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Henri Lefebvre's Legacy of the Micro- and Macro-Problem in Social Analysis

*No knowledge of (global) society
without critical knowledge of
everyday life in the way it implants itself
- with its organisation and its privation,
with the organisation of its privation –
in the middle of this society and its history.
No knowledge of everyday life without critical
knowledge of the (entire) society.
Henri Lefebvre*

I.

Since the mid 1940s¹ Henri Lefebvre has been providing several books on everyday life and the relationship between everyday and social development under the heading of the “Critique of Everyday Life”. The demand is made for a critical as well as practical view of the connection between macro-, meso- and micro-processes as well as the field of the constitution of social formations, social forms, form definitions (Formbestimmtheiten) and their consequences for the conditions of individual existence (cf. Lefebvre, 1977, II: 154 onwards).²

He analytically and pointedly articulates the relationship between the critique of everyday life and the critique of political economy: “La critique de la vie quotidienne implique et enveloppe la critique de l'économie politique au sens de Marx et cherche à atteindre l'homme social qui se base sur l'activité économique et la déborde (Lefebvre, 1989: 604; cf. 1977, III: 153). Thus Lefebvre reformulates the conditions of the concept of capital³, which are categorically placed and developed by Marx, in order to empirically and analytically dig up the revolution theory buried within it as a question of the revolutionary subject, its constitutive conditions as well as its transversal networks. This aims to reach ‘down’ to human experiences⁴ and requires specific knowledge about the status of Marxist capital

¹ His last contribution in this field is the posthumously published volume “Eléments de rytmanalyse” (Lefebvre, 1992).

² The papers in Knorr-Cetina/Cicourel (1981) provide a very useful overview on the state of the art of the micro- and macro-debate. Unfortunately this doesn't include the works of Lefebvre. Although most of his work could be read as a commentary to this debate - and even a solution! Especially if one takes into account what Knorr-Cetina states: that the presented approaches “do not yet go far enough in their attempt to reconceive of the ‘macro-order’ from the perspective of micro-social theory and methodology” (1981: 41, cf. 30, 34).

³ For the logic of Marx's capital analysis, see Reichelt (1970).

⁴ In the German speaking area, this denotes the much discussed approach of Negt/Kluge, Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung/The Public Sphere and Experience (1972).

analysis, whose dimensions, carefully developed by Lefebvre, allow precise knowledge about his understanding of Marx's theory as a socio-political project (cf. Lefebvre, 1972: 100 onwards, 263 onwards; 1978: 164 onwards). Information about the way he sees himself and the perspectives of Lefebvre's experience with Marxist theory give rise to reflections that he applies in his second volume of "Critique of Everyday Life": "First, and patiently, we have reinstated the initial Marx agenda, a program which is both utopian and practical, the idea of a total practice which will resolve the contradictions by eliminating all alienating divisions. *Second, in taking Marxism up again as radical critique of everyday life in this way, we are shedding light on precisely what revolution would change, if the real stopped lagging behind the possible.* ...In Volume I of *Critique of Everyday Life* (1946) the aim was simply to give everyday access to history and to political life. Today the aim is to build a long-term policy on how to answer the demands for a radical transformation of everyday life" (Lefebvre, 1977, II: 48-49; emphasis H.S.).⁵

Lefebvre sees his work as a theory that contributes to the knowledge and diagnosis of modernity that is only made possible on the basis of a restitution of Marx's project. In doing so, his constant critique of dogmatic thinking makes him immune to rendering Marx's theory absolute. His views on the advances and limitations of Marx's theory and its involvement in historical constellations drive him to seek both completion and further development (cf. Lefebvre, 1977, III: 159; 1972: 101-102, 263-264).

In his discovery and interpretation of Marxism as a radical critique of everyday life, not only does the well-known alienation theoretical leitmotiv of the young Marx of the Parisian manuscripts become the focus, but at the same time it forms the basis for a substantial critique of immanent economic, sociological or philosophy abridgments of Marx's theory – particularly as a deeper critique of political economy. This interpretation also includes the attempt at placing "humans", in their both concrete and always socially conveyed existence, in the centre of a theory without falling prey to the charges of "ontology" or "anthropology" that Lefebvre levels against Existentialism.⁶

The questions of the constitutive conditions of subjectivity and the relationships between subjectivity, political ability, decision-making and responsibility should be answered separately from the classical talk of subjectivity's transcendental constitutive conditions.

