

Philosophizing the everyday

The philosophy of praxis and the fate of cultural studies

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The following presents a genealogy and critique of the concept of the 'everyday', looking at the philosophical, political and cultural conflicts and contexts which radically transformed its contents after the Russian Revolution from a term synonymous with the 'daily' and 'contingent' to one identifiable with the vicissitudes of cultural and social transformation and democratization. It aims to bring into focus the revolutionary prehistory of the 'everyday', at a time when this prehistory has been all but forgotten, and the concept has been largely disconnected from questions of social agency. As such it concentrates on the two major cultural-national formations which gave ideological shape and direction to the emergence of the concept before its assimilation into cultural studies proper in the 1970s: the German–Soviet debates in Marxist philosophy and culture from 1910 to 1939, and the postwar reconstruction of the concept in the new Marxism and the arrival of cultural studies in France after World War II. Customarily the German–Soviet debates are written up in the histories of Western Marxism as no more than a thematic ground plan for the postwar 'invention' of the everyday.¹ Here I am interested in digging out its variegated uses, temporalities and critical lineages, in order to restore an expanded understanding of the term. My point, however, is not to diminish the postwar theorization of the everyday in France, but to problematize its history and incorporation into contemporary cultural studies.

In this regard, the identification between Henri Lefebvre's writing on the effects of postwar commodification and consumption and the critique of 'everyday' life is only half the story, as Lefebvre's prewar work testifies. The narrative in contemporary cultural

studies for which the 'everyday' (*der Alltag*) originates in Lukács's and Heidegger's early writing as a term of derogation, and is transformed, in Lefebvre, Barthes and the Situationist International into a term identifiable with the demands of cultural and social transformation is partial, not to say misleading. The shifts in cultural and critical usage of the term are far more complex and open to dispute than this familiar version of events would suggest.

After the Russian Revolution, Lukács's early existential marriage between 'everyday life' (*Alltag lebens*) and 'inauthentic' experience, with all its affectations of late Romantic ennui, was subject to a massive cultural and political haemorrhaging.² Indeed it was the impact of the Russian Revolution that propelled Lukács to question (if not wholly reject) his earlier writing and embrace the critical immanence of 'everyday life'. Furthermore, this political revision of the concept intersects with the earlier development of psychoanalysis and its 'secularization' of human consciousness in the conflicts of everyday experience. Although neither cognitively nor politically convergent, psychoanalysis and Soviet revolutionary politics produce a comparable *denaturalization* of the everyday. Freud substituted the interpretation of *everyday speech* for neurological diagnosis in the treatment and understanding of the perturbations of psychic life and illness, requiring the physician actively to listen to the experiences of the patient;³ and for the first time in human history the Bolshevik seizure of power was able to break the link between the collective experience of the dominated and religious and cultural fatalism. As a consequence one should not underestimate the utopian content of the Russian embrace of the 'everyday'; from 1917 the 'everyday'

(*byt*) in Soviet culture was subject to an extraordinary theoretical elaboration and scrutiny.

A good illustration of this are Trotsky's writings from the early 1920s in *Pravda*, first collected in English under the title of *Problems of Life* in 1924 (and republished as *The Problems of Everyday Life* in 1973).⁴ In this collection and other writings up until his exile in 1928, Trotsky returns again and again to the 'everyday', as the focus of the achievements of the Revolution and the site where the Revolution is to be defended and deepened. As the focus of the working class's cultural and spiritual development, 'the everyday' is where the revolution is to be made and remade in accordance with the new conditions of socialist construction.

The older generation, which is more and more diminishing, learned communism in the course of a class struggle; but the new generation is destined to learn it in the elements of construction, the elements of construction of everyday life.⁵

Trotsky was following Lenin's directive to the Party to shift its energies after the consolidation of power from political work to cultural work, or rather, to the transformation of political work into cultural work. This provided an expanded space for the analysis and theorization of the everyday, culture, the national question and gender. Alexandra Kollantai's work in the 1920s on sexuality, marriage and everyday life was exemplary of this shift, even if the 'gendering of the everyday' was largely absent from the theorization of the 'everyday' until the 1970s.⁶

A world to be made

But the Russian revolution did not just transform the 'everyday' into an active concept, as if the concept had been all but dormant until the Bolsheviks' seizure of power; its revolutionary content set in motion a critical revision of the categories of pre-revolutionary Marxist philosophy and culture itself. The 'everyday' was one of the signifiers invoked by Western Marxism in its divesture of prewar German Marxism's naturalism and positivism, and by artists and writers in their embrace of the new technology and documentary modes of representation.⁷ In fact, the philosophical critique of the naturalism of orthodox Marxism and bourgeois science, and the invention of an interventionist art of the everyday, inhabited similar conceptual universes in the 1920s. The 'everyday' was the means by which Western Marxism contested the undialectical social categories of both the Second International and the bourgeois art academy. It also enabled the recovery

of the significance of Marx's early writing and the philosophical status of Marxism as such.

However, if the everyday was where a new world was to be made, the concept of the everyday was not the manifest site of debate in the most influential critical writing of the period; rather, the 'everyday' signifies a kind of a generalized point of attraction for the critique of prewar Marxist orthodoxy and bourgeois science. In this, the formation of the term in Europe is inseparable from the euphoric reinterpretation of Marxism as a theory of praxis in the early 1920s in Europe: the origins of Marxism as cultural critique. Thus, in the three founding texts of the philosophy of praxis, Karl Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy* (1923),⁸ Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1923)⁹ – his farewell to a Romantic naturalization of the everyday as 'inauthentic' – and Lukács's *Lenin* (1924),¹⁰ the term *der Alltag* is rarely used and is never a focus for the discussion of political practice, as it is in Trotsky's pre-exile writings. Nevertheless, these books' revolutionary fervour is incomprehensible without an understanding of the everyday as the phenomenological basis of revolutionary practice and the new revolutionary epoch. As Lukács says in *Lenin*, 'the development of capitalism turned proletarian revolution into an everyday issue'.¹¹

In this sense, as the 'hidden mover' of the Marxist theory of praxis, the significance of the everyday lies in the cultural, political and philosophical impact of the Revolution on a younger generation of European Marxist philosophers. For Korsch and Lukács, the overriding question for revolutionaries in Germany after Bolshevik power was: what are the practical and ideological problems facing the generalization of Soviet revolution in conditions of 'stable' bourgeois democracy? The insistence on a methodological return to dialectics, and to Hegel, in Korsch and Lukács, needs to be seen, therefore, as a philosophical and *political* defence of Marx and Lenin's concrete analysis of the concrete situation. In Korsch this takes the general form of a defence of dialectics as the 'unbreakable'¹² core of Marxism's interrelation between theory and practice and the specific form of a critique of orthodox Marxism's 'rationalist and negative'¹³ theorization of social consciousness. Korsch is emphatic: after 1917 Marxism faces a clear choice – either a collapse into a positive science or a return to the dialectical philosophy of Hegel.

