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# **Cultural Studies**

Theorizing Politics, Politicizing Theory

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Special Issue

**Rethinking Everyday Life: And Then Nothing Turns  
Itself Inside Out**

Edited by

**Michael E. Gardiner and Gregory J. Seigworth**

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## Editorial Statement

*Cultural Studies* continues to expand and flourish, in large part because the field keeps changing. Cultural studies scholars are addressing new questions and discourses, continuing to debate long-standing issues, and reinventing critical traditions. More and more universities have some formal cultural studies presence; the number of books and journals in the field is rapidly increasing. *Cultural Studies* welcomes these developments. We understand the expansion, reflexivity and internal critique of cultural studies to be both signs of its vitality and signature components of its status as a field. At the same time, cultural studies has been – and will no doubt continue to be – the subject of numerous attacks, launched from various perspectives and sites. These have to be taken seriously and answered, intellectually, institutionally and publicly. *Cultural Studies* hopes to provide a forum for response and strategic discussion.

*Cultural Studies* assumes that the knowledge formations that make up the field are as historically and geographically contingent as are the determinations of any cultural practice or configuration and that the work produced within or at its permeable boundaries will be diverse. We hope not only to represent but to enhance this diversity. Consequently, we encourage submissions from various disciplinary, theoretical and geographical perspectives, and hope to reflect the wide-ranging articulations, both global and local, among historical, political, economic, cultural and everyday discourses. At the heart of these articulations are questions of community, identity, agency and change.

We expect to publish work that is politically and strategically driven, empirically grounded, theoretically sophisticated, contextually defined and reflexive about its status, however critical, within the range of cultural studies. *Cultural Studies* is about theorizing politics and politicizing theory. How this is to be accomplished in any context remains, however, open to rigorous enquiry. As we look towards the future of the field and the journal, it is this enquiry that we especially hope to support.

Lawrence Grossberg  
Della Pollock

January 1998



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# Gregory J. Seigworth & Michael E. Gardiner

## RETHINKING EVERYDAY LIFE

And then nothing turns itself inside out

*The contingencies and permeabilities and rhythms of everyday life make it notoriously difficult to pin down in any determinant way. Hence, everyday life places unique demands upon critical practice and conceptualization. In following one potential angle of approach, this essay looks at the influence that philosopher Gottfried Leibniz played in the thinking of sociologist and everyday life philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre's theory of moments and his conceptions of 'the everyday' draw upon often overlooked (and controversial) elements from Leibniz's monadology and other later writings. This essay concludes by considering how substituting 'everyday life' for the 'culture' of cultural studies requires, among other things, a closer consideration of the immanently biopolitical implications that Lefebvre teased out of Leibniz. As the introductory essay for this special issue of Cultural Studies, we also set up, in the final section here, an overview of our contributors' own unique angles of approach to the study of everyday life at the dawn of the 21st century.*

**Keywords** articulation; biopolitical; everyday; Lefebvre; Leibniz; rhythmanalysis

The *unrecognized*, that is, the everyday, still has some surprises in store for us. Indeed, as I was first rethinking the everyday . . .

(Lefebvre 1988, p. 78)

It was a moment, and it passed. I already see the furniture around me, the old designs on the wallpaper, the sun through the dirty windows. I saw the truth for a moment . . . Not knowing oneself is living. Knowing oneself badly is thinking. Knowing about oneself suddenly, as in this glowing moment, is suddenly to have the notion of the intimate monad, the magic word of the soul.

(Pessoa 1998, p. 146)

What is there under your wallpaper?

(Perec 1997, p. 211)

## To be determined, interminably

We begin knowing this: there is nothing to know of everyday life. That is, everyday life does not easily or readily submit itself to either questions or answers from the knowing (and variously disciplined) subject/s of epistemology. Of course, ask almost any classroom full of students and they will immediately tell you as much: 'What?! Everyday life? You're wasting your time' – and, by extension, theirs. Between the always already and ever-not-quite-yet, the everyday transpires, suspended, as the infinitely strung-out process of perpetually leaving too soon and arriving too late. Or is it arriving too soon and leaving too late? Either way, you will somehow have missed it because the everyday passes by, passes through. It sails past, sails over. It goes around, goes under. Under the wallpaper. Under the rocks and stone (there is water underground). Under the cobblestones, the beach. Nothing (clearly) happens but something (obscurely) is and has been afoot. Under foot: the ground is shifting – have you felt it too? – as a growing dissatisfaction gnaws along the hinges and through the very hearts of different academic disciplines in the humanities causing these fields, each in their own way, to simultaneously (if not also paradoxically) draw back into themselves, sub-divide, and inter-blur. Yes, it is cultural studies that is regularly held up to alternate honour or horror in such instances.

One of the more interesting recent instances comes from the journal *Critical Inquiry*'s symposium on the 'end of theory' (even while we set aside the comparatively few digs and ducats explicitly tossed in the direction of cultural studies therein). Our favourite response, among the *Critical Inquiry* contributors and editors, to the 'end of theory' (post-9/11) question comes from Lauren Berlant. Carrying forward de Lauretis' own observations on this matter – that '[t]hinking . . . originates in an embodied subjectivity, at once overdetermined and permeable to contingent events' – Berlant wonders about what might turn out to be a coming 'sensualist turn' in the realm of theory (2003, p. 1). She writes:

There is much more to be said on this topic of theory and embodied histories of the present. How else to make sense of this shift in tracking change, thinking system, and constructing objects or scenes that require explanations? Who is embodied, and how, and what is served by the sensual turn? Can we think about the relation of critical optimism to our vertiginous awareness of escalating violence in ways that continue to challenge our professional contexts? Or is it the case, as the *New York Times* opined recently, that this is a time of resistance without a critical imaginary? One could dilate infinitely on these questions.

(2003, p. 1)

Between de Lauretis and Berlant, our argument here is neatly previewed: to unfold a contemporary philosophy of the everyday that both highlights and aids

in the critical emergence of an infinitely dilating, embodied subjectivity (as a return to the human and to collectivity without passing through or resurrecting, as Berlant also notes, the old metaphysically transcendent subject) that is ever-and-again rendered affectively overdetermined and permeable to contingent events. Alternatively, as Hoboken rhythm-and-drone rock band Yo La Tengo (2000) has phrased it from a slightly different though complementary angle: 'trying to embrace the nothing of the everyday' (repeat to fade-out). Among the whole host of things that might come through the currently frayed and bare-wire ends of theory, why not an even more pressing necessity for critically embracing the polyrhythmical fluctuations of the everyday's contingent eventfulness and overdetermined uneventfulness (especially in those in-between moments when we feel it change track, re-route, and call for new ways to 'think system')? Hence, we will dilate on this notion further in what follows . . . though maybe not infinitely (after all, we are working under a word-limit).

Perhaps, then, we will be forgiven for wondering if, in such times as these, everyday life might serve as good and as unbound a place as any other (maybe even better?) to gather-round and remind ourselves of all the disciplinary ways that we can still agree to disagree. As Highmore has remarked, following Lefebvre: 'If . . . the everyday lies both outside all the different fields of knowledge, while at the same time lying across them, then the everyday isn't a field at all, more like a para-field, or a meta-field' (2002, p. 4). Multiply singular in its totality, the everyday is the groundless ground of lived/living concatenation, conglomeration and visceral cross-reference – even if one must immediately hasten to add that any mention of the 'lived/living' should not be understood to somehow exclude the un-lived, inorganic, incorporeal and non-human in whatever form such matters might take: such is the impetus that fully saturates, through and through, the notion of *life* in the couplet 'everyday life'. Indeed, it's hard to fathom what might actually fall outside everyday life since eminently tangible remainderings and immanently fleeting ambiances (and everything in-between) provide its building blocks, its cobblestones (and what flows beneath), and the designs on its wallpaper (and what extends beyond).

