

**Everyday Life at the Crossroads of Modernity:
Intersections in the thought of Henri Lefebvre,
Cornelius Castoriadis and Agnes Heller**

by

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Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy

in the

Department of Social Inquiry

College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

July 2017

Abstract

Since the nineteenth century, considerations of 'everyday life' have become increasingly prominent in Western socio-philosophical discourse. This interest emulates the reflexivity of everyday life that modernity has generated more broadly. Modern freedom underlies this tendency which has profoundly altered the organisation and content of social life. Social theory and philosophy are tasked with making sense of these eventualities which force them to problematise their own philosophical foundations. This thesis examines the intellectual contributions of Cornelius Castoriadis, Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre in their efforts to formulate social theoretical positions that can account for the significance and vicissitudes of modern everyday life. I engage with their theories concurrently by way of a thematic narrative that reflects the correspondence and deviation of their positions. I structure the thesis in such a way that it is akin to a conversation or dialogue between the three theorists with the intention of accentuating their distinctive voices and concerns regarding the issues under consideration. This discussion generates an account that considers the ways in which paradoxical expressions of freedom animate the social-historical content of everyday life. On the one hand, freedom amplifies the fragmentation, contingency and indeterminacy of everyday life in modernity, and on the other, it underlies our collective organisation and institutions that aim towards individual and social autonomy. These observations evoke a sense of the tragic irony of contemporary everyday life. Explicitly and implicitly Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all place everyday life at the centre of their social philosophies. This recourse to the everyday helps them to not only develop a responsive knowledge of our society but also to identify openings where social and political autonomy could be cultivated. I conclude by framing their social and political gestures in terms of 'postmodern humanism' and point towards Zygmunt Bauman's everyday sociology as complementary to these directions in their thought.

Keywords: Everyday Life, Modernity, Freedom, Postmodernism, Humanism, Cornelius Castoriadis, Agnes Heller, Henri Lefebvre

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Signed:

Timothy Andrews

26th July 2017

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I am grateful for the personal relationships, both new and old, that have formed and strengthened throughout the process of writing this thesis. My experiences over this time have been filled with vibrant conversations of intellectual engagement and encouragement. I am fortunate to be immersed in two close knit communities: among the family and friends of our local community that we call 'the hood' and in the nurturing intellectual environment cultivated by the faculty and postgraduates of the Department of Social Inquiry at La Trobe University. The many engaging dialogues and passing conversations that these communities enable have provided me an invaluable source of inspiration and guidance. More personally, I would like to thank my principal supervisors, Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan, for their warm intellectual generosity, close readings of numerous drafts and commitment to helping me to realise this project. I also thank friends and colleagues, Nathan Finley and Andrew Gilbert, whose sympathetic and critical engagements with the text provided precious scholarly insight and rigour; Alonso Casanueva Baptista, for our lively philosophical discussions, his help with translations and his patience for my continual questions and interruptions; and to Marcel Cameron and Oliver Macindoe for their keen attention to detail. In addition, I am grateful to all those involved in the *Antigone* and Hegel reading groups. The discussions that these collective readings generated were not only of intellectual value but were also great fun. Likewise, I am grateful for the opportunity to have been able to participate alongside the editors of *Thesis Eleven* as an editorial assistant. Finally, my partner Yee Wen's support, her patience, love and companionship, has been a source of reassurance and inspiration throughout these years. This has been as much her journey as it has my own.

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Prologue: *Ulysses* and the Labyrinth

Stately, Plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and razor lay crossed. A yellow dressing-gown, ungirdled, was sustained gently behind him by the mild morning air. He held the bowl aloft and intoned:

–Introibo ad altare Dei.

James Joyce (1922: 1)

The opening lines of James Joyce's *Ulysses* capture the profound transformation of everyday life as it entered modernity. Joyce was acutely aware that the profane had become sacred. In Joyce's setting, irony rules. However, it is not cynical irony. In a world that could no longer locate a singular origin of meaning, Joyce's presentation of modern everyday life had discovered a locus that facilitates the unison of synthetic and authentic meanings that animate our modern lives.

Perhaps no other artefact of cultural production is as representative of the relationship between everyday life and modernity as Joyce's *Ulysses*¹. *Ulysses* impresses on us the inescapability of our everyday lives. In contrast, the more traditional novel embarks on an adventure; it extends a hand to us and leads us reassuringly along its path. For our part, we trust in the narrative and give ourselves over to the story, extending ourselves as a receptacle to be taken away from the banality and incomprehensibility of our daily lives. Instead, *Ulysses* expresses and reflects back to us the nature of our daily existence. In daily life, we do not have a clear narrative to follow. Our modern lives do not unfold with the drama of anticipation resting on each turn of events nor do we await the profound, sometimes cryptic, disclosure of the significance of our lives. *Ulysses* reminds us of this. The reader of *Ulysses* is subject to the same contingent conditions of their own everyday life. The experience that follows can be unsettling. Without the guidance of meta-narratives to give form to the content of the novel, the weightlessness of the reader's own modern life may

become apparent. Joyce makes space for another narrative to emerge. He gives new life to the epic in modernity. In contrast to the totality of the traditional epic that Georg Lukács (1971 [1916]) had described, Joyce's epic is instead generative: written by the contingency and freedom of modern everyday life as it collides with and creates society and our world.

Modern everyday life arouses and distributes self-awareness throughout society with an intensity and novelty that has no precedent. This self-awareness involves a creative component. Here we are reminded of the Daedalus myth – it is of course no accident that Daedalus is the namesake of Joyce's protagonist Stephen Dedalus – that the intricate craftsmanship of the Daedalian kind risks the enslavement of the artist himself. Inverting Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, Castoriadis draws on the Daedalus theme most eloquently in the preface to his *Crossroads in the Labyrinth* where he renders it into an allegory for the world-creating achievements of self-reflexive human thought. It is worthwhile quoting Castoriadis (1984a: ix–x) at length:

To think is not to get out of the cave; it is not to replace the uncertainty of shadows by the clear-cut outlines of things themselves, the flame's flickering glow by the light of the true Sun. To think is to enter the Labyrinth; more exactly, it is to make be and appear a Labyrinth when we might have stayed 'lying among flowers facing the sky'². It is to lose oneself amidst galleries which exist only because we never tire of digging them; to turn round and round at the end of a cul-de-sac whose entrance has been shut off behind us – until, inexplicably, this spinning round opens up in the surrounding walls cracks which offer passage.

Castoriadis suggests that the Labyrinth transcends the 'stable landscape' of everyday life, that unlike everyday life it is disorienting and deceptive. It is at this point I take leave of Castoriadis' allusion. Instead, I present modern everyday life and the Labyrinth as inseparable in modernity, as grafted onto each other in an unholy union that forever denies us a harmonic truth. Once we stepped into the Labyrinth we did not depart from everyday life, but rather, we transformed it. Our everyday life traced our journey through the maze, replicating each twist and turn and forever reshaping itself to this tune. However, all is not lost. We need only return to Joyce's account to realise that there remains a story to be told. Whilst upon our entry to the Labyrinth we

sacrificed the stability of everyday life, we also made possible a world of our choosing. It is from within this paradox that this thesis begins.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. The field of inquiry: everyday life and freedom

Social philosophies that treat everyday life as the ultimate ground of their knowledge are better placed to disentangle the paradoxes that modernity engenders. Everyday life is the theatre of the human condition in modernity. It responds to our individual thoughts, feelings and actions while being shaped by our collective institutions and cumulative histories. Everyday life is a place, a *topos*, where we live and act. The aggregate of this activity, in turn, prescribes the conditions that define the ways in which we act. Everyday life is centrally located in the reciprocal relationship between the individual and society. The tug of individual and collective activity animates everyday life and modern freedom exacerbates this tension into uncertain terrains of historical alterity. Everyday life can be considered a totality; however, it is an indeterminate and contingent one, and therefore resistant to the imposition of totalising theoretical interpretations or knowledge. Thus, everyday life is perhaps better conceived as an intersection of the human condition rather than a conceptual framework in itself.

These insights, which derive from the social and philosophical writings of Cornelius Castoriadis, Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre, establish the central motifs of this thesis. My discovery of the significance of modern everyday life through the writings of these three authors has led me to understand that everyday life defies the constraints of any one particular theoretical contortion. Throughout this thesis, I suggest that philosophical, sociological, anthropological, psychological and historical attention to modern everyday life helps to understand modernity and the possibilities and puzzles that are engendered by modernity's unique interplay between freedom and everyday life. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all agree that any philosophy of modern freedom that is divorced or estranged from our quotidian reality will neglect the very conditions of modern freedom. This important insight is a central theme throughout this thesis. Furthermore, these investigations into the nature and

configuration of modern everyday life provide our society with a fundamental frame of reference for our collective and individual choices.

This thesis responds to a tradition initiated by Karl Marx. Marx theorised and politicised the correspondence and tension between idealism and materialism. At the most general level of analysis, Marx identified the historical conflict between the actual content of human life and the material and social products of its labour. In this light, the theme that motivates the thesis is the disjuncture between social creations, i.e. institutions, culture, language and norms, and the actual content of human lived experience. Modernity exacerbates these tensions that manifest through the correspondence of freedom and alienation. Everyday life provides a conceptual frame within which the disparate elements that compose the amorphous totality of society intersect. This understanding features in Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's social philosophies. Each stress the value of both theorising everyday life and the empirical examination of everyday life. All three share the understanding that the relationship between theory and empiricism is reciprocal and dynamic and therefore contributes toward knowledge that is necessarily incomplete and fluid. Even so, and most importantly to this thesis, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's contributions make the case that this approach to knowledge, regardless of its fluidity and incompleteness, opens for us a window into the reality of our world.

As with Marx, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all consider that a problematical concept of freedom is a fundamental precondition of modernity. They understand that freedom can only be exercised towards the benefit of all who compose society if it is motivated by a self-reflexive attitude towards the content of everyday life and the social forms that shape it. It is on this basis that all three, to greater or lesser extent, come to their politics via perspectives that are sociological in orientation. Whilst Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre each develop social philosophies that stand on their own, this sociological attitude towards politics – one that places an open totality of everyday life at its centre – firmly situates our trio in the tradition of critical humanism initiated by Marx. In this way, more so than the content of Marxism and its associated categories,

Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre each preserve the spirit of Marx in their political and social philosophies.

The format of the thesis gestures towards the procedure of Habermas' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1990). Habermas' project traces the evolution of the Hegelian mediation of the individual subject and the spirit of community across the thought of several important nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers³ through to his own theory of the rational discourse of communicative action. In contrast to Habermas' theory of communicative action, the present discussion highlights the importance of accounting for the experiential and active condition of everyday life in this philosophical trajectory⁴. I identify the inception of a discourse in Marx's philosophy that connects everyday life with modern freedom. I focus my attention on how Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre pick up this discourse. Their contributions all develop this motif in greater detail and in the context of the twentieth century. I present their variations on this dynamic of modernity alongside each other. The narrative that emerges confirms the modern interplay between freedom and everyday life. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's contributions help account for and come to terms with a dynamic and paradoxical relationship between freedom and everyday life that has transformed the character of modernity.

In modernity, freedom and everyday life are combined in the quintessentially modern question: 'How do we want to live?' This question can only be thought in response to the questions, 'How have we lived?' and 'How do we live?'. These questions bring everyday life to the fore. In this setting, the everyday lives in which we reside become increasingly visible to us. Increasing awareness of everyday life is intrinsically bound up with the possibility that it could be otherwise. Intrinsic to this form of consciousness are the rudimentary underpinnings of modern freedom. In the most general sense, freedom is the implicit and explicit knowledge that the world as we know it could be organised differently on the basis of our own activity. In modernity, this knowledge fuels the massive upheavals – the social, cultural, political and technological transformations – that continually reshape our world. The sum of our activities, in both their autonomous and heteronomous configurations animate the

social-historical modality of our everyday life. For us to make sense of our world requires that society is orientated towards its own reproduction. At the same time, the enterprise of modernity privileges constant transformation. Because of this, we collectively reproduce our world as both constant and in alterity⁵. This paradoxical conceptualisation of modern freedom and everyday life unfolds throughout this thesis.

The world that Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre witnessed in the twentieth century was radically different to the one that Marx had encountered in the previous century. 'Progress' marched forward, revolutionising the technologies, politics and organisation of practically all societies. With the new order came two devastating world wars. These wars disclosed a darker side that stripped modernity of its innocence. In the twentieth century, the contradictions and paradoxes of the epoch became increasingly apparent. A deeper reflexivity uncovered relationships between freedom, life and knowledge that problematised definitive understandings of our world. The failings of modern political experiments exacerbated tensions latent within grand designs that sought to organise freedom and people's everyday lives. At the same time the progress of knowledge had turned on itself. The project of rationality had begun to dismantle its own foundations. In this setting, the confidence of a younger modernity was shaken. Neither the politics of freedom nor the project of rational knowledge could uphold the certainty that they had previously professed.

Throughout Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's contributions we can detect their own coming to terms with this new world. Their responses vary; however, they each develop an account that navigates the contingency and ambivalence of the period without losing sight of their sense of project. For all three, modern everyday life is a fragile social-historical modality, torn between the stability necessary for its reproduction and the destabilising forces of constant change. They share an understanding of the tragic orientation of modern everyday life insofar as it is bound to positive and negative expressions of freedom. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre each make light of this situation – their contributions are neither pessimistic nor nihilistic. Attuned to the possibilities of human life within the boundaries of this configuration, they each weigh the costs and benefits of modern freedom. All three gamble on

modernity and make recommendations that endeavour to realise the potentiality of the humanist values that are latent within its parameters.

Throughout this thesis, I trace the influence and guidance of this scheme across the thought and contributions of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. The significance of everyday life and freedom to modernity establishes the axis of this discourse. I examine their theoretical descriptions of modern everyday life, their discussions of modern freedom and the politics that emerge on this basis from their social philosophies. I do not synthesise or conflate their insights. Instead, this thesis intends to examine the significance of modern everyday life and freedom in a format that is more akin to a conversation or a dialogue between the three theorists, whereby the parallels, intersections and tensions between their thought play out.

The thesis has a dual purpose. On the one hand, it demonstrates the centrality of everyday life to the human experience in general and, in particular, its significance and composition in modernity. On the other hand, I underscore the philosophical value of approaching the subject of everyday life from distinct, and sometimes contradictory, perspectives. In this way, the methodology of the thesis corresponds to the conclusions it draws about its subject – that is, the ambivalent, contextualised and elusive nature of modern everyday life benefits from varied, and perhaps inconsistent, modes of interpretation. The voices I have chosen to animate this thesis each incorporate an ambivalent and dynamic concept of everyday life into their social philosophies. For each, everyday life is the ground of their social philosophies. It is the location of a reality caused by the intersection of all aspects of the human condition. This story cannot be told by one narrator. Instead, it requires multiple voices. The theoretical conversation facilitated by this thesis breathes new life into the humanist project initiated by Marx. Amid the ambivalence and precariousness of our own epoch, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre provide fruitful perspectives that resituate freedom and everyday life at the centre of our modernity.