The importance of Hegel for the philosophy of praxis, then, lies in the recovery of Marx's connection to the philosophy of consciousness. For, in producing a 'rationalist and negative' theorization of

social consciousness, orthodox Marxism is incapable of grasping Marx's Hegelian insistence on human beings' recognition of their own alienation as the basis for its eventual supersession. In this respect, *History and Class Consciousness* is far more ambitious philosophically than Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy*. Alienation is not a subjective state of being, but the generalized condition under which human relations are lived out and experienced under capitalism. Consequently, Lukács argues, the possibility of revolutionary social transformation is deeply compromised by the forces of reification. Yet, because of the proletariat's daily self-knowledge of itself as a commodity, it nevertheless is able to imagine the transformation of these forces in its own interests and the interest of humanity as a whole. The result is a far-reaching shift in the conceptualization of the 'everyday'.

By incorporating the objectifying effects of the ideological mechanisms of bourgeois society into an analysis of the consciousness and praxis of the working class, Lukács opens up the capitalist everyday to its contradictory essence. The everyday is neither 'inauthentic' nor 'authentic', but, rather, the conflictual temporal and spatial order from out of which the contradictions of class society provide the basis of historical and social consciousness. Hence the *structural* significance of his writings for the emergent cultural turn to the everyday in Western Marxism. By focusing on the atomizing and repetitive effects of technology and commodity production, Lukács identified the concept of alienation with the expansion of exchange-value into all aspects of daily life; he therefore aligned the 'everyday' with the carceral temporal and spatial orders of capitalism, producing the coordinates for a politics of space.

But this immanent critique of the everyday is deeply compromised by Lukács's concessions to Hegel's logical form of the dialectic; and, consequently, by a failure to theorize adequately the rapidly changing political circumstances of the period. In order to develop their Hegelian critique of Marxist scientific orthodoxy, Korsch and Lukács are forced to underestimate the global ascendancy of capital. By 1924 capitalism had restabilized itself, launching the Soviet Union on course for its policy of 'socialism in one country' and defensive alliance with world capitalism.

In this regard there is an overwhelming contradiction at the heart of Lukács's philosophy of praxis and incipient theory of the 'everyday'. Despite arguing for the convergence between the ideological and the economic, and the importance of a return to the

problems of class subjectivity, his theory of political and cultural mediation is lacking in concrete differentiation. A revolutionary consciousness is imputed to the proletariat on the basis of a hypostatized philosophical identity as the agent of its own disalienation, distinct from the actual divisions of its identity as the subject of its own historical reproduction. 'To posit oneself, to produce and reproduce oneself – that is *reality*'.¹⁴ The turn to the 'everyday' is subsumed under an *abstractly embodied* theory of social agency.

Nevertheless, Lukács's turn to the question of the 'everyday' out of Hegel's theory of alienation was theoretically propitious, inseparable as it is from the need for Marxism to reconnect its law-giving modalities to a theory of consciousness and the cultural determinations of bourgeois power. By the late 1920s the philosophy of praxis had achieved a kind of prescient anti-Stalinist status, hence its 'clandestine' value for the next wave of critique of orthodoxy, in the writings of Lefebvre in France and Antonio Gramsci in prison in Italy in the early 1930s, and Walter Benjamin in Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Lefebvre and Gramsci

In *Dialectical Materialism* (1940), written in 1934–35, Lefebvre returns to Lukácsian and Korschian themes. But whereas Lukács 'resolves' the problem of mediation through the idealized consciousness of the Party, Lefebvre insists on the concrete, contradictory and everyday conditions of mediation. In other words, he sees the abstract universality of historically produced species-being as *always* partially realized in alienated, everyday existence. 'Alienation is not a fixed and permanent illusion. The individual is alienated, but as part of his development.'¹⁵

The implications of this for a theory of the 'everyday' are enormous, although Lefebvre himself does not build on these moves until after World War II. By drawing out Marx's understanding of alienation as the objective basis of the production of human development, Lefebvre argues that the dialectical method 'joins up again with a profound materialism'.¹⁶ But, importantly, Lefebvre doesn't stop at a philosophical critique of reification and a defence of *The German Ideology*. He extends this in the first theoretical outline of a critical hermeneutics of the everyday:

the most trivial object is the bearer of countless suggestions and relationships; or refers to all sorts of activities not immediately present in it ... the most complex qualities are present in the humblest of objects, conferring on them a symbolic value or 'style'.¹⁷

In short, Lefebvre reconnects the Hegelian-Marxian re-creation of the movement of the real to the alienated universality of everyday life, opening up a space not only for a renewed extension of politics into cultural politics (which characterizes the early philosophy of praxis), but for the formation of a new kind of Marxist sociology, in which the meanings of the object are accorded a relative autonomy. Lefebvre's version of the philosophy of praxis is, in fact, the first meeting inside the communist tradition between Marxism as a critique of the commodity form and Marxism as a hermeneutics of the commodity form.

When Gramsci began writing his prison notebooks in gaol in the early 1930s, he was faced with a comparable set of problems to Korsch and Lukács: how is it possible for the European proletariat to win power in conditions where the bourgeoisie is culturally dominant? However, in sharp contrast to these writers, his work on proletarian popular 'consent' to capitalist rule was grounded in an empirical analysis of the structures of parliamentary democracy, hence the significance of his reintroduction of the term 'hegemony' from the pre-Bolshevik Russian labour movement. But the *Prison Notebooks* are not just a theoretical elaboration of political strategy; they are also a philosophical critique of the legacy of philosophy of praxis itself. Gramsci's work is clearly indebted to Lukács and to the shift to the 'problem of the superstructure'. But his work on hegemony is directly designed to outstrip and displace the abstractly embodied class agency of both the Lukácsian revolutionary putschists and Stalinist workerists.

In the theory of hegemony, Gramsci is trying to work out a theory of mediation which begins, as in the case of Lefebvre, from the *actual* contradictions of living subjects and concrete objects, rather than existing as a mere philosophical postulate of 'concreteness'. But he rejects any notion of a unified subjectivity, setting out *a priori* from 'the contradictory state of consciousness'.¹⁸ In this he opens the philosophy of praxis to what Trotsky's concept of the everyday took for granted: the critical transformation of ordinary experience and 'common sense' through the socialization of intellectual and moral values.

Common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life.¹⁹

Gramsci sets out to place the 'ambiguous, contradictory and multiform'²⁰ consciousness of 'everyday' experience at the forefront of the construction of the proletariat's cultural and political ascendancy, refusing

to reify working-class culture as the passive repository of science and theory. The upshot is a Hegelian transformation of practical reason into a new Marxist understanding of mass culture from below, a 'new common sense'.²¹

Like Korsch, Lukács and Lefebvre, Gramsci turns to Hegelian dialectics to reintegrate politics and economics, politics and culture, into a historical account of capitalism. But unlike his predecessors, Gramsci's reflexive emphasis on consciousness and the 'concrete' finds a level of conceptual differentiation that is not paralleled elsewhere in the early Western Marxist tradition. However, this 'success' came at a cost. As with Korsch and Lukács, Gramsci transforms Marxism into a philosophy of consciousness; knowledge is no longer based on the scientific theorization of a thought-independent reality, but is the expression of a subject.