Thinking along similar lines and like the Leibnizian urban-dweller that he was, Lefebvre notes that 'everything is in everything and everything is total – and yet nothing that is, is in anything other than itself. Within oneness, there are differences and disjunctions; both actively and potentially, there is multiplicity' (1961/2002, p. 273).<sup>1</sup> Even the most seemingly intimate monad, as Leibniz maintained, never bears less than the rest of a world along with itself, from one fluctuating moment to the next. Monads persist by constantly shuffling, dilating and contracting their regions of clarity and opaqueness, reconfiguring by often barely perceptible rhythms. Hence, this provides one of the reasons why Lefebvre's 'theory of moments' calls up, by necessity, his procedure of 'rhythmanalysis' – a connection that Lefebvre makes, forthrightly, in a footnote to the 'Theory of Moments' chapter from his *Critique of Everyday Life*:

*Volume II*, where he states: ‘Philosophically, the “theory of moments” is linked to an interpretation of Leibniz. The “substantial link” (*vinculum substantiale*) between monads is itself a monad’ (1961/2002, p. 370). More pointedly, what Lefebvre alludes to here is the crucial importance of thinking everyday life as a whole, but a whole of a highly particular (even peculiar) sort: not that fairly commonplace conceptualization of a whole which comes to be perpetually ensnaring or encircling (based around the relational character of identity and contradiction) and, thus, sucks up and seals off all that occurs (or has occurred or will occur) into its own endlessly assimilative totality. Rather, the everyday is a whole that reconstitutes itself in each moment as that which subsists (insists) (persists) (ex-sists) as – more modestly? – one additional part alongside any and all of the other parts: the everyday as a whole moving alongside all of the other moments of the day-to-day. This is an everydayness that does not close-off but, instead, perpetually opens up: an open totality arising with every moment, a beach beneath every cobblestone.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, each moment – in such a theory of moments – is wholly extended across the open infinity of moments, but forever in the next moment (of the whole’s eternal return) ranges across all of them in infinitely varying dispersion, with different emphases and diminutions: a different(ial) whole at each moment. Everything is in everything while nothing is in any thing other than itself. Take, for example, the human being. As Lefebvre continues: ‘Every human “being” is physical, biological, economic, social or sociological, but unevenly, according to the aspects and the moments, sometimes this one more than that one, sometimes that one more than this one, but without ever losing unity completely’ (1961/2002, p. 273). Almost like music, certainly like rhythm, the event-full (and always more-than-human) movement from moment to moment undulates (as the substantial link between monads is itself a monad) – like the infinity of water particles that gets re-cast from one wave to the next, or like the smallest dancing specks of dust, caught in a certain angle of light, rising, falling, and hovering against a dark backdrop. ‘The spectre of undulatory movements (with or without trajectories) extends’, writes Lefebvre, ‘indefinitely, even infinitely, from the macro to the micro, from corpuscular movements to the movements of metagalaxies’ (1985/1999, p. 12). As we will see, this undulation (of moments, of movements), with or without trajectories (seemingly either shimmy and comet-trail or shimmer and blink), is no mere wavering and half-hazy thought-image for everyday life philosophizing.

In some ways, catching hold of this conveyance continues to pose one of the greatest difficulties for contemporary approaches to everyday life (and, without a doubt by this point, that aforementioned classroom full of students has begun to manifest a shimmy and blink of their own): how to give thought-image to something that has, more often than not, neither thought nor image? How to imagine something that phases-out at very nearly the same time as it phases-in, as each and every daily moment passes by – passes through – pulsating along that

faintly lingering string of unevenly lit instants where ‘ordinary’ and ‘remarkable’ gather themselves up again along the gradual shade-off cast by the other’s cross-light? In short, how to bring into critical conceptualization and practice some thing that is, in fact, not strictly a thought, an image or a thing at all?

It is hardly a secret (indeed, over time, it has come to feel more like a riddle): how does one present everyday life critique – in its movements and moments, processes and rhythms – without reducing it to a ‘some thing’, without presenting it as a ‘some thing’ to be known, or, that is, a clearly demarcated object of knowledge (as if it ever could be)? Perhaps better to begin with ‘no thing in particular’ (a ‘whatever’): to leap, as Lefebvre (and a few others) understood, into the very midst of the differential itself and, thus, follow the Leibnizian swoon from universal to singular as folded and flected in the (momentarily eternal and intimately exterior) monad. It is a move that sets one on the decidedly less-travelled terrain of that which circulates in the beyond-thing-ish realm of the ‘processual’, of the transitional, of the affectual, of relations of force, of the in-between (of that which precedes and is outside its own terms). Signs, even structures, have long been erected to prevent such an unhesitant (that is, non-deferred) leap into the differential – they read simply ‘a void.’ Numerous bodies have danced along the edge of this void, while consciousness has regularly rumbled across it, hearing itself by times, circling and seemingly lost in its own echo (by default or by design) at other times. Labelled ‘a void’, since it means then having to bring into account those quite potentially messy non-things that are above (and below and between and vaguely ‘about’) all else: a-signifying, real but incorporeal (i.e. virtual), pre-individual and non-conscious, inorganic, more-than-human, a-human. None of these, and needless to say there are more, are anti- (say ‘human’) or un- (say ‘conscious’) or otherwise negating or starkly oppositional. These (wave)particles and long durations of existence bear a proximal, unlocalizable – indeed, circulatory – otherness without falling into absolute difference or contradiction. The immanence of their void – the seemingly treacherous sink into the collective whirl of the variously unaccountable – serves as that indiscernible area toward which everyday life critique regularly gestures (usually late in the day and off to one side of its main path), but has only rarely been pursued as full (and, from certain vantage points, potentially foolhardy) immersion.

However, Lefebvre’s everyday life approach is seldom averse to such immersion and, as a result, what methodologically sometimes appears as rather scatter-shot and soft-focus comes into sharper view when his penchant for entering in among the differential movements of this (teeming) void is better understood.<sup>3</sup> Neglecting such movements (and moments) in Lefebvre’s own analytic leaves one rather doomed to dissective stillness, insurmountable alienation and the bare repetition of fetish-objects (whether devolved from bureaucratic-capitalist imperatives or theoretical ones): fated to partake in an interpretative practice that can always uncover a conveniently determined end-product (in a reductive



present) but endlessly miss its producibility (in its undetermined futurity). As Lefebvre maintains:

Beneath an apparent immobility, analysis discovers a hidden mobility. Beneath this superficial mobility, it discovers stabilities, self-regulations, structures, and factors of balance. Beneath the overall unity, it uncovers diversities, and beneath the multiplicity of appearances it finds a totality. Analysis must maintain these two sociological aspects (incessant change, the disappearance of elements, nascent conjunctures – the structuring of the whole, relative stability) and grasp them in the wholeness of a single history. (1961/2002, p. 238)

The wholeness of a single history arriving in each moment. Exhausting without extinguishing, gathering itself up to go on into the next moment in order to reconstitute itself anew: the continual variation of everyday life and its analytic procedures, interwoven.

Pessoa's insomniac (and quasi-autobiographic) bookkeeper Bernardo Soares describes this intertwined process vividly as it overtakes him during his cross-town commute through Lisbon of the early 1930s: so vividly, that it is worth quoting his diary-entry at length.

I'm in a trolley, and, as is my habit, I'm slowly taking notice of the people sitting around me. For me details are things, words, sentences. I take apart the dress worn by the girl in front of me: I turn it into the fabric that makes it up, the work that went into making it – but I still see it as a dress and not cloth – and the light embroidery and the work involved in it. And immediately, as in a primer on political economy, the factories and the labor unfold before me – the factory where the cloth was made, the factory where the twist of silk, darker in tone than the dress, was made, which went into making the twisted little things in the border now in their place next to the neck; and I see the components of the factories, the machines, the workers, the seamstresses, my eyes turned inward penetrate into the offices, I see the managers trying to be calm, I follow, in the books, the accounts involved in it all; but it isn't only that: I see, beyond that, the domestic lives of those who live their social lives in those factories and those offices . . . All of them pass before my eyes merely because I have before me, below a dark neck, which on its other side has I don't know what sort of face, a common, irregular green edge on a light green dress.

The entire life of society lies before my eyes.

Beyond all that I sense the loves, the secret life, the souls of all those who worked so that this woman seated in front of me in the trolley can wear around her neck the sinuous banality of a band of dark green silk on less dark green cloth.