Lefebvre's answer, which, in reference to the empirical human being, traces everyday life as

⁵ Lefebvre, aside from Adorno, is the most relevant representative of Western Marxism, see Anderson (1978) and Schmied-Kowarzik (1981). For Lefebvre's categorisation in French Marxism and its history see Poster (1975); Schoch (1980); Judt (1986).

⁶ Lefebvre also sharply criticises structuralist views and authors, above all Althusser; see for example Lefebvre (1974: 76-77); Münster (1987 a, b).

the future place of human self-realisation, embodies the demand that something more than an abstract negation of the transcendental argumentation be portrayed.

If philosophy and literature were in an alliance against everyday human life, that led not only to an undermining of everyday life caused by the confusion between capitalist reality and “what is humanly real” (Lefebvre, 1977:1: 134-135, 93 onwards), but also, as may be inferred, to the necessity of a transcendental argumentation, because the “underminers” were really unable to see any basis for making subjectivity possible.

Lefebvre’s thesis-like formulation “Humans will be everyday people, or they will not exist” therefore begins and ends in the demand, which is recurrent in his work, that a real critique of everyday life should include a “rehabilitation of everyday life” (Lefebvre, 1977, I: 135).

Lefebvre’s program is primarily determined by his view of the need for a rehabilitation of everyday life against the devaluations made by “higher activities” – philosophy, literature, art, morality, and politics. It is crucial here that these higher activities have a negative relationship to everyday life but only appear to be separate from it (Lefebvre, 1977, I: 93-94). In fact their conditions for existence must be seen as seeds out of which everyday practice grows. This, then, leads to the conclusion: “Even and particularly when extraordinary activities have created them, they must return to everyday life in order to examine and increase the validity of creation. What arises or is built in upper-spheres of social practice must prove its truth in everyday life, be it art, philosophy or politics. They all become authentic only on this level.” (Lefebvre, 1977, II: 53).⁷

II.

This leitmotiv of the connection between everyday life and higher activities, so-called upper spheres of society (the state, science, culture) is composed and simulated by Lefebvre in constantly new variations: however, this motiv is based around what he apostrophises as a “fundamental statement”: “It is everyday life in which the rational core lies, the real centre of practice” (Lefebvre, 1972: 49). He sees the production of social relationships as occurring in everyday life, which, in turn, not only stands by all activities in a crucial way, but it also encompasses them with all their conflicts and differences: “It is their intersection, their connector and their common ground. In everyday life, the totality forms from relationships that make a whole out of what is human and of every human being” (Lefebvre, 1977, I: 104). A further development and specification of this approach leads him to the statement:

“According to our hypothesis, which guides our entire program, everyday life is the place in

⁷ See here Heller’s view in her “Everyday life” (1978: 96): “Everyday life and the way of thinking related to it are the basis of history, there is no social theory – there cannot be any – that could escape it”.

which and from which real *creations* are accomplished, those which produce what is human and, in the course of their humanisation, *the people: the deeds and actions*" (Lefebvre, 1977, II: 52).

The talk of the "present-absent abundance" of everyday life is accordingly, in its leitmotivistic connection, to be related to the theory of the "actions and deeds" that produce what is human in everyday life, and is able to be further analysed with the help of this connection. When reference is made to the "rationality included in everyday life" (1972: 27) and the "inherent creative activity, the unfinished work" (1972: 24) of everyday life, one can speak of giving everyday life its misdirected wealth back (1975: 135), and, in general, exposing the "virtualities of everyday life" (1972: 39).⁸

Therefore analytical work with the theoretical categories of "realisation" and "expropriation", "alienation" and "emancipation", "creativity" and "passiveness" is made and shown to be relevant by the reference to empirical aspects of everyday life. In the focal point of knowledge about everyday life there is the insight into its polar or ambiguous or multi-valent character that is constantly sought to be comprehended in new definitions in order to thus define each present social reality in reference to possibility.

Lefebvre works on the problem of mediating the micro-, meso- and macro- problem in his own ways⁹: Everyday life is categorically primarily defined through "ambiguity" (1975: 14), appears as "residue and product" (1977, II: 73), described as a "place of meeting and clash between repetition and creation" (1977, III: 70) and as a contradictory relationship "between productive activity and passive consumption, between everyday life and creativity" (1974: 207), illustrated by the "misery" and the "greatness" of everyday life (1972: 55), by "poverty and wealth" (1975: 331) as well as "degradation and fertility" (1972: 24), the crucial question for the evaluation of virtualities is that of the perspectives within this structure and structuring, and therefore of the possibilities of the utopia of a domination free and just society.