Yet if the weight of political circumstances leads Korsch, Lukács et al. into various forms of voluntarism and philosophical idealism, this analysis of the consciousness of the effects of commodity production and modernization also provides the theoretical tools for what was to become the active legacy of the Russian Revolution: a critical hermeneutics of the 'everyday'. If the philosophy of praxis reunites the dynamics of class consciousness with the temporal and spatial experiences of capitalism, Walter Benjamin and the later Lefebvre develop a cultural analytics of modernist space and time.

Benjamin and Arvatov

History and Class Consciousness had a tributary influence on both Martin Heidegger's formulation of the concept of 'everydayness' in *Being and Time* (1927) and the intellectual formation of the young Benjamin. Benjamin and Heidegger both took seriously Lukács's spatial and temporal critique of modernity. However, whereas Heidegger saw everydayness as a surrender to the inauthenticity of the present, Benjamin built on Lukács's immanent critique of the everyday. The opening up of the phenomenological content of everyday experience was pursued within the *antiphonal context* of Heidegger's writing on everydayness, though Benjamin and Heidegger shared a dislike of notions of historical linearity.

The distinction between the 'everyday' and everydayness, then, is more than an etymological nicety; it defines a politics. Benjamin's notion of the everyday as a cultural category bridges the experience of the Russian Revolution and the conditions of European modernity, producing what amounts to a reconceptualization of Soviet avant-garde notions of the 'everyday'



as a space of intervention in a European capitalist setting. Benjamin was the first writer to import the revolutionary content of the ‘everyday’ into the study of the cultural meanings and experiences of the routinized, commodified ‘everyday’ of bourgeois society. With this, he was the first writer within Western Marxism to give systematic attention to the alienations of the ‘everyday’ as a philosophical problem of *cultural practice*. Arising from this, the activist demands of the philosophy of praxis underwent a kind of internal rupture, in which the famous split in Marx’s last thesis on Feuerbach between praxis and philosophy, action and interpretation, was dialectically reconstituted as a politics of interpretation. The meaning-producing content of the phenomenology of everyday capitalist experience became the space of political critique and aesthetic interruption; the ‘everyday’ began its journey out of the theory of reification into the contradictory actuality of commodified experience.

In one respect, this was a direct inversion of Heidegger’s ‘everydayness’ as an expression of the

inauthenticity of publicness. Whereas for Heidegger ‘everydayness’ involves a profound ‘de-severance’ of Being,²² of the subjection of Being-with-one-another to that of Being-for-others, for Benjamin the technological transformation of the ‘everyday’ was also a place of shared knowledge, a place where Being-for-others and social consciousness can be created and expanded. The technologically repetitive and mechanical forms of the ‘everyday’ are defined in terms of their powers of *social* connectivity. This is because for Benjamin the disclosing powers of film and photography bring the appearance of things into social and political consciousness, thereby transforming the everyday as the mediation of experience itself. As he states in ‘Fragment of Manuscript’, an unpublished version of ‘A Small History of Photography’ written in 1931,

If in comparison to art the photographic reduction of the original proves itself to be not only an organ of consumption, but one of production – that is to say of the new valorization of old works – then that holds all the more evidently for the reality of the everyday [*der Wirklichkeit des Alltags*]. In all areas the reproducible is on the point of placing itself at the pinnacle of the value scale.²³

As a result, the phenomenological expansion of the ‘everyday’ under mechanical reproduction opens up the interpretative functions of the producer and spectator, developing the unconscious content of looking and reading. Crucially, this simultaneous telescoping and expansion of cognition involves a critical shift in the relations of art’s production and reception. In ‘The Author as Producer’ Benjamin argues that the class differences between artists and writers and the working class are superficial in a world of transformed skills and socialized technologies; and therefore that artists and writers should identify themselves as proletarians through establishing their critical place in the relations of production of their time, just as workers should appropriate the new technologies in their own interests. For the Benjamin of the ‘productivist years’ (1930–37), this shift invites a *repositioning* of the artist and non-professional as co-participants in, and producers of, the everyday.

Benjamin, however, does not explicitly theorize the 'everyday' as a category; the everyday is, rather, the *taken-for-granted landscape* of his analysis of modern technological and industrial experience. In this he uses various definitions of 'daily life' (*tägliches Leben*) 'the daily' (*täglich*) 'everyday life' (*Alltag Lebens*) and 'the everyday' (*der Alltag*) in an *ad hoc* fashion. Nevertheless, there are a number of references where he focuses specifically on the critical identity of the 'everyday' as a consequence of his critique of art's traditional functions. And these occur invariably when he is discussing or recalling the social and cultural transformations of the Russian Revolution. One of these references is in an interview Benjamin did with the Moscow evening newspaper on 18 December 1926: 'In the USSR art serves industry and everyday life.'²⁴ That is, art serves industry and everyday life, *unlike under capitalism*, where it is dependent upon employers and the market. As is well documented, this visit in 1926 to Russia played a crucial part in the development of his later writings. The sense of the 'everyday' as free from reification prompted him to declare that private life had been abolished. As he wrote in the later essay 'Moscow', Russia is under the 'aegis of the new *byt*'.²⁵ In this, much has been made of Benjamin's links to the productivist writer Sergei Tretyakov; little work has been done though on the extensive debates within productivism and the avant-garde on the everyday, particularly in the writings of Boris Arvatov. It is his work on the everyday that places the political expectations of cultural transformation for Trotsky, and the cultural allegiances of Benjamin, in a wider intellectual context. Indeed, Arvatov is one of the great missing figures in the debate on the 'everyday' during this period, for, unlike most of his revolutionary peers and the early Western Marxists, his essays on productivism from the 1920s (published as *Kunst und Produktion* in 1972)²⁶ actually advance a theory of the everyday. It is not clear whether Benjamin read Arvatov, given that Benjamin's Russian was bad, although he was familiar with Tretyakov; but there is much in Arvatov that helps situate Benjamin's concern with redrawing the spatial and temporal boundaries of art, and the critique and supersession of the 'everyday' itself in Lefebvre and the Situationist International.

For Arvatov, bourgeois culture can only decorate and supplement the real; it cannot organize it. As a result art has been pushed out of general social praxis. Productivist art, on the other hand, breaks with bourgeois art's fetishism of form by privileging

the transformation of art into a model of scientific reflection. Just as science engages with hypotheses in the world of the abstract, 'so will art also retain the function of constructing hypotheses in the world of the concrete.'²⁷ Decoration and the representational functions of art will not lose their value, but people will have a collective control over these functions as part of a democratic culture in which the mediations of bourgeois ideology through art will disappear. In this, creativity is 'to develop experiential, elastic, multiply formed and permanently fluctuating norms, for the reconstruction' of reality.²⁸ Artists, scientists, engineers and workers will organize a common product, destroying the category of autonomous art. Hence it is the job of working-class revolution to dismantle the gap between artists and intellectuals as the monopoly possessors of a knowledge of beauty and aesthetics, and society as a whole.