I become stupefied. The seats on the trolley, made of a tightly woven strong straw, carry me to distant regions and into multiple industries, workers, workers' houses, lives, realities, all.

I leave the trolley exhausted and sleepwalking. I just lived an entire life.  
(Pessoa 1998, p. 115)

Exhausted not so much from a newly heightened awareness (as might be invoked through models of consciousness-raising) but, even more, in the passing of sensation into depthless processes, their interconnections, the wholeness of their single histories, and the sinuous banality of their surfaces and colours. 'Let your eyes transgress their own limits,' say Lefebvre and Regulier (1985/1999, p. 11): as eyes turn inward (seeking after a modality beyond the visually perceptual register) to penetrate offices, moving on to jittery managers, accounting books, multiple industries, secret lives, all. Motility. Of multiplicity. Immersed, of a circulating void. Singularly every day: once again, for the first time.

So exhausted is Soares/Pessoa that, in fact, the next diary-entry does not follow until apparently months later, wherein Soares/Pessoa asks himself if it might be possible to create a '[p]hilosophy without thought?' as something unmediatedly 'felt. . . carnal, direct' (1998, p. 116). How to create an everyday philosophy that would venture into life through the outside of knowing: just as Leibniz' monad is famously without windows, interior though not privative, or, as Fenves puts it: 'The windowless condition of the monad is . . . the positive condition of not being "influenced" by anything in the world and yet corresponding with everything worldly nevertheless' (2001, pp. 9–10). No 'influence' (which has been set in quotation marks by Fenves because this manner of influence will never knowingly register as such), or, that is, a short circuit of consciousness (because unmediatedly felt, carnal, direct). This is not an argument for the omission of consciousness or for otherwise blocking it off but, instead, the admission of the impinging, circumambient influx of everything, everything that consciousness – at least as historically conceived in the West – has been typically bent upon shunting aside. In his essay 'The ambivalence of disenchantment', Virno concurs:

Along the parabola of modern philosophy that stretches from Descartes to Hegel, only Leibniz valorizes an experience that depends on what falls outside of the self-reflective subject: 'There are hundreds of indications leading us to conclude that at every moment there is in us an infinity of perceptions, unaccompanied by awareness or reflection.' For Leibniz, it is these 'little perceptions,' the opaque side of the spirit, that connect each individual to the complete life of the universe. But this is an exception.

(1996, p. 30)

However, perhaps, this is an exception that proves the rule: by positing a banal/neutral a-consciousness, endlessly differential of-itself, because infinitely,

impersonally and permeably indifferent to everything (including itself). In correspondence with the world.<sup>4</sup> In correspondence with everything.<sup>5</sup> Catch a wave (or catch a Lisbon bus). Take notice of the dispersive patternings in the dust. Get rhythm.

## Rhythms of mattering

Certainly, this kind of talk can get you into trouble: speaking of philosophy without thought, and of a body (human or non-human) as a purely affective surface that registers everything without parsing or hierarchizing difference on its exterior, but by making itself the living interior of difference.<sup>6</sup> A philosophy without thought – or at least without thought always and only at its head (literally) – necessitates a continuously adjacent non-philosophy of life on its outside. Nothing ruled out, most especially nothing's penchant for turning itself inside out.

Adorno describes how his friend Walter Benjamin believed that 'everything habitually excluded by the norms of experience ought to become part of experience to the extent that it adheres to its own concreteness instead of dissipating this, its immortal aspect, by subordinating it to the schema of the abstract universal' (1955/1988a, p. 4). Thinking like this got Benjamin into all kinds of seemingly intractable trouble (the persistent danger of an everyday monadology turning acephalic was, as Benjamin knew, its grimmest inside joke). Still, the procedure remains: no subordination of the concrete to the abstract universal but, instead, finding the universal in the concrete. Benjamin called his take on Leibniz's monad simply 'the Idea', which, like the monad, is not mentalistic but unmediatedly felt, carnal, direct. Or, as Adorno also says: 'Therefore, Benjamin does not weave a relation to the absolute out of concepts, but rather seeks it through corporeal contact with the material' (1955/1988a, p. 4). Yet, at the same time, Adorno writes that 'there was something incorporeal' about Benjamin himself, that his 'thinking constitutes the anti-thesis of the existential concept of the person, he seems empirically, despite extreme individuation, hardly to have been a person at all, but rather an arena of movement in which a certain content forced its way, through him, into language' (1966/1988b, p. 329, p. 330). What better way to model the ongoing processes by which critical thought and everyday life fold and unfold into and out of each other? An arena of movement, the collective insistence of a world (contrary to the solitary, separate existence of a being), a touch of/for concreteness with a simultaneous sense of how such concrete tactility taps incorporeal universes of experience (in both their persistent and coming potentials): wherever the utopias of everyday life appear, they will nearly always traverse these critical ingredients.

The contemporary import of Leibniz's monad – and the complex relatedness of monadic aggregates through the 'vinculum substantiale' [substantial link

or bond] – might register with greatest insight on those theoretical approaches that focus on the rhythmic everyday interpenetration of corporeality and incorporeality (combined as ‘virtuality’), or, from one other angle of approach, the terrain of biopolitics. Although, of course, Lefebvre never made use of the term ‘biopolitical’, his theory of moments and his rhythmanalysis – because of the way that they go beyond classical ontology (since he always maintained that there is more to ‘being’ than the actual), beyond existentialism (since, Lefebvre notes, one must also account for ‘essences’), and beyond phenomenology (since everything eliminated as outside conscious experience must be reinstated) [1961/2002, pp. 349–350] – might have much to offer the increasingly frequent invocation of the biopolitical.

In this regard, it might be instructive here to re-read (again) one of Lefebvre’s earliest and best known statements on everyday life. From the first volume of his *Critique of Everyday Life*, written in 1947, Lefebvre writes:

Everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by ‘what is left over’ after all distinct, superior, specialised, structured activities have been singled out by analysis, must be defined as a totality. Considered in their specialization and their technicality, superior activities leave a ‘technical vacuum’ between one another which is filled up by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and its form. In it are expressed and fulfilled those relations which bring into play the totality of the real, albeit in a certain manner which is always partial and incomplete: friendship, comradeship, love, the need to communicate, play, etc.

The substance of everyday life – ‘human raw material’ is its simplicity and richness – pierces through all alienation and established ‘disalienation.’ If we take the words ‘human nature’ dialectically and in their full meaning, we may say that the critique of everyday life studies human nature in its concreteness.

(1947a/1991, p. 97)

Among numerous uptakes from this oft-quoted passage, everyday life has been made to appear variously as ‘lack’, as dialectical grace note, as shadowy and irrecoverable disintegration, as unconscious, as null or empty set, and so forth. But what if Lefebvre’s striking appeal, through these words, tends in a different, less vacuous (despite the mention of a ‘technical vacuum’) direction?

Not surprisingly, we think that there is another (less-travelled) direction as echoed by the notion of ‘bond’ in paragraph one and, then, by ‘substance’ in paragraph two of the above passage from Lefebvre. Nothing, in the everyday,

ever truly falls away, gets lost, goes lacking, turns to zero, is rendered null and void (though maybe full and void is another story). As Lefebvre notes: 'When determinations fall outside one another they only do so relatively, momentarily and partially' (1961/2002, p. 192). Partial and incomplete, while adhering to their own concreteness: the variously indeterminate is as crucial as what is determined and, in fact, offers up a more profoundly aggregate 'something' (even if it might come to pass as barely anything, or, almost nothing).<sup>7</sup>

*Something*, we will say, which is not easy to define, precisely since this 'something' is not a thing, nor a precise activity with determined outlines. So what is it? A mixture of nature and culture, the historical and the lived, the individual and the social, the real and the unreal, a place of transitions, of meetings, interactions and conflicts, in short a *level* of reality.