1.2. Setting the scene: the other players

In the twentieth century an intellectual tradition emerged that took everyday life seriously. Throughout the twentieth century, investigations into the significance of everyday life became increasingly common. For the most part, this corresponded to a shift in sociology from positivist and functionalist perspectives towards more interpretive approaches initiated by thinkers such as Max Weber, Georg Simmel and Wilhelm Dilthey. On the other side of the Atlantic, these approaches influenced George Herbert Mead's development of symbolic interactionism that initiated an American sociological tradition that focused on social interactions and the construction of meaning. These, along with the development of cultural studies and postmodern theory in the latter part of the twentieth century saw sociology turn towards everyday life as a subject of inquiry. Philosophy played a major role in this reconfiguration. Its quest for the meaning of life took on renewed significance with existentialism, phenomenology, structuralism and deconstruction. There were many other factors: Sigmund Freud's revolution in psychology paved the way for a radically new way of understanding the subject – while the arts and literature were the early pioneers of drawing attention to the everyday well before the twentieth century. The creation of the modern public generated a broad scholarly interest in the everyday lives of ordinary people (McKeon, 2006). In the twentieth century, the Annales School paved the way for new directions in scholarship and prompted investigations into the history, anthropology and archaeology of daily life. Likewise, feminism's influence on the social sciences necessitated investigations into everyday life. Veiled by patriarchal dominance of the public sphere, it was in everyday life that gender discrimination, oppression and exploitation were most explicitly experienced and reproduced.

By the 1960's the subject of everyday life had become a central theme for much of the social sciences. For many scholars the quotidian became the focus of their scholarship. Diverse categories such as time, place, routine, work, consumption, sex, sleep and boredom became serious subjects of scholarship. An anthropology steeped in the quotidian formed the basis for many disciplines in the social sciences. These daily, repetitive and ordinary aspects of human life became a rich foundation to inspire

insight into the present and future organisation and orientation of societies. This reorientation of the social sciences that reached maturity in the latter part of the twentieth century is situated in the larger narrative of modernity that, since the European Enlightenment, saw a social reconfiguration towards greater reflexivity. In short, society had become interested in itself. In this context, the conditions, meaning and possibilities of everyday life became increasingly pertinent.

The philosophical and social theoretical innovations that flourished from the nineteenth century onward inspired this anthropological interest in everyday life which would, in turn, go on to inform the former. Tracing the development of the concept of everyday life and its increased prominence in social theory and philosophy is a difficult task. While the reflexivity of modernity inspired by the Western Enlightenment underpinned interest in the everyday, the traditions that took up the subject are diverse and have cross-pollinated one another. An extensive summary of the development of the concept and its centrality to discourses that seek to understand modernity is beyond the scope of this thesis. Furthermore, such a discussion would not be necessary to contextualise the thesis narrative. Notwithstanding, it is helpful to engage with some significant traditions and theorists who have influenced Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's interest in the subject of everyday life in relation to their theories of modernity.

Above all, these three theorists are best situated within the tradition that critically intervenes in modern everyday life. In this respect, Karl Marx is the central interlocutor. His early writings articulated an essentialist philosophical anthropology that drew attention to human social and material creation. For Marx, the conditions of human life in modernity were troubling. In the midst of Europe's industrial revolution, Marx was attentive to the consequences that the rapid transformation of productive processes had brought to human lives subject to these working conditions. He focused his analysis on political economy. He identified capitalism as the source of the exploitation of the working class that not only degraded the material conditions of life but also alienated human life from its 'species essentiality' (Marx and Frederick Engels, 2005 [1844]). Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all identified as Marxists at various

stages of their lives. For each of them, the humanism of Marx's early philosophical writings was influential and helped them to expand their critique beyond the relations of production to incorporate the whole of human life. They were not alone in this respect. Others including Georg Lukács, Antonio Gramsci, Karl Korsch, Walter Benjamin and the Critical Theorists of the Frankfurt School, significantly: Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse, had all built on Marx's critique to take in the broader cultural implications of a capitalist modernity⁶. For these theorists, the relations of production were only part of the problem. Martin Jay (1984: 3) explains that their concern was culture, 'defined both widely as the realm of everyday life and narrowly as man's [sic] most noble artistic and intellectual achievements'.

Earlier contributions influenced this direction. The existentialism of the nineteenth century philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche together with existentialist literature questioned the sources of meaning in modernity and what the implications were for human life without the clarity of the fullness of religious life. Similarly, Max Weber's sceptical approach both appreciated and problematised modernity. He took the excesses of modernity to task, especially the tendency towards rationalisation and bureaucratisation and ultimately, the disenchantment of the world. Georg Simmel's fragmentary (Highmore, 2002: 35) and impressionistic (Frisby, 1992) approach to everyday life in the modern world added another interpretive layer to these approaches. These positions helped to problematise the conditions and experience of modern life. Moreover, they did not restrict their analysis to the capitalist relations of production. This contributed to the thought of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre – especially insofar as they sought to make sense of the failures of 'really existing communism' and found commonalities between the alienating life experiences in both capitalist-oriented and socialist-oriented societies.

Along different lines, a new phenomenological approach emerged with the work of Edmund Husserl and, in particular, his concept of *Lebenswelt* or 'life-world' that articulated a pre-given world of objects in which the subject 'lives' as a dynamic horizon:

The life-world, for us who wakenly live in it, is always already there, existing in advance for us, the "ground" for all praxis ... The world is pre-given to us ... as the universal field of all actual and possible praxis, as horizon. To live is always to live-in-certainty-of-the-world (Husserl, 1970 [1936]: 142).

Husserl's breakthrough helped to situate the subject in the world and took the subject's interaction with the world as the focus of his philosophy. Husserl's student Martin Heidegger worked from a similar perspective. In contrast to Husserl, and along more existential lines, he located philosophy itself in the world as a distinct modality of being. Both Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and Heidegger's existential phenomenology were major influences on subsequent theories of everyday life. Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann (1973) and Peter Berger and Luckmann (1967) reworked Husserl's contribution into sociological phenomenologies of everyday life. Their conceptualisation of life-world prioritises everyday life as the ultimate reality of human life and theorises the social construction of this reality. Habermas' (1985a, 1985b) theory of communicative action added greater depth to this sociological articulation of the concept of life-world. He attempted to integrate a phenomenological life-world analysis with sociological action theory via his theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1985b). Habermas' contribution sought to respond to the problem he associates with the subject-centred phenomenology that Schutz continues from Husserl. Along similar lines, for Castoriadis, Lefebvre and, to a lesser degree, Heller, the phenomenology of these perspectives is problematic. They take issue with the privileged position granted to the subject in such phenomenological accounts and question the inadequacies that prevent them from effectively interpreting embodied and social-historical dimensions of modern everyday life.

One of the significant aspects of Heidegger's philosophy was the critique of everyday life or 'everydayness' as inauthentic. Lefebvre and Heller (via Lukács) took this critique seriously, whilst simultaneously attempting to redeem the everyday. This problematic gives distinctive flavour to each of their contributions in relation to the concept of everyday life forming a tension between higher spheres of human meaning and the everyday. For his part, Castoriadis circumvents the problem by avoiding

explicit conceptualisation of everyday life. He thus avoids making such a distinction and is better placed to mediate meaning and human life activity via an emphasis on 'doing' rather than 'being'.

Phenomenology and existentialism played a significant role in recalibrating philosophy and social theory in the post war period. This had a major impact on interpretations and theories of everyday life. The 'linguistic turn' in the Western intellectual tradition was central to this reconfiguration. With this movement, across several fields of inquiry, language came to be understood to constitute reality itself. Ludwig Wittgenstein's late philosophy, post-Heideggerian hermeneutics, linguistic and anthropological structuralism all contributed to the turn. So too did Jacques Lacan's reworking of Freudian psychoanalysis which involved a structuralist interpretation that formulated a relationship between the 'real', the 'imaginary' and the 'symbolic' that was mediated by language whilst structuring language itself. The linguistic turn was particularly influential in French social and philosophical thought.

Situated within the French intellectual milieu, Castoriadis and Lefebvre's intellectual contributions both responded to these developments. The distinctive character of their mature contributions derives from their working through the problems posed by the linguistic turn. In this way, they both discovered a productive tension between, on the one hand, language and signification and, on the other, the social-historical dynamic and the sensual experience of the world. Likewise, Heller employs Wittgenstein's later philosophy in her earlier writings on everyday life. Wittgenstein provides the theoretical tools for Heller to account for the relationship between language and everyday life. Later, Heller extends these ideas to account for the embodied, affective and sensual experience of human life. The significance of language does not dominate in her contribution, but is instead present among a blend of anthropological, historical and cultural interpretations of the modern condition. Each of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre responses to the poststructural and the later postmodern turn differ from those of others who engaged with the concept of the everyday on a similar basis.

Of these, Michel de Certeau (1988; 1998) makes the most significant contribution to the field. Reworking Michel Foucault's (1977) insights on modern social control, de Certeau makes 'practice', both as a form of power and of resistance, the central motif for interpreting everyday life. In this way, de Certeau's analysis resides in, and takes as its vantage point the dynamic aspects of modern life that derive from the ambivalence of human agency. What emerges in the writings of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre is the attempt to situate this dynamism and indeterminacy of the everyday in a larger historical context.

With respect to the fluidity of everyday life, it is perhaps the thought of Zygmunt Bauman that shares the most affinity with Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. His notion of liquidity animates the concept of modern everyday life and situates the theorist as an insider to the ebbs and flows of our changing circumstances. For Bauman, as with Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre, the ambivalence of everyday life is crucial, but it is from this vantage point, and with close attention to the fluidity of the everyday that we can initiate a project that attempts to understand from within. Bauman's sociology opens an important channel of communication between philosophy and the sociology of everyday life. I return to these insights in the conclusion of the thesis insofar as Bauman's contribution can help translate Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's social philosophies into more practical orientations.

What this brief outline demonstrates, and what becomes more apparent throughout this thesis, is the comfort Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre exhibit working across diverse intellectual paradigms and developing their own distinctive social philosophies. Accordingly, all three exhibit a characteristic independence of thought that places them on the periphery of the dominant canons of twentieth-century thought. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all defy the constraints of any one particular 'ism'. They criss-cross the spectrum of Western thought, developing their own idiosyncratic contributions. One of the striking features of each of their accounts is their ability to juggle some of the contradictory repercussions that arise from such an approach. Accordingly, paradox, irony and sometimes tragedy feature often in their thought. This comes to the fore when one considers how each of them bridge the

expanse between the modern and postmodern; that they critically engage with both ends of the spectrum and find their voices in the space in-between.

1.3. On the origins of a tradition in Marx

While Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre absorbed diverse traditions of social and philosophical thought, Marx was perhaps their most significant underlying influence. This comes to the fore especially in the context of the significance of everyday life and of freedom to each of their social philosophies. While there are major departures in their thought from Marx, it is Marx's distinct form of humanism that finds its continuation in their contributions. Throughout Marx's oeuvre, among his various voices, there is a consistent message: that the examination of the relationship, conflict and creation of the material and cultural expressions of our world has the power to transform such relations and therefore the organisation of human societies. Marx's message has a double intention. On the one hand, he is describing the mechanics of modernity and its historicity as he sees it; on the other, he is advocating a political project of emancipation on this same basis. For Marx, as with Georg Hegel, positive freedom emerges through the development of a form of consciousness that negotiates its individual and social expressions. Marx adds to this by emphasising the material conditions of human life as a fundamental consideration of this equation. He brings everyday life to the fore of his philosophy in this arrangement and, in doing so, justifies his anthropology, political economy and sociology. Casting Marx in this light helps to reveal the significance of everyday life in the social philosophies of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre and situates them in the distinctive humanist tradition that Marx initiated.

Marx's approach to understanding his world is sociological in orientation⁷. His innovation is to rework Hegel's 'science' into a more sociological arrangement. In the *Grundrisse* (1973 [1858]), Marx articulates his 'method for political economy'. He proceeds with what is seemingly self-evident, honing in on the detail and contradictions that arise in order to approach the concrete determinations of our world:

thus, if I were to begin with the population, this would be a chaotic conception [*Vorstellung*] of the world, and I would then, by means of further determination, move analytically towards ever more simple concepts [*Begriff*], from the imagined concrete towards ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the simplest determinations (Marx 1973 [1858]: 100).

The conceptual movement then returns to the general but this time informed by the complexity of the detailed determinations that it discovers:

from there the journey would have to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations (Marx 1973 [1858]: 100).

For Marx, arriving at the 'rich totality' is not the endpoint of his conceptual movement. Rather, it becomes a starting point by which to return to the simplest determinations through the lens of this totality. In contrast to Hegel's conceptual movement, which Marx (1973 [1858]: 101) claims to be a self-referential form of thought that 'unfold[s] itself out of itself, for itself', his method makes constant recourse to the world of concrete determinations that are refigured by the movement itself:

the concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation [*Anschauung*] and conception (Marx 1973 [1858]: 101).

In this way, Marx's method gestures towards sociology, whereby the interrogation of the changing circumstances of human life in their simplest determinations informs a rich conception of the social totality, which in turn provides the point of departure for renewed observation and conception.

Marx's earlier philosophical and anthropological insights mirror the movement of this method. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx outlines a theory of objectivation that integrates human material and abstract creations into a reciprocal relationship. Taking his aim at Hegel with insights garnered from the materialism of

Ludwig Feuerbach, Marx emphasises that which is human as being sensuously in and a part of nature. In this arrangement, humanity finds itself in a world that is presented to it as both external nature, through its sensual experience of the world, and as mediated, abstractly and materially, by its own internal nature. Marx makes it clear that these two expressions of nature in human life are not mutually exclusive: 'That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.' (Marx and Frederick Engels, 2005 [1844]: 276). This corrective to Hegel helps Marx to connect the historical development of consciousness laid out in Hegel's *Phenomenology* to the concrete conditions of human life via the sensual experience of the world and the human essential qualities that, in turn, recreate the world and history via material and abstract objectivation.

In *The German Ideology* Marx gives this formulation more historical relevance. He argues, again in contrast to Hegel, that his historical conception 'remains constantly on the real *ground*⁸ of history; it does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice' (Marx and Engels, 1976a [1846]: 54). Marx's point is twofold. In agreement with Hegel, he affirms that history and the particular society one is immersed in, structure the ways in which one interprets the world and acts within it. He adds to this the postulate that the material conditions of life – of life lived in a world already transformed by human activity – shape what one interprets and how one acts. Marx (1976a [1846]: 54) clarifies his point in simple terms: 'circumstances make men [sic passim] just as much as men make circumstances'. In this way, Marx defends his intention to examine the material conditions of life as they intersect and collide with the social-historical creations (language, institutions, norms etc.) that are, in part, responsible for the material circumstances themselves. Although Marx rarely employed the term explicitly, the notion of everyday life captures this intersection.

What is apparent is the complex layering of Marx's approach. His attempt to philosophise the anthropological conditions of humanity generates a conception of history that not only develops an account of the contemporary material and social conditions, but also situates his own philosophy as a historical force of its time.

Following Marx's logic, his critique of capitalist political economy and the revolutionary potential of this critique to transform the world could only emerge under the historical conditions conducive to his method being able to strip away the mystifications of political economy and uncover the simple determinations of material life that can in turn contribute to his understanding of the complex totality of human society. He parallels in his own project the dynamics he observes in modernity itself. Marx (1976b [1846]: 5) crystallises this sentiment in his Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: 'the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to change it'.