In this way Arvatov argues that artists, writers and engineers have to *organize* and *form* the everyday. Artists, writers and engineers must be involved in 'the melting of artistic forms into the forms of everyday life', a phrase that was, of course, to find its way into Benjamin's own writing. Accordingly 'the problem of the reflection of everyday life is the problem of everyday life'. 'It is not the "everyday" of workers' which should be portrayed on stage, but rather theatre activity must unfold in life itself.' In this, artistic activity will be developed according to use and the demands of specific social tasks, eventually leaving the social needs of representational art to 'die away in a thoroughly organised, integrated social system'.²⁹ The transformation of the everyday is based on its ultimate supersession as a cultural and social category.

The significance of Benjamin's work for our narrative, therefore, lies in its point of contact between various claims on the everyday during the 1920s and 1930s, making his writing a critical confluence of the deepening conflict in Western Marxism between Lukács's legacy of the philosophy of praxis and a hermeneutics of the everyday. Benjamin's work can be seen as bridging three different concepts of the everyday: the critique of the everyday as the reified 'reproduction of the immediate' (Lukács³⁰); the utopian dissolution of art into the everyday (productivism); and the representation of the everyday (the rehistoricization of everyday life). If we have addressed the first two in some detail, we need now to elaborate the third, for it is the third which mediates the first, qualifies the second, and expands the terms of reference of the 'everyday' itself as a cultural category.

Trace and remainder

Benjamin's politicization of mechanical reproduction involves the incorporation of the 'everyday' into aesthetic experience. In this sense he recognises how technology allows consciousness to interpret 'everydayness' as culturally significant and motivated. Benjamin is the first theorist of the everyday to incorporate the hermeneutic possibilities of Freud's psychoanalysis into a 'microscopic' hermeneutics of culture. 'Since the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* things have changed. This book isolated and made analysable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception', he says in the 'Artwork' essay.³¹ In fact, if Freud recast psychic life in terms of the interpretable content of everyday speech and gesture, Benjamin recast cultural theory in terms of the 'hidden speech' of the commodity and everyday appearances. In this way Benjamin's assimilation of Freud's psychoanalysis to cultural theory is governed by the everyday's concealment of dissatisfaction and loss. And just as the talking cure involves the constant revoking of the memory of trauma and the putting of this image into words, so Benjamin's understanding of the everyday as a realm of alienated symptoms and signs of desire invests the interpretative 'shock' of the representation of the sign (montage) with the power to shatter the reified 'reproduction of the immediate' and rehistoricize the everyday.

Viewed from this perspective, Benjamin aligns the modern detachment of aesthetic experience from its embodiment in artisanal tradition with a non-linear conception of historical consciousness. Because mechanical reproduction frees the consciousness of the aesthetic to range over all objects and events, the production and interpretation of culture are no longer identifiable with the local experience of the singular, unique object embedded in an unfolding aesthetic tradition, but with the globalizing experience and simultaneous effects of mechanical reproduction itself.

In this respect, Benjamin supplies the philosophy of praxis with both a theory of the discursivity of the everyday and a more complex account of modern temporality. His unification of historical consciousness and cultural practice defines the 'everyday' in terms of its *sedimented temporal conditions and relations*. The 'everyday' stands at the conjunction of past and present, present and future, past and future, rather than as teleologically settled and continuous with the past. Indeed, in terms of the three categories of the 'everyday' outlined above, Benjamin's 'everyday' has a discontinuous tripartite structure: as a space of social

intervention and possible revolutionary transformation, as alienated symptom, and as a utopian sign. It is difficult, therefore, to talk about Benjamin's work strictly in relation to the priorities of the philosophy of praxis. For in his adaptation of a Freudian hermeneutics he disengages the 'everyday' from questions of systematic political strategy and class agency. For all his thinking on the temporality of revolutionary transformation, he is essentially a theorist of how the internal conflicts of historical temporality are mediated at the level of artistic form.³² The 'everyday' serves a very different philosophical function in its guise as unconscious symptom and sign than in the Hegelian unification of reason and praxis, in earlier Western Marxism. For the turn to the 'hidden', despoised, remaindered and 'microscopic' content of everyday experience unites the 'everyday' with what *escapes* the totalization of reason and systematic philosophy.

In Benjamin's theory of the trace we see the beginnings of the postwar distinction between the 'everyday' as that which is familiar and the 'everyday' as that which is remaindered, that which is left behind after the structured activities of science, technology and social administration have defined and regulated daily experience. In this regard, Benjamin's Marxism opens its heterodox origins to another strand of German idealism: Schelling's critique of reason as an abstract system. For Schelling, Kant and Hegel demonstrate an essential abhorrence of reality, in so far as they reduce the living basis of things to a pregiven order. Freedom is a matter of choice, not the result and development of something already immanent to Being which is revealed through conceptual understanding. As he argues in the *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* (1809), there is an 'irreducible remainder [to reality] that cannot be resolved by reason'.³³ 'The unruly lies in the depths', in an infinite breakdown of the appearance of the order and form of things.³⁴

The concept of the 'irreducible remainder' is key to grasping the changing political and social claims of the concept of the 'everyday' in the 1930s. For the turn to a Schellingian–Freudian hermeneutics of the trace in Benjamin represents the point where the theorization of the 'everyday' as a revolutionary unity of theory and practice passes over into the theory of the self-positing creative subject. Indeed, what is striking about the postwar 'reinvention' of the 'everyday' in France is how much Lefebvre, Roland Barthes, Maurice Blanchot, the Situationists and Michel de Certeau, despite their political differences, all rework the notion of the 'everyday' as 'irreducible remainder'.

For it is the theory of the 'irreducible remainder' that is now seen, precisely, as holding on to the possibility of the critique of modernity.

In the 1930s Lefebvre had begun to recognize the importance of a phenomenological hermeneutics as a way out of the abstract anthropology and proletarian identity-thinking of orthodox Marxism on questions of culture. However, if *Dialectical Materialism* and 'La Mystification: Notes pour une critique de la vie quotidienne' (1933)³⁵ were the first moves in this direction, *The Critique of Everyday Life* (1947)³⁶ was the concrete development of this into a theory of culture. *The Critique of Everyday Life* is the philosophical summation of the turn to culture and ideology in the 1920s and 1930s. This was the first work of philosophical criticism of capitalist culture that assimilates the themes of Lukács and Heidegger in order to move beyond them. As such Lefebvre identified something shockingly simple: with the massive industrialization and urbanization in Europe in the early part of the century, the production and consumption of culture was now part of the process of capital accumulation itself. The critique of alienation, therefore, cannot be based on a model of reification which separates human practice and consciousness from the advanced technological conditions of its realization. Marxism requires a far more sophisticated account of the production and consumption of mass culture than subscribed to by the Manichaeic defenders of 'reification theory' and party orthodoxy. In a move comparable to that of Benjamin, Lefebvre recognized that the investment in the forms of mass culture represent the partial fulfilment of needs, and therefore are irreducible to conditions of alienated subjecthood.