(Lefebvre 1961/2002, p. 47)

The residual is, then, its own kind of differential (it is worth remembering too that 'differential space' was Lefebvre's way of talking utopia). This residual is rarely a neatly defined fall-off (perhaps better conceived anyway, in its own light, as immanent bleed-up rather than fall-off). Invariably, its edges are unevenly contoured. As such, in the oscillation of materialities and incorporealities and their rough-hewn intermixtures (where the everyday serves as common ground, as bond), rhythms emerge (rhythms which need not literally be 'heard' but might, also, belong to some other manner of sonority). In fact, the everyday retains the rhythmic, transitional flip itself [the vibratory differential as a whole] as on-going part of the process, and the *vinculum substantiale* serves as sticky palimpsest for these shuffling superpositions of everyday moments (it is the adhesive surface of their transitions, meetings, interactions, and conflicts).

Blanchot, long the best reader of Lefebvre around several of these points, captures it in this way:

To live it [the everyday] as what might be lived through a series of separate, technical acts (represented by the vacuum cleaner, the washing machine, the refrigerator, the radio, the car), is to substitute a number of compartmentalized actions for this indefinite presence, this connected movement (which is however not a whole [that is, less a whole than a 'becoming']) by which we are continually, though in a mode of discontinuity, in relation with the indeterminate totality of human possibilities.

(1959/1993, p. 244)

Indefinite presence, indeterminate totality, and connected movement: Leibniz's *vinculum substantiale* plays a similar, though widely disputed, role with regard to the monads of his own philosophy.<sup>8</sup> The *vinculum substantiale* was Leibniz's

attempt, admittedly not without some amount of hesitancy and controversy, to think how the real (corporeality) and the ideal (mental phenomena) fold together, in inseparable union and continuous extension, through the super-added force relayed from adherent monads-as-resonating-aggregate. Here Leibniz's infamous pre-established harmony as divined through God finds its correlate in the decidedly more discontinuous yet equally 'divine will' of matter (where, instead of harmony, the matter of lived existence beats with the alternating punctual and a-punctual rhythms of grace, chance, accident, process, and recurrence).<sup>9</sup> Or as Lispector, in *The Passion According to G.H.*, effuses:

Oh, the violent amorous unconsciousness of what exists surpasses the possibility of my consciousness. I am so afraid of so much matter – matter resonates with attention, resonates with process, resonates with inherent nowness. What exists beats with strong waves against the unbreakable grain that is I, and that grain tumbles among the abysses of tranquil billows of existence, tumbles and does not dissolve, that seed-grain.

(1964/1988, p. 132)

When Lefebvre says that the basis for his theory of moments is found in Leibniz's *vinculum substantiale* and that the substantial link between monads is itself a monad, the monad becomes then 'the moment' (the undissolvable seed-grain of experience surpassing the possibility of consciousness) in Lefebvre's theory of moments, and the substantial linkage of these everyday monadic moments is knotted with the rhythmic foldings or becomings of matter and passion.<sup>10</sup>

This dynamism of mattering has become a key focus of recent critical work around the biopolitical, turning attention to the matter of life itself, nakedly so (as in Agamben's 'bare life') and increasingly molecularized.<sup>11</sup> As Rose has summarized:

Politics now addresses the vital processes of human existence: the size and quality of the population; reproduction and human sexuality; conjugal, parental and familial relations; health and disease; birth and death. . . . It [biopolitics] has given birth to techniques, technologies, experts, and apparatuses for the care and administration of the life of each and all, from town planning to health services. And it has given a kind of 'vitalist' character to the existence of individuals as political subjects.

(2001, p. 1)

Perhaps inevitably, then, the accent in the term 'everyday life' must, on occasion and particularly now, fall slightly more heavily on the vitalistic fourth vowel (and of course, when placed upon other tongues, life precedes the everyday). Life itself is the supple line in the everyday between the living and the lived (Lefebvre 1961/2002, p. 217). It is this 'life' of the everyday that

Lefebvre wanted to bring to the vocabulary of Marx, to rethink the everyday in a new dialectic that ‘allows for the analysis of becoming, that is to say, of time, more or less connected to space’ and where music (‘the art of time’) could arise within the everyday through melody, harmony, and rhythm (1988, p. 86). Such a music could almost never be fully pre-established in its melody, harmony and rhythm (indeed, Leibniz’s *vinculum substantiale* concedes as much too, by departing from the ‘divine intellect’ of God), and must, thus, remain continually open to its outside, to risk, to occasional near-stasis, and to total transformation (and to ugliness as well as beauty). It was Lefebvre’s way to imagine, through Marx,

the total person of the future, being deployed as a body, as a relation between the senses, as thought. These investigations converge toward the supreme and final question that goes beyond classical philosophy. It is not a matter of understanding what the verb ‘to think’ signifies, as Heidegger did, but of responding to the question, *What remains to be thought now?* . . . To understand this in Marxist terms we need to reformulate the conflictual relations within the triad: nature/matter/human. If a person is first and foremost an earthly being and a human body, how do we relate the person to a representation of the world that includes the recent contributions of all the sciences, including cosmology, astrophysics, and microphysics? These types of knowledge extend from infinitely small to infinitely large. What, then, is the relationship of human beings to the world of which they continue to be a part?

(1988, p. 87, emphasis added)

Certainly, it seems self-evident that such questions, sets of concerns, and means of approach (to the becomings of nature/matter/human) might offer themselves as potential links to a variety of ongoing biopolitical projects, and one could, indeed, productively dilate along any of these numerous lines of pursuit almost infinitely. Let us, then, by way of drawing this introduction to its more finite close (even if it might actually be more akin to throwing it into the open), touch briefly on a small feature, drawn from out of this preceding discussion, that could have rather profound importance to the practices of cultural studies.

### Soft tissue and supple articulations

We are thinking specifically here (or rethinking as the case might be) of Jameson’s response to the doorstep volume *Cultural Studies* published in 1988 (edited by Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler): even more specifically, the section of his essay ‘On “cultural studies”’, entitled ‘Articulation: a truck driver’s manual’. Jameson claims that, although for cultural studies, the concept of

articulation seems to be '[d]erived, like organic, from the body as a reference, it rather designates the bony parts and the connections of the skeleton, than the soft organic organs' (1993, pp. 30–31). There is, as Jameson implicitly advises, another route that can be taken through Marx's rather figural conception of the organic [and 'organs'] and, particularly, his notion of 'metabolism'. Once meant to designate the separate functionings of the various organs, when run through the cultural studies' (truck driver's manual of) articulation, this more fluidified conceptualization of the 'organic' has been lost in transposition – *from* the diverse and divergent functionings of the body's organs *to*, now, become indistinguishable parts of one and the same thing: an identifiable and organized body with its organs always presumably in their appropriate location and proper arrangement. Further, the term 'organic' itself has regularly come to serve as modifier preceding the word 'intellectual' – embracing, in this way, the main divergence allowed to such a body: the splitting of its pessimistic intellect from its less fatalistic will (as the latter tries to turn in a decidedly sunnier direction). However, Marx brings more into the mix than the severing and reconnecting of intellectual heads and wilfully optimistic bodies; a whole diverse ensemble and polyrhythm of bodies, organs, brains, and value-generating machinery are caught up in the circulations of capital. As Marx writes in the *Grundrisse*: '[I]n the human body, as with capital, the different elements are not exchanged at the same rate of reproduction, blood renews itself more rapidly than muscle, muscle than bone, which in this respect may be regarded as the fixed capital of the human body' (1973, p. 670). It is the 'fixed capital' of the body's skeletal structure that cultural studies' concept of articulation (with its mapping of contexts – wherein the entirety of the body itself often becomes one more bony connecting node among the other non-necessary linkages) – captures in its own way: by turns, successfully but also ultimately limited in its suppleness (as organs resolve into a hierarchy of function, as bones lock into place). The knee bone's connected to the thigh bone, the thigh bone's connected to the hip bone . . .

But what if the concept of 'articulation' was able to offer a better accounting of 'soft tissue' and those other, more inconspicuously supple kinds of circulation, mobile differentiation, and implicate connectedness? Taking on board the immanence and vitalism of 'life' from philosophies of the everyday certainly places different demands upon cultural studies (whilst also, fortunately, offering up several suggestive and road-tested directions in response to these demands). That is, there cannot be any mere substituting of 'everyday life' in the place of 'culture' without, of course, drawing upon and redrawing new (and old) constellations of concerns (not to mention, among other things, subsequent shifts and reconfigurations in conceptions of praxis itself). In the space of this ground still to be covered, cultural studies is not yet, if it wants to be, synonymous with the study of everyday life, and its theory of articulation will have to be one crucial site of rethinking.