⁸ C.f. Heller's argument that also focuses on the possible, in this case "an individual-active life", and concludes: "That is why we have no reason to accept that the transformation of everyday life into a 'consumerist everyday life' is humanity's inevitable historical fortune. Everyday life is approaching, insofar, the consumerist style – which is negatively evaluated – as the subject of everyday life is a particular subject – in this respect there is no principle difference between the past and the present –, and everyday life becomes insofar active, non-consumerist, with a positive value accent, *even in the economic sectors that belong to consumption*, as the subject of everyday life is individuality" (1978: 90-91).

⁹ And it is necessary to add one of his results of social analysis here: "It is not only the entire society that becomes a place of reproduction (of production of conditions and no longer of production methods); rather it is also the entire space. Monopolised by neocapitalism, sectorised, reduced to a homogenous and yet fragmented and hacked up milieu (space is only sold to 'clientele' in tiny little pieces), space becomes the seat of power" (1994: 100).

If the perspective of a processing of the object “everyday life” is able to be concluded on the first attempt, from investigating and dealing with it, and to be traced as a rehabilitation program, the question remains of the significance of a critique of everyday life in the context of a practical political interest in the development of a theory of society, thus in that which the connection between micro, meso and macro processes demands and provides for cognitive achievements that are conducive to real change.

The resulting necessary connection between knowledge of everyday life and knowledge of totality leads to, in the interest of supporting the constitution of subjectivity and of the development of decision-making and responsibility – as a form of conscious action, a specific formulation by Lefebvre on the connection between recognising and taking action: “*One only reaches radical negativity again only through radical critique of everyday life. Double and uniform movement: it is impossible for one to understand everyday life without rejecting it, and it is impossible for one to recognise it without wanting to change it. Everyday life and its rejection radically challenge the entirety of the modern world bit by bit: ... This type of a privileged critique puts an end to the fragmentation of the whole; its reconstructs it into a new entirety...* consequently the critique of everyday life – and only it alone – would be capable of summarising the diverse individual critiques and protests in a bundle. ... The totality of these critiques and radical critique of totality, i.e. negativity, is only reconstructed when one begins with everyday life” (Lefebvre, 1975: 330-331. Emphasis HS; c.f. 1977, II: 34).

Following these implicit and, partly, explicit guidelines, Lefebvre begins the realisation of his program by presenting a view of his understanding of Marxism as critical knowledge of everyday life (1977, I: 144 onwards; specifically 153). In accordance with his praxis-philosophical framework and interpretation, that flows from his interest in the problem of “becoming a subject” (ibid. 163), he analyses the following elements and dimensions of Marx’s theory as connectable “building blocks” for a critique of everyday life: a critique of individuality, critique of mystification, critique of money, critique of needs, critique of work, critique of freedom. Finally he drafts a theory of everyday life in the modern world, i.e. in Late Capitalism. In conclusion, his thoughts move between a hopeless, socially changing conception of everyday life in post-war France (low degree of alienation, possibilities and strategies that struggle against the restrictions of capitalism) and a disillusioned, yet not hopeless concept of everyday life that is theoretically focussed on the concept of “bureaucratic society of planned consumption” (1972). This is the expression of a life that is subject to the restrictions of capitalism and almost completely alienated – increased still by “second degree alienation” and a decrease in the awareness of alienation – which does not,

however, merge into this definition and, thus, into a completed system formation (1972: 135 onwards; 1975: 68; c.f. 1974: 69-70).

It is analytically relevant for the subject and freedom perspective that Lefebvre states that, for the fundamentally controversial constitution of capitalist societal development, particularly in its effects on the “bearers” of this formulation in particular: “The conflict between the desire for active participation in production in the broader sense (production of works and of social relations) and the diverse dissociations, mainly the dissociation between production in this global sense and production in a restricted sense, between productive activity and passive consumption, between everyday life and creativity. ... And finally the contradiction - ... - between the overorganisation and the tendency to decompose, between the *strong sides* and their *weak sides*. ... A *strength* such as the organisation of production and the rationality within the endeavour can become a *weakness* when the context changes, when one for example applies the same type of rationality to urban areas. Conversely a *weak side* such as culture or city life can become *strong* when it comes to the production or reproduction of a centrality” (1974: 207).¹⁰

III.

