of the Frenchman. In his *Theory of the Novel* (1971), Lukács in fact draws on both Hegel and Bergson explicitly to formulate the importance of temporality in a discussion of the second of his three proposed novelistic types, where he mentions Bergsonian duration by name (Part II, chapter IV). In *History and Class Consciousness* (1972), discussion of Bergson is merely implicit as, to give an example, Lukács elaborates on Marx's

I will not attempt to explore how conscious Lefebvre may have been of these connections. He was not conscious of them, and moreover they most likely would have infuriated him. Nor does such an approach seek to establish the indirect route he may have taken in coming into contact with Bergsonian ideas. Rather, the act of articulating the work of each with that of the other has not merely a historical motivation but a methodological one—to bolster the common project whose continuation Bergson never lived to appreciate and whose inheritance Lefebvre never overtly recognized. Moreover, acknowledging the Bergsonism in Lefebvre's later work—which is at once to recognize the philosophical debt to contemporary urban theories of cultural studies and human geography—works to correct what has been denounced as a reduction of the philosophical aspect of Lefebvre's work.⁽¹⁰⁾ Finally, consistent with the stated aims of both thinkers, exploration of this connection provides strong evidence for reassessing the way problems of life—or more specifically those of urban life—are conceived and represented by more traditional disciplinary approaches. Both thinkers advocated interdisciplinarity. Bergson has been quoted as saying, “We gauge the significance of a doctrine of philosophy by the variety of ideas which it unfolds, and the simplicity of the principle it summarizes” (Chevalier, 1969 [1928], page 74).⁽¹¹⁾ Lefebvre gives a nod to Jane Jacobs's articulation of the urban as a complex problem akin to those of the natural sciences (2003 [1970], page 45)⁽¹²⁾ and spends many pages arguing for an interdisciplinary approach to the urban (2003 [1970], chapter 3, especially pages 53–55). In *Rhythmanalysis* he once again argues explicitly for interdisciplinarity (2006 [1992], page 20). More than merely explicit, the importance of interdisciplinary methods for both Bergson and Lefebvre is evident from both the content of their texts and their shared refusal to narrowly define the key problems of their writings.

This essay will investigate Lefebvre's unacknowledged return to Bergsonian ideas starting from the framework for spatial analysis outlined in *The Production of Space* (1991a [1974]). It is here that Lefebvre, in spite of his stated intention, reveals the fundamentally philosophical nature of his understanding of space and of the

⁽⁹⁾ continued

critique of capitalism's characteristic reproduction of time: “Thus time [for capitalism] sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable ‘things’ (the reified, mechanically objectified ‘performance’ of the worker, wholly separated from his total human personality): in short, it becomes space” (page 90). Lucio Colletti's “From Bergson to Lukács” (1973), in fact, cites the above quotation in presenting this connection. Although his treatment of the link between Bergson and Lukács is complex, Colletti notes that *History and Class Consciousness* was the first work (since that of Karl Marx) to link the critique of the intellect and the analysis of reification (page 175). On the unifying theme of reification/the hypostatization of the abstract in Marx, Colletti refers the reader to Karl Korsch's *Karl Marx* (1936).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Elden (2001) wrote of the “recent attention to Lefebvre's work” that “much ... has been in the field of geography, or related areas such as urban sociology or cultural studies. Little attention at all has been paid by political theorists or philosophers. This should be cause for inquiry, given that Lefebvre described himself, not just as a Marxist, but as a Marxist philosopher on several occasions. It is also cause for concern” (page 809). Three years later, Elden's assertion had not waned: “As I have argued at greater length elsewhere, one of the problems of recent appropriations and interpretations of Lefebvre in the English-speaking world is the narrowness of the reading that has been given. The focus from fields of geography, urban sociology and cultural studies has largely been at the expense of interest from political theorists or philosophers” (2004, page 6).

⁽¹¹⁾ The note beneath this epigraph from Chevalier's text reads, “From the preface written by Henri Bergson for G. Tarde's *Extracts*, published in the series *Les grands philosophes* (Paris, Michaud, 1909).”

⁽¹²⁾ On page 19 of the same work, he speaks favorably of Jacobs by name; Jacobs addresses this character of the problem of urban life in her classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, chapter 22 “The kind of problem a city is” (1992 [1961], pages 428–448).

relationship between space and time. In the *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 3* (2005 [1981]) he continues to work with Bergsonism without calling it by that name, and later, in *Rhythmanalysis* (2006 [1992])—in many ways a stronger, more intensely philosophical, manifestation of the project outlined in *The Production of Space*, he, in fact, realizes Bergson's call for an intuitive grasp of experience and the reconciliation of a theory of knowledge with a theory of life. That this connection might have provoked Lefebvre's anger does not make it any less significant. After assessing the intersection of the two thinkers' concerns, a final section will explore their relevance for contemporary research. Their combined work ultimately provides philosophical support for current approaches that stress movement, process, and mobilities in their critique of the spatialization of urban life. Importantly, the previously unexplored Bergson–Lefebvre connection bolsters the reconciliation of disciplines and the dual critique of reification and the intellect (see Colletti, 1973; Lukács, 1972; also footnote 9 this paper) that drives much recent investigation into spatial practices. Such philosophical support lends its weight to two key areas of cultural studies in particular, the fusion of film studies and human geography and the acknowledgement of mobilities. Supported by the combined work of Bergson–Lefebvre, these areas of investigation in turn reinforce Lefebvre's own call for a scholarly focus on rhythms in order to destabilize the brute linearity of contemporary capitalism.