Felski takes notes some of this distance-to-be-covered in a recent essay on cultural studies and method, marked by her own (implicit) ambivalence to the idea of articulation. She writes that, against more symptomatic reading strategies, cultural studies' theory of articulation

refuses to see the world in a grain of sand [or] to proceed as if a text were a microcosmic representation of social relations that, if deciphered correctly, will yield the hidden truth of the social whole. By contrast, cultural studies seeks to detotalize the social field and hence rejects the assumption that any individual work can represent that field. The political pulse of a culture is not to be found in the depths of a single work but rather in a mobile and discontinuous constellation of texts as they play off, influence, and contradict each other.

(2003, p. 512)

However, needless to say, this is precisely what Leibniz's monadology (as modified by the *vinculum substantiale*) and, hence, what Lefebvre's theory of moments and rhythmanalysis set out to do: to remind us of and to revive, in their own ways, totalization (albeit 'open totality') as critical tool, to find the world in a seed-grain of matter, 'to rhythmically scale up/down from intimate to immense in a single bound. None of this 'everyday' approach necessarily works to deny the 'political pulse' that cultural studies takes from discontinuity and non-necessary correspondence, but, further, superadds the immanence of 'life' as connective (soft) tissue, as substantial and saturative bond: affectively over-determined and permeable to the contingent.

The main political pulse of the 'bios' is, most certainly, found in the super-additive of immanence as the 'moving substrate of force relations which is the condition of possibility of power' (Cheah 1996, p. 126). While cultural studies' theory of articulation can work *across* diverse elements, as Felski also notes, and make certain linkages, it is less apparent how, in its current state, it might begin with a visceral, substantial bond always already in place (not always to-be-made by critical practice itself) and, then, how rapidly it might traverse, more vertically than across (a dash less cartographer's fever-dream and a dash more insomniac's virtual time-unravel), the life ground that opens up – in a straight shot of immanence – from molecular membrane to cosmic forces. That is, without feeling silly (though likely getting dizzy). This would mean taking seriously Lefebvre and Regulier when they write (echoing in part Marx's *Grundrisse* moment):

Without knowing it [. . .] human beings appropriate at the center of the universe movements that are consonant with their own movements. The ear, the eyes, the gaze, the hands – these are far from being passive organs that do little besides record or execute. What is shaped, formed, and produced is part of this scale which, it must be emphasized, has nothing accidental or

arbitrary about it. It is the scale of the planet, of accidents, of the surface of the earth, and of the cycles that recur.

(1985/1999, p. 11)

What would cultural studies look like (sound like) (feel like) if it was to work at this scale, if it was to fully bring the 'life' of everyday life on-board, with its moments, monads, movements, multiplicities and matter? It is hard to predict, but perhaps worth the try. Time to get suppl.<sup>12</sup>

## Turning the kaleidoscope

We will not attempt to sum up the special double issue that follows (like one of those bravura performances by a conference panel respondent who tenuously demonstrates how all of the papers just presented 'truly' shared a common thread). To undertake such a task here would be next to impossible. Simply put, we have gathered some people together whose writing on everyday life we admire: whether long sustained as a life's distinguished work or as promising start to a career just underway. In our initial entreaty to each of our contributors, we posed the following series of questions (contributors' names, in brackets, are attached to those questions that give shape to particular thematics of their essays, though needless to say, nearly any bracketed name can slip from this particular attachment to migrate to other sets of concerns as well):

- What is everyday life? What are its central (and ambient) qualities, properties and dynamics? (Sandywell)
- How is everyday life transformed under the conditions of modernity and, as some would now have it, postmodernity? How is everyday life manifested (similarly and/or differently) on the peripheries and semi-peripheries of the capitalist world-system? What does an accounting of everyday life have to contribute the current discourse of globalization? (Harootunian & Maffesoli)
- How can the nascent critical or 'redemptive' elements of everyday life be identified and understood? How are the emancipatory possibilities inscribed in everyday practices, relationships and events taken up and realized concretely by specific individuals and groups (often taking the form of new potentials for autonomy, collectivity, dissent/culture jamming, accommodation, etc.)? (Burkitt & Gardiner)
- What are the central intellectual traditions of a critical approach to the analysis of everyday life? To what extent are these traditions influenced by local and national conditions and specific contexts of intellectual production, or is there the possibility of constructing a broader, more synthetic theory? How might the pursuit of different intellectual pre-histories of the contemporary 'everyday' subsequently yield altogether new and perhaps contrasting

- sets of questions, critiques and strategies for everyday living? (Ganguly & Pickering)
- What implications do recent transformations (and continuities) in the nature of everyday life hold for analyses of subjectivity (and the conceptual status of 'the object' for that matter), gender, embodiment, race, ethnicity, sociocultural identity, sexuality, the concept of 'experience', transnational capitalism, the conditions of collectivity/belonging, and so on? (French)
  - What are the ethical and aesthetical qualities of everyday life? Are these elements in contradiction, or do they dovetail in important respects? (Highmore & Probyn)
  - How does the very study of everyday life itself conjure up a different sense of the relationship between theory and practice? How does one's understanding of everyday life transform the movements of critique and, thus, produce new strategies for writing (e.g. increasingly fabulative, poetic, evocative, experimental, explorative, polyrhythmical, processual, sensuous, etc.) for otherwise conveying the insights of intellectual work? How is pedagogy (and the role of the university) transformed in the light of such understandings? (Game/Metcalf and Gregg)
  - Social relationships are increasingly technologically mediated by ubiquitous consumer culture and digital/virtual modes of communication, which blur the line between the social and the cultural, and between formerly differentiated institutions and spheres of activity. How have the lived space-times of everyday life been affected by these sorts of processes? (Galloway, Poster & Wise)
  - What implications might follow for our understandings of everyday life if we attempt to grasp, not only those inconspicuous aspects of everyday life (as derived from the various inadequacies, habitual tendencies, and distractions of human consciousness), but also such sidereal realms as: the inorganic, the incorporeal, the impersonal, the nonhuman, the non-representational, the affective, and the bio-political? (Shotter & Thrift)

Some contributors, as readers will discover, address one or more of our questions directly.<sup>13</sup> Others approach our series of questions more obliquely or presume different sorts of catalysing problematics about everyday life. Many of the essays that follow speak to one another (without necessarily acknowledging their conversation), and a few may even interrupt each other (though again, not by explicit design). However, all told, herein are seventeen different essays about one thing (for once, that one thing is not sex or, then again, maybe sometimes it is): everyday life. Multiple, monadic, mobile. Turn this issue like a kaleidoscope in your hands, and the various, unevenly contoured pieces will fall into new patterns. Everything is in everything and nothing is in anything other than itself – and, then, nothing turns itself inside out. That is everyday life. That much we know.