For Marx the historical development of freedom is intimately intertwined with everyday life. He is attentive to the changing configurations of the conditions of human life throughout history, focusing on the ways that everyday life is conceived, mediated and compartmentalised by each consecutive structuring of society. Marx traces the historical tradition of emancipation in order to anticipate the possibility of novel configurations of everyday life. His historical conception shares a close affinity with Hegel's philosophy of history. Like Hegel, Marx understood the historical movement of consciousness through increasingly complex layers of individual and social interdependence as being fundamental to his own concept of freedom. In contrast to Hegel, however, Marx emphasises the materiality of life and its inseparability from the development of individual and social consciousness. His analysis of the historical transformation from feudal society to modern society via political revolution and the problems he attributes to the new society help to illustrate the significance of freedom and everyday life in his account.

According to Marx's analysis, the feudal societies that preceded the modern era were integrated societies but lacked freedom. In these societies an individual's relation to the state was mediated by their direct relations within their respective estates, guilds and corporations. An individual's material and civil conditions of life, their relation to property, the family and their mode and manner of work, were defined by their predestined location within their particular section of society. The configuration of the sections of this society into a hierarchical structure determined the relations of these sections of society under the umbrella of the state. In this way, the individual's

relation to the state was determined by the state. Marx (2005 [1844]: 165) contends that the particular individual related to the *state as a whole*, that the terms of his/her conditions of life were subsumed directly into the organisation of the society as a whole. The civil society of feudalism was egoistic in orientation. The constituent sections of this form of society and the predestined conditions of life unique to each of them were ordered in direct relation to the state as a whole, affirming their material and life conditions as a part of this integrated whole.

The political revolutions of the Enlightenment freed the population from this predetermined organisation of society. They dissolved the sections of society that constituted the hierarchical whole of feudal society. While Marx understood this eventuality as an emancipation of the population from the determinations of the state as a whole, he problematised the liberal freedom of the new society. The dissolution of the estates, guilds and privileges of the old society had the effect of breaking society up into its constitute elements. In this form of society, freed from the predeterminations of feudal society, it was necessary for the individual to establish their own relationship with these constitutive elements – including: religion, interests, needs, property and labour – the terms of which were no longer ordered by the division of the society into its discrete homogenous tiers. Marx contended that this form of political emancipation had the effect of dividing the individual into its particular isolated expression, on the one hand, and its generalised conception on the other. He argued:

political emancipation is the reduction of man, on the one hand, to a member of civil society, to an egoistic, independent individual, and, on the other hand, to a citizen, a juridical person (Marx and Friedrich Engels, 2005 [1844]: 168).

Civil society, no longer integrated as a whole, is fragmented into its expression as individual members. In this way, the self-orientation of feudal civil society is turned in upon itself towards the egotism of the individual. For Marx, this has profound significance for everyday life. Everyday life ceases to be a shared mode of life-activity distinctive to each section of society and conforming to the overall organisation of society, but rather, an individualised experience:

a person's distinct activity and distinct situation in life were reduced to a merely individual significance. They no longer constituted the general relation of the individual to the state as a whole (Marx and Friedrich Engels, 2005 [1844]: 166).

For Marx, liberal political emancipation divested society of its unity. Political power in feudal society was unilaterally exercised on the basis of its sovereignty towards its own reproduction. In modern society, political power is distributed as a direct relationship between individuals and the constituent elements (property, production, the family, religion etc.) that comprise the state. The problem was that these political freedoms were dispersed amongst the population negating the objective and social powers that Marx attributed to humanity. Liberal political emancipation freed the individual from the rigid hierarchy and determinism of feudalism but left him or her at the whim of autonomous social abstractions freed from their intimate relationship with the material and social conditions of life and paving the way for the capitalist perversion of social relations.

Marx postulates the redemption of this social arrangement in terms of a positive freedom that reintegrates the generalised and particular expressions of the individual through the concrete conditions of material life and life shared with others. He articulates the movement as follows:

when the real, individual man re-absorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a species-being in his everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognized and organized his "own powers" as social powers, and, consequently, no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of political power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished (Marx and Friedrich Engels, 2005 [1844]: 168).

This conception of freedom underpins and connects the various elaborations of freedom that can be found throughout Marx's oeuvre. Here, he combines the movements of the Hegelian dialectic with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's humanism and completes the picture by emphasising the materiality and creativity of human existence. Thus, human freedom comes into its fullest fruition once all the essential

qualities – sociality, materiality, and creativity – that comprise what it is to be human are brought together in conscious union in the realm of everyday life. Beyond discussions of the various voices of Marx, this conception of freedom holds throughout Marx's oeuvre – from his early intuitions in his doctoral thesis all the way through to *Capital*. While the objectives of his analysis and arguments change frequently throughout his intellectual contribution, the assumptions and convictions that underpin this arrangement remain throughout.

A critical assessment of Marx's concept of freedom is beyond the scope of this thesis⁹. Rather, what is of significance here is the initiation of the Marxian tradition that animates the social philosophies of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. Marx's philosophy and political project were rigorously problematised throughout the twentieth century. New approaches to interpreting everyday life were developed independent of Marx's project. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre each benefited from this diverse scholarship. Notwithstanding, the spirit of Marx's project remains in each of their social philosophies. The significance of everyday life as the intersection between the material conditions of human life and abstract social forms remains a focal point in each of their contributions. In accordance with Marx, they avoid the distractions of philosophy and politics by consistently returning to the everyday and privileging its coherence as guide for their social philosophy. Likewise, understanding the intimate relationship between human freedom and everyday life continues through to Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's social philosophies. In contrast to Marx, however, they each problematise the possibility of realising freedom, instead treating freedom as an enduring paradox of modern societies.

1.4. Why Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre?

For this thesis, I have limited the frame of the discussion to the social philosophies of Cornelius Castoriadis, Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre. The subject under consideration – the significance of everyday life and its relationship to freedom in modernity – is not exhausted by their insights. There are others whose contributions

add to this discussion. Of these, Zygmunt Bauman, Michel de Certeau and Jürgen Habermas¹⁰ stand out as thinkers whose attention to the everyday in modernity engages the discourse present in this thesis. However, whilst these theorists have a voice on the peripheries of this discussion, my approach shies away from a comprehensive mode of investigation, instead opting to create a less crowded hermeneutical space. The choice of three theorists brings sufficient diversity to the themes under consideration without cramping a full presentation of their socio-philosophical insights on the subject.

Furthermore, it is not the intention of this thesis to furnish a complete account of the subject, but rather to present several related but distinct and sometimes contradictory perspectives alongside one another so as to emphasise the ambiguity of the topic. This is reason to attend to biographical and historical contexts from which their insights emerge. It is hoped that this thesis is conducive to the logics of a good conversation, one in which each of the participants can be heard, their character and personality expressed, and their disagreements and mutual understandings presented in such a way that they are in themselves insightful and intellectually productive.

The choice of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre is in part justified by their independence of thought. All three are somewhat peripheral to the mainstream of Western social theoretical discourse. Their intellectual interests are diverse, as are the influences on their thought. More importantly, I believe they each have something distinct and exigent to contribute to this discourse. When presented in the form of a dialogue, there are moments of incongruence between their respective bodies of thought, skirmishes that underscore the issues that should draw our attention. Despite such divergences, each of the three perspectives complement one another, filling in the gaps and making sense of that which lies beyond the theoretical frame of the other two.

For his part, Lefebvre makes a strong case for thinking the everyday. Throughout his long career, he sought to highlight the central significance of everyday life to the human condition and to examine the particular configuration of everyday life

in modernity. Further investigation uncovers more complicated themes in his work: a unique medley of Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche¹¹ that combines the notion of eternal recurrence with an open dialectic that navigates both cosmological and anthropological nature. Lefebvre's overall argument is that we take the everyday seriously; that it is the foundation, substance and point of human existence.

Castoriadis is somewhat of an outsider to the constellation of thinkers who have investigated the everyday. Unlike Heller and Lefebvre, he offers neither a systematic and explicit exposition of the concept of everyday life, nor addresses it as a concept in itself. However, his account of the 'social imaginary institution of society' encapsulates the substance and significance of everyday life. His elucidation of the 'social imaginary' and his theorisation of the 'social-historical' construct a valuable conceptual apparatus that helps to underscore the significance and centrality of everyday life to human societies. In response to the interventions of structuralism and poststructuralism, Castoriadis provides clearer definition to the role of language and signification in relation to the social-historical modality of everyday life. The everyday is at the decisive heart of Castoriadis' social theory as a latent concept that brings his theory of society together.

Heller's conceptualisation of everyday life comes to be subsumed under her larger project of describing and problematising modernity. Her motivation resides in her attention to the dangers that modernity poses to human life and society. Her warning is directed not towards modernity itself, but rather, towards its potential transgression, the danger of which resides in the precarious architecture of modernity itself. For Heller, conceptualising modern everyday life plays an important role in ameliorating her trepidation because it is the possibility of choosing the kinds of life that we might want to live that is at stake in modernity. Heller's warnings are welcomed in the pages of this thesis. In addition, Heller's philosophical attitude is a source of inspiration for this thesis – she makes explicit the idea that biography is indicative of the particular social philosophies that one produces. This is one of the central motifs that guides this thesis.

The combination of these three different orientations balances the depiction of everyday life in modernity that emerges in these pages. Notwithstanding, there is sufficient overlap in their social philosophies to help construct a larger narrative and give more definition to how we might understand modern everyday life. Despite their differences, all three include in their accounts of modernity an acceptance of the indeterminacy of our world, of its ambivalence, and of its tragic nature. The conclusions that each of the theorists leave us, however, are neither pessimistic nor nihilistic. On the contrary, they each convey to us a sense of what is collectively possible. It is this orientation – the ability to juggle the contingency of modernity alongside the hopes of the modern project – that makes Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre particularly good company in these pages.

The thesis treats Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's contributions as roughly contemporaneous, understanding that they each approach the problem from different vantage points within modernity. I refrain from employing the perspective of 'multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt, 2002). While the notion provides a useful comparative framework, for the purposes of this thesis, sketching the shared global experience of modernity helps us to identify the fundamentals of the epoch. Instead, I evoke Castoriadis' (1987, 1991d) description of social imaginaries to capture the differences between the three theorists and maintain a sensitivity to their shared experiences of modernity. From this perspective, one can situate the *Weltanschauung* of the individual in the context of a localised experience of modernity, one that is situated in a particular time and place and takes into account the historical and cultural context. With this in mind, the thesis biographically contextualises the three intellectual contributions so that we might gain some understanding as to the motivations that arouse their interests, foster their concerns and, ultimately, shape and define their social philosophy. Despite these differences, the three share a home within the larger framework of the modern Western social imaginary. While their self-reflexivity and distrust of totalising narratives lends their approaches a similarity to postmodern¹² perspectives, they do not stray too far from the humanist ideals of the Enlightenment. According, they take the questions of life and freedom seriously.

The concept of the 'social imaginary' is a latent motif of this thesis and requires some explanation. My usage of the term derives primarily from Castoriadis' (1987) ontological articulation of the concept alongside Charles Taylor's (2004) focus on self-articulation and Paul Ricoeur's (1986) more cultural interpretation. My explanation here is preliminary and far from comprehensive, intended to help theoretically conceptualise the premise and logics that motivate the thesis¹³. The social imaginary describes the collective meanings and significations that shape our understanding and interaction with the world. Concepts of the social imaginary build on Émile Durkheim's (2001 [1912]) idea of 'collective representations' – the shared beliefs, ideas and values of society – while gesturing towards the psychical origins of the imagination. What distinguishes the concept of the social imaginary is that it describes the ways in which cultural configurations of meaning shape our interaction with our world and, in turn, how this interaction contributes to the figuring of the social imaginary. The social imaginary is not a fixed sphere of human meaning, but rather a dynamic source of social and individual signification. Castoriadis emphasises the social-historical mode of the social imaginary that exists as both instituted and instituting on the basis of the collective anonymity of society. Ricoeur adds to this understanding with an emphasis on the cultural character of the social imaginary. He juxtaposes ideology and utopia, postulating that the 'conjunction of these two opposite sides or complementary functions typifies what could be called social and cultural imagination' (Ricoeur, 1986). Taylor (2004: 23) helps us understand the relationship between meaning and modern Western self-understandings. He stresses

the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with other, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.

What stands out here, alongside the world-creating function of the social imaginary, is the possibility for variation within the social imaginary. The point here is that individual subjects are situated within a social imaginary from distinct but related vantage points within modernity. Our biographies play a role in articulating ourselves and our world understandings, which in turn feed back into the networks of signification

that compose the social imaginary. In part, the narrative of this thesis builds on this insight: that despite the collective meanings and significations that compose the modern Western imaginary, it is necessarily constructed from the ever-changing vantage points of those individuals who comprise it. Furthermore, everyday life is the locus of our collective experience of the world. It is bodily, visceral and sensual whilst providing the forum for the intersubjectivity that binds us together in society. It is through this intersubjectivity and our embodied experience of the world that meaning and signification are constituted and reconstituted as the sum of our collective doing, feeling, thinking and communicating. In this way, the social imaginary is grafted onto the everyday in constant alterity, filling its materiality with infinite and ever-changing depth and richness of meaning and signification. Once again, we are reminded of the sanctity that Joyce ascribes to everyday life in *Ulysses*. By bringing the thought of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre together in these pages, we account for an interplay between freedom and everyday life in modernity that lends socio-philosophical articulation to Joyce's literary allusion.

1.5. Other surveys of the concept of everyday life

In the past few decades several monographs and collected volumes have traced the social theoretical significance of everyday life throughout the twentieth century (Bennett, 2005; Gardiner, 2000; Highmore, 2002; Inglis, 2005; Jacobsen, 2008; Roberts, 2006; Ross, 1996; Sheringham, 2006). While I have briefly located the major intellectual traditions that shaped Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's understandings of modern everyday life, these accounts are more comprehensive and empirical in their approaches to tracing developments in thinking the everyday. Several of these help to contextualise and distinguish the themes that this thesis addresses and help to further contextualise their thought amongst other twentieth century theorists. Here, I focus attention on several volumes that I think capture a broad spectrum of the social theoretical interest in everyday life, while also responding to the significant motifs that feature in the present thesis. These include Michael Gardiner's (2000) *Critiques of Everyday Life*, John Roberts (2006) *Philosophising the Everyday*,

Ben Highmore's (2002) *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* and Michael Sheringham's (2006) *Everyday Life*.

Gardiner's (2000) *Critiques of Everyday Life* shares many affinities with the present project. His intention is to account for a critical tradition towards everyday life, to carve out a space between the forensic phenomenologies of everyday life and the critical social historical emancipatory tradition. He accounts for the limitations of sociological functionalism (Comte, Durkheim and Parsons) insofar as it fails to account for the symbolic and intersubjective meanings that animate everyday life. He criticises the microsociologies of symbolic interactionism (Goffman) and the social phenomenologies of everyday life (Schutz, Berger and Luckmann) for their enduring and mechanical descriptions of the 'lifeworld' and intersubjectivity (Gardiner, 2000: 4). Furthermore, Gardiner is wary of (but not averse to) cultural studies and postmodern interpretations of everyday life which tend towards depoliticisation, nihilism and postmodern relativism (Gardiner, 2000: 8–9). In contrast to these schools of thought, Gardiner curates a motley collection of loosely aligned orientations, Dada and Surrealism, Mikhail Bakhtin, Henri Lefebvre, the Situationists, Agnes Heller, Michel de Certeau and Dorothy Smith. He does not argue that they share the same tradition, but rather that they can be aligned insofar as they *problematise* everyday life; in that they 'expose its contradictions and tease out its hidden potentialities, and raise our understanding of the prosaic to the level of critical knowledge' (Gardiner, 2000: 6). Of interest to Gardiner's project is the balance between the fine details of everyday life and the larger social historical forces that are bound up with the everyday. Along these lines, and with an approach that resonates with the present thesis, he argues that

it must be acknowledged that everyday life incorporates a form of 'depth' reflexivity, which is necessary if we are to account for the remarkable ability that human beings display in adapting to new situations and coping with ongoing existential challenges, as well as to explain the enormous cross-cultural and historical variability that daily life manifests (Gardiner 2000: 6).