Lefebvre’s demand for a rehabilitation of everyday life, his socio-theoretical approach of mediating between everyday life theory and his critique of political economy lead to a clear contouring of an overall program in which the logical and historical reconstruction of the object “everyday life” are connected with a large-scale cultural revolutionary perspective on the change of everyday life, both as way of life, and societal formation.

On the basis of a difference, or discrepancy, between everyday life as the world of experiencing and history as a world of substantial praxis, style formation and creations, this programme may be laid out in separate elements:

- a) The demand for a transformation of everyday life lives on the world of triviality’s possession of hidden wealth;
- b) The portrayal of previous history should be shown as pertaining to an area of the ‘pre-history’ of human alienation;
- c) “One can consider the entire history, a history which does not report events according to their apparent magnitude and does not report people the way they speak of themselves, rather which considers both, the events and the people, from a totally different perspective of what is suffered” (Lefebvre, 1975: 81)¹¹;

¹⁰ See here Hegel’s formulation on the theory of contradiction: “Something is thus alive as long as it contains contradiction, and this power is that of containing and withstanding contradiction” (1969: 76).

¹¹ From a leitmotivistic perspective connections to Adorno and Benjamin also arise here.

- d) Overcoming the difference between everyday life and history should be debated in the framework of the classical Marxist theory of the dying off of the state, a critique of state and power. This particularly represents a ‘thorn in the flesh’ for ‘state socialism’, to which Lefebvre often dedicates critical analyses in order to clarify its reversal from an emancipatory one to a project of domination (Lefebvre, 1975: 81; c.f. 1977, II: 43; 1978: 32, 36, 277-278).

In order to reconstruct the systematical social and everyday theoretical powers which are found in the leitmotifs and figures of justification of Lefebvrian thought and in order to make clear the connection between empiricism and theory, it is useful to subdivide his concept of “everyday” or of “everyday life” into the dimensions “empirical” and “(meta)philosophical” without wanting to eliminate the interwoven connection of these dimensions.

Demonstrating the historical nature of everyday life, and apportioning or tracing of the historical structural genesis of various types of the object of research in the context of constantly newly mediated social conditions have constitutive significance for Lefebvre’s engagement with the relationship between theory and empirical work.

At the same time, this approach is not only weighty in a reconstructive sense, but it also contains, in the way in which it draws closer to the object, a critical evaluation as well as statements about possible or necessary changes to it in the future: “By the way in which the critique of everyday life shows how people live, it also accuses the strategies from which this everyday life has grown. Critical thought overcomes the borders between the specialised sciences and human reality” (Lefebvre, 1972a: 150).¹² It is understandable that, under the conditions of a research method that is structured in such a way, theoretical and empirical knowledge is to be developed or re-formulated in the respective frameworks of historical social processes. Therefore Lefebvre has often posed ideas about its object, the problem of research and presentation, methods, difficulties with comprehending everyday life because of its changing content. This includes problems with clarifying the question of what is or what seems to be, just as much as the problems with processing new categories. Above all, it is about the cases

¹² In “Everyday life in the modern world”, Lefebvre formulates as a “dilemma” when dealing with everyday life: “*Either* one is occupied . . . , with strengthening institutions, existing ideologies – the state or some kind of church, some kind of philosophical system or a political organisation – and thereby endeavours to consolidate the everyday life on which this ‘superstructure’ is built up and contained. *Or* one is occupied with ‘changing life’. In other words: *Either* one raises the instances which tower over what is everyday, whereby they claim to domineer over it, to absolutes, to platonic ideas – *or* one relativises these beings (state, church, cultures, etc.), one refuses to substantiate them . . . , one makes them void, one enhances the status of that which belittles them, that upon which they put pressure by regarding it as a residue: everyday life” (1972: 27-28).

in which the place or ranking of old categories changed because processes have taken place in the meantime that modified that placing of the everyday or everyday life within the social totality in a drastic way.