## Notes

- 1 To our knowledge, only Harvey, in his *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, has explored, to some extent, the debt that Lefebvre's work owes to Leibniz. However, it also seems to us that Harvey, at times, often chooses to read Leibniz's monadology uncharitably (at least, less charitably than Lefebvre) by turning the monad too plainly idealist and too literally inward (as 'hermetically sealed' in its windowlessness) and, thus, removed from 'social and political life' (1996, p. 74). Needless to say, this presents a problem that Harvey must then endeavour to solve – and he illustrates one proposed solution by mapping, rather awkwardly, the apparent inadequacies of Leibniz's philosophy on to the *processual* circuit of Marx's political economy, and, thereafter, casts any Leibnizian-inspired approach as one that could, at best, only grasp each node of the process in isolation, and, at worst, come to serve as indication of a 'political practice that made retreat into the windowless world (his study) . . . a particularly attractive proposition' (1996, p. 75). There is a minor irony about this latter flourish of Harvey's and his mention of 'his [Leibniz's] study'. In 1870, Karl Marx is thrilled to receive a very fine present from his friend Ludwig Kugelmann: tapestries that had once hung in Leibniz's study! On 10 May 1870, Marx even writes to Engels of his delight at this gift: 'You know my admiration for Leibniz'. What Harvey misses (as we will later touch upon) is the undulating linkage of Leibniz's monadic moments (not always so firmly set in twinkling motionlessness) as 'vinculum substantiale' (substantial bond) – which, indeed, become the basis for Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis and his concomitant theory of moments. Leibniz's monadology remains to be better cast in light of Marx's discussion of 'living' labour and the circulatory processes of the body, as well as the human body's ongoing absorption into the 'body' of capital itself (for potential points of resonance, see Dienst 1994, Negri/Hardt 2000, Dyer-Witheford 2002 and, yes, even Harvey (2000, pp. 97–130) himself on the body as an accumulation strategy and Marx's 'species-being').
- 2 Although it is a witty aside from his *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre is probably more than half-kidding when he writes: 'The beach is the only place of enjoyment that the human species has discovered in nature' (1974/1991b, p. 384). Following this, he then launches into a discussion of the body itself as a 'differential field'.
- 3 Pessoa offers this lovely account: 'At a certain level of written cogitation, I no longer know where I have my attention focused – whether it's on the dispersed sensations I'm trying to discover, as if they were unknown tapestries, or on the words into which I plunge right in, get lost, and see other things in my desire to discover my own description. There form within me associations of ideas, of images, of words – everything lucid and diffused' (1998, p. 219).
- 4 Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.* conveys this quality (indeed, qualia!) of consciousness better than anyone (with the possible exception of Maurice

Blanchot). The beatings and resonances of matter, the will to accretion, the neutrality of love, the impersonal soul, the 'greater reality' of the nonhuman, the energetics of indifference, and, in a few sentences that point ahead to our discussion of Leibniz's 'vinculum substantiale', she writes: 'I am trying to tell you how I came to the neutrality and inexpressivity of myself. I don't know if I am understanding what I say, I feel – and I very much fear feeling, for feeling is merely one of the styles of being. Still, I shall go through the sultry stupor that swells with nothingness, and I shall have to understand neutrality through feeling. Neutrality. I am speaking of the vital element linking things' (1964/1988, p. 92). Or, as Lefebvre says, the substantial link between monads is itself a monad: vital and neutral.

- 5 For more on correspondences, see Bachelard (credited by Lefebvre as the originator of the term 'rhythmanalysis') who writes of Baudelaire: 'immensity in the intimate domain is intensity, an intensity of being, the intensity of being evolving in the vast perspective of intimate immensity. It is the principle of "correspondences" to receive the immensity of the world, which they transform into the intensity of our intimate being' (1958/1969, p. 193).
- 6 See, for instance, the passage in Leibniz's *Monadology* where he writes: 'Consequently every body is sensitive to everything which is happening in the universe, so much so that one who saw everything could read into each body what is happening everywhere, and even what has happened or what will happen, by observing in the present the things that are distant in time as well as space' (1973, p. 189). See, also, Deleuze's *Foucault* and its last chapter on 'Foldings, or, the inside of thought (subjectivation)' (1986/1988, pp. 94–123).
- 7 A detailed consideration of Lefebvre's conceptual 'something' could be revealing in this regard: 'Something – which is certainly not a thing – is encountered once again. . . . It vanishes, and at the same time it makes itself known' (Lefebvre 1961/2002, p. 342). The notion that there is always, in every relation, 'something that is not a thing' (an ambiguous whole or totality residing alongside any singular, lived space-time) is important to Lefebvre; it is his 'whatever', his Leibnizian indiscernible. See, for further example, his relation of 'something' to ambiguity (contra 'ambivalence') and totality (1961/2002, p. 84, p. 220) and the flashes of the mobile concept of 'something' across his masterwork *The Production of Space*, especially during its brief appearances in the discussion of Leibniz in the 'Spatial Architectonics' chapter (1974/1991b, p. 169) and in its concluding chapter 'Openings and Conclusions' (1974/1991b, p. 403)
- 8 The majority of Leibniz interpreters – most notably, Bertrand Russell – have greatly downplayed the role of the substantial bond in Leibniz's system of thought, if not denied it any importance whatsoever (thus, making it all the more interesting that Lefebvre should have alighted upon it). The vinculum substantiale is discussed by Leibniz almost exclusively in his correspondence, from 1712–1716, with a Jesuit scholar, Bartholomew Des Bosses, in the final years of his life. It receives no mention in any of his formally published works;

for instance, his *Monadology* was published in 1714, two years before Leibniz's death, and makes no mention of the *vinculum substantiale*. This concept's life of ill repute is chronicled rather thoroughly in Adams' *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (1994, pp. 299–307). For further background on the *vinculum substantiale* and other details, see also Rescher (1979), Woolhouse (1993), Fenves (2001) and Deleuze (1988/1993).

- 9 See Massumi on the rhythm and beats of existence (1997, pp. 748–750). Additionally, see Lefebvre for more on musically-derived approaches to dialectics and worn-out ontologies (1961/2002, pp. 244–263).
- 10 Negri's 'kairos' [the singular and indeterminate time defined by life itself] transpires around this same fold of matter and passion. In fact, he describes 'subjectivity' as something that does not subsist but is produced in the 'connection of monads of kairos' and, later, that their 'plane of association [is] the material fabric of the common predication of the being of the world' (2003a, p. 173, p. 180). All of which sounds, probably not accidentally, like Leibniz's *vinculum substantiale*. Thus, when Negri translates 'kairos' from heavy-duty philosophizing to more everyday discourse (in an interview from 2003), he could easily be mistaken for Lefebvre: 'Everything is constructed each time, at each instant. Nothing is predetermined, because everything is determined, in the void of reality, by the infinity of wills that open up at each moment. And this is the richness of life, of a life that can modify itself through and through, that can completely reinvent itself at any moment' (2003b, p. 97). See also Maffesoli's poetic invocation of 'kairos' in this issue of *Cultural Studies*.
- 11 Cheah's extended review-essay 'Mattering' (1997, pp. 108–139), of Butler's *Bodies That Matter* and Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies*, is perhaps one of the best recent essays at clearly spelling out what is at stake in debates over the dynamisms of matter itself.
- 12 Latour rehabilitates 'articulation' by thinking it outside of subject-object relations (in a sense, thinking 'articulation' on the life-ground of the event and not of phenomena, or what Massumi has called 'the being of relation' versus the relatedness of beings (2002, p. 70)). A theory of articulation that starts with relatedness as first condition (not secondary analytical construct) takes it away from the realm of the (only) human and makes it, instead, as Latour says: 'an ontological property of the universe' (1999, p. 303).
- 13 In the initial stages of this project, Professor of Sociology Stephen Crook of James Cook University, Australia – a superb scholar with a long-standing interest in the issue of everyday life – had committed himself to contributing an essay. Stephen, however, became very ill in the interim with cancer and passed away in September 2002. The current issue of *Cultural Studies* is very much poorer for not being able to include his planned essay. The editors would like to dedicate this special issue to the memory of Stephen Crook, and to direct readers to the memorial essay in his honour by Barry Sandywell at the end of the present volume.