More polemically, John Roberts (2006) takes issue with the degeneration of the concept of everyday life in cultural studies. He traces a very different history of the

concept of everyday life during the twentieth century. Roberts' starting point is the year 1917. He presents the critique of everyday life in terms of the philosophy of praxis and traces its development from the Productivists and Constructivists of the Russian Revolution through to Michel de Certeau. Lefebvre is Roberts' guide. Roberts is encouraged by Lefebvre's ability to engage with the 'enculturalisation' of politics whilst maintaining a project of distributed revolutionary praxis. Roberts' history of philosophising the everyday maintains critical respect for theorists such as Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin for their cultural and hermeneutical engagement with the everyday. He stresses concern for the digression of the philosophy of the everyday into the cultural and hermeneutical sphere that he suggests comes to dominate in the late twentieth century, to the detriment of the philosophy of praxis. He argues that

the assimilation of the everyday into popular culture of the moment divests the critique of the everyday of its specific philosophical dynamic: the relationship between the critique of the everyday and the critique of social totality (Roberts, 2006: 11).

While this thesis does not take issue with cultural and hermeneutical interpretations of everyday life, it does, albeit on different terms, share with Roberts a consideration of the philosophical dynamic between everyday life and 'the social totality'. Throughout this thesis, I articulate this tension in terms of the correlation, overlap, and dissonance between the social imaginary and everyday life.

Highmore's (2002) *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* stands in contrast to Roberts' argument. He narrates a tension between those critiques of everyday life that focus on the rationalisation and mechanisation of modern everyday life, on the one hand, and those, on the other, whose embrace of the extraordinary and exceptional relegate the ordinary and everyday to banality and boredom. Instead, Highmore is interested in those who discover in the everyday the simultaneous expression of these extremes. For this, he focuses on the ideas of Simmel, Surrealism, Benjamin, Mass-Observation, Lefebvre and de Certeau. Highmore (2002: 16) suggests that for these thinkers and movements 'the everyday offers itself up as a problem, a contradiction, a paradox: both ordinary and extraordinary, self-evident and opaque, known and

unknown, obvious and enigmatic'. Highmore (2010) gives more definition to this approach in his later volume *Ordinary Lives*. In which he makes a case for investigating the 'ordinary' as the location of the richness and depth of human life. This thesis is somewhat sympathetic to Highmore's approach. The notion that everyday life is enigmatic and ambivalent, making rational interpretation problematic (Highmore, 2002: 19), is part of the narrative of this thesis. However, where Highmore is concerned with how this plays out in relation to the cultural aesthetics of everyday life, I focus on the indeterminacy and contingency of everyday life as a social-historical condition exacerbated by modernity.

In *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (2006), Sheringham captures how artists and thinkers have approached the indeterminacy of everyday life. He limits his discussion to the French intellectual tradition that grappled with the concept of the everyday from the 1950's onwards. To this end, he enlists Lefebvre, Roland Barthes, de Certeau and Georges Perec as his main protagonists. Sheringham (2006: 6) confines his study to 'stress[ing] the coherence of an intellectual tradition'. The philosophy of Maurice Blanchot seems to be Sheringham's inspiration. He ties his narrative together with a keen interest in how the characters of this tradition innovatively read and engaged with the indeterminacy of the everyday. Above all, he is interested in those thinkers who could acknowledge everyday life's 'resistance to thought, the indeterminacy that makes for its paradoxical strength' (Sheringham, 2006: 361). On this theme, Sheringham's first chapter 'The Indeterminacy of the Everyday' could be considered an essay in itself. Here, he expands his field of inquiry to situate his main protagonists amongst other significant thinkers of the field, including, most prominently, Blanchot, Heidegger, Lukács, Adorno and Heller. The intention and register of Sheringham's discourse offers a model for the present thesis. His ability to see into the particular content of the theories he addresses, and to establish a narrative that emphasises the reciprocal relationship between the theorists and their subject of inquiry, leads him to reflect on the mode of their intellectual and artistic output as much as the content of their theories. The character of this mode of inquiry informs my approach in this thesis.

These monographs have all made important contributions to identify in those traditions that have taken up the concept of everyday life as an important one for investigating human life and modernity as social totality. Furthermore, they each elucidate, with different emphases, the value of these theoretical contributions. While there is some overlap in these studies' approaches with that of present thesis, in this thesis, the emphasis is not so much on the intellectual development of the concept, but rather on treating the contributions of the three theorists as roughly contemporaneous. This is reflected in the structure of the thesis, which unpacks the concept thematically rather than addressing each of their contributions separately. The intention here is to facilitate a conversation or dialogue that draws attention to their independence of thought, and that demonstrates the value of unpacking the issues from different vantage points. In comparison to the monographs discussed above, this thesis falls short of the rigorous intellectual contextualisation that these works endeavour to achieve. However, in place of this, I attempt to weight this thesis towards the productive generation of insights that emerge out of the confluence and contention of Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's respective perspectives.

1.6. The plan

This thesis is designed to facilitate a dialogue or conversation between Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. Accordingly, I identify several themes that capture the ways in which they each interpret modernity and how everyday life emerges from these elucidations as centrally located in each of their social philosophies. The chapter structure of the thesis reflects this approach. Each chapter discusses each of their particular positions separately whilst constructing a narrative that accounts for the continuities and discontinuities between their respective thought. A summary of the approach is as follows: Chapter 2 contextualises their theoretical contributions biographically; Chapter 3 provides an overview of the different ways that the concept of everyday life features as an important motif in each of their interpretations of modernity; Chapter 4 identifies how the concept of modern freedom and its relationship to indeterminism and contingency is for each of them fundamental to understanding

everyday life in modernity; Chapter 5 reflects on the ways in which everyday life might be important for thinking about the political possibilities that reside in our modernity in relation to each of their contributions; while, Chapter 6 concludes by restating the insights that the thesis generates in terms of a 'postmodern humanism' with gesture towards the social and political possibilities that this entails.

Chapter 2 introduces each of the three theorists by situating their theoretical contributions as a product of their particular life experiences. For this, I emphasise the social-historical conditions in time and place which give rise to the knowledge and issues that attract their intellectual attentions. With recourse to Heller (1999a) and Nietzsche's (2002 [1886]) suggestions, I argue that any author approaches the subject of their inquiry from an idiosyncratic viewpoint which is layered by their memories, character and personality and which is given definition by the background of their social imaginaries. In contrast to thinkers such as Barthes (1977 [1967]) and Foucault (1998 [1969]), who problematize, in different ways, the relationship between author and text, this thesis takes a position that strongly connects the biography of the author with their work. In this respect, the thesis addresses the issue with a strong emphasis on the communion of the social imaginary, which is necessarily reflected in the author's contribution. From this perspective the author's contribution becomes at once idiosyncratic and a window into the social historical articulation of the social imaginary. I do not deny the social autonomy of the text, but rather seek to situate its distinctive subjectivity in place amongst the fluidity of the social imaginary. I identify several enduring motifs, which derive from their personal biographies and give life to each of their intellectual contributions. For Lefebvre, it is his movements – both physically and mentally – between the rural countryside of the French Pyrenees and modern Paris that feature prominently throughout his biography. This movement helps to explain the dialectic between centre and periphery that animates and gives definition to his contribution. Castoriadis vacillates between philosophy and politics throughout his life. His independent vocation as revolutionary organiser and philosopher, his employment as an economist at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and his being, a psychoanalyst and educator all help shape his attempt to reconcile his politics with his philosophy and continually broaden his field of enquiry.

Heller's intellectual biography begins with the Holocaust. Her direct experiences of fascism and totalitarianism remain with her and extenuate her interpretation of the different expressions of modernity in which she resides throughout her life. Chapter 2 provides biographical recourse for the chapters that follow with the hope that a contextual frame will add greater clarity to their particular intellectual positions. This approach justifies the investigation of the subject of everyday life from diverse perspectives.

Chapter 3 sets in motion the task of laying out the central social theoretical and philosophical concepts that underpin this thesis. The chapter provides an overview of the ways in which the concept of everyday life features in Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's theoretical accounts of modernity. Along different intellectual trajectories, they each expand the horizons of Marxism to encompass the whole of human life. This sets in motion the creation of three distinctive accounts whereby the concept of everyday life has central significance. Of the three thinkers, it is Lefebvre who makes the most comprehensive study of the everyday. His project is initiated in response to the malaise of European society in the beginning of the twentieth century. Lefebvre celebrates the everyday as a site of reflexivity and consciousness towards social transformation and as a natural regulating force on the excesses of human creation. Heller takes a different approach. Her interpretation of the significance of everyday life undergoes a transformation throughout her intellectual life. Initially, she developed a phenomenological paradigm to describe everyday life and politicised it by contextualising it in terms of the historical development of human consciousness. Later, she would describe the characteristics of modern everyday life that were the basis for modernity itself. Herein, resides a precarious equilibrium that could uphold modernity whilst looking towards its best possible manifestations. While Castoriadis does not evoke the term everyday life in his conceptual apparatus, I argue that his notion of the social-historical is a theoretical device that captures the modality of everyday life. His social philosophy helps us to understand everyday life as the aggregate of human doing. Chapter 3 aims to capture the central premise of each of their theoretical contributions insofar as they pertain to everyday life. Here, their formulations appear distinct, enlisting idiosyncratic terminology and with recourse to

different intellectual traditions. The chapter concludes by emphasising some of the continuities and discontinuities between their approaches that will inform the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter 4 investigates the concept of modern freedom described by Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. Of interest is how this concept contributes to our discussion of modern everyday life. We discover a degree of consensus among the three. Firstly, because of the profound transformations everyday life has undergone in modernity; secondly, because of the paradoxical orientation of modern freedom that exacerbates social indeterminacy and contingency. Lefebvre's account revolves around the open dialectic between freedom and necessity. Here, freedom is ironic. It propels the independent and creative spirit of humankind whilst providing the 'Trojan Horse' for Nature's return. Heller puts freedom at the centre of her theory of modernity. For Heller, freedom is a paradoxical but essential condition of modernity. It is freedom that makes modernity possible, yet also contributes to its inherent instability. Castoriadis approaches freedom by equating it with his concept of autonomy. In this conception, autonomy is dependent on its mutual expression in both the individual and society. In modernity, this configuration permeates the social imaginary as a core signification that accounts for individual and social consciousness of the human authorship of society. What emerges from the chapter is the tension between positive and negative expressions of freedom in modernity. Freedom animates modern everyday life, but also engenders the ambivalent and tragic dimensions of contemporary life.

Chapter 5 builds on the previous chapters in order to outline the possibilities and hopes for modernity that emerge in the thought of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. Each of their distinct projects emerged out of Marxism to incorporate the whole of human life as the subject of their politics. This sentiment remains throughout their later writings, taking on a more generalised humanist orientation that negotiates the demise of the grand narratives of politics and accepts more indeterminate and fragmented interventions. Lefebvre's 'future orientated' romanticism propels his politics. He suggests that we ask ourselves: What kind of life do we want to live?

Moreover, this question orients his critique of everyday life on the basis of the answer, or answers, to this question. Castoriadis' contribution suggests the mutual configuration between politics and the social imaginary. This, combined with his insights into the social-historical, help to decipher the relationship between the politics of the project of autonomy and the indeterminacy of the collective (and anonymous) modality of everyday life. Heller places her bets on modernity. Wary of the precariousness of this social arrangement, she advocates pluralism and a strong civil society that maintains recourse to both one's particular everyday life and the universalised experiences of togetherness in modernity. Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's political projects all look inwardly into modernity. While their focuses and concerns vary, I identify in all of their political and philosophical projects a willingness to engage with the dynamism and diversity of everyday life in order to develop an open and creative politics that focuses on the humanistic possibilities that remain within the framework of modernity.

In Chapter 6, I conclude by recapitulating the narrative of the thesis in terms of humanism and postmodernity. I suggest that the centrality of freedom and everyday life in all three of Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's contributions creates a social theoretical opening to mediate the continuities of modernity into postmodernity. On the one hand, their faith in the value of freedom and life demonstrates their commitment to humanist ideals; and on the other, their attention to the interplay between freedom and everyday life in modernity gives rise to an awareness of the indeterminate, contingent and ambivalent character of contemporary society. I argue that their contributions attempt to hold on to a humanist orientation without the overarching narratives that inspired the humanist Enlightenment. As a final gesture, I suggest that this position situates each of their social philosophies 'in the world' and point towards the everyday sociology of Zygmunt Bauman to exemplify a practical and constructive extension to Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's philosophies.

Chapter 2. Windows onto Modernity: Locating Theory in Biography

It is on Heller's advice that this chapter takes shape. In *A Theory of Modernity* (1999a), Heller explains that the shared life experiences of the author are inseparable from the theories of modernity s/he creates. Heller is aware of the sources of her own contribution. She contends that her idiosyncratic theory of modernity is her own 'intuition into the essence of modernity, founded on [her] own life experiences' (Heller 1999a: viii). She argues that any theory of modernity is necessarily founded on a personal and shared experience of the world. Any theory of modernity combines the perspective of the individual experience plotted across the topography of time and place amongst the shared experience of particular histories and the common experience of all. As Heller (1999a: ix) puts it, to fuse 'the perspectives of the one, few and the many'. It is on consideration of Heller's self-awareness of her own theoretical creation that this chapter is inspired.

This thesis argues that the three protagonists – Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre – develop three idiosyncratic interpretations of the significance of everyday life in relation to modern freedom that, read alongside each other, are conducive to distinct, insightful and manifold understandings of modernity that would not otherwise be apparent. Alongside one another, these theories present us with much discord and harmony. They are paradoxical and contradictory inasmuch as they confirm and reinforce each other. The result of the encounter is generative. The differences between these theories are bound to the individual biographies of the authors, which is inseparable from their individual autonomy. The purpose of this chapter is to account for these biographies. To examine their life trajectories alongside their intellectual endeavours in the hope that this positions us to unravel the tensions and interpret the affinities that are present in subsequent chapters. My underlying argument rests on the conviction that in order to interpret or comprehend modernity, we should be compelled to listen to different voices. This chapter adds to this; not only should we listen to their theoretical insights, but also their stories.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the biographies of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. This account is far from comprehensive¹⁴. Instead, it aims to present biographical portraits of the three theorists. By approaching these biographies with emphasis and interpretation, the hope is that each of the thinkers are rendered in such a way that we may begin to understand the significance of their particular pathways to approaching modernity, and the centrality of the concept of everyday life to them. To be more systematic, the aim is to: (1) identify the formative conditions of their lives; (2) account for the particular histories they encounter; and (3) interpret the choices they make that inform their theoretical interventions. In addition, the chapter presents the evolving philosophical and political positions of the three layered throughout the accounts. This method, as one may presume, is far from rigorously scientific. It is instead a hermeneutical enterprise. It offers a reading of the three biographies in light of their philosophical and social theoretical contributions in order that we may approach an understanding of the significance of their social philosophies alongside one another.