Lefebvre's demand consists then, with the help of a "dialectalisation of concepts and methods" (1977, III: 108-109), of deciphering everyday life in its appearance, but also in its reality, by means of implementing its apparent, formless facts in knowledge (1972: 43). In doing so he seeks to apply Marx's procedure to his own work; a procedure which is understood as a "presentation of the system and through the presentation its own critique" (Marx Engels Works: 29: 550; c.f. Theunissen, 1978: 13 onwards). This shows the dialectic development of concepts on the basis of a representation that reveals the historical content of what is uncovered, without stopping there: "This correct perspective leads also to the points which indicate the overcoming and going beyond of the present-day form of production relations and so foreshadowing the future. If on the one hand the pre-bourgeois phases appear as *only historical*, that is, transgressed presuppositions, the present-day conditions of production on the other hand appear as *transgressing themselves* and positing thereby the *historical preconditions* for a new state of society" (Marx, no year: 365; c.f. Lefebvre, 1977, 1: 150, 184, 226, 139 onwards, 173: III: 91 onwards; c.f. further Theunissen, 1974).¹³

In order to be certain and assure oneself of the scope of Lefebvre's approach, Lefebvre's further thoughts on his approach are relevant: on the one hand he links the possibility of formulating knowledge of social totality to a procedure that rests on a "constellation of concepts" (1974:7), on the other hand he insists, without wanting to renounce the level of conceptual knowledge (1977, II: 95), on the knowledge of problems – which are admittedly only mentioned cognitively – that arise from the reference to dialectics: "One can not get around (despite the efforts of all dialecticians from Heraklit and Hegel to those of today) violating the structures of discourse in

¹³ Lefebvre illustrated the problems and procedure in an example: "Thus the simplest event – a woman buying a pound of sugar, for example – must be analysed. Knowledge will grasp whatever is hidden within it. To understand this simple event, it is not enough to merely describe it; research will disclose a tangle of reasons and causes, of essences and 'spheres': the woman's life, her biography, her job, her family, her class, her budget, her eating habits, how she uses money, her opinions and her ideas, the state of the market, etc. Finally I will have grasped the sum total of capitalist society, the nation and its history. And although what I grasp becomes more and more profound, it is contained from the start in the original little event. So now I can see the humble events of everyday life as having two sides: a little, individual, chance event – and at the same time an infinitely complex social event, richer than the many 'essences' it contains within itself. The social phenomenon is defined by the unity of both of these aspects. It still remains to be explained why the unending complexity of this fact is concealed, and whence its apparent banality comes, this appearance that is still a part of its own reality" (1977, I: 65).

order to ‘mention’ dialectic movements. It is necessary to gain control of that which escapes – not because of its essence (as something unrecognisable) or its nature (as an irrational or ontological truth), rather of that which simply escapes because it is ‘that’ which needs to be controlled and which reveals the becoming of knowledge as well as that of what is real.¹⁴

Similarities between Lefebvre and Adorno can here be seen through a crucial leitmotiv of thought; this is the determining power of “negativity”. What Adorno states in the title of his main work and develops in its execution also arises in Lefebvre’s work through the contrast between the concepts of negativity and “totality”: “Every totalisation that poses as a perfect totality disintegrates and disperses – although only after it has developed all of its virtual possibilities. As soon as it proclaims itself to be the *world* on a human (and thus finite) level, and only after this illusory and self-indulgent proclamation of itself, is it denied, eroded, fragmented and finally massacred by the negative force (that which is limited, finite) that the world has born for all times. Only a perfect totality reveals that it is not one” (Lefebvre, 1977, III: 10-11).¹⁵ The principle of becoming¹⁶, which is embodied in negativity or dialectic negation (Lefebvre, 1977, III: 13) that is confronted with totality and its demand for completeness, is not only the basis for the fundamental antisystematic impulse, the rejection of identity-philosophical thought. At the same time it provides the reason for hopes that have to do with the object “everyday life” that is itself endangered by totalising movements: “The realising or totalising conditions which systems strive for

¹⁴ Both of Lefebvre’s ideas point to fundamental problems in the constitution of knowledge and also make the proximity of fundamental elements of his thoughts to those of Adorno or even of Adorno’s to his become apparent. This is mentioned in Adorno’s “Negative Dialectics” (1966: 163-164): “To become aware of the constellation in which the thing stands means to decipher the one that it carries within itself as something that became what it is. The chorismos of the outside and the inside is for its part historically conditioned. The only knowledge which can unleash the history in the object is that which is aware of the historical positional value of the object in its relationship to others; the updating and concentration of something already known, which it transforms. The cognition of the object in its constellation is that of the process, which it has stored up within itself”.