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# Barry Sandywell

## THE MYTH OF EVERYDAY LIFE

### Toward a heterology of the ordinary

In Memoriam Steven A. Crook (1950–2002)

*The aim of this paper is to contribute to the rethinking of everyday life as a central, if highly diverse and problematic, theme of modern philosophy and social theory. The focus of the essay concerns the uncertain ontological status of 'the everyday' within the human sciences. An initial exploration of the ambiguity of the expression 'everyday life' points to a more consequential type of undecidability once it is fully recognized how the ideology of 'everyday life' functions to suppress the materiality, contingency, and historicity of human experience. This can be seen in the contrast between powerful atemporal conceptions of everyday life and more critical understandings of the lifeworld framed in temporal categories. The distinction between everyday life and lifeworld proves useful as a marker for two very different approaches to the ordinary. The paper claims that the ordinary has been systematically denigrated in the very act of being theorized as 'everyday life'. A tradition of binary and dichotomous theorizing is uncovered as one of the fundamental sources of the myth of an ahistorical, unmediated everyday life. After mapping a range of more reflexive perspectives toward the investigation of ordinary life, the paper concludes on a positive and reconstructive note by suggesting that any attempt to go beyond the dualisms and antinomies of contemporary theory must first abandon this mythology to reveal the histor(icit)y and alterity of lifeworlds in their rich natural, incarnate, political, and reflexive imbrications.*

**Keywords** everyday life; the ordinary; historicity; lifeworld; alterity; heterology

## Introduction

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the rethinking of 'everyday life' as a central, if highly diverse and problematic, theme of modern philosophy and social theory. The focus of the essay concerns the uncertain ontological status of 'the everyday' within the human sciences. An exploration of the ambiguity of the expression *everyday life* points to a more consequential type of undecidability

once we recognize how the term has functioned ideologically to suppress the *historicity* of human experience. This can be seen in the contrast between powerful *atemporal* conceptions of everyday life and more critical understandings of the lifeworld framed in temporal categories. The distinction between *everyday life* and *lifeworld* proves useful as a marker for two very different approaches to the ordinary. For example, across a range of philosophical perspectives everyday life has been theorized as the sustaining *ground*, *matrix* and *foundation* for other social practices, while on the other hand the ordinary is seen as an *unfinalizable force-field* of living history and novel forms of selfhood. However, even this binary divide between synchronic and diachronic perspectives is seen to be mapped onto much more ancient binary oppositions that still operate as debilitating dichotomies of modern thought (*essence/appearance*, *theoria/praxis*, *universalism/particularism*, *abstract/concrete*, *objective/subjective*, *form/content*, *cognitive/pragmatic* among the more notable of these). I argue that the ordinary has been systematically denigrated in the very act of being theorized as 'everyday life'. This dichotomous *theorizing* has helped sustain the myth of an ahistorical, unmediated everyday life. I conclude by suggesting that any attempt to go beyond the antinomies of contemporary theory must first abandon this mythology to reveal the *histor(icity)* and *alterity* of *lifeworlds* in their rich material, incarnate, political, and reflexive imbrications.

The essay is divided into four parts. First, a brief review of the grammar of 'everyday life'. Second, an analysis of some of the persistent antinomies associated with the myth of everyday life. Third, a sketch of alternative accounts of everyday experience aspiring to overcome the antinomies that accompany the very idea of a theory of the pretheoretical. Finally, the essay will conclude with observations about the prospects of a more reflexive approach to the heterology of ordinary life.

### The grammar of 'everyday life'

Given a larger canvas, an exploration of the disparate meanings of 'everyday life' would require a critical deconstruction of different approaches to the analysis of everydayness (for example, in the work of such figures as Dilthey, Wittgenstein, Simmel, Husserl, Schutz, Heidegger, Dewey, Lefebvre, Kosik, Bakhtin, Benjamin, Bloch, Habermas, Garfinkel, Debord and de Certeau, among others). Given the limitations of a short essay, our sights are confined to a prolegomena to this larger project. We first need to explore the ways in which the 'ordinary' and the 'everyday' have been imagined in mainstream/malestream philosophy and social theory before assessing the limits of these approaches. We begin by asking 'what is meant by the expression *everyday life*'? What, in other words, are the meanings implicated in this polysemic term? We can set the scene by asking where and when 'the everyday' entered modern discourse.

To begin with the word *ordinary*: from the Latin *ordinarius* (*ordo -dinis*, order, arrangement, system), *ordinary* implicates a cluster of significations indexing the habitual, customary, regular, usual, or normal. What is ordinary is 'real'. Terms for stability thus tend to borrow from Middle and Shakespearean English words for order (*order-ly*, *order-li-ness*, *order-ing*, *ordin-ance*, *ordin-ate*, *ordin-al*, *ordin-ar-y*, *co-ordin-ate*, *sub-ordin-ate*, and so forth). Like the dualism 'real/unreal', the *ordinary* contrasts with the *exceptional* or *unusual*. Thus we say that something is *commonplace* (and perhaps even *mediocre* or 'of middling quality') in contrast with the shock of the *extraordinary*. The latter experience is literally 'outside' or 'beyond' the usual order or normal course of things (cf. Skeat 1963, pp. 205–206, p. 414). Where the ordinary is exemplified by commonplace phenomena that are taken for granted and unnoticed, the extraordinary marks the disturbing eruption of the rare and the highly valued. Like other forms of *extravagant* experience, the extraordinary exceeds the limits and boundaries of ordinariness.

Ordinariness is also one of the key features of 'custom' and 'tradition', the 'non-place' where 'nothing happens' (since 'the real world' is precisely *that* order that guarantees that nothing extraordinary will happen). In this respect, the 'ordinary' prepares the way for ideological interpretations of the related idea of stable *tradition* (and thereby of traditional *communality*) as a timeless sociality of the now (or in the watchword of modern capitalism, 'business as usual'). In social thought, this allows the dangerous elision between *moral* order and *social* order. Thus, in medieval culture where routinization, customary work patterns and status hierarchies codify the moral norm, periods of disruption – for example, in carnival – are the times when the 'world is turned upside down', when once-ordered things wander beyond their limits, when class, gender and sacred hierarchies are inverted, where everyday prodigality is overturned in bouts of excessive expenditure, where the seriousness of the established moral and political order is suspended in a temporary utopia of irreverence, festivity and scatological laughter (Bakhtin 1984). What is ordinary is subject to the 'orders that be', protected by the denizens of official culture. What is extraordinary prefigures the 'effervescence' of social orders rendered fluid and mobile. In this way, Bakhtin famously counterposes carnivalesque temporality to quotidian time as the possible to the actual. Without exploring this theme further, we can already see a whole metaphysics condensed in the grammatical contrast of *ordinary/extraordinary* – or its sociological equivalent, *tradition/modernity*.

In a related vein, *ordinary language* is seen as the unnoticed, but ever-present discourse of everyday usage. Unlike the 'extraordinary' idiolects of specialisms and professional discourses (the differentiated domains of law, science, philosophy, theology, aesthetics and so forth), ordinary language is the realm of mundane speech practices that predate the differentiated idioms of modernity. Conversational usage operates as a pseudo-eternal form of life whereas

'extraordinary' speech acts can be compared to the carnivalesque moments within ordinary language, for example, the moment where traditional discourse gives way to 'the philosophical discourses of modernity'.

Similar associations and dualities cling to the term *everyday*. *Everydayness* connotes the normal run of things, the usual and the commonplace. Everyday experience is what happens in typical form today as it has done yesterday and will do tomorrow. Everydayness is the positive continuity of endless repetition, the 'bad infinity' of mundane temporality, to borrow Hegel's idiom. For this reason, the standing *present* – the present stripped of its possibilities – is the grammatical tense of the everyday. Everydayness characterizes experiences that appear to be firmly embedded in the known rituals of practical life separated from the open realm of events and temporal flux. In their detachment from change such experiences become *mundane* (Latin *mundanus*, from *mundus*, the world). Things that are mundane are thus this-worldly, earthly, confined to the horizon of commonsense knowledge and its presentist categories. Like the Greek word *kosmos*, mundanity frames the order of daily life denuded of its ambiguities as eternally the same. Depending upon the features we highlight this might be variously described as a *presentist*, *substantive* or *ontological* conception of everyday life.