We might say, then, that the philosophy of praxis is continued by other means in Lefebvre, in so far as Lefebvre begins to think of culture in terms of 'resistance' and critique from within the spaces and temporalities of an emergent culture industry. For in contradistinction to Benjamin, the philosophical theme of the 'irreducible remainder' is not something that is brought to bear on everydayness through intellectual labour, but is ontologically given through the autonomous self-positing of human beings. In this sense the concept of the 'everyday' is the name given by Lefebvre to the concrete forms of mediation of the dialectic of becoming, aligning the everyday's detachment from its philosophical condescension with Gramsci's 'common culture'.

Thus if Benjamin severed the 'everyday' from 'everydayness', and 'repetition' from 'repetitiveness', Lefebvre codified this separation by treating

'everydayness' as the space of historically unrealized species-being. Hence the 'everyday' is not just a space of critical decoding and redemption, but also a place of active dissent from 'everydayness'; a place where mass mediated and industrialized everydayness is unable completely to regulate and reify the shared practices, customs, forms of resistance, self-identity, and moments of subversion of a 'common culture'.

From this standpoint Lefebvre is the first writer actually to codify the 'everyday' as phenomenologically co-present with, but conceptually distinct from, mere 'everydayness'. Lefebvre makes a fundamental distinction between 'daily life' (*la vie quotidienne*), 'everydayness' (*la quotidienneté*) and 'the everyday' (*le quotidien*): 'le quotidien' being the modality of social transformation and class resistance, 'la quotidienneté' being the modality of capital's administration of atomization and repetition. For, if everydayness designates the homogeneity and repetitiveness of daily life, the 'everyday' represents the space and agency of its transformation and critique. Consequently in *The Critique of Everyday Life*, it is possible to see Lefebvre's conceptual differentiation of the 'everyday' as a candidate for the missing category of mediation between subject and object in Lukács's Hegelianism. In Lefebvre the 'everyday' is the category which grasps the experience of the proletariat in the process of its own self-consciousness as a class.

This expansion of the meaning of legitimate cultural experience is part of a largely dissident politicization of the everyday under the state-led modernization of French culture in the late 1940s and 1950s. Indeed, after the war there is a remarkable shift in the national focus of critical theory within Western Marxism, from the interwar experiences of German modernization to that of France. A number of factors produce this shift: the repressive political situation in the Federal Republic; the rapid accumulation of capital in postwar France, drawing massive investment into the rebuilding of Paris, the development of the motor industry and standardized housing; the strength of an indigenous Left culture organized in alliance and dissent around a politically dominant PCF, capable of explaining and analysing the cultural shocks of this rapid modernization; and a Marxist intelligentsia well placed in disseminating and expanding the dialectical content of the 'everyday' against both Stalinist denunciations of 'Americanization' and the technocratic and nationalist theorization of modernization in the new heavily funded social sciences (structuralism and Annales-school historiography).³⁷ In fact, it is discontent with structuralism's profound lack of interest in the conflicts

and aporias of modernity in crisis which links Lefebvre's writing in the late 1940s to Blanchot's and Barthes' theory of the trace in the 1950s. For what unites these writers is a sense of how structuralism and technocratic defences of modernization echo each other, replicating in a very different political context many of the same philosophical issues around social agency, historical change and cultural practice which dominated Lukács's, Korsch's and Benjamin's critique of Second International gradualism. In these terms the political defence of the concept 'everyday' as a trace and remainder in conditions of capitalist expansion becomes increasingly clear in France by the 1950s: that is, the 'everyday' is now identifiable on a historical scale with a critique of the neutral ideology and 'eventless' change of modernization itself.

In the ten years between *The Critique of Everyday Life* and Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957), the concept of the 'everyday' takes on an increasing identification with the cultural heteronomy of French modernization. When Barthes published his collection of short pieces on the 'mythes de la vie quotidienne française',³⁸ his aim was to historicize what was judged to be beneath serious critical attention: the implicit ideological content of popular cultural activities and pastimes. With this he makes a Benjaminian move. Whereas bourgeois culture sees significance in efficiency and regulation, he sees truth in insignificance. Indeed it is the dispute over what counts as the significant event that unites the early Barthes and Lefebvre. Both return to the epistemological problem of where and in what forms knowledge is to be situated: in the *longue durée* and the abstractions of class struggle, or in the objects, gestures and acts of daily life?

This rehierarchization of the 'event' also brings into view the work of Maurice Blanchot in the 1950s. In 1959 in *L'Entretien infini*,³⁹ he responds to Lefebvre, elaborating on the everyday's particularities. Blanchot credits Lefebvre with having transformed Heidegger's and Lukács's condemnation of the everyday as the work of reification. In this he identifies with Lefebvre's immanent critique of everydayness, its conflicted and contradictory character. As such, the everyday contains an oblique truth which always escapes the law, or discursive knowledge. By belonging to the 'insignificant', when the everyday is lived out it 'escapes every speculative formulation, perhaps all coherence, all regularity'.⁴⁰ Thus, although the everyday is banal and platitudinous, it is the very ordinariness of the everyday which brings us back to the spontaneity of our species-being. From this Blanchot links the notion of the everyday as that-

which-is-remaindered to the idea of the everyday as the place where we are *ourselves* ordinarily. 'Nothing happens; this is the everyday.'⁴¹ This is very different from the dream of 'full subjectivity' which haunts the everyday in early Western Marxism and Lefebvre. If Blanchot's theory of the everyday brings forth a subject without social agency, in Lefebvre the everyday remains attached to an older Marxist humanist dream of the 'total man'. It is the revolutionary reconceptualization of this older Marxist notion of 'full subjectivity' that supplies one of the most influential readings of Lefebvre and the notion of situated knowledge in the 1950s: the Situationists' critique of capitalist spectacle.