The production of space

One of the key problems of cultural geography, and of Marxist praxis, concerns the reconciliation of that perennial philosophical dichotomy that cleaves space from time in its various and sundry avatars—the material and the immaterial, movement and representation, the particular and the universal, the real and the imaginary, and the concrete and the abstract. Although these oppositions cannot be reduced to one another, the conceived distance between space and time helps to shape our understanding of each of them to some degree. In an article published in *Progress in Human Geography*, Alan Latham and Derek McCormack (2004) have stated quite concisely what has been the goal (in many cases, even if the failure in others) of much recent geographical work: interrogations of space must acknowledge “a notion of the material that admits from the very start the presence and importance of the immaterial” (page 703). Lefebvre's watershed text *The Production of Space* in fact addresses this very central philosophical problem of geography, even though he discourages the reader from seeing it for what it is. It is here that a deep understanding of Bergson's anti-philosophical project reveals the hidden Bergsonian premise of Lefebvre's work. I must insist that exploration of the connection between these two French thinkers undermines the work of neither one. Instead, the Bergsonian approach to space can be read as both a precursor to and an extension of Lefebvre's substantial and important work on spatial practice. This view is additionally important as it seeks to correct what has been seen as a reduction of the philosophical complexity of Lefebvre's work (Elden, 2001; 2004; see footnote 10 this paper). Lefebvre's important contribution to discussions of space suggests new paths of investigation that retain the vital impetus of his work and make possible its extension to a wider range of cultural processes. *The Production of Space* places the philosophical issue of space as preeminent, seeks to reconcile space and time with one another while considering each in itself as an abstraction, and even relies on Bergson's critique of the idea of ‘nothing’. Drawing attention to these important connections of Lefebvre's work with Bergsonism will provide the context for the subsequent discussion of the Bergsonian refutation of the ‘spatialization of time’ that obtains in Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* and that motivates the ‘new science’ of rhythmanalysis in his later writings.

Lefebvre's epic treatise *The Production of Space* is clearly concerned with space in a broad sense and, more importantly, with the way in which we apprehend and make sense of it. It undeniably suggests that philosophical assumptions play a role in our understanding of space, even if Lefebvre himself lamentably chooses not to pursue this significant motivation for his investigation, and subsequently discourages this approach. Early on in the text, Lefebvre, in spite of himself, lays claim to the importance of philosophy for his project, strangely enough through its dismissal (see epigraphs, above). The following quotation, although lengthy, is essential to understanding this paradox:

“What term should be used to describe the division which keeps the various types of space away from each other, so that physical space, mental space and social space do not overlap? Distortion? Disjunction? Schism? Break? As a matter of fact the term used is far less important than the distance that separates ‘ideal’ space, which has to do with mental (logico-mathematical) categories, from ‘real’ space, which is the space of social practice. In actuality each of these two kinds of space involves, underpins and presupposes the other.

What should be the starting point for any theoretical attempt to account for this situation and transcend it in the process? Not philosophy, certainly, for philosophy is an active and interested party in the matter. Philosophers have themselves helped bring about the schism with which we are concerned by developing abstract (metaphysical) representations of space, among them the Cartesian notion of space as absolute, infinite *res extensa*, a divine property which may be grasped in a single act of intuition because of its homogeneous (isotopic) character. This is all the more regrettable in view of the fact that the beginnings of philosophy were closely bound up with the ‘real’ space of the Greek city. This connection was severed later in philosophy’s development. Not that we can have no recourse to philosophy, to its concepts or conceptions. *But it [philosophy] cannot be our point of departure*” (page 14, last emphasis added).

In this passage Lefebvre denounces philosophy itself as suspect. Philosophy, in the sense of a traditional metaphysics, is deemed responsible for the schism between the concepts of ‘ideal’ space and ‘real’ space. Although he suggests a decentering of the philosophical question and not its eradication, he is at this point working against the very interdisciplinarity that he will so strongly espouse in *Rhythmanalysis* (see also 2003 [1970], pages 53–55). Most importantly, he minimizes the role of this philosophical question in the process of human thought—something appreciated and written extensively about by Bergson. It is this question that Lefebvre, despite himself, will return to in *Critique of Everyday Life* and *Rhythmanalysis*, and it is this question which in fact motivates *The Production of Space*.

By the time of publication of *The Production of Space*, this traditional metaphysical division between ideal space and real space, the space of mental categories and the space of social practice, had already been denounced by none other than Bergson himself—a good half-century before Lefebvre’s opus, in fact. In pointing out the cohabitation of space and time, in describing the intimate connection between physical and mental realities, between matter and memory, between things and consciousness, Bergson hoped to dislodge the Kantian understanding of space and time as abstract and prior to lived experience (see especially Bergson, 1998 [1907], chapter 4). In *The Production of Space*, Bergson is mentioned only twice in passing (1991a [1974], pages 21–22, 73), yet it is precisely because of the fact that Bergson’s philosophy is an *antiphilosophy*—one which calls traditional philosophical categories into question and which takes it upon itself to explain the origin of philosophical error—that his works are of such great relevance to Lefebvre’s goal to arrive at a “unitary theory of physical,

mental and social space” (1991a [1974], page 21). What Lefebvre is at a loss to name [“Distortion? Disjunction? Schism? Break?” (1991a [1974], page 14)] is in fact the Bergsonian idea of ‘space’ itself: a method of division, of carving up reality which in itself produces not only physical space, mental space, and social space but also their conceptual division from one another.⁽¹³⁾ I believe that Lefebvre’s dismissal of Bergsonian methodology, when, in fact, it would most behoove him to explore it, is itself predicated on a common misunderstanding of Bergson as a philosopher of ‘time’ interested in the immediacy of consciousness at the expense of material/spatial realities (see Lefebvre, 1991a [1974], pages 21–22). Fraser (2006) delves into some effects of these misunderstandings.⁽¹⁴⁾ These misunderstandings prove as detrimental to contemporary scholars interested in issues of space as they did for Lefebvre. Just as Bergson sought to correct the errors of a traditional metaphysics that cleaved space from time, Lefebvre, without the support of the philosopher’s works, sought to correct the way those same errors had influenced our understanding of space.

In the three works that are commonly judged to be his most important, *Time and Free Will* (2001 [1889]), *Matter and Memory* (1912 [1896]), and *Creative Evolution* (1998 [1907]), Bergson dissolves from provisional dualisms (of space and time, matter and memory, intellect and instinct) in order to emphasize their union as a composite. The composite is wrought of two tendencies which cannot be isolated from each other. Put most succinctly, the nondualism is one between “two different kinds of reality, the one heterogeneous, that of sensible qualities, the other homogeneous, namely space” (1970 [1889], page 97). Although language invites us to consider time and space as distinct or opposed facets of reality (Bergson, 1998 [1907], pages 298–304; see also Lefebvre, 2002 [1961], page 342),⁽¹⁵⁾ it does not encourage us to think about how it is that our intellect separates one from the other (the form of thought), nor does it clarify how each is implicated at every moment of our experience. Time and space are, for Bergson, neither abstract ideas nor concrete things, but two ways of thinking about experience, two entry points to a temporally-spatial whole. Each one suggests a certain way of differentiating this whole. Put a different way, there are “two kinds of multiplicity, two possible senses of the word ‘distinguish,’ two conceptions, the one qualitative and the other quantitative, of the difference between *same* and *other*” (2001 [1889], page 121, original emphasis).