Castoriadis (b. 1922), Heller (b.1929) and Lefebvre (b. 1901) were all born in the first thirty years of the twentieth century in different locations in Europe. All three encountered vastly different, but still quintessentially modern paradigms. They were born into, what can be characterised as, the same overarching modernity, albeit in different times and places. They share a larger modern social imaginary that looms over their localised social imaginaries. Place, culture and their personal experience provide the frame by which they as individuals access the social imaginary that surrounds them. The result is that we discover in their philosophical contributions descriptions of modernity that share general orientations amongst divergent particular concerns. For this, it is their biography as it is woven into history and embedded in place that is largely responsible. Thrown into the contingency of modernity by the accident of birth (Heller, 1987b: 301) they find themselves on different starting blocks: Heller, in Budapest facing the Holocaust and communist totalitarianism; Castoriadis in Athens¹⁵, at a time when Greece's internal differences came to the fore as a result of the movements of wider European history; and Lefebvre, in the French Pyrenees before the outbreak of World War I. From here, each negotiate their own pathways

through the contingency of history. The result is three unique elucidations of modernity, each with their own interests, emphases and concerns. What is perhaps most surprising is not their divergence, but their agreement: despite the immense disparity between their life experiences, there are overwhelming similarities between their approaches to modernity, albeit with different emphases and aspirations. Of these, the significance of freedom and everyday life emerge as central themes in each of their contributions.

2.1. Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991): from the country to the city

It is not surprising that irony held special significance for Lefebvre's understanding of modernity. His long and eclectic life was woven with irony. His love for the city, for Paris, complemented his attraction to the stronghold of traditions in the French countryside, as did his embrace of the modern alongside the cohesive and festive bonds of the pre-modern. Lefebvre's attraction to the dialectic is apparent in his own life. He lived the contradictions of spontaneity and organisation, of autonomy and dogma, of past and future. While irony may help to explain the dynamics of Lefebvre's life and thought, it is his future-oriented romanticism that brings his intellectual biography to life. Lefebvre celebrates the sensuality of everyday lived experience and supplements his philosophy with his voraciousness for living. The source of this project flows from the traditional rural festive themes that penetrated Lefebvre's imaginary as a result of his rural childhood. It also informs and articulates his role in the young philosophical group: *Philosophies*, which he helped establish in his formative years as a young academic at the Sorbonne. His commitment to his interpretation of Marxism and his struggles with the dogma of formal Marxism was defined by an embrace for the everyday and his desire to bring the revolution to life via art and a return to nature. After his break with the *Parti communiste français* (PCF) in 1959, Lefebvre was released from the formal censorship of the party. This allowed him to articulate his own distinctive Marxism that focused on the transformation of the content of everyday life. These ideas, with the help of the Situationists, informed the May-June 1968 Paris

student revolt. In the final chapter of Lefebvre's thought, he was driven by the project of aestheticising the city in such a way that it registered the vitality and spontaneity of human life in a gesture that combined his old world penchants and modern logics. This brief survey of Lefebvre's thoroughly twentieth century life, from 1901 to 1991, offers us an insight into his thinking.

Lefebvre was born in 1901 to a dogmatically Catholic Basque mother and a freethinking Breton father (Merrifield, 2009: xxvii; Shields, 1999: 8) in the rural Landes commune of Hagetmau. He died in 1991 only fifty kilometres away in his maternal ancestral town of Navarrenx. From the borders of the Pyrenees, Lefebvre moved to Brittany where he conducted much of his schooling. This was followed by stints in Paris, Aix-de-Provence and retreats back to his childhood home before finally becoming more settled at the Sorbonne with both his *Licence* in Philosophy and his *Diplôme des Études Supérieures* (Shields, 1999: 11). It was at the Sorbonne that Lefebvre began to associate with Georges Politzer, Pierre Morhange, Georges Friedmann, and later, Paul-Yves Nizan and his lifelong friend Norbert Guterman. Together, these young philosophy students formed the group *Philosophies*.

Philosophies was established in the wake of World War I. The group sought to confront the malaise that had gripped much of a modern Europe whose grand promise of 'progress' had been gouged out by the trenches of World War I. *Philosophies* responded personally to the *inquiétude* of the era put forward in Paul Valéry's (2016 [1919]) '*la crise de l'Esprit*' (Burkhard, 2000). The group was closely associated with both the Surrealists and the Dadaists. Their provocations and interventions sought to unsettle the academic world, just as Dada and Surrealism had the art world. Their answer at the time was a form of mysticism that was rapidly transformed into a distinct French Marxism by 1928. The conversion to Marxism was rapid and enthusiastic, so much so that the following year, 1929, Lefebvre was sent on a mission to south Brittany with a brief to procure an island fit for the sanctuary of persecuted intellectuals; the first of whom would be none other than Leon Trotsky (Burkhard, 2000: 75). The plan failed to transpire, but from this point on, Marxism firmly gripped Lefebvre's imagination.

It was during this time that Lefebvre and his comrade, Guterman (2003 [1933]), consolidated their intuitions and convictions in their article 'Mystification: Notes for a Critique of Everyday Life' in the second addition of *Avant-Poste*. Here, Lefebvre and Guterman reconciled their concerns for the *inquiétude* with a unique brand of Hegelian Marxism. They set up a paradigm that would serve faithfully the entirety of Lefebvre's oeuvre. In part, the inspiration for this formative article was his concern for the rise of fascism across Europe. Lefebvre had experienced the full momentum behind national socialism while on vacation in Germany in 1932 (Burkhard, 2000: 139; Hess, 1988: 97–100; Shields, 1999: 50). Lefebvre understood the temptation of fascism: it was, in itself a response to the same *inquiétude* that *Philosophies* also responded to. His concerns informed the growing scepticism and critique of dogmatism that would develop in his thought. Lefebvre and Guterman, with close parallels to Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* published ten years earlier (apparently Lefebvre had not yet engaged with Lukács' writings at this time¹⁶), confronted what they described as 'mystification' – a fog of bourgeois culture that enveloped the whole of modernity. Lefebvre and Guterman's critique went further than Lukács' critique of 'reification'. In their account everything was suspect and the mysticism manifested itself in the fabric of everyday life (Lefebvre and Guterman 2003 [1933]: 81). It is in this first reference to the everyday as a concept (Lefebvre and Guterman, 2003 [1933]: 72) that the critique of everyday life first emerges in Lefebvre's writings. Soon after, the theme was developed and expanded in Lefebvre and Guterman's *La conscience mystifiée* (1999 [1936]). It was in these years that Lefebvre consolidated his thought. He developed a dialectical method with the help of Hegel and Marx and identified his subject of interrogation: the mystification and alienation of everyday life.

His experience of World War II presented additional contexts that would shape his research interests. During the war, after being relieved of his teaching post in 1941 due his connections with the PCF (Elden, 2004: 3) he based himself in Aix-en-Provence (Merrifield, 2006: 2). Lefebvre periodically spent time in Marseille where he connected with the vibrant political and artistic community that was resisting the German occupation and Vichy's France (Hess, 1988). Here, he befriended intellectuals (notably Gaston Berger and Simone Weil) who were actively involved in

resistance efforts (Hess, 1988: 111–112). It was during this time that Lefebvre himself participated with in the French Resistance. However, his participation was to be brief. After a falling out with the Resistance¹⁷ and considering the heightened danger that the German occupation of Southern France brought with it, Lefebvre fled to the valley of Campan in the Pyrenees (Hess, 1988: 113).

In Campan, Lefebvre solidified his connection to the countryside. His interest was aroused by the historical records of the rural peasant community. These inspired a preliminary study into rural folklore (Hess, 1988: 114; Shields, 1999: 27). This interest was complemented by his interactions with the local population. Remi Hess (1988: 114) suggests Lefebvre's exile in Campan presented the opportunity for him to conduct a kind of forced participant observation. Here, he lived with the local population and spent long hours in the mountains with the shepherds (Hess, 1988: 114). This initial work would contribute to a thesis that would earn him a doctorate in 1954 (Elden, 2004: 128). This work and the later publication *La vallee de Campan* (1963) cemented Lefebvre's relationship with the rural French countryside, and would prove formative for his later thinking that spanned the divide between rural and urban life (Elden, 2004).

After the war Lefebvre taught in various schools and universities in several cities throughout France. Following his studies of rural Pyrenees communities that were commissioned by the *Musée national des arts et traditions* he conducted intermittent research in urban and rural sociology with the *Centre d'études sociologies* until the early 1960's (Stanek, 2011: viii). He held chairs in the universities of both Strasbourg (1961-65) and Nanterre (1965-73) whilst engaging in urban research through the *Institut de sociologies urbaine* which he had cofounded in 1962 (Stanek, 2011: viii–ix). At both Strasbourg and Nanterre he encouraged students to work in unconventional self-directed research groups, which would prove to be a useful tactics in the student uprising in May 1968 (Trebitsch, 2008: x)¹⁸.

During his time at Nanterre he was influential in the events of May 1968. Not only did he participate in organisational meetings with students, he can also be credited with influencing the Situationists whose revolutionary orientation helped give

May 1968 some of its distinctive characteristics (Ross, 1997). The uprising in 1968 was a turning point for Lefebvre. Even though he had already begun to focus on urban sociology, the festive atmosphere he observed during the student uprising helped him to better formulate and synthesise the themes already latent in his earlier studies of rural France with his urban sociology (Elden, 2004). With this move, Lefebvre discovered a point of reconciliation between his Marxist philosophy, his romanticism and his analysis of the city. His later years were preoccupied with these theoretical and political directions, often with the collaboration with his last wife Catherine Régulier. During this time, he predominately focused on a politics of space that intended to cultivate natural spontaneity in the structure of the spaces created by cities.

While much of Lefebvre's life was spent in the city, his connection with and relationship to the Pyrenees and Occitan remained, both as a retreat and as a metaphor for his political and philosophical ideas. Building on Edward Soja's (1996) claim that Lefebvre lived the tension between the centre and periphery geographically through his identity, J. Nicholas Entrikin and Vincent Berdoulay (2005: 132) suggest that perhaps Lefebvre's identification with these places of his ancestry has recourse to his politics. The idea that Lefebvre identified as Occitanian as a celebration of his politics is fitting. This, combined with his commitment to Paris, the centre, allowed him to bypass his Frenchness and catapult himself into the global setting. In Lefebvre's (in Entrikin and Berdoulay, 2005: 132) own words: 'I am Occitan, that is to say, peripheral – and global'. Elsewhere, Lefebvre (1965: 10) elaborates on the point: 'this country, [the Pyrenees] I know it better than the people who live here, precisely because I left it. In order to go elsewhere'. Beyond the more explicit anthropological overtones to these words, one can read something more subtle and perhaps more revealing of Lefebvre's own interpretation of his biography. Lefebvre speaks of choice, of freedom. He felt he had escaped the shackles of both the narcissistic city and the reclusive countryside. He considered himself truly modern in his own terms, traversing the urban and rural with the wisdom of the global.

Another significant theme throughout Lefebvre's life was his difficult relationship the PCF. He had remained a member of the party for 30 years before his

expulsion in 1958. The prankster spirit of his early years with *Philosophies* combined with Guterman and his critique of mystification, which could just as successfully direct its critique at the Communist Party as it could National Socialism, seem at odds with his allegiance to the strict party doctrine of the PCF. Exacerbating the contradictions, Lefebvre played a role in purging independent elements within the party including his old friends Friedman, Politzer and Nizan and most notably Jean-Paul Sartre (Shields, 1999: 23). Rob Shields (1999: 83) suggests that Lefebvre's desire to maintain a presence in the centre of French intellectual life reflected Faustian pacts made across Europe as left-wing orthodoxy was preferred to independence of thought. Lefebvre's (2003 [1959]) defence following his own expulsion from the PCF argued that while allegiance to the party did not necessarily embody what it was to be a communist or a Marxist, it offered a vehicle for the revolution, a space for likeminded individuals to confront capitalism from the perspective of Marxism in unity. However, after he was no longer bound by the constraints of party dogmatism, he took the liberty of conceding:

that the ontological idea has spread to the conception of the party ... Marxism has turned into a metaphysics of the party and State, elevated into absolutes that demand unconditional allegiance (Lefebvre, 2003 [1959]: 231–232).

Lefebvre was well aware of the contradictions he faced with his commitment and complicity with the party. In a personal communication, Lukács (in Shields, 1999: 22) expressed a camaraderie with Lefebvre on the complications of remaining critical from within the party, resolving: 'we understand the defects of our socialism, but all critique will be used to hurt us. We are stuck in this contradiction'. Perhaps Lefebvre was compelled by the irony that his anti-orthodox impulses would be best served from within the party. In the light of a more psychological reading, it may be that Lefebvre reproduced the themes from his past: thirty years of censorship in the PCF must have had a redolence with the childhood memory of his smouldering poetry notebooks, burnt by his ultra-religious mother for their sensuality (Davidson, 1992: 152). For Lefebvre, his vision of '*le soleil crucified*' (the crucified sun) embodied all the repressions of his youth (Trans. note in Lefebvre, 1995 [1962]: 391). In his

autobiography, *La somme et le reste* (1989 [1959]), Lefebvre admits to carrying the crucified sun within him throughout his life. Lefebvre took dogmatic religion to task in his early intellectual years with *Philosophies* and attempted a final blow by embracing Marxism. However, he found himself subjected to the same kinds of dogmatism within the PCF. History repeats itself. In a more favourable reading, perhaps it was his desire to remain in the centre after a long journey from the periphery. This way he could remain the one permanent other amongst the many insiders. As an outsider within, Lefebvre could be the unorthodox protagonist from within the ranks or, in the words of Leszek Kolakowski (1969), the jester amongst priests.

Burkhard (2000) evokes Kolakowski's metaphor to describe Lefebvre in his comprehensive account of *Philosophies*. He suggests that Lefebvre is the one member of the group that remains a jester throughout his life (Burkhard, 2000: 247). Lefebvre knew his part, he was to stir and provoke. Kolakowski (1969: 54) elaborates:

the jester's constant effort is to consider all the possible reasons and contradictory ideas. It is thus dialectical in nature – simply the attempt to change what it is because it is. He is motivated not by a desire to be perverse but by distrust of a stabilized system. In a world where apparently everything has already happened, he represents an active imagination defined by the opposition it must overcome.

This was the project that Lefebvre undertook throughout his life. He took this role seriously and was sure to flaunt his perversions in the face of authorities at any opportunity. Beginning at the Sorbonne, Lefebvre and the *Philosophies* group stirred up the status quo. He continued to provoke from within the party ranks for more than 30 years as a member of the PCF. After his break with the PCF he turned his rebelliousness towards more pedagogical ends, influencing a younger generation of radicals and helping cultivate the institutional dissent that would cumulate in the student uprising of 1968.