Situationism

The Situationist International (1957–72) was the place where the critique of the everyday and the philosophy of praxis reconnected in France in the 1950s and 1960s.⁴² For what distinguished the Situationists from other French intellectuals of the period was the way the group carried over and developed many of the key themes of Lefebvre's writing on the everyday – such as the hermeneutics of space and aestheticization of politics – but without selectively disconnecting their content from the wider framework of class politics. Barthes and Blanchot share Lefebvre's anti-structuralism, but not his interest in the everyday as a utopian site of cultural transformation. The Situationists, on the other hand, moved back beyond Lefebvre to Lukács and the ultra-leftist context of the early revolutionary debates on the everyday. In this they connect the concept of 'everyday' to a political tradition different to that of Lefebvre: council communism and proletarian anarchism. In fact, the Stalinist, Trotskyist and social-democratic context in which the 'reinvention' of the everyday took place in France from the 1930s to the 1960s was unceremoniously attacked in Situationism. This was due to what the group saw as the dilution of the critique of everyday life through its Barthesian semiotic and sub-Surrealist appropriation in the emerging cultural studies. Hence the return to the early Lukács, particularly in Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967).⁴³

What the Situationists approved of in Lukács was the totalizing content of the critique of reification, his refusal to separate the economic from the cultural. From this standpoint, the critique of 'everyday' represents the totalizing struggle against capital's regime of separation: between exchange value and use value, public and private, art and necessary labour. As they say in one of their first codifications of the 'everyday', 'The

Transformation of Everyday Life' (1961),⁴⁴ in the next wave of revolutionary struggle the failure to link the cultural with political is to accept the impoverishment of everyday experience. On this score what marked out the Situationists was their re-radicalization of the convergence between cultural struggle and the philosophy of praxis within and beyond the traditions of Western Marxism. For if Lefebvre identified the temporal and spatial organization of modernity as a means of theorizing the forms by which a cultural resistance and critique of capitalism might take place, extending this into an expanded understanding of what is judged to be culturally significant, the Situationists identified the spatial and temporal orders of everydayness as the site of cultural struggle – that is, as the actual site where the imagining of a different social order is to be enacted. From this perspective, the everyday is neither the postponed site of social transformation, nor simply a hermeneutics of culture, nor an expanded theory of art, but the politicization of interventionist cultural action itself. In localized acts of disruption and subversion, the Situationist *gestus* becomes an act of proletarian identification and, consequently, a prefiguration of human emancipation and 'full subjectivity'. The result is a mixture of Teilaktion-type twenties class spontaneity, aestheticized productivism and early Romanticism.

These themes are developed in the only revolutionary text written on the 'everyday' since Arvatov's *Kunst und Produktion*, Raoul Vaneigem's *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations* (1967), translated as *The Revolution of Everyday Life* in 1983.⁴⁵ Written in 1963–65, it systematizes the Situationists' critique of the everyday as the realm of spectacle and separation, developing a range of terms and concepts that offer both a practical guide to strategies of dereification and to the philosophical

generalization of the critique of everyday life as the critique of identity and self-preservation.

Combining the early Romantics' defence of the aesthetic as the realm of the non-identical with a libertarian version of early Marx (via Lukács's theory of reification) and a critical anthropology, Vaneigem set out to revolutionize the Marxist-humanist concept of the 'total man'. For Vaneigem the Stalinist and Trotskyist appropriation of the concept has been at the expense of any plausible theory of subjectivity and human emancipation. Indeed, the humanists' 'total man' has been philosophically vapid and creatively bankrupt, in so far as its function is tied to the categories of bourgeois culture and the hierarchies of the capitalist division of labour: a society of self-discipline and self-sacrifice. In this regard Vaneigem was particularly repulsed by the return to fatherland, family and cult of labour in the Soviet Union and postwar France. In fact, it was the Situationists' recognition of the structural symmetries between capital accumulation in the West and the Soviet Union – a version of the theory of state capitalism – that allows the group to systematize the critique of the everyday as a critique of identity and economic self-preservation. Something historically unprecedented enters the debate on the 'everyday': for the first time the critique of the everyday now inhabited a critique of the Marxist tradition itself, or rather its institutionalized forms in Stalinism and orthodox Trotskyism. But if this isolated the SI politically in the 1950s and 1960s, the philosophical moves which underwrote their dissension are perfectly familiar. This is because, like Lukács, Korsch and Lefebvre, Vaneigem and the Situationists turned to the philosophy of consciousness in order to think their way out of the crisis of the stalled proletarian revolution and the reified 'reproduction of the immediate'. And, significantly, it is the figure of Schelling and the concept of the 'irreducible remainder' which again haunt these revisions and translations.

Above all else *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations* is a defence of the autonomous self-positing subject, what Schelling calls 'activated selfhood'⁴⁶ and what Vaneigem calls 'radical subjectivity'.⁴⁷ I cannot have consciousness of my self-determination before I exercise it; therefore there can be no proof of my freedom, separate from its exercise. In this respect Vaneigem argues that authentic self-realization is 'locked

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up in everyday life',⁴⁸ through penetrating what is universally given in consciousness. What Vaneigem calls the 'desire for realization' pushes the Schellingian themes of Lefebvre's reworking of the early Marx into a radically revisionist context for the everyday: the critique of the everyday becomes identifiable with the self-positing creativity of the individual. In this there is a fundamental attack on mediation and representation as rationalizing and identitary, turning the critique of the everyday back to the utopian legacy of productivism.

But Vaneigem is not a productivist by another name, despite this alignment of creative activity with social transformation and the critique of representation. His investment in 'lived immediacy' has no basis in an activist conception of the reconstruction of reality. On the contrary, Vaneigem identifies the possibility of 'lived immediacy' with the spontaneous *negation* of the social world. Hence the importance of the destabilizing pleasures of play and festivity in Situationism. In this way it is the disruptive 'micro-events' or least-events of everyday life which resist or disrupt the logic of the spectacle and supply the basis of authentically situated (non-mediated) knowledge: impassioned daydreams, pleasures taken in love, the sudden rush of sympathy or empathy with another, the capricious gift (the potlatch), the spontaneous act. It is the link between 'pure giving' and the critique of exchange value that is key to his theory of subjectivity. Through the systematic reintroduction into class politics of the convergence between disalienation and 'activated selfhood' and the non-identitary, the critique of the everyday was reconnected to the supersession of the *official time of consumption*. In the 1950s this connection between consumption and dead time had all but disappeared in the euphoria of the postwar boom. Modernization was the time of arrival, rarely that of departure. This places Vaneigem's and the Situationists' critique of the everyday far to the left of Lefebvre and the others critics of postwar modernization. For if everydayness is associated with the theft of self-realization, in the abstract, in Lefebvre, Barthes and Blanchot, in Vaneigem and the SI, the theory of 'lived immediacy' deepens and polemicizes the connection between the critique of the everyday and the critique of exchange value. The theory of 'lived immediacy' identifies exchange value as the very *expropriation of experience itself*.

However, in Vaneigem and the SI this defence of 'lived immediacy' is at a precipitous cost. The valorization of the link between 'lived immediacy' and the critique of exchange value produces a premature dis-

solution of subject and object, mediation and representation. Indeed, by the time the group broke up in 1972, very specific and pressing questions of mediation and representation were bearing down on the dream of 'full subjectivity': the demands of the women's and post-colonial liberation movements. Vaneigem and the SI represent the last great moment of exchange between cultural critique and the philosophy of praxis. They define the point where the connection between philosophy of consciousness and class politics began to unravel under the deconstruction of the subject and the rise of post-structuralism. Accordingly, the conflict between the legacy of Western Marxism and hermeneutics entered a new critical phase by the mid-1970s, bringing the 'everyday' in line with the changed expectations of cultural theory itself. For by the time Michel de Certeau wrote *L'Invention du quotidien: Arts de faire* (1974) (translated as *The Practice of Everyday Life* in 1984),⁴⁹ an emergent cultural studies was returning to Barthes in order to invent the 'everyday' as a theory of consumption.