More important than this first maneuver in which Bergson references the two multiplicities—the two tendencies that are themselves abstracted from a unitary, if variegated, space–time—is the way he brings up their interpenetration (see also 1912

⁽¹³⁾ It is interesting to note that Bergson, who had to submit two dissertations as the requirements of the time in France dictated, submitted not only *Time and Free Will* (2001 [1889]) but also a shorter dissertation in Latin titled “Quid Aristoteles de loco senserit” [Aristotle’s concept of place] also published in 1889 (1970 [1889]).

⁽¹⁴⁾ This century-old misunderstanding appears even in recent scholarship. Consider Doreen Massey’s otherwise impressive essay on “Philosophy and the politics of spatiality: some considerations” (1999), in which she argues that Bergson’s error was to not have envisioned space as equally open as time, not to have seen that space is also a realm of difference and multiplicity. I insist that Bergson’s ontological claim concerning space is much more nuanced than the dualist space versus time argument attributed to him by his detractors. For Bergson, space was not a “dimension” (Massey, 1999, page 32) but a view taken by mind (Bergson, 1998 [1907], page 157). It is just as egregious to consider Bergson a ‘philosopher of time’ (and not space) as it is to see Lefebvre as interested in space at the expense of time. Neither the philosopher nor the urban critic had such a simplistic understanding of difference or multiplicity. That said, although Massey’s use of Bergson is problematic [I find Elizabeth Grosz’s view of Bergsonism much more accurate (see especially Grosz, 2004; 2005)]; her analyses are superb.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Here Lefebvre speaks opaquely of a ‘disintegration of language’.

[1896], page 72), emphasizing that “it is through the quality of quantity that we form the idea of quantity without quality” (1970 [1889], pages 122–123).⁽¹⁶⁾ For Bergson, quality plays a role in quantity, intensivity in extensivity, inclusive succession in simultaneity, duration in matter, time in space. This is akin to what Lefebvre posits in analyzing the *production* of space. It is not a static moment (space) that deserves attention, but, rather, the process of creating what at any moment may be taken *by the intellect* as staticity (space–time). This is to rightly deal with process, not product—and process, as Lefebvre and his proponents in cultural geography (eg Harvey, 1989; 1990; 1996; 2000) are aware, is by no means strictly spatial. Just as Bergson (and for that matter self-proclaimed phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty)⁽¹⁷⁾ emphasized the interaction between space and time, matter and memory, the quantitative and the qualitative, Lefebvre delves into these same reconciliations in the name of what he calls ‘social space’. This ‘social space’ is both a “field of action” and a “basis for action”, both “actual” and “potential”, and, to approximate most clearly Bergson’s own use of language, both “qualitative” and “quantitative” (Lefebvre, 1991a [1974], page 191).

For Bergson, the qualitative and quantitative are intimately connected, as are memory and matter, consciousness and things, time and space; yet, it is the role of the intellect to perceive quality only through quantity, to reduce consciousness to a thing in order to act upon it, to perceive time only through space. As I will have a chance to discuss further in the next section, to the degree that human thought follows the tendency of the intellect, it carves fluid reality into bits and pieces through representation. Lefebvre’s own triadic model of spatial production [“Spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces”, in Lefebvre (1991a [1974], page 33; see also Harvey, 1990, pages 218–219)] is a testament to the power of this tendency of thought to divide

⁽¹⁶⁾ The full quotation reads: “And yet we cannot even form the idea of discrete multiplicity without considering at the same time a qualitative multiplicity. When we explicitly count units by stringing them along a spatial line, is it not the case that, alongside this addition of identical terms standing out from a homogenous background, an organization of these units is going on in the depths of the soul, a wholly dynamic process, not unlike the purely qualitative way in which an anvil, if it could feel, would realize a series of blows from a hammer? ... In a word, the process by which we count units and make them into a discrete multiplicity has two sides; on the one hand we assume that they are identical, which is conceivable only on condition that these units are ranged alongside each other in a homogeneous medium; but on the other hand, the third unit, for example, when added to the other two, alters the nature, the appearance and, as it were, the rhythm of the whole; without this interpenetration and this, so to speak, qualitative progress, no addition would be possible. Hence it is through the quality of quantity that we form the idea of quantity without quality” (Bergson, 2001 [1889], pages 122–123).

⁽¹⁷⁾ Merleau-Ponty (1982 [1948]; 2000a [1964]; 2000b [1964]; 2000c [1973]; 2004 [1945]) often returned to the idea that “the hand that touches is also the hand that is touched”. Space and time were not separable abstract concepts: “We must therefore avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time” (2004 [1945], page 161, original emphasis); “I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them” (page 162). In this sense, Lefebvre can be said to have brought phenomenology to bear explicitly on social production. He writes: “Can the body, with its capacity for action, and its various energies, be said to create space? Assuredly, but not in the sense that occupation might be said to ‘manufacture’ spatiality; rather, there is an immediate relationship between the body and its space. Before *producing* effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before *producing itself* by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before *reproducing itself* by generating other bodies, each living body *is* space and *has* its space. ... This thesis is so persuasive that there seems to be little reason for not extending its application—with all due precautions, naturally, to *social* space” (1991a [1974], pages 170–171, original emphasis). See also Kirsten Simonsen (2005), who splendidly recovers Lefebvre’s contribution to the literature of the body/phenomenology.

and partition, even as it attempts to undermine this very practice and restore movement to the conceived image of a static spatial field. That said, it is quite a narrow view indeed to assume that Lefebvre's work on space prizes space over time.⁽¹⁸⁾ As the title itself indicates, his work explores *The Production of Space*—that is, the way in which space is implicated in a larger temporal process, the way that temporality permits the formation and reformation of spaces. Recalling the complex relationship between space and time that Bergson takes great care to develop in his works,⁽¹⁹⁾ Lefebvre explicitly asserts that “Time is distinguishable but not separable from space” (1991a [1974], page 175). Space and time are for Lefebvre, as they were for Bergson before him, separable only in “a view taken by mind”;⁽²⁰⁾ “time is known and actualized in space, becoming a social reality by virtue of spatial practice. Similarly, space is known only in and through time” (1991a [1974], page 219). Lefebvre goes on to discuss how capitalism has produced a particular relationship between space and time, thus his famed dictum that capitalism has survived through the 20th century “by producing space, by occupying a space” (1973, page 21). Whereas for the philosopher Bergson it is the tendency of the intellect to prioritize space over time, for the urban critic Lefebvre it is the tendency of capitalism to do so (1991a [1974], page 219). Reading both Bergson and Lefebvre together produces the interesting issue of the relationship between the spatial nature of Bergson's ‘intellect’ and the spatial nature of capitalism as discussed in Lefebvre's work (and that of Harvey). The key to understanding this relationship involves the two thinkers' shared critique of the ‘spatialization of time’. Before moving on to discuss their common use of this concept in relation to everyday lived experience, I will touch upon one more similarity involving the theorization of space.