¹⁵ Theunissen, in his interpretation of Hegel’s logic, referred to the ‘wealth of experiences of the concept of negation’ (1978: 171 onwards): “‘Positivity’ as an interpretatively introduced title for all possible forms of pretence in which the notion of the particular pretence becomes caught up, means primarily simple predeterminedness, the continuous existence of what exists. Accordingly, ‘negativity’ as a similarly global antonym, primarily means *activity*, and, to be sure, activity in the whole scope in which it alone can fully cover the opposite of predeterminedness” (p. 173).

¹⁶ This also determines the ‘entrance’ into Lefebvre’s continuous debate with Heidegger – especially in „Metaphilosophy“ (Lefebvre, 1975); on Lefebvre’s self-conception c.f. Prein/Sünker (1991: 97 onwards). For Elden, the critical references to Heidegger are a relevant leitmotiv in the development of the works, after the references to Heraklit, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche (2004: 8, 76-77, 170, 179, 191, 242).

are all the more disconcerting as they can actually succeed in this approximative and thus formless ‘world’ (by all means more or less ‘well’, only to a certain extent, only almost, but still in a ‘real’ manner). They are dangerous because they force a new, almost complete, almost ultimate form upon what is ‘real’ and they constitute it in this form to what is ‘real’ by making it what it is; by letting it ‘be’. Luckily we know, however, that this systematic form always leaves a residue that destroys it from the inside out” (Lefebvre, 1975: 352).¹⁷

Lefebvre’s realisations of his original intentions when working on “Critique of Everyday Life” in the 1940s, his contrast between what was portrayed at the time as everyday life, to which perspectives and hopes there was reason given, and that which self-arose within a relatively short period of time in the way of developments in the object area, once again emphasises his process as portrayal and critique, and extends to the insight in the necessity to take seriously the historical formation of everything that constitutes everyday life.

If the approach of “Critique of Everyday Life” lives on a critical object portrayal into which the hope for a qualitative change, a release of the object’s virtual wealth enters, then the social development in France of the fifties and sixties leads to the fact that the object of the author’s research vanishes or changes until it is unrecognisable and these changes bring about problems with portrayal as well as further leading to an essential revision of the socio-historical perspectives in relation to the realisation of subjectivity in everyday life (Lefebvre, 1977, II: 8-9, 22, 148-149, 168-169; 1972: 48-49, 61 onwards, 89 onwards; 1974: 221).

This “confirmation of everyday life” (1977, II: 98) finds its essential basis in what Lefebvre calls the re-privatisation of life; something that is diametrically opposed to the insight into the historically powerful nature of everyday life, and thus to the perspective of liberation in a global sense. Privatisation has modified and solidified everyday life, “and, to be sure, in its characteristic as a place of ‘privation’ and of false appearances. This unexpected consolidation of our research object has upset the

¹⁷ This is also a possible answer to the question of whether the capital movement is a self-negating one (c.f. Lefebvre, 1974: 15).

A classical formulation of this problem can be found in the “Grundrisse” (Marx, no year: 313 – 314): “Capital drives this tendency it has beyond national barriers and prejudices as well as beyond nature worship, as well as beyond all traditional, confined, complacent, encrusted satisfactions of present needs, and production of old ways of life. It is destructive towards all of this, and constantly revolutionises it, tearing down all the barriers, which hem in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs, the all-sided development of production, and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces ... The universality towards which it irresistibly strives encounters barriers in its own nature, which will, at a certain stage of its development, allow it to be recognised as being itself the greatest barrier to this tendency, and hence will drive towards its own suspension”.

research, seeing as it changed both the object itself and the perspective as well as the methods of access and action” (1977, II: 104).

With the almost culture-critical sounding question, “The organisation of everyday life (with its ‘brilliance’, with its splendid disguise, ‘modernism’) – is that supposed to be the French way to Americanisation?” (1972: 98)¹⁸ the theory of consolidating everyday life is connected with that of the feature that distinguishes and characterises modern societies (1975: 119).

It is understandable that the everyday life which is characterised by monotony and fragmentation (1972: 225) does not provide a basis for processes of self-realisation in everyday life and for style formation and production of meaning. This especially does not happen when a form of movement has de facto priority which deep-structurally leads the superficially appearing separations to “uniformity”. Lefebvre crucially analyses these homogenisation processes: “We know that complexity conceals homogeneity and that difference masks synchronisation. Imitating people. Imitation is not an individual phenomenon, not a relationship from individual to individual. It is a social relationship: a form that produces conformity and broad conformism. The place of autonomous activity has been taken over by ‘attitudes’, and attitudes are facial expressions” (1975: 242-243).