Lefebvre's philosophical journey conjoined with his affection for both the city and the countryside. His youthful search for a response to the *inquiétude* that resulted in an enthusiasm for the everyday was given more clarity by the rural and urban

themes that became prominent in his later work. Once he was no longer constrained by the rigidity of the PCF, he was better positioned to work towards realising his project of transforming modern everyday life. He combined his romantic sentiments for the traditions of the French countryside with the practical considerations of modern urban life. From Lefebvre's biography we can infer that this direction was mediated by his attachment to the countryside already solidified as a youngster, and by the religious dogmatism of his mother and childhood education. Perhaps it was these that provoked Lefebvre's life as a jester; the habit of being forced to rebel and the desire to bring nature to the city. By way of summary, Alastair Davidson (1992: 153) offers us an insightful anecdote: Lefebvre had once introduced him to a priest who had been banished to a tiny village in the Pyrenees. Davidson (1992: 153) elaborates: 'I believe that Henri Lefebvre saw this priest as his alter ego, the one he had renounced'.

2.2. Cornelius Castoriadis (1922–1997): tracing the Enlightenment

In many ways, Castoriadis is of the Enlightenment. He was, as many have said before, encyclopaedic. As a polymath, his interests were many and simultaneous, filling his life with several vocations and many projects. The arts, especially music, literature and the culinary were to be taken as seriously as his politics and philosophy. As Edgar Morin (1998: 5) reflects, 'he showed in a dazzling way, against the established dogma, that one can form a culture for oneself in the twentieth century'. However, the Enlightenment penetrates deeper. Humanism and critique dominate Castoriadis' orientation. They underpin his dedication to, and mediate, the squabbles of his philosophical children: freedom and democracy. Political by choice, he is philosophical by necessity. Castoriadis' biography reflects this as his life and vocations vacillate between the political and the philosophical. Of course, both are always present; his first love was philosophy and he never denied his politics.

Castoriadis and Marx would have made great intellectual interlocutors. This distinguishes Castoriadis from many of his revolutionary colleagues, especially those who struggled to avoid Marxist dogma. His pedagogical debt to Marx was repaid with

the creation of his own formidable social philosophy and revolutionary theory. Through to middle age, Castoriadis was consumed by his Marxist militancy both in theory and in practice. The advent of his own distinctive strand of thought correlates with the exhaustion of Marxism. For Castoriadis, the students taking to the streets of Paris in May '68 was a symbolically decisive moment for the twentieth century. In this moment, radical politics were at once expanded and invigorated by new sites of contestation and, at the same time, subject to an impotence that would haunt them until today. It is difficult to separate Castoriadis' intellectual trajectory from this history. The contours of his political thought were defined by his early political participation and critical engagement with the Greek left, and expanded and amplified among his comrades in the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group.

By the time of the 1968 student uprising in Paris, Castoriadis had composed the outlines of his authentically original contribution. Leaving Marxism behind, Castoriadis' project came to interrogate the structure of all aspects of modern human life; a philosophical elucidation of human activity, the individual and society. His interests expanded and his life was transformed. His late intellectual work was textured with a psychoanalytic flavour (he began to practise as a psychoanalyst in the early 1970s), and he immersed himself in the world of ancient Greece in order to further develop his theory of democracy. In Castoriadis' later life, he thrived intellectually; bringing philosophy to the world with catholic enthusiasm but in doing so, he necessarily surrendered the active politics that he had been committed to during his years of participation with *Socialisme ou Barbarie*¹⁹.

Castoriadis was born in Constantinople in 1922, the same year his family moved to Athens, where he spent his youth. He has fond memories of Athens, of its beauty, street life and atmosphere. Castoriadis (1990b: 2) recalls: 'it was a truly physical pleasure to stroll down the few avenues in central Athens in the sun, with the few trees there were there, and to chat with people'. Barely into his teenage years, he had already discovered his passion for philosophy. For this, he holds his father responsible, whom he characterises as a staunch anti-monarchist, atheist and outspoken Voltairian (Castoriadis, 1990b; *Interview with Cornelius Castoriadis*, 1984).

Castoriadis grew up steeped in intellectual and cultural activity. Both of his parents valued education and imparted to Castoriadis a strong sense of pedagogy. His mother bequeathed to her son a passion for music, while his father aroused his appetite for literature and philosophy – he would have the young Castoriadis recite French poetry or philosophic texts such as *Apology of Socrates* by Plato (Castoriadis, 1990b). Castoriadis' high school teachers were influential, many of whom he acknowledges for their role in his secondary education (Castoriadis in *Interview with Cornelius Castoriadis*, 1984). In particular, his French tutor Maximiani Portas (later Savitri Devi) – who was the first to answer his philosophical questions – had a significant and lasting impact on him (Dosse, 2014: 18)²⁰.

As a precocious adolescent, he had completed his secondary education by the age of fifteen. It was this same precocity, combined with his concerns for social justice, that drew Castoriadis towards Marxism as a teenager. At this age, he devoured various Marxist publications that he would find in a small bookstore in Athens. His interest in radical politics at this time would lead him to the final chapter in his pedagogical development: his tutelage under the militant Spiros Stinas, who imparted a revolutionary spirit to him, and was in turn revered by Castoriadis (Castoriadis, 2014).

As a teenager, and during the years preceding World War II, the political climate in Greece was rapidly changing. By 1936, then only fourteen, Castoriadis had already joined a Greek Communist youth cell. Greece was then under the control of the dictator Ioannis Metaxas. In one incident, the three other young men in Castoriadis' cell were rounded up, beaten and incarcerated for six months (Castoriadis, 1990b). The ordeal must have been quite harrowing for the young Castoriadis. Nonetheless, Castoriadis continued his radical pursuits, and the stakes were raised with the Gestapo to contend with as Greece endured occupation under German forces. During the occupation, Castoriadis had first been a member of a group under Communist command before joining an ultra-left Trotskyist group under Stinas (Castoriadis, 1990b). It was in these years of witnessing the internal conflicts, purges and violence of the Greek Left that Castoriadis formed his lifelong distaste for Stalinism and its analogues.

In 1945, Castoriadis left for Paris with a scholarship in hand to commence a PhD in philosophy. He departed Greece with many other young intellectuals including, notably, his friend Kostas Papaionnou as well as Kostas Axelos and George Kaidylis, on the New Zealand troop carrier *Mataroa*. François Dosse (2014: 37) remarks that 'this crossing of the Mediterranean, which is a journey through time, a passage between antiquity and the contemporary, can be perceived as a metaphor for the philosophical work that will [later] occupy Castoriadis'. Within months of his arrival in Paris he had associated himself with French Trotskyists (including Claude Lefort and Jeanie Walter, who became Castoriadis' lover and later the mother of their first child Sparta Castoriadis). Here, he continued to develop his critique of Stalinism that was initiated by his limited contact with a smattering of critical texts, including Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937) among others (Castoriadis, 1990b, 1990a: 35). Moreover, he was motivated by his disillusion with the organisation of Greek communism (especially his distrust of the attempted Stalinist coup in 1944). To France, Castoriadis brought with him an intimate firsthand knowledge of Stalinism that was well received by the French Trotskyists. Trotsky's critique of the Soviet state as a degenerated worker's state did not hold up for long in Castoriadis' mind and he began, alongside others, to construct a critique of Soviet bureaucracy as a new kind of exploitative class society (Castoriadis, 1990b). It was this break with Trotskyism that initiated the creation of the revolutionary group and journal of the same name *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in the late 1940's.

From 1949 to 1970, Castoriadis worked as a professional economist for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Primarily the job provided him security given his precarious situation as a foreign national in France, and a cover for his political activities. It also gave him insight into the economic mechanisms of twentieth century capitalism and the workings of high level bureaucracy (Castoriadis, 1990b). It was over these years that Castoriadis was predominantly occupied with *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. The group believed themselves to have cut through perversions of organised Marxism and discovered the *germ* of Marxism that could bring it into fruition in their contemporary era. The first issue of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (1949: 1) declared: '[W]e believe that we represent the living

continuation of Marxism within contemporary society'²¹. They took aim at the mainstream of Soviet-influenced and organised Marxism of the time that, in the opinion of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, had betrayed the original task of Marxism with the result of a new kind of exploitative social organisation. Their concern was with the situation of the proletariat and the authoring of revolution by and for the proletariat. They stood against capitalism and against bureaucratic state socialism. The question remained, how to inspire revolutionary activity? And furthermore, could the role of the revolutionary organisation circumvent its propensity towards exploitative bureaucracy?

These problems played themselves out in both the theory and practice of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* until its final days in 1967. These internal debates provided Castoriadis a forum in which to cultivate his own philosophical and political ideas. The arguments and divisions that plagued *Socialisme ou Barbarie* centred on organisation. The group juggled theory and practice, agreeing on Castoriadis' vision of a self-managed society but disagreeing on their role in getting there. The left of the group, headed by Lefort, dismissed the role of the revolutionary organisation. '[W]e are an intellectual group, we publish a magazine, that's all', Castoriadis (1990a: 36) recalls of Lefort's attitude; whilst others, including Castoriadis, argued for the continued relevance of political organisation. Finally, although Castoriadis would shy away from conceding, Lefort's position won out. In 1967, with an inactive readership and lack of participation, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* disbanded (Castoriadis, 1990b).

This background into Castoriadis' political practice and development is useful for understanding both the historical transformation of radical politics and the crossroads of Castoriadis' biography that unfolded in the late sixties and early seventies. No longer did he believe that the analysis of capitalism, restricted to the terms of economics and production, could be the sole pathway to liberation in the twentieth century. Revolutionary politics had to step out of the factory so to speak. Castoriadis' 1963 article published in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, 'Recommencing the Revolution', argued that the revolutionary project concerned all aspects of human life. The responsibility fell to all those who composed society. The students of '68 understood this: 'change life' was their rally cry. Intuitively, they had located their

freedom, it was woven into the very fabric of the society they inhabited, it was all the time under their feet, '*sous les pavés, la plage!*'²², they proclaimed. The problem was how to realise this. In concrete terms, the student revolt of 1968 degenerated, failing to establish adequate organisation and faced with the problem of expanding its broad project to the whole of society. Castoriadis (1990b) reflects on his conflicted feelings during 1968. He recalls his genuine elation when witnessing the spontaneous practical organisation of the students and hearing the voices of common people:

people belonging to layers of the population who had never been able to express themselves in this screwed-up society, who came and said what was in their hearts and on their minds; I recall a nurse who had come to speak there, an old man (Castoriadis, 1990b: 9).

At the same time, he remembers feeling and experiencing a deep sense of the contemporary political tragedy, of the inevitable collapse of these moments of spontaneity and creation back in on themselves (Castoriadis, 1990b: 9). The student uprising had confirmed Castoriadis' own theoretical reorientation. The evolution of his thought had led him to take seriously the idea that the revolutionary programme would have to take account of the whole of human life. This realisation brought his philosophical inclinations into closer alignment with his politics. However, the more diffused approach of this orientation left the revolutionary programme somewhat impotent. The dispersion of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and the tragic failures of 68' led Castoriadis to hang up his revolutionary boxing gloves and set about reconciling his philosophy with his politics.

Following the events of the late sixties, the orientation of Castoriadis' life changed dramatically. In 1970 he was naturalised as a French citizen and, no longer requiring his cover at the OECD, he resigned his post along with his multiple pseudonyms, the most famous of which were Pierre Chaulieu and later Paul Cardan²³. Freed from the threat of deportation, his ever-burgeoning responsibilities at the OECD²⁴ and the demands of his political activity, Castoriadis set about expanding his philosophical program that had ripened in the background of the events of the previous years. He returned to the philosophical problems that he had grappled with when he

first arrived in Paris. Then, the main working title for his doctoral work was 'Introduction to an Axiomatic Logic'²⁵ with a complementary thesis: 'Introduction to the Theory of the Social Sciences'²⁶ (Dosse, 2014: 44). His philosophical concerns at this time are not dissimilar to those of his mature thought. Along similar lines to Husserl, Castoriadis was troubled by the crisis of science and philosophy (Dosse, 2014: 45). Even at this early stage in the development of his thought, he was problematising the notion of a closed philosophical system (Castoriadis, 1990b: 3). In the final years of the 1960's and the early 1970's Castoriadis developed his theory of the social imaginary and social historical. He had approached Paul Ricoeur in 1967 with the intention of completing a doctoral dissertation under Ricoeur's supervision, titled, 'The Imaginary Foundations of the Social-Historical', which failed to transpire for practical reasons (Dosse, 2014: 264). Nevertheless, the ideas Castoriadis had formulated to this end were published in his original and important work *L'Institution imaginaire de la société* (*The Imaginary Institution of Society*) in 1975. The elaboration of this work would consume much of his intellectual endeavours from this point on.

In 1973, Castoriadis began practising as a psychoanalyst. His first analysis began in 1960²⁷ and his interest in the field later coincided with his second marriage to the notable psychoanalyst, Piera Aulagnier, in 1968, whom he met through a Lacanian seminar series. Their confluence of thought was reciprocally productive and had a significant influence on French psychoanalytic theory at the time. Gerassimos Stepanatos (2007) goes as far as to say that the convergence of their two perspectives signalled the end of the hegemony of the structuralist signifier in French psychoanalytic theory. In addition, Castoriadis played a behind-the-scenes role as Aulagnier's husband and as a non-practising member in the democratic experiments of the 'Fourth Group'²⁸ in which Aulagnier was a major contributor. Here, Castoriadis' critique of power and bureaucracy converged with psychoanalysis in a move that sought to democratise the psychoanalytic organisation and address modern social alienation (Dosse, 2014: 169). His daughter Sparta recalled her surprise when her stepmother told her that her father would take up the profession as a psychoanalyst: 'It was a shock to me. I didn't think he would succeed in shutting up to listen to his patients'²⁹ (Dosse, 2014: 175). Despite Sparta's concerns, several of Castoriadis' analysands

recount his positive style of psychoanalysis which focused on creation and possibility in contrast to the more common analytical approach that fixates on negative analytic categories such as loss and trauma (Dosse, 2014: 184).

Castoriadis continued to practise psychoanalysis for many years both privately and in several hospitals. He was still working on the philosophical implications of his psychoanalytic theory up until his death in 1997. Castoriadis' psychoanalytic pursuits shaped his thought in two directions. On the one hand, he fleshed out his elucidation of society with an innovative theory of psyche and language; on the other, he had his 'ear to the ground', so to speak, insofar as he had the intimate experience of hearing the minds of a diverse section of society.

From the 1970s onward, Castoriadis evoked a paradigm that encompassed the individual and social configuration of our world. It took seriously the individual psyche and its social role in the world and in history in a way that he had not previously considered. His project retained a revolutionary attitude. Society, Castoriadis argued, is the product of the creative potentials of human history. It is our society, a society authored by us. By rejecting Marxism, Castoriadis sacrificed the focus of the Marxist revolutionary project that took aim at the relations of production. Marxism had provided Castoriadis' politics with a site of contestation. Once out of the factory, Castoriadis' politics took seriously all aspects human life. The forays of his later years, into psychoanalysis and the politics of Ancient Greece, only confirmed this. Castoriadis' revolutionary project had broadened. His mature project was decentered, taking into account all aspects of human life, from the psyche to the social imaginary and the ebb and flow of the social-historical, without prioritizing any one aspect of the human condition.