In addition to the shared redefinition of the relationship between space and time, another important philosophical premise shared by Bergson and Lefebvre is that of the idea of nothing, the void, empty space.⁽²¹⁾ Commonsense representations of ‘nothing’ claim that it is less than something. The idea of a stack of papers on my desk is, for common sense, more than the same idea minus the stack of papers. Yet, for Bergson, the idea of nothing is, in fact, more than the idea of something—it is the idea of something plus its negation (1998 [1907], pages 272–298). This discussion, comprising many pages indeed, is tied into Bergson's extensive critique of the intellect and of traditional philosophy. As might be expected of the philosopher's philosopher, he does not directly tie this faulty premise into social life. And yet, once again, we find evidence for the assertion that Lefebvre's work consists, in part, of the rigorous, if unconscious, *application* to social life of Bergson's philosophical corrections.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Elden (2004) similarly confronts this possible misunderstanding head-on: “In other words, Lefebvre did not replace temporal with spatial analysis, but thought the relation between space and time, and in the process rethought both concepts. It is crucial to remember that they must be thought together, and yet cannot be reduced to the other. Space and time are the indispensable coordinates of everyday life, and therefore a rethinking of them is essential to that overall project” (page 170).

⁽¹⁹⁾ This complex relationship between spatial and temporal multiplicities, between differences of degree and differences of kind, is treated with great care and precision in the work of Deleuze, especially *Bergsonism* (2002 [1966]). Deleuze also works with Bergsonism extensively in his two *Cinema* volumes (2003a [1983]; 2003b [1985]) and in two essays posthumously published in English as part of *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953–1974* (2004).

⁽²⁰⁾ In *Creative Evolution* (1998 [1907]), Bergson writes that “This space [a homogeneous and empty medium, infinite and indefinitely divisible] is therefore, preeminently, the plan of our possible action on things, although, indeed, things have a natural tendency, as we shall explain later on, to enter into a frame of this kind. It is a view taken by mind” (page 157).

⁽²¹⁾ Bernard Pullman's *The Atom in the History of Human Thought* (2001) explores the rich history of the opposed theories of the universe as either an empty container or a full field.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre's writing at times almost appears to be based on Bergson's discussion of nothing as an unfaithful if not illusory concept. Lefebvre writes: "The notion of a space which is at first empty, but is later filled by a social life and modified by it, also depends on this hypothetical initial 'purity,' identified as 'nature' and as a sort of ground zero of human reality. Empty space in the sense of a mental and social void which facilitates the socialization of a not-yet-social realm is actually merely a *representation of space*" (1991a [1974], original emphasis, page 190; see also 2003 [1970], page 40). Although Lefebvre's discussion, because of the priority extended to the application of philosophical concepts, lacks the philosophical rigor of Bergson's, he has in a sense given life to Bergson's somewhat dry but nevertheless astute observation.

We have seen that both thinkers shared the concern of reconciling the abstract realms of space and time with one another. In *The Production of Space* Bergsonism is present in the philosophically grounded framework used by Lefebvre to approach space, one that eschews static and abstract concepts to apprehend fluid experience. Yet, it is in *Critique of Everyday Life* that one finds Lefebvre relying implicitly upon Bergson's philosophy with more consistency and in greater detail. In reconciling Bergson's philosophy with Lefebvre's later works, it is my aim to rediscover Lefebvre's original intention, even if in doing so I must defy the explicit instructions of Lefebvre himself, as evidenced in *The Production of Space* (discussed above) and take on the philosophical understandings that constitute our spatial experiences and practices. This intention was to correct two entwined problems of philosophy. The first was what Lefebvre saw as the insular character of philosophical speculation—he thought it should be applied to the lived world in accordance with Marxist praxis, the reconciliation of thought and action. The second was the faulty philosophical problem of using static categories to understand a mobile world. In addition to grounding our understanding of the struggles over urban space, ultimately Bergsonian methodology allows us to take Lefebvre's analysis where it is just beginning to venture, not only into philosophy but also into all of the humanities, social sciences, and even the sciences, for that matter.

The critique of everyday life

One of Lefebvre's greatest contributions has been this three-volume work in which he seeks to return to the concrete, to reconcile thought and life, to expose the intimate connection between thought and action, and to recover the fundamental possibility for radical social change.⁽²²⁾ This focus on the everyday needs be seen as the complement to Bergson's philosophical project.⁽²³⁾ Bergson worked to dismantle from within philosophy the very traditional abstract philosophical concepts which Lefebvre later eschewed in his concrete and applied analyses. Philosophically, Bergson questioned the very conceptualization of movement in static terms, explaining how movement seen/represented by the intellect was quite another thing entirely from real movement itself. In this three volume work Lefebvre consistently proposed "starting out from actual

(22) Michel Trebitsch (1991) supplies a concise rendering of the events and motivation leading up to this project.

(23) In the third volume of the *Critique of Everyday Life* (2005 [1981]), Lefebvre explicitly denounces traditional philosophy with prose that is reminiscent of Bergson's: "The originality of the project with respect to traditional philosophy has already been underscored. It regarded daily life neither as the non-philosophical, nor as raw material for some possible construction. It did not regard it as the thing from which philosophy distances itself in order to embark upon either a phenomenology of consciousness, or a logic, or ethics, or aesthetics. It sought to show that the confused character of lived experience, as of daily life, betokened not their poverty but their richness" (page 17).

experience, and elucidating it in order to transform it—as opposed to starting from the conceptual in order to impose it” (2005 [1981], page 76), a continuation of his insistence in *The Production of Space* that “spatial practice is lived before it is conceptualized” (1991a [1974], page 34). First, let us see how Bergson placed lived experience at the center of his effort, in order to be better equipped to discuss the Bergsonian critique of the ‘spatialization of time’ inherited by Lefebvre.