These ancient senses are still preserved in the concept of *Lebenswelt* or *lifeworld* that first appears in the philosophy of Husserl. The lifeworld is the world of mundane knowledge presupposed by all scientific knowledge, a prelogical realm composed of everyday experiential typifications and interpretive schemes by means of which habitual patterns of social interaction are practically managed. In contrast with extramundane 'provinces of meaning', the world of everyday life is represented as a coherent intersubjective or public 'domain' of consciousness shared by all members of society. Once reified into *existential presuppositions*, the 'structures of the life-world' can be said to sustain the 'paramount reality' of social coexistence and co-ordinated world-work (Schutz 1967, 1971). Phenomenology sometimes identifies and sometimes separates 'the world of work' (or 'world of working' (*Wirkwelt*) with the 'world of everyday life' as the *sphère de la vie pratique* (Schutz/Gurwitsch 1989, p. 226). The commonality of *la vie pratique* is ensured through its unproblematic and taken-for-granted status as an experiential 'ground' for other 'provinces of meaning', 'practices' and life-world structures (Schutz & Luckmann 1973). Phenomenology thus both substantializes and conflates 'everyday life', 'the world of work', 'the ordinary' and 'quotidian experience'. Another polemical and contrastive term is the specialized cognitive 'attitude' of science or philosophy that suspends the 'natural attitude' of everyday life in order to thematize and describe previously taken-for-granted assumptions and horizontal presuppositions: 'The concept "life-world," world of daily existence, etc., is after all a polemical concept. It signifies the world in which we live and which for us – or for some other group – constitutes reality in contrast to the "world" which science constructs'.<sup>1</sup>

Irrespective of their provenance – whether embedded in ordinary language or reformulated as theorists’ categories – the same insistent image of everyday life as a static and ‘timeless’ sphere, a sustaining *matrix*, or *ahistorical* fundament of repetitive behaviour is evident. Whether we speak in terms the *le monde vécu* (*le mode comme il est vécu*), the pre-predicative realm of the lifeworld, the ‘paramount reality’ of mundane relevances, the ‘natural attitude of everyday life’ or the microsociology of ordinary conversation that artfully produces ‘ordinariness’ makes little difference. Social *reality* as a *cohesive identity* is securely ‘anchored’ in prosaic assumptions, typifications, and members’ collaborative, methodic work of ordinariness. This is where essentialism and presentism actively occlude the possibility of a more radical understanding of heterological *experience* (*vécu*), obstructing the exploration of experience unhindered by received metaphysical dualisms. Let us briefly itemize some of the sources of this *ontologization* of ordinariness.

To condense a complex story we can simply assert that both ancient and modern philosophy has, with notable exceptions, treated the ordinary as the phenomenal world of *doxa* – of opinion, dogma, illusions and unreflexive thinking that obstructs the efforts of philosophical reflection (and thereby truth-saying). From Parmenides onwards, the complexities of everyday life are denigrated as ‘that’ which has to be abandoned or transcended in order to engage in true *theoria* and to live the *vita contemplativa*. In the Eleatic vein, ordinary experience understood as a sphere of illusory ‘knowledge’ has to be suppressed as a negative obstacle to the positivity of ‘genuine’ *theoria*, *philosophia*, *science*. This cultural amnesia is most visible in the tenacious hold of Platonic and Cartesian ‘specular’ theories of knowledge which translate the *essence/appearance* dualism of certain knowledge and dubitable experience – the Way of Truth and the Way of Seeming – into the language of modern culture (Sandywell 1996, 1999). Indeed, orthodox philosophical traditions can be viewed as different phallogocentric attempts to *escape* from ordinariness into a pure realm of truth-saying. Thus in the crucial century between 1750–1850 ordinariness formed one of the epistemological adversaries of the Enlightenment project; the everyday came to be projected as the target of radical scepticism, the source of ‘superstition’ and ‘prejudice’ (the modern form of denigration which represents everydayness as an adversary of what Habermas calls ‘the philosophical project of modernity’). Closely associated with the devaluations of radical Enlightenment is the image of everydayness as a bounded *domain* of ‘merely’ pragmatic interests and fallible knowledge (of *commonsense* contrasted with *science* with its promise of secure foundations and absolute self-certainty). In a more immediate way, everydayness was simultaneously identified with the secular realm of ‘practical activity’ and transmuted into the *action* pursued by ‘ordinary people’ (this-worldly activity anchored in the rational subject as the sphere of practical life).<sup>2</sup> Both movements involved a type of ‘reality-stripping’ in which the material mediations of modernity (including the ravages of capitalist exploitation, gender

oppression and colonial violence) were suppressed to secure the pseudo-transparency of 'mundane' life.

An important chapter in this process coincides with the democratic politics of modernity where ordinariness comes to be contrasted with 'revolutionary' periods of sudden change and transformation. Where the everyday is habitual and static, political and social change is depicted as fluid and mobile (a contrast that is still embedded in the expression 'social movements'). More generally, everydayness is frequently understood as the *popular*, the universal sphere of the 'common good', the 'common wealth' or even 'common humanity' expressed in the activities of daily life as a cultural invention of democratic modernity (privileging the popular as a source of authentic will-formation and societal purpose). In this sense, 'the everyday' is a construction of modernity, following the philosophical and institutional transformations of late-enlightenment Europe. In the late nineteenth and through the first part of the twentieth century, everydayness as *commonality* is reconceptualized as *mass experience* (providing a key presupposition for accounts of popular experience couched in terms of the commercialization, trivivization and banalization of experience as a consequence of the new technologies of cultural (re)production and dissemination bewailed by cultural critics of the right (from Arnold to Leavis) and the left (Adorno). As 'low' to 'high' culture, the 'popular' is whatever is common to or shared by a collectivity, typically presented in terms of mass population groupings (implicit in terms such as 'the people', 'popular culture' or the forms and practices of 'ordinary people' tacitly understood in terms of the large population-centres of urban-industrial nation-states).

In sociological discourse, these meanings were incorporated into the category of 'community' (*Gemeinschaft* in Ferdinand Tönnies terminology) contrasted with the imposed and 'artificial' organization of 'society' (*Gesellschaft*), 'mechanical solidarity' displaced by 'organic solidarity' (Durkheim), substantively rational action displaced by formal-instrumental action (Weber). In these imaginary schemas, the associations and organizations of 'society' are represented as abstract systems arising upon a substructure of vital forms of face-to-face community (thus, in Weber the forms of action associated with traditional authority are systematically replaced by rationalized forms geared to more impersonal, abstract and instrumental forms of social organization). More recently, everyday life has been presented as the 'object' of managerial systems (the response of governmental authorities to the crisis of liberalism, corporatism, welfare-state capitalism and the triumph of legislative reason; Bauman 1987). From here, it is a short step to theories of the state regulation and colonization of everyday life (in both the liberal capitalist spheres and the eastern-bloc communist states) framed in terms of the demise or disappearance of 'community' before the bureaucratic juggernauts of corporate capitalism and the modern state. Once these distinctions are in place, we can move from images of eroded community, colonization and domination to a view of everyday life as

an 'object' of political administration and reconstruction (the processes through which the welfare/warfare state has reconstructed the basic terms of reference of everyday life in the twentieth century).

These variant forms of devaluation have long been incorporated into the fabric of modern social thought. Here everydayness is the *habitual*, the *local* and the *routine* or, more generically, the domain of *taken-for-granted* practices and assumptions shared by a 'mass public' (as in the expression 'public opinion' and, of course, efforts to take the temperature of the public through 'opinion research'). This becomes the unquestioned premise of both normative sociology and the 'mass-observation' studies in the 1930s and 1940s (see Adorno 1998, Highmore 2001). Even more poignantly, in the tradition of Romantic anti-capitalism, the everyday is troped as 'fallenness': the quotidian nihilism of ordinary vacuity and banality (the 'being-forgetful' *Weltanschauung* of 'the They', or in less guarded terms the hegemony of mass-popular taste and mass-market consumer culture that follows in the wake of 'the revolt of the masses').

### The world we have lost

How has everyday life been viewed through these interpretations? What is the question to which 'everyday life' is the answer?

(Crook 1998, p. 534)

In reality, there are a number of questions to which everydayness has been commended as an answer. We have already noted one of the most pervasive attitudes toward the everyday in the repression of ordinary life that forms a presupposition of the quest for absolute wisdom (*sophia*) and the modern project of cognitive foundationalism. We refer, of course, to the ancient dualisms of *essence/appearance* and *theory/practice* (*vita contemplativa/vita activa*). A related attitude is exemplified in the condescension of historical and descriptive social science that views everyday life as a *domain* of banal popular culture. Finally, and overlaid on these prejudicial images, the idea of everyday life is framed as depoliticized *private life*, the affective realms of intimate sociation counterposed to the public world of consequential, organized social action (typically divided into the 'spheres' of *work* and *politics*). This topographical imagery is routinely formulated in gendered terms where the private is the sphere of the 'feminine' and the public the sphere of 'masculine' interests.

#### *Antinomies of everyday life*

Sustained by these negative and formal conceptions of ordinariness, we should not be surprised to find a series of persistent, if spurious, antinomies characterized by a relentless drift toward universal, asocial and atemporal