That ancient Greek democracy informed much of Castoriadis' project is not incidental. He never forgot his Greek origins, even though he was troubled by his relationship to his homeland. For Castoriadis, Greece had failed to negotiate history in the way that Western Europe had succeeded. Greece remained trapped somewhere between the Athenian polis and Byzantine Christianity and had failed to establish its

own modern tradition (Castoriadis in *Interview with Cornelius Castoriadis*, 1984). This, alongside the cosmopolitanism and intellectual hub that was twentieth century Paris made France Castoriadis' home. As a young man, Castoriadis was drawn to philosophy. Even at a young age, he intuitively understood its potential, but it took the politics of the Western European Enlightenment for Castoriadis to realise its possibilities. Castoriadis, helped along by his father's Voltairian spirit, unravelled the puzzle that his Greek origins had endowed him. In France, Castoriadis discovered the Enlightenment. Here, with the scaffolding of Humanist Marxism he was able to make a convincing interpretation of modernity. Whilst Castoriadis never returned to live in Greece, he did discover the potency of the Greek tradition. In this he was able to, albeit for himself, forge a distinctively modern Greek tradition.

The final chapter of Castoriadis' life was more at ease than were his more turbulent years living a dual existence between his professional day job at the OECD and his covert revolutionary activities and all the volatility they entailed. His French naturalisation in 1970 certainly played a role, permitting him to publish under his own name and to participate openly in French society without the threat of deportation. In 1978, he married his third wife, Zoe Christofidi. Their life together until his death in 1997 was perhaps the most settled and intellectually productive periods of Castoriadis' life (Dosse, 2014: 245). Their apartment in the *XVI arrondissement* was a vibrant cultural and social environment, playing host to regular social gatherings whereby Castoriadis could hold court with music, games and lively conversation (Dosse, 2014: 247). It was in this period that Castoriadis finally secured a teaching position at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*. His seminars attracted a wide audience that many of his students recall with fond memories. Pierre Vidal-Naquet suggests that these were some of the best days of Castoriadis' life, a time when he could bring all of his faculties together in teaching and research (Dosse, 2014: 311).

From an early age Castoriadis was driven towards philosophy and politics, firstly by the influence of his parents and then by his own precocious spirit. This spirit was one that Castoriadis was enthusiastic to impart: friend and colleague Eugène Enriquez (1989: 31) recalls how his adult children reflect on how Castoriadis would

explain to them in their youth the wonders of the stars and planets while holidaying together with Castoriadis on the Greek island of Skopelos. Castoriadis was a vibrant and charismatic character and enjoyed a central position amongst others in creative philosophical and political discourse. Participants in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* recall his physicality and enthusiasm to make his point and convince others, but emphasise his desire to win over those with dissenting viewpoints with his charisma and clarity before resorting to heated confrontations – of which he was also very capable (Dosse, 2014: 102–108).

Castoriadis' intellectual energy is apparent in his writings. His polemical engagement with the subject of his inquiry and his ironic wit do not detract from the seriousness and gravity he places on his intellectual endeavours. In tracing the contours of Castoriadis' intellectual biography, it is striking how much his political and philosophical positions change and evolve. His willingness to accept the limitations of his own thinking demonstrate the degree to which he practises his own philosophy. In this way, the project of autonomy – the project of critique and conscious creation – motivates his intellect.

Castoriadis began his intellectual journey with a love of philosophy and a passion for the emancipatory potentials of politics. As a young adult, Marx's contribution had been quintessential in helping Castoriadis begin this project. This Marx had sought to bring philosophy to the world and the world to philosophy. Castoriadis was attentive to people's everyday lived experiences – his engagement with workers during his *Socialisme ou Barbarie* years, the voices of the people that had inspired him in 1968 and his intimate contact with his analysands – informed this project. The results were such that he would abandon Marxism and, to a lesser degree, the autonomous workers' movement in favour of a grander project of social transformation that understood a more distributed approach that rests within our collective mode of thinking and doing in the world. With this, Castoriadis had unified his philosophy and politics.

2.3. Agnes Heller (1929–): traversing modern imaginaries

Heller's life has taken her on a grand tour of modernity. Her story and experiences are perhaps more quintessentially modern than most. She has suffered the darkest days of modernity and lived amongst its great diversity. Heller is both resident and exile in modernity. It is for this reason that one can detect a longing and ambivalence in Heller's description of modernity. Regardless, Heller is resolute that modernity is our only choice; that even if it cannot entirely satisfy, at the very least it has the potential to provide the conditions for life and freedom for all. Heller's biography demonstrates this compromise as she traverses thoroughly different expressions of modernity from Eastern to Western Europe and from Melbourne, Australia to New York and back to Budapest. Her philosophy responds to her experiences in life and in this way, she leans on the sociological side of philosophy. The questions she asks derive self-consciously from her experiences. Thus Heller's philosophy traces her biography. She responds to her embodied, emotional and intellectual experiences of the different times and places she resides in. For much of her life these experiences of the world were directed towards making sense of the Holocaust. Later in life, Heller (1999b: 476) concludes that the Holocaust is beyond understanding. This is not to say that her endeavour was in vain. Her life taught her that which her father had impressed on her during her youth: that ours is a shared world and that in sharing this world, humanity oversees a vast terrain of difference and diversity. For Heller, this is the meaning of humanism. Heller's biography discloses a nostalgia for a sense of home. Home, she discovers, is found amongst others in our world.

Heller was born in Budapest in 1929. Of her early years she speaks of the moral and intellectual influence of both her father and grandmother. The former introduced her to politics, the latter to literature (Heller, 2009: 238). For Heller it was her father who instilled in her a sense of purpose and of possibility. She recalls how as a young girl her parents would teasingly call her 'the little philosopher'. Heller asked her father why he had wanted her to become a philosopher (or a composer), to which he responded that 'it was the most absurd thing for a girl to become', and added that

he wanted her to be the most absurd! (Heller, 1999b: 21). An anecdote from Heller's teenage years reveals the effect this attitude had on Heller in her formative years. She recalls how Gyuri, an early romantic interest, had commented: 'how clever you are, even though you are a girl' to which the young Heller responded: 'dear Gyuri, it is like saying: how well you can ride a bike, even though you are a monkey' (Heller 1999b: 45). This became the title to Heller's memoir: *Bicikliző Majom*³⁰, which translates as 'Monkey on a bicycle'. The essence of what Heller's father had imparted to her was not restricted to gender equality. She took from him a grander vision of what it meant to be human. She recounts her father's involvement assisting refugees in the Hungarian internment camps with the official documents required for them to find safer refuge outside of Hungary, and his refusal to convert to Christianity to protect his family. Heller (1999b: 26) argues that these were not gestures that asserted his Jewish identity, but rather they confirmed his deep sense of human morality that transcended the confines of difference. Her father's attitude instilled in Heller the conviction that while she was might be a Jew, a Hungarian and a woman, she was above all human. It is this sense of universal humanism that Heller retains.

The Holocaust, above all else, is the beginning of Heller's intellectual biography. The landscape after the war was deeply unsettling for her. Along with many of her friends and family, Heller's father died in Auschwitz in 1945. Heller and her mother survived by evading deportation in Budapest. In the final months of the war, when Hungary was gripped by the extreme violence of the Arrow Cross Party, Heller recalls several moments when they narrowly escaped deportation and execution. Throughout these months, their lives were reduced to a precarious hand-to-mouth existence under the constant threat of capture. This, in the context of a country that lost seventy percent – over half a million – of its Jewry in Nazi death and labour camps, and suffered mass executions, forced starvation and exhaustion, forged the question in Heller's psyche: 'how could this have happened?' Alongside her experiences of the communist totalitarian regimes that followed the war in Hungary, the devastation that Heller awoke to after the war provoked in her a sense of responsibility and commitment to investigating the sources of morality and evil (Heller in Polony, 1998). These are the

questions that Heller's philosophy responds to (Heller, 1999b: 479; Heller and Tormey, 1998: 22).

Heller endured a troubled relationship with the state in communist Hungary for over thirty years. In the first years after the war, she negotiated the post-war environment juggling both Zionism and Communism. Communism won out and she joined the Hungarian Communist party in 1947. She soon realised that the party did not conform to the democratic ideals she had anticipated. Heller was relieved by her expulsion from the party a few years later (Heller, 1999b: 108). In 1953, there was a transformation in the Hungarian political situation with the appointment of Imre Nagy as Chairman of the Council of Ministers and the introduction of his 'new course' in socialism. With liberal political reform underway, Heller re-joined the party in 1954, in time for the abortive revolution of 1956. The repercussion of the Soviet crackdown on the Hungarian Revolution ushered in a difficult period for Heller. In 1958, she was once again expelled from the party and, consequently, from her post at the university. With no other job opportunities, she had no choice but to teach Hungarian in secondary school for five years. Heller recalls the years 1964-65 as dark times, a 'period of intimidation, of executions, of imprisonment', and recounts personal exposure to the intimidation tactics of the state (Heller and Tormey, 1998: 27).

During the brief period from 1965 until 1971, Heller and her colleagues experienced a moment of relative freedom. Heller regained an academic position at The Institute of Sociology and it was during this time that she enjoyed meeting international intellectuals³¹ involved in the Korčula movement. More significantly, along with Heller a small group of young philosophers, including Heller's husband, Ferenc Fehér, György Márkus, Mihály Vajda (to lesser degree István Mészáros, Maria Márkus and Iván Szelényi), coalesced around Heller's mentor and teacher, Georg Lukács establishing the loosely affiliated 'Budapest School' (Heller, 2010: 21).

Lukács died in 1971. Without the protection of Lukács' international fame and clout within the party, a new era of precariousness for Heller and the Budapest School began (Grumley, 2005: 7). In 1973, Heller and her colleagues were subjected to the

so-called philosophers' trial, which resulted in them either leaving their positions 'voluntarily' or being expelled from them. The next few years were extremely challenging. Barred by the state from gaining employment, Heller and others involved with the Budapest School sought employment outside of Hungary. In 1977, after decades of harassment at the hands of the state, Heller, along with her husband, Ferenc Fehér, left Hungary. She took up a position in sociology at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, while Ferenc made do travelling back and forth from a research position at the Australian National University in Canberra (Heller, 1999b: 396).

After the Holocaust, Heller struggled to come to terms with her Hungarian identity. It was not until the revolution of 1956 that she felt liberated from this internal conflict. The politics of 1956 arose from the people and out of the everyday. The politics of this revolution were not caught up with ideological divisiveness. The revolution was, for Heller, the spontaneous flourishing of this attitude on a mass scale. She maintains that it 'is still the most important political event in [her] life because it was a real revolution and because it was the only really socialist revolution in history' (Heller and Tormey, 1998: 23). Heller's enthusiasm for the 1956 revolution is founded on the basis that the revolution was realised spontaneously, autonomously and creatively by the people. It was not inspired by the logics of a revolutionary programme that found its inception in another worldly projection. On the contrary, the revolution found its form, so to speak, in *Rhodus* itself. Inasmuch as the revolution had aroused Heller, she was equally devastated by the crushing of the revolution only ten days after its inception. '[T]he turn set in slowly', Heller begins,

people were murdered slowly; heads were chopped off at a leisurely, measured tempo: salami tactics. In the winter of 1957 the terror set in with full force. That is when they started to hang people ... As for my personal fate, I felt I had entered a dark cave. The whole country had been swallowed up by a tunnel ... The entire country clattered into a dark underpass ... It would last a long time, for a very long time, until 1989 (Heller, 1999b: 188).

The lessons of totalitarianism had become clear to Heller over the course of her struggle and conflict with the Hungarian state. Totalitarianism cannot tolerate any

dissenting opinion: this is its nature. However, while pluralism, an integral condition of modernity, cannot be entirely erased, it can be outlawed and expelled – this was Heller's fate (Heller in Polony, 1998). Heller's experience of totalitarianism in communist Hungary converged with her personal connections to the Holocaust. This manifested in a wariness towards the promise of political movements. Heller (2009: 237) qualifies this point: 'I smell dangers where others, who have grown up in Western democracies, do not'. This privileged position allows Heller to problematise freedom in such a way that she reveals the paradoxical pulse of modernity. Yet Heller remains positive. In agreement with Hegel's (2005 [1820]: xx) commentary on Aesop's punchline: '*hic Rhodus, hic saltus*', Heller positions her politics: that the jump took place in *Rhodus* is important, likewise, a politics will always reflect its times. However, where she differs from Hegel is to emphasise the possibilities that can be found in *Rhodus* itself; that while politics might always be of their time, the possibilities therein are many (Heller, 2009: 237).

Heller's coming to the West, first to Melbourne where she spent nine years and then in New York – where she received and took on the newly created Hannah Arendt chair of philosophy at The New School for Social Research – informed Heller's sensitivity to difference within modernity. During this time, she was attentive to the internal differences of the West. Heller found Australia to be socially and economically collectivist, yet politically individualistic, whereas in the US she discovered the reverse, namely, politically conformist yet economically individualistic (Heller in Polony, 1998). In Australia, Heller was surprised to discover that good personal relationships could transcend one's political standpoint. She recalls her friend and colleague John Carroll at La Trobe University who she describes as deeply conservative and of the right, but who was on good personal terms with his colleagues on the left (Heller, 1999b: 395). This non-judgemental openness stood out to Heller as something characteristic of Australian modernity. Later, in New York, she describes a very different social attitude (Heller, 1999b: 446). There, Heller observed stronger orientations towards family over friendships. She found it more difficult than in Australia to make strong friendships, which she attributed to the more functional orientation of relationships in the US. Heller's encounter with liberalism, first in Australia and then later in the US, helped her

understand the difference that modernity cultivates across time and space. For Heller, the dualism of Western and Eastern modernity broke down and she replaced it with a more variegated and pluralistic account of modernity.

On coming to Australia, Heller discovered new freedoms that had a significant impact on the nature of her work. Without the political constraints of the totalitarian regime she could untangle the political interventions from her philosophy, which had been, until that time, masked within her philosophical work (Heller, 2010: 54). Heller found her political voice in partnership with her husband, Ferenc Fehér, whose 'down to earth analysis' was coupled with Heller's generalised ideas (Heller and Tormey, 1998: 45). The shape of her politics at this time was in transition. The novel experience of freedom of travel allowed Heller to enjoy life as a 'globetrotter' (Heller, 2010: 56). In these early years, she was further acquainted with the New Left and an international academic community. Heller's experiences in Hungary provoked in her a reaction to the New Left that saw her forge a new path. Heller's disagreement is captured in the following anecdote recalling her experiences at the first Bonn peace and disarmament rally:

I was among the first to speak and I duly defended the cause of peace. After me came intervention after intervention. As I listened and listened to them my blood started to boil. They were haranguing about a peace-loving Soviet Union and the war-mongering United States. I could hardly believe my ears ... I had lived too long in a country under Soviet rule not to be able to discover, after one half an hour or so, the Soviet machination behind the whole "peace" rally (Heller, 2010: 61).