For Bergson, the role of the intellect was to ‘spatialize time’: to partition a fluid reality, to create divisions in that reality even, especially, through the ‘simple’ act of perception. Even the evolution of the intellect was geared toward preparing the body’s action upon things.⁽²⁴⁾ As such, the intellect developed as the part of the body geared toward matter, the world of things.⁽²⁵⁾ To the degree that the intellect was the form of thought that most adhered in social life, social life itself consisted in the imposition of static forms: “And the essential object of society is to introduce a certain fixity into universal mobility. Societies are just so many islands consolidated here and there in the ocean of becoming” (Bergson, 2002a [1934], page 82; see also 1935 [1932]). In this vein, one of the comments most widely attributed to Bergson is his characterization of the functioning of this intellect. For this characterization, he employed, as did others of the time, the newly burgeoning seventh art form as a metaphor. Likening the intellect to the cinema, he famously wrote that “the mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographical kind” (1998 [1907], page 306).⁽²⁶⁾ The intellect, like the cinema, partitions reality into snapshots; it understands real movement only through static images. One may perhaps think of the famous photographic motion studies of Eadweard Muybridge as a visual accompaniment to Bergson’s metaphor. Bergson himself, elsewhere, critiqued the Eleatic philosopher Zeno’s example of Achilles and the tortoise to illustrate this teratological error of the intellect.⁽²⁷⁾ Movement cannot be equated to the distance covered because it is part of duration, continual becoming, the eternal moment where the past bleeds into, even recreates itself in, the present. Here, Bergson, has illustrated that temporal phenomena cannot be understood by the spatializing process characteristic of the intellect. To put it another way, lived experience, for Bergson is not reducible to the static designs of thought.

⁽²⁴⁾ In *Matter and Memory* (1912 [1896]), Bergson repeatedly refers to perception as the “virtual action of things upon our body and of our body upon things” (page 309).

⁽²⁵⁾ In the following quotation from *Creative Evolution* (1998 [1907]), Bergson explains this in the form of suggesting an alternative to the Kantian understanding of time and space: “This alternative consists, first of all, in regarding the intellect as a special function of the mind, essentially turned toward inert matter; then in saying that neither does matter determine the form of the intellect, nor does the intellect impose its form on matter, nor have matter and intellect been regulated in regard to one another by we know not what pre-established harmony, but that intellect and matter have progressively adapted themselves one to the other in order to attain at last a common form” (page 206).

⁽²⁶⁾ The full quotation reads: “We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, and, as these are characteristic of the reality, we have only to string them on a becoming, abstract, uniform and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic in this becoming itself. Perception, intellection, language so proceed in general. Whether we would think becoming, or express it, or even perceive it, we hardly do anything else than set going a kind of cinematograph inside us. We may therefore sum up what we have been saying in the conclusion that the *mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographical kind*” (1998 [1907], page 306, original emphasis; see also Deleuze, 2003a [1983]; 2003b [1985]).

⁽²⁷⁾ If Achilles runs ten times faster than the tortoise, and the tortoise is given a 10 m head start, then by the time Achilles runs the initial 10 m the tortoise will have moved another $\frac{1}{10}$ m. When Achilles runs the $\frac{1}{10}$ m, the tortoise will have moved another $\frac{1}{100}$ m, and so on. Thus, Zeno concludes, Achilles will never catch up with the tortoise. Nevertheless, and as Bergson correctly assumes, the flaw in this reasoning is that while the space traveled may be divisible, the movement is not. Achilles will, indeed, surpass the tortoise.

Lefebvre relentlessly advocated this very philosophical premise, as I have written above, through its *application* to urban life in his three-volume *Critique*, especially in the last volume. Now in the position to reflect most perspicaciously upon the project's entirety, he writes:

“[K]nowledge must proceed with caution, restraint, respect. It must respect lived experience, rather than belabouring it as the domain of ignorance and error, rather than absorbing it into positive knowledge as vanquished ignorance. ... Understanding lived experience, situating it, and restoring it to the dynamic constellation of concepts; ‘explaining’ it by stating what it *involves*—this was how the meaning of the work and project was expressed” (2005 [1981], page 17, original emphasis).

Now positioned to respect lived experience, knowledge has to relinquish its addiction to representing fluid experience through static concepts. In Bergsonian terms, this means that the tendency of intellect in human thought must give way to intuition—that is, to “a certain effort which the utilitarian habits of mind of everyday life tend, in most men, to discourage” (Bergson, 2002 [1903], page 165). Recognition of the ‘spatialization of time’ is a key part of the movement of practicing intuition—which Bergson calls ‘metaphysics’ or philosophy (see Bergson, 2002 [1903], especially pages 188–193).⁽²⁸⁾ For Lefebvre, this recognition is also of great importance.⁽²⁹⁾ He criticizes traditional Marxism’s approach to rhythms by stating: “The general problem here is the spatialization of temporal processes” (2005 [1981], page 129). This Bergsonian language, although perhaps unconscious and definitely unacknowledged, is not used lightly. Underlying Lefebvre’s understanding of the rhythms of life is an explicit rejection of the way that the qualitative nature of time has been made linear and homogeneous, the way living processes have been reduced to quantities. In Bergson’s work, this critique is purely philosophical and only virtually political. In Lefebvre’s work, however, the philosophy is brought into relation with the capitalist mode of production by his actualization of the critique Bergson left unexplored.

“On a watch or a clock, the mechanical devices subject the cyclical—the hands that turn in sixty seconds or twelve hours—to the linearity of counting. In recent measuring devices, and even watches, the cyclical (the dial) tends to disappear. Fully quantified social time is indifferent to day and night, to the rhythms of impulses” (2005 [1981], page 130).⁽³⁰⁾

The consequences of the quantification of the qualitative, the spatialization of time, the “splintering of space and time in general homogeneity, and the crushing of natural rhythms and cycles by linearity” (page 135), are, for Lefebvre, disastrous—thus, the illusion of time as reversible, and from that illusion, the suppression of tragedy and

⁽²⁸⁾ Compare with the idea of ‘metaphilosophy’ as articulated by Lefebvre (2003 [1970], pages 64–68).