'The creative consumer': de Certeau and the new cultural studies

De Certeau's work has its origins in the wider debate on the everyday and popular culture in the 1970s in France, Britain and the USA. The central concern of *The Practice of Everyday Life* embraces what is to define the development of cultural studies proper in the Anglophone world in the 1970s and 1980s: the critique of the notion of the passive consumer of culture, a notion which was the mainstay of both 1950s' sociologies of mass culture and the Frankfurt School. De Certeau's work, consequently, can be seen as part of an emergent literature in which the cultural consumption of the many is treated as active and discriminating, supplying the framework of what was later to be called reader-response theory. De Certeau expands the self-positing creativity of the subject into a cultural-studies-type differential analysis of mass consumption and the creative consumer.

But if this locates de Certeau's theory of the everyday within the political context of Lefebvre, Barthes and the Situationists, his work disconnects the philosophy of praxis from any explicit totalizing critique of capitalism. The critique of the sign, and the Situationists' notion of *détournement*, are repositioned in de Certeau as expressly practices of semiosis. The utopian identification between a theory of semiosis and the power of the proletariat to dissolve the effects of reification is denied or suspended; the critique of the everyday is now held *within* the symbolic spaces of

capitalism, in a kind of a constant war of attrition with the effects of exchange value. In this way, the dissident or subversive interpretation or use of popular forms and practices becomes a kind of *poesis*, or 'rewriting' of the dominant culture. As such, his work can be seen as an attempt to put in place a modified subject of cultural resistance: by disengaging the concept of the everyday from both the determinism of the Frankfurt School and the voluntarism of the Situationists, a politicized semiotics is attached to issues of self-representation, oral history and culture 'from below'. The result is a sophisticated version of what, by the mid-1970s, was to become an expanded definition of the concept of resistance for the new cultural studies: the critique of the everyday as a disruption and *recoding* of the signifying systems of bourgeois culture.

Appropriation and reuse of the meanings of the dominating, the poaching of the forms and meanings of the powerful, the insinuation of the voice of the 'other' into the reading of the bourgeois text, are the inevitable daily forms which resistance and creativity take under class society, lending 'a political dimension to everyday practices',⁵⁰ such as walking, reading, decorating, cooking. For example, in a take on the Situationists' Surrealist *flanêur*, de Certeau's 'creative' walker is able to situate the experience of the city in a narrative that replaces the façades and forms of the urban environment as a source of mute power and social control with a secondary poetic, social geography; he or she is able to 'rewrite' the oppressive details of their surfaces. In the enactment of fantasy and autobiographical storytelling, walking and day-dreaming recover the non-proper content of places.

By the mid-1970s it is possible to trace through this dissolution of collective politics into cultural politics an exact reversal of Lukács's de-differentiated, reified subject: the activated subject of resistance is now seen as in creative and open negotiation with the conditions of his or her own alienation. 'Storytelling' becomes a kind of semiotic emancipation from the brute everyday. The critical postwar transformation of a hermeneutics of the everyday out of the philosophy of praxis coexists in de Certeau with the wider depoliticization of the alliance between the critique of the everyday and a microscopic politics of desire in post-'68 French culture. Politics is parcelled out to multifarious cultural acts of resistance; a politics of feints, dodges and ludic subversion.

Nevertheless de Certeau's work on consumption as enunciation, and cultural production as everyday practice, is instructive in one important respect: it ups the ante on the codification of the everyday as

remainder through a kind of uncompromising reversal of the strictures of the Frankfurt School and structuralism. This brings into focus an alignment within the new cultural studies between the new history 'from below' and the counter-narrativization of everyday experience. Telling stories of being-*in-the-world* is one of the ways in which the working class and dominated are held to analyse the conflicts between the reproduction of everyday life as custom and habit and the reproduction of alienated social relations as a whole – for instance, the work done in the 1970s on the cultures of resistance in Nazi Germany.⁵¹ The customs of everyday life sustain an immanent critique of the world, locating knowledge in the analogical, rather in the objective operations of science. But for de Certeau the emancipatory function of this storytelling is never identified with anything other than a local and symbolic challenge to social power. The conditions of transmission and reception of a critical oral tradition are rendered ideologically unconstrained. If the activity of the cultural critic is mistaken for the critical activity of the consumer in theories of the creative consumer, the social function of 'storytelling' from below is mistaken for the work of emancipation itself. This marks what was to become the fundamental crisis of a hermeneutics of the everyday as it mutates into cultural studies in the mid-1970s: with the widespread turn to a redemptive model of ideology, the critique of the everyday was now identifiable *with* self-representation and the free creativity of the enunciating subject, setting in place the generalized inflation of cultural questions as a way of thinking about social power.

The triumph of the 'irreducible remainder'

From this perspective, it is possible to divide our history into four main categories: (1) theories of the everyday which claim to produce a subject without remainder (Heidegger); (2) theories of the everyday which produce a messianic subject (Lukács, Vaneigem, Debord); (3) theories of the everyday which produce a subject as the embodiment of social contradictions (Gramsci, Benjamin, Lefebvre); and (4) theories which produce a subject whose agency is identified with symbolic displacement or recoding (Barthes, de Certeau). The last three categories can, in turn, be split between a concept of the subject in atomized resistance, but collectivized momentarily at points of social crisis (Vaneigem, Debord, de Certeau), and a concept of the subject as part of a shifting collective of counter-hegemonic alliances (Gramsci, Lefebvre). By the mid-1970s, the 'reinvention' of the everyday had come to define itself in relation to the latter, divesting

itself of its avant-garde temporality. The spatial and temporal dimensions of the critique of the everyday had contracted ontologically at the same time as they had expanded epistemologically. The dialectical mix of the messianic, anti-representational and historical content of the everyday noted in Benjamin was now dissolved.

There has been a fundamental transformation of the democratic content of the concept of the everyday in the twentieth century. Under its revolutionary emergence the concept's demotic identity was integral to the demands and expectations of revolutionary change and working-class agency. The arrival to power of a subaltern consciousness of the everyday into the experience of a shared, common culture was to enact the promise of the dehierarchization and democratization of capitalist production and social relations. In short, to identify and defend the everyday was to see it as a space where praxis and reason were united. In the post-Bolshevik period of the early formation of cultural studies in postwar France, the memory of this revolutionary elision between praxis and reason is transformed into a process of cultural democratization internal to the new conditions of mass culture. The everyday became the signifier of socialist democratization through cultural change. To defend the everyday as the space of democratic transformation was to give value to those things and experiences 'from below' that state modernization, bourgeois high culture and the abstractions of the market occluded. Hence the increasing identification between the everyday and the notion of the symbolic remainder, and, in the widest sense, the importance of the aesthetics of montage. In the third – post-Situationist – period, this fledgling connection between the everyday and the symbolic others of capitalist repression and modernist abstraction became a systematic theory of the non-identitary and multiple subjectivity. To defend the everyday is to seek and reclaim the cultural autonomy of the subaltern subject; the everyday is the site of the 'voiceless'.