Theoretically Lefebvre conceives the contents of this homogenisation and consolidation movement, that does not exactly improve the potential for liberation, without actually being able to perfectly negate them, with the concept of “mundaneness”, whereby this concept reduplicates both in itself and a modernity that conceals it (1972: 39-40, 164-165, 185); meaning that “mundaneness” embodies a historical and systematical antipole to “everyday life”.

The establishment of everyday life as a generalised way of life is completed in the context of a societalisation process that is established or tries to establish itself as a threefold movement: as a “totalisation of society” in connection with an “extreme individualisation” as well as a “particularisation” (1978: 340; c.f. Heller, 1978: 81-82). The social and societal alternative is all about the introduction and realisation of a concept of “cultural revolution” (Lefebvre, 1972: 263), based on all people’s maeutically supported creativity and thus referring to the ability for utopia (1972:

¹⁸ Max Frisch achieved in his novel “Homo Faber” an illustration and a symbolisation of what the Americanisation of life style as “American way of life” means from a European perspective. For ambivalent ways of dealing with “Americanism” in the European tradition, particularly in intellectual debates and in literary products of the Weimar Republic see Lethen’s instructive study (1970: 19-57).

52).¹⁹ Although the terms for this perspective vary, the contents remain identical: Lefebvre aims for a “revolutionary project of liberation” (1972: 24), “a transformation of everyday life” (1978: 44, 231), in order to start dissolving mundaneness within everyday life – and thereby not to stop at the “elite exchange” which has been common in previous history and which is then sold as revolution. For: “People will need to be completed in everyday life: in a *different* everyday life to the one that is consolidated around us” (1975: 269). The project of the “Aufhebung of philosophy” and the project of “l’homme total” are in accordance with each other because the concern is about a reciprocal relationship between a realisation of reason and a realisation of people (1975: 126, 135, 341 onwards).

This perspective, with which the definite, concrete negation of predominant reality and thus with the field of what is present – is propagated and aimed for, has a substantial basis in the “Theory of needs”, which mainly follows Marx’s analysis in the “Grundrisse” and the “economic-philosophical manuscripts” (c.f. Marx, no year; MEW EI: 537, 540), where the essential relationship between needs, pleasure and work (1977, II: 11 onwards, 40; III: 116; 1975: 83, 142 – 143, 357; 1978: 107 onwards; c.f. Sünker, 2003: Chap. VIII) is named the background for restricted forms of life that should be qualitatively changed in order to realise a “radically different lifestyle” (Lefebvre, 1974: 41). It is crucial for work to be understood as “travail attractif, self-realisation of the individual” (Marx, no year: 505) in order to be able to consider and fulfill the sociality and sociability of all people, to overcome alienation. Learning, creativity, ability to enjoy and self-realisation which constitute real individuality and identity, and thus human subjectivity, its real existence, can be cultural-revolutionarily educated by everyone’s social praxis at least in its pre-requisites – this, however, in the end depends on everyone’s education and, thus, their “political maturity” (1974: 228)²⁰ – in order to make democracy²¹ possible.

¹⁹ The concern is still always the question of the most different dimensions of change and changeability, especially of “the human being”, see here Parin’s brilliant little study (1978); c.f. further Sünker (2004).

²⁰ This gives rise to consequences for semantics and praxis of ‘politics’: “The word ‘political’ regains its original meaning on a new level; it means theoretical and practical knowledge of social life in civitas” (Lefebvre, 1974: 229). On the connection between educational theory and social philosophy see Sünker (2007a: 33-38); on “Politics in/and Capitalism” see Gerstenberger (2007). Included in questions of conceptualisation and praxis of ‘politics’, not only, yet essential in their reference to cultural revolutionary ideas, are the chances and problems which are in accordance with good and associated lives and “good company”, as M. Rosner (2002) presents them using the Kibbutz concepts and experiences.

²¹ On the question of the conceptualisation and praxis of democracy – as the anti-concept of capitalism – see basically the studies by Bowles/Gintis, *Democracy & Capitalism* (1987) and Meiksins Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism* (1995).

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