⁽²⁹⁾ Although Bergson sees this rift as an innate tendency of human thought which he calls the intellect, Lefebvre historicizes the rift between knowledge and life, attributing it to the “silent catastrophe” (page 46) of modernity’s beginning. Lefebvre places the advent of modernity at around 1910: “‘One’ continued to live in Euclidean and Newtonian space, while knowledge moved in the space of relativity. Comparatively straightforward, Euclidean and Newtonian space still seemed absolute and intelligible because it was homogeneous and had nothing to do with time. As for time, it remained clock-time, and was itself homogeneous” (page 47). Interesting, in this regard, is the fact that Bergson’s three major works, *Time and Free Will* (2001 [1889]), *Matter and Memory* (1912 [1896]), and *Creative Evolution* (1998 [1907]), were all published before 1910. Also, while controversy surrounds the work to this day, Bergson engaged his philosophy with Einstein’s physics in 1922 with *Duration and Simultaneity* (1999 [1922])—an effort which, judged successful or not, produced entanglements still worthy of consideration (see Durie, 1999).

⁽³⁰⁾ *Inner Time* (1993), by Carol Orlock, provides a fascinating discussion of biological cycles that I believe would have intrigued Lefebvre in this regard.

death (page 133) and the rampant colonization/commodification of daily life. “Time is projected into space through measurement, by being homogenized, by appearing in things and products” (page 133; see also 2002 [1961]). Thus asserts itself the need for restoring the irreversibility of time, Lefebvre argues, through music, dance, the festival: in short, the themes of everyday life. Lefebvre has rescued time from the ‘social relationship’ (see the Lefebvre epigraph, above) through which it is managed by capitalist spatialization.

Despite his insistence on redefining philosophical premises from within the discipline of philosophy itself, Bergson, too, sought a philosophy that would be more precisely attuned to life itself, to the ways in which the time of life is cut up, partitioned, managed by the intellectual representation of it. Thus, his persistence in suggesting that “*theory of knowledge* and *theory of life* seem to us inseparable. ... It is necessary that these two inquiries, theory of knowledge and a theory of life, should join each other, and, by a circular process, push each other on unceasingly” (Bergson, 1998 [1907], page xiii, original emphasis). In imbricating his philosophical revolution with the evolution of life as he did (especially) in *Creative Evolution*, Bergson perhaps thought that he had achieved this goal. The result has, nevertheless, proved unsatisfactory for Lefebvre and others. In his critique of everyday life, I suggest that Lefebvre, too, thought he had reconciled a theory of knowledge and a theory of life. He had brought philosophical problems out of the ivory tower to their social application. And, yet, might philosophers bemoan Lefebvre’s explicit rejection of philosophy (see 1991a [1974]; see also discussion above)? Whereas each thinker succeeded on his own terms and perhaps failed regarding the priorities of the other, there can be no doubt that together this search for a unified knowledge/life was realized. The next section takes on Lefebvre’s rhythmanalytical project. It is here that I believe Lefebvre would have most pleased Bergson. By this, I mean to say that the project is intensely philosophical, and is methodologically grounded in the realities of lived experience. It is not the intellect that obtains in rhythmanalysis, but intuition, a mode of thinking that attunes itself to movement and not static forms. For Lefebvre, this movement, this lived temporality opposed to linear trajectories, escaping from yet coexisting with the colonization of daily life (2006 [1992], page 73), is rhythm.

Rhythmanalysis

To the extent that Lefebvre’s rhythmanalytical project is a logical continuation of his distaste for traditional philosophy, it is foreshadowed in *The Production of Space*,⁽³¹⁾ and in *Critique of Everyday Life* where he even terms it “a new science” (2005 [1981], page 130).⁽³²⁾ He rejects the static approach of traditional analysis, recalling Bergson’s denunciation of the intellect as ‘cinematographical’ knowledge. Whereas intellection apprehends movement only through static images, something akin to the effect of Muybridge’s motion studies (above), the method of the rhythmanalyst is altogether different:

⁽³¹⁾ “Naturally, the history of space should not be distanced in any way from the history of time (a history clearly distinct from all philosophical theories of time in general). The departure point for this history of space is not to be found in geographical descriptions of natural space, but rather in the study of natural rhythms, and of the modification of those rhythms and their inscription in space by means of human actions, especially work-related actions. It begins, then, with the spatio-temporal rhythms of nature as transformed by social practice” (1991a [1974], page 117).

⁽³²⁾ “Rhythmanalysis, a new science that is in the process of being constituted, studies these highly complex processes. It may well be that it will complement or supplant psychoanalysis. It situates itself at the juxtaposition of the physical, the physiological and the social, at the heart of daily life. ... Compared with the existing sciences, it is multi- or interdisciplinary in character” (page 130).

“For him [the rhythm analyst] nothing is immobile. He hears the wind, the rain, storms, but if he considers a stone, a wall, a trunk, he understands their slowness, their interminable rhythm. This *object* is not inert; time is not set aside for the *subject*. It is only slow in relation to our time, to our body, the measure of rhythms. An apparently immobile *object*, the forest, moves in multiple ways: the combined movements of the soil, the earth, the sun. Or the movements of the molecules and atoms that compose it (the object, the forest). ... He thinks with his body, not in the abstract, but in lived temporality” (Lefebvre, 2006 [1992], pages 20–21, original emphasis).

In the tradition of Bergson, who declared that intellect was the static, speculative tendency of consciousness that had attenuated itself to matter in order to act upon it (1912 [1896]), Lefebvre is seeking to escape the tropes of a historically disinterested theoretical knowledge divorced from moving, living realities. To unite thought and action, thought must escape the static images of movement, and mold itself to (nonlinear) rhythms.

This concept of rhythm is, at the same time, a conscious acceptance of the phenomenological project and its concomitant rejection of the knowledge that imagines itself to be somehow noncorporeal. Bergson’s aim was to dispense with the simplistic representations of lived realities offered by realism and idealism, by extreme objectivity and extreme subjectivity. Lefebvre, in this fashion, held a similar belief that the body was at once mental and physical, yet subject to reduction and/or abstraction by the mainstream political and philosophical imagination.

“One could reach, by a twisty road and paradoxically beginning with bodies, the (concrete) universal that the political and philosophical mainstream targeted but did not reach, let alone realize: if rhythm consolidates its theoretical status, if it reveals itself as a valid concept for thought and as a support in practice, is it not this concrete universal that philosophical systems have lacked, that political organizations have forgotten, but which is lived, tested, touched in the sensible and the corporeal?” (Lefebvre, 2006 [1992], pages 44–45, see also page 67).