Heller's move to the West, first to Australia and then to the US, initiates a metamorphosis in Heller's politics and philosophy. The freedom the West afforded Heller, and a developed understanding of the nature of totalitarianism and of pluralism in modernity, converged with her own biographical experience. It was at this time that Heller's theoretical contribution began to take a distinctive and coherent shape. Her experience in Australia and the US is well documented in her own philosophy over these years. The significance of Heller's exposure to Australian society is poorly accounted for in the literature. The contrast between her experience in Australia, on

the one hand, and in the US on the other, helped her to formulate her political philosophy. In this light, Heller takes into account the different modes of personal relations and connectedness that are possible within different expressions of modernity. Heller's philosophy of history traces her untangling of modernity as a fragmented totality. The notion of postmodernity is meaningful to Heller and she weaves it into her account of modernity. In addition, Heller complements this project with a simultaneous multivolume project on ethics and morals, the results of which cumulate and conclude in the publication of *A Theory of Modernity* in 2005.

Beyond the political and historical dimensions of Heller's biography, there is another formative story in Heller's life. She has always actively pursued a sense of intellectual community among her personal friends and colleagues. Heller embraced her friends and intellectual counterparts as a formative component of her philosophical identity. Early, in the first years after the war, Heller enjoyed the intimacy and bonds she developed during her brief participation in the Zionist movement. Most significant is the strong personal and intellectual bonds she formed amongst members of the Budapest School who gathered around Lukács. To a less personal degree, there was the international community of New Leftist intellectuals that she entered into, and which was established from a series of Korčula Summer School meetings in the former Yugoslavia (Heller, 2010: 22). And finally, filling the void left by the gradual dispersion of the Budapest School was the strong sense of community amongst the young academics she associated with in Melbourne (Heller and Tormey, 1998: 45).

The adherents of the Budapest School were, as Heller (2010: 21) puts it, 'personal friends but also philosophical and political allies'. The Budapest School found its definition in a humanistic Marxism. Contemporaneous with the school coalescing in the early 1970s Heller began to identify as a Marxist. Previously, despite her involvement the Communist Party, the regime had discouraged the reading and interpretation of Marx's primary texts (Heller and Tormey, 1998: 26). The Budapest School was initially characterized by a renaissance of Marxism: its affiliates felt they had to forget the orthodox Marxism of the time and return to Marx himself. From here, they could 'develop philosophy in a proper direction' (Heller and Tormey, 1998: 29).

The group was close-knit, critically engaging with each other's works and sharing in each other's personal lives. Lukács orchestrated the group. He provided the forum and context in which the young philosophers responded to his work and that of each other. The school outlived Lukács and it was not until the eve of their departure from Hungary that the school lost its formative moment. '[Y]ou can never, ever overcome capitalism, socialism is rubbish and so is Marxism' said Mihály Vajda to the rest of the group in 1976; while as Heller recounts, 'that was end of the Budapest School' (Heller 1998: 36). This declaration resonated with the other members of the group; the school had set out on a renaissance of Marxism which had transformed into its deconstruction (Heller and Tormey, 1998: 36). Despite the dissolution of the group's premise, the close friendships were retained amongst these colleagues and remained an important connection during their time in Australia. Heller and Fehér, for their part, carried on Lukács' tradition of social and intellectual gatherings and actively fostered new intellectual friendships in Melbourne. Beilharz (n.d. [forthcoming]) recounts the galvanising and catalytic effect that their 'institutionalised Sunday evening soirees at their suburban home' had in developing diverse intellectual and personal friendships at this time. Heller's sensitivity towards cultivating relationships and community resonates in her philosophical work. The response to Heller's challenge to modernity – 'how could Auschwitz have happened?' – not only resides in her moral and ethical philosophy but also in her daily life and personal relationships. For Heller, the only response to the Holocaust is the cultivation of a spirit capable of bonding all of humanity.

Heller's philosophical life began with Auschwitz. Upon reflection, she considers her intellectual contribution as the repayment of her debt to the victims of modernity, especially those that died and suffered at the hands of National Socialism and communist totalitarianism (Heller, 1999b: 476). Heller explains her oeuvre as an endeavour to understand how Auschwitz and the Gulag were possible. Her conclusion is that she could not understand: that the Holocaust is beyond understanding (Heller, 1999b: 477). Nevertheless, Heller feels that she was able to conclude this lifelong intellectual project. While she may not have been able to understand these extremes of the twentieth century, she was able to make sense of the circumstances that made

them possible (Heller, 1999b: 477). In this way, Heller (1999b: 478) concludes that she was able to fulfil her duty to the dead and that she is free to return to the sense of wonder that she had felt in her youth.

Heller's memoir consistently returns to themes that relate to finding one's place in the world, a place to settle or to call home. She speaks of friends who found their place: George and Maria Markus, for example, who found their place and home in Sydney (Heller, 1999b: 397). In contrast, Heller seems more unsettled. Her vagrancy is bound to her philosophical search for understanding. This narrative correlates with the social and historical conditions of Heller's life. Her story reflects the experience of the European Jewry and their continual struggle to experience a true sense of home in Europe. The Jewish story is where Heller's begins. It is also one that remains: the current rise of Viktor Orbán's Hungary is just another chapter in the perennial rise of European bigotry.

However, Heller's life also embodies a more universal story. Her search for a home resonates with the modern (or perhaps postmodern) condition. In modernity, the traditional home, spatially located, can no longer be taken for granted. 'Moderns' find homes elsewhere. Heller (1995b) mentions several: the home some of us share in European culture, in a democracy or in the temporality of the absolute present. Heller understands the different senses of home these can provide. They each resonate with her own search for a home. In this way, Heller's life has been quintessentially modern. Her longing for home is also the plight of us moderns. Thus, Heller's modernity reflects her own life. This modernity is characterised by a deep sense of mourning, with a melancholy for a satisfaction that will never be fulfilled. In recent decades, Heller has made her home back in her native Hungary. It was only after she had concluded her philosophical and historical discourse and fulfilled her self-imposed obligations that she could return to the country of her birth. Heller helps us understand that whilst we moderns do find a sense of home in modernity, that will always be a home of some compromise. This is our fate as moderns.

2.4. Three lives and three theories of modernity

Nietzsche agrees with the intimate connection between one's biography and one's thought. '[E]very great philosophy so far has been: a confession of faith on the part of its author, and a type of involuntary and unself-conscious memoir' (Nietzsche 2002 [1886]: 8), he affirms. Whilst Nietzsche's critique anticipates the sort of self-reflexivity that characterises much of philosophy and social thought in the twentieth century, he perhaps overlooks the degree of flexibility that this orientation might have on the self. While Nietzsche tries to pin the philosopher and their product to a rigid kernel of their morality, one could add that this kernel itself is dynamic within the life of the philosopher. More so than philosophy, a theory of modernity must be the product of one's transpiring life experience and the negotiation of inherited thought. It cannot be isolated to a singular moment of one's morality but to its unfolding through a life immersed in the collectivity of the social-historical. To tackle modernity, one must approach it from the vantage point of the unfolding of one's own life experiences.

There can be no separation between the formation of Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's unique social philosophies, on the one hand, and their biographies on the other. Each chooses the subject of their investigations in line with a character and personality that derive from their individual experiences just as much as they are compelled by the social exigency of their times. Lefebvre's enthusiasm for both the traditions of the rural countryside and the possibilities of the modern city shape his political and philosophical trajectory. The pendulum between these two extremes helps him to resolve the sense of *inquiétude* he perceived in his early years. A sense of irony and romanticism underlie Lefebvre's playful attitude toward life and intellectual work. It is with these attitudes that he advocates a project of transforming everyday life. In Castoriadis, we discover a fiercely independent character fixated on contributing to a more just society. In this, and in his passion for knowledge and discourse we can detect both an Athenian citizen and a champion of the Enlightenment. In this amalgam, his location in Paris and commitment to politics are both the choices and conditions of his life and character. In contrast, Heller's character develops in a much darker setting. For Heller, the Holocaust and the direct experience of modernity's excesses dominate.

Even so, Heller finds a beauty in modernity amongst her love for philosophy and the communion she encounters with others. These experiences are reflected in her account of modernity, one that is fraught with paradox and a melancholic longing for a sense of home. Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's biographies provide us insight into their approaches to modernity. Sentiment in their personalities is aroused by the account of their formative moments and life context. From here, we can conjecture the provocation of their particular interests and concerns. The narration of their biographies secures us a privileged position from which to observe the sources of their perspectives. The hope is that this prior biographical knowledge compliments our engagement with their idiosyncratic interpretations of the significance of modern everyday life.

These biographical portraits of Lefebvre, Heller and Castoriadis tell the stories of three individuals wrestling with historical contingency. Equipped with their indoctrination into the social imaginary, each forms a unique perspective and understanding of their world. As such, our protagonists are much like the rest of us. We are all born into the world and immediately confronted by the need to make sense of this world. This process unfolds as the contingency of experience collides with inherited knowledge. In modernity, more than any other epoch, we are asked to choose. Our individual autonomy is aroused (for some more than others) and we are confronted by choice within the limitations of shared meanings and significations. In this way, we navigate our worlds of individual and shared experiences. Our compass is our access to the social imaginary. However, this compass does not provide clear directions. Instead, its answers are varied and ambivalent, but herein lies a creative moment: it is from this uncertainty that we can give form to understanding the particular worlds that we encounter. While our individual experiences are unique, our shared experiences and shared imaginaries provide the building blocks for original interpretations of the world that can be shared with others. For Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre, this paradigm makes itself explicit throughout their intellectual endeavours and especially in the positing of each of their theoretical insights. As with our own intuitions about the world we inhabit, their perspectives are unique and products of their particular and shared experiences in the world.

Heller asks of her readers that they read her theory of modernity through the lens of their own life experiences and with the aid of shared traditions. She wants them to 'give their own intuition a chance to grasp the essence of modernity' (Heller 1999a: ix). I share Heller's sentiment. While this thesis does not furnish a theoretical paradigm as such, it is the stage for the encounter of three distinct elucidations of modernity to take place and draw attention to the central role the interpretation of everyday life yields for making sense of our society. In addition to Heller's proposal that we take any account of modernity through our own lens, I have furnished these biographical depictions so that they might provide the lenses in which to unpack the encounters that follow. Having located the distinctive character of each of their social philosophies within their biographies, I now build on this variation and focus on their attention to everyday life in order to help sketch the contours of modernity.

Chapter 3. **Situating the Everyday: The Contours of Modernity**

Form through activity, or, the function determines the form, or is it the form that determines the function? I think it's the function that determines the form. So, yeah, through activity, yes ...

Cecil Taylor

Despite notable differences in Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's approaches to interpreting modern society, this thesis suggests that it is the ways in which the significance of everyday life features in each of their theories that brings the trio together in these pages. They each navigate the permutations of the twentieth century and social theoretical revolutions with a similar caution. While all three develop their theoretical contributions out of the tradition of Humanist Marxism, they each demonstrate an openness to revising the determinacy and disillusion that had ossified and paralysed the Marxist project in the twentieth century. At the same time, neither Castoriadis, Heller nor Lefebvre lost confidence in the positive value of social theory despite its being undermined by postmodernism and poststructuralism in the latter part of the twentieth century. Instead, they conceived and developed theoretical projects that maintain a critical genealogy with modern thought whilst learning from with the development of more flexible and dynamic approaches to the understanding of modernity.

At the fulcrum of this balancing act is the notion of everyday life. Each of the three introduce a blend of ideas that have originated in response to the limitations of modern universalistic thought. One can detect the integration of phenomenology, existentialism, psychoanalytic theory, structuralism and poststructuralism into their accounts, which maintain the scaffolding of modern humanism. For all three, everyday life is the site whereby social institutions, ideologies and the structures of inherited society collide with the contingency, indeterminacy, spontaneity and creativity of human life.

It is thanks to this combination – of critical respect for the modern thought that developed during the Western Enlightenment and the commitment to build something new in its problematic shadow – that Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre diverge from other intellectuals that have taken conceptualising everyday life seriously. Intellectual traditions such as critical theory, existentialism, phenomenology, structuralism, poststructuralism and postmodernism have each contributed to the philosophical conceptualisation of everyday life. However, none of them limit their perspectives to any one of these positions. Instead, they each learn from the advantages of these traditions whilst taking into account the problems they engender.

Although they developed their thought from the similar critical traditions of the theorists of the Frankfurt School, neither Castoriadis, Heller nor Lefebvre share the school's pessimism. Adorno and Horkheimer (1972 [1944]) demonstrate an awareness of the significance of everyday life in twentieth century capitalism in their critique of the culture industry. Likewise Marcuse, whose *One Dimensional Man* describes an everyday life totally mediated and controlled by advanced industrial capitalism (Marcuse 1964). The problem with these formulations, especially in Adorno and Horkheimer's account, is that they articulate the vestiges of Enlightenment thinking as self-devouring. In their understanding, the solutions to the impasses of twentieth century capitalism lie in the same rationalities that have facilitated the alienation and control of freedom and everyday life. Habermas provides a corrective to this by proposing a rationality embedded in the phenomenological and intersubjective experience of the world. This rationality is expressed via the intersubjectivity of language in his theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1985a, 1985b). The Frankfurt School's willingness to incorporate Freudian psychological analysis into their particular renditions of Marxism is a point of similarity between their theories and those of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. The school was influenced by the Freudo-Marxist psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich via Erich Fromm, who furnished the Frankfurt School theorists the conceptual tools needed to further develop an anthropological and psychological concept of freedom³². Along similar lines, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre were also attentive to the insights of psychoanalytic theory and incorporated them into their respective social philosophies³³. In each case,

psychoanalytic theory helped ground their social theory and philosophy with more attention to the lived experiences of everyday life.

Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all incorporated existential and phenomenological accounts of everyday life into their social philosophies. While their engagements with these traditions motivate their social philosophies from different theoretical starting points and in divergent directions, there is an overarching problematic that existentialism and phenomenology bring to their contributions. While each of the three agree with the existential and phenomenological position of the subject, they are troubled by the way that this subject-orientated perspective struggles to incorporate more sociological and collective interpretations of society. The problem with existential and phenomenological accounts of everyday life is that they focus on the individual subject, as with Husserl (1970 [1936]) and Heidegger (2008 [1927]), or the intersubjective phenomenology of Schutz, Berger and Luckmann's (1967; 1973) sociological account of life-world. In these accounts, phenomenological and existential experiences of everyday life are promoted in place of overarching social theoretical interpretations. What is missing is cumulative experiences and life-worlds of the a-subjective anonymous collective that underpins our society (Adams, 2012b, 2012a; Castoriadis, 1997c)³⁴.

Perhaps most significantly, the intellectual revolutions of structuralism, poststructuralism and, later, postmodernism set out the theoretical issues to which the most original aspects of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's contributions respond³⁵. The materiality and inescapable presence of everyday life provides each of them a counter narrative to these traditions whilst taking seriously and negotiating the implications of these revolutions in social philosophy. Following the earlier structural linguistic work of Ferdinand de Saussure, structuralists such as Jacques Lacan, Roman Jakobson and Claude Levi-Strauss bypassed the central locus of the subject and took as their starting points linguistic or social structures and the rules, codes and systems that they entailed in order construct their social, anthropological or psychological theories. From this radical perspective, the presumed freedom and agency of the subject came into question, undermining the fundamental values of the

Enlightenment. Put simply by Best and Kellner (1991: 19), with structuralism 'the subject was dismissed, or radically decentred, as merely an effect of language, culture, or the unconscious, denied causal or creative efficacy'.

Much of structuralism initiated