From this point on, an unprecedented reversal takes over: at the same time as the conditions of capitalist monopolization deepen the uniformity of daily experience, in the new cultural theory the everyday as the site of symbolic remainder becomes a hugely expanded site of interpretative freedom, cultural activity and popular pleasures. Not only does mass culture become a site of contestation through its non-passive consumption, but popular counter-cultures become sites of political resistance, education and autonomy. But what this produces, paradoxically, is the increasing dissolution of the content of the everyday as a signifier

of cultural democracy itself. Under the simultaneous expansion of the meanings of culture, and the critical de-massification of mass culture, the critique of the everyday is assimilated to the pleasures of capitalist everydayness, incorporating the meanings of the dominated as popular pleasures into a new consumerist counterculture. But if this strengthens the necessary link between the democratization of representation and collective struggle 'from below', it also weakens the link between democratization and cultural production. De Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* is paradigmatic in this respect, in that it contributes to the postmodern incorporation of the everyday as a site of complex and differentiated social agency and subjectivity into the 'politics of representation' separate from any structural engagement with the problems of material distribution and economic justice.

If moments of autonomy and signs of dissent can be discerned in all forms of so-called mass culture, and popular cultures function as sites of resistance, the dehierarchizing function of the everyday loses its former negative political leverage. The notion of the 'irreducible remainder' no longer signifies a utopian trace or space for practices of another *rationality* – as in Arvatov, Benjamin, Lefebvre and the Situationists – but a confirmation of the creative powers of the consumer and the superior democracy of community politics. In this way, the democratic content of the everyday has become overly identified with the celebration of popular *representations*. As such, after almost three decades of cultural studies the concept of the everyday is now also the site of the repression of its own post-capitalist and 'anti-art' history. For if the new differentiated social subject expands the 'everyday', it does so at the expense of its historical and critical relationship to its *non-contemporaneous* temporalities.

As Arvatov, Lefebvre and the Situationists understood, the critique of the everyday is also driven by the promise of its own demise. Yet for all the concept's contemporary dehistoricization, the tropological content which the 'everyday' possesses has extraordinary powers of invocation. When one tries to imagine a genealogy of synonyms of the concept, such as the 'ordinary' or the 'daily', they don't possess the same depth and powers of abstraction. This is because the critique of the everyday is never just a form of anthropology or ethnography. Rather, it exists as a utopian and culturally discontinuous space through which the struggles over social agency are fought out. This is why we should derive its meanings from the constellation of competing political temporalities and

spatialities from which it has emerged, despite its current absorption into a philosophically diminished cultural studies.

Notes

- Thanks to Peter Osborne and Esther Leslie for their comments.
1. See, for example, the work of Kristin Ross: 'French Quotidian' in Lynn Gumpert, ed., *The Art of the Everyday: The Quotidian in Postwar French Culture*, New York University Press, New York, 1997; and *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1995.
 2. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, Merlin Press, London 1971.
 3. Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published in 1900, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* in 1901. As Freud was to say in 1890 in 'Psychical (or Mental) Treatment', 'Words are the essential tool of mental treatment ... for the words which we use in our everyday speech are nothing other than watered-down magic' (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. 11, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, London, 1953–74, p. 283).
 4. Leon Trotsky, *Problems of Everyday Life, and Other Writings on Culture and Science*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973.
 5. Trotsky, 'How to Begin', in *ibid.*, p. 70.
 6. Alexandra Kollantai, 'Marriage and Everyday Life', in *Alexandra Kollantai: Selected Writings*, translated, introduced and commentaries by Alix Holt, Allison & Busby, London, 1977.
 7. See John Roberts, *The Art of Interruption: Realism, Photography and the Everyday*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998, chs 2 and 3.
 8. Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, New Left Books, London, 1970.
 9. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, Merlin Press, London, 1971.
 10. Georg Lukács, *Lenin: A Study in the Unity of His Thought*, New Left Books, London, 1970.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
 12. Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, p. 5.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
 14. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, pp. 15–16.
 15. Henri Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1968, p. 100.
 16. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
 18. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1971, p. 331.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 421.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
 22. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1962, pp. 138–48.
 23. Walter Benjamin, *Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge: Gesammelte Schriften Band 11.3*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1977, p. 1138.
 24. Walter Benjamin, 'In der UdSSR die Kunst in der Industrie und des Alltags lebens tritt', *Nachträge: Gesammelte Schriften, Band VII.2*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1989, p. 886.
 25. Walter Benjamin, 'Moscow', in *One Way Street and Other Writings*, New Left Books, London, 1979, p. 189.
 26. Boris Arvatov, *Kunst und Produktion*, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich, 1972.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
 28. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
 29. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 33, 35, 36.
 30. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 9.
 31. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, Fontana, London, 1973, p. 237.
 32. For a discussion of this issue, see Peter Osborne, 'Small-scale Victories, Large-scale Defeats: Walter Benjamin's Politics of Time', in Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne, eds, *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, Routledge, London, 1994, ch. 3.
 33. F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* (1809), Open Court, La Salle IL, 1986, p. 34.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
 35. Henri Lefebvre, 'La Mystification: Notes pour une critique de la vie quotidienne', *Avant-Poste*, no. 2, August 1933.
 36. Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, Verso, London, 1991.
 37. For an analysis of postwar French modernization and the 'everyday', see Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*.
 38. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1957, p. 9.
 39. Maurice Blanchot, *L'Entrantration infini*, Gallimard, Paris, 1959. The section on Lefebvre and the everyday was translated as 'Everyday Speech', in *Yale French Studies*, no. 73, 1987.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
 42. *L'Internationale Situationniste: 1958–69*, Van Gennepe, Amsterdam, 1970.
 43. Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, Buchet-Chastel, Paris, 1967; English translation, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Black and Red, Detroit, 1977.
 44. 'The Transformation of Everyday Life', *IS* no. 6, 1961; reprinted in Christopher Gray, ed., *Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationist International*, Free Fall Publications, London, 1974.
 45. Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Press*, Left Bank Books and Rebel Press, London, 1983.
 46. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries Into the Nature of Human Freedom*, p. 80.
 47. Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, p. 151.
 48. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
 49. Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien: Arts de faire*, Gallimard, Paris, 1974; English translation, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California, Berkeley, 1984.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.
 51. See, for instance, Detlev J.K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life*, Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1980.