This acknowledgement of the primacy of the body [one thinks of Merleau-Ponty’s *The Primacy of Perception* (2000a [1964])] makes it possible to unhinge thought from its visual bias. Analysis of the rhythm, although it does not completely lack a visual element, downplays it. Lefebvre subverts the hegemony of the visual field, embracing the tactile, embracing sensations and especially sound, the act of listening (2006 [1992], especially pages 19–20, 22, 60). This deemphasis of the visual accomplishes a comparable thing to what Bergson envisioned with his insistence that perception was our virtual action upon things (Bergson, 1912 [1896], pages 307–309). Thought must release its speculative character; it must relinquish the preconceived designs through which perception operates; it must turn away from intellect. For Bergson, who succeeded where Immanuel Kant failed, this was possible through intuition. In advocating that the rhythm analyst think “with his body” (2006 [1992], page 20), Lefebvre, in effect, calls attention to the speculative character of intellectual thought. One might compare this bodily thinking with the thought likened by Quantum physicist David Bohm to bodily “proprioception”, the self-perception of the body by the body (1994 [1992], pages 121–130).

Intuition, like Lefebvre’s bodily thinking, acts in turning away from the abstract categories habitually employed by the intellect in perception and thought. Intuition restores thought to the world of lived experience. Just as intuition, for Bergson, is not ignorant of intellect, but intensely aware of it, aware of its mechanical nature, so too, for Lefebvre, is rhythm analysis aware of the rhythms that have been instilled in time by capitalist production (2006 [1992], page 69). A moving, living reality requires a mode of

knowledge that is also mobile, capable of moving with it yet not becoming assimilated into it. It is this form of knowledge that, for Lefebvre, can approach the lives of those modern people who “not only move alongside the monster [that is capital] but are inside it; they live off it” (pages 54–55). This mobile knowledge would make it possible to discern the qualitative difference between the rhythms imposed on life and the rhythms of life itself.

Such a mobile knowledge is exactly what Bergson strove to articulate. Whereas his idea of analysis was closely tied to his view of the intellect and the apprehension of static forms, intuition was more carefully attuned to movement. In “Introduction to metaphysics”, he contrasts intuition with analysis:

“We call intuition here the *sympathy* by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it. Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, common to that object and others. Analyzing then consists in expressing a thing in terms of what is not it. All analysis is thus a translation, a development into symbols, ... [an] ever incomplete representation.” (Bergson, 2002 [1903], pages 161–162, original emphasis).

Lefebvre comes to find Bergsonian intuition and to politicize it on his own terms. In “Introduction to metaphysics”, Bergson articulates what philosophy should be. In *Rhythmanalysis*, Lefebvre (2006 [1992]) actually *does* Bergsonian philosophy—something he may very well not have wanted to hear.

Toward a philosophy of the urban

I propose that seeing the common thread of Bergson and Lefebvre’s work is not just of historical interest, but of methodological significance as well. The force of their combined emphasis on real movement, on lived realities, on the insufficient nature of abstract concepts in understanding fluid experience, on the reconciliation of space and time, on the spatializing nature of the intellect, and on capitalism’s spatializing reduction of rhythmic processes—their call for a return to the body and thus to action and their firm commitment to interdisciplinarity—all of these commonalities give philosophical strength to current understandings of urban life as a dynamic process (see Harvey, 1996; Madanipour, 1996; 2001; 2003). The union of Bergson and Lefebvre points to the importance of three interconnected points that, while they have been addressed by theorists in turn, have yet to be sufficiently imagined as part of one unitary, if complex, problem of urban criticism. Each of these points needs to be seen as part of a larger philosophical project, understanding philosophy in the Bergsonian sense: “Philosophy can only be an effort to dissolve again into the Whole” (1998 [1907], page 191). This idea of the Whole, of totality, is not that of a monolithic whole, but—like the Bergsonian notions of *durée/duration* (1970 [1889]), creative evolution (1998 [1907]), the *élan vital* (1998 [1907]), and the open society (1935 [1932])—one that is multiple, constantly changing, unpredictable, and even alive. Although the struggles over social space, over mental categories, over the spatialization of time characteristic of contemporary capitalism (Harvey’s ‘spatial fix’) may be struggles at a certain place at a certain time, they are, in effect, struggles over the whole of a social life. Seen as an attempt to “dissolve again into the Whole”, philosophy is thus a refusal to accept the compartmentalizing conceptual divisions that the intellect introduces into the world through its assimilation to the apparent boundaries of matter (Bergson) just as it is critical of the reification inherent to contemporary capitalism (Lefebvre). The whole in this sense can in no way be an abstract concept but is rather a concrete, complex, and expansive living reality.

The first point suggested by Bergson–Lefebvre thus involves the use of abstract categories in approaching reality. Significantly, much current research in human geography and cultural studies shares the desire to return from abstract intellection to concrete lived realities and thus to acknowledge the importance of a renewed call to reconcile theory and practice, knowledge and life. Numerous studies have emphasized the insufficiency of static intellectual concepts for the analysis of urban life by, to give just a few examples, problematizing the definition of public versus private space (Brown, 1999; Fraser, 2007a; Staeheli, 1996), noting the complexity of the urban process (Delgado Ruiz, 1999; 2007; Fraser, 2007b; Jacobs, 1992 [1961]), and bridging the perceived gap between material and immaterial realities (Latham and McCormack, 2004; Marston, 2004; Steinmetz, 1999). This problematization of abstract concepts must be understood in terms of both Bergson’s overarching critique of intellect—one which has evolved by assimilating to the hard lines of matter, thus attuning itself more and more to deal with things instead of with relations (1998 [1907], page 206)—and the Marxist critique of reification. This two-pronged critique is not altogether new as Lefebvre eschews abstract categories and even Harvey agrees implicitly with Bergson when he writes that things are not in space, but space is in things (Bergson, 1970 [1889]; Harvey, 1996; also Hewitt, 1974).

The second point, which in fact follows from the first, involves interdisciplinarity. The very notion of discrete disciplines is a product of the abstract ‘intellectual’ concepts denounced by Bergson and the ‘analytical’ thought discarded by Lefebvre in favor of a bodily thinking. A challenge for researchers across the disciplines has been to recognize the socially constructed as nonetheless materially real and to, in turn, see the material world as socially constructed—to see experience, just as Marx saw capital, as a relation (see Harvey, 2000, page 28). In short, just as things are abstracted out of relations, disciplinary knowledge is an abstraction of the Whole—this knowledge is no less an abstraction for having a practical application. Disciplines are, just as matter/space was for Bergson, also “a view taken by mind” (Bergson, 1998 [1907], page 157). With this implicit philosophical motivation, many astute studies, to give just a few examples, have sought to bridge the socially constructed and the materially real (Marston, 2000), material and immaterial realities (Latham and McCormack, 2004), culture and the state (Steinmetz, 1999), and culture and the economy (Jessop, 1990). The current state of research, in cultural studies and human geography, as well as in film studies and literary studies, places a high value on interdisciplinarity and has, in fact, implicitly employed Bergsonian tenets in dislodging the primacy of the object long characteristic of academic scholarship. To this end, Rob Kitchen and Martin Dodge (2007) suggest that even maps, traditionally seen as static and representational objects, need be understood as a practice of “creating, rather than simply revealing, knowledge” (page 332). There is an interdisciplinary drive for process to replace the product, for relations to replace things. Bergson’s disruption of the facile designs of the intellect not only squares with the critique of capitalist mechanism, but also becomes an ally of cultural studies: for example, in challenging film studies’ insistence on the self-contained importance attributed to the individual text (see Turner, 2000). In this tradition, there have been many recent attempts to reconcile film studies and geographical concerns that come to rest implicitly on the very philosophical upheaval represented by Bergson–Lefebvre (Aitken and Zonn, 1994; Clarke, 1997; Cresswell and Dixon, 2002; Dear, 2000; Hopkins, 1994). Neither abstract categories nor disciplinary knowledge is sufficient to take on the relations that constitute the movement of life.

The third point highlighted by the union of Bergson and Lefebvre is the importance of mobility. Interestingly, Bergson’s call to return to movement, to lived experience, a call—it must be noted—echoed by Lefebvre’s work on process, everyday life,

and rhythm, has been answered by a whole emerging tradition of scholarship that necessarily cuts across traditional disciplinary boundaries. It is likely that the contemporary interest in mobilities (eg Blunt, 2007; Brenner, 2004; Cresswell, 2006; Hannam et al, 2006; Lorimer, 2007; Urry, 2000) would not have been possible without an implicit grounding in the modern philosophical work of Lefebvre, and, before him, that of Bergson.⁽³³⁾ Although Lefebvre called for the use of philosophy in investigation of urban phenomena (epigraph, above), few authors have thoroughly grappled with the philosophical basis for this approach. At times, those studies that purport to establish such a basis end by misreading and subsequently rejecting Bergson only to reclaim him from other sources.⁽³⁴⁾ This connection with philosophy is important not merely as another new area to be studied (thus, not mobility merely as content or topic, such as [im]migration, tourism, travel, information technology, etc) but, rather, because there is no area of contemporary life that lies outside of the characteristic channeling or reduction of complexity into simple formula or a manageable system. In its contemporary manifestation, the increasing drive of capitalism to accelerate turnover time coincides with a pervasive emphasis on the spatialization of time and the ‘intellectual’ nature of thought as cities are carved up, development is projected, daily life is subjected to simplified schemes, and human rhythms and movement are increasingly subjected to mechanical reproduction.

This pervasive spatialization of time, seen through the combination of Bergson – Lefebvre, is not merely a ‘natural’ tendency of the intellect (Bergson), nor solely a ‘historical’ creation of the capitalist mode of production (Lefebvre). Understanding the philosophical basis of the purportedly discrete categories of the material and the immaterial realities—that is, acknowledging the complex and process-driven model of reality shared by both Bergson and Lefebvre—relieves scholarship of the need to oppose the ‘natural’ solution to the ‘historical’ solution. It is not that new terrain needs to be conquered, that the ‘study of mobilities’ needs to be tackled as a discipline in its own right with its own unique method and originally defined set of problems. Rather, the emerging research on mobilities, rhythms, and flows—that is, research into what Bergson called the ‘real movement’ of life—needs to acknowledge at once the confluence of both the historically situated spatialization of capitalism and the teratological spatialization of intellect. As the key issue facing the study of mobilities, this must involve an ongoing encounter with a philosophical problem of method that both Bergson and Lefebvre confronted, each in his own way. This complex confrontation leads onward toward a philosophy of the urban.

⁽³³⁾ “The analysis of spatiality and spatial restructuring is one area of social science that began to bring out the significance of mobilities (Soja, 1989; Harvey, 1989), yet in some ways has not fully taken this step ... in their search for spatial *ordering*, the social sciences have still failed to fully recognize how the spatialities of social life presuppose, and frequently involve conflict over, both the actual and the imagined movement of people from place to place, event to event” (Hannam et al, 2006, original emphasis, page 4).

⁽³⁴⁾ Richard G Smith (2003), for example, maintains that space and time cannot be separated (page 578, note 8) and yet opposes this view to Bergson’s view, stating that the Bergsonian idea “subordinates space to time in its movement from a space that is solid, discontinuous and concrete to a space that is a continuous abstract extension (mathematical time)” (page 563). He goes even further in allying himself with a critic of Bergson, who “relies on arguing that this duality of space is no more than a product of different degrees of abstraction” (page 563). The view of a combined space–time which he espouses, noting its polymorphous and multiple nature, is, in fact, not merely a Deleuzian conceit but comes also from the “Bergsonians” he criticizes early in the essay (page 563). If nothing else, this example testifies to the unfortunate legacy of denouncing Bergson without a full understanding of his thought.

Conclusion

In summary, in spite of his declared refutation of Bergsonian philosophy, Lefebvre's actual relationship with it was significant—although uncomfortable, unconscious, and certainly unacknowledged. His urban project relied on rejecting traditional philosophy, denouncing the spatialization of time, escaping the idea of space as a simple container for activity, reconciling knowledge with life, and departing the realm of static abstract concepts for the lived realities of temporal experience—all aspects of Bergson's philosophy now applied to a scintillating critique of the capitalist mode of production. Bergson hoped to discern the lived realities underlying their representation by the intellect. Lefebvre exposed the living urban realities that are obfuscated by the cloud of a negligent urbanism. Conceived as a relational totality, the work of both thinkers provides a compelling philosophical base for the study of urban life conceived as a process. The composite of Bergson–Lefebvre provides a philosophically interdisciplinary understanding of movement and process—of mobilities and rhythms—that is useful in sidestepping the complicity of scholarship in the spatialization of time characteristic of contemporary capitalism. Together, the two philosophers provide a compelling basis for a philosophy capable of approaching the urban as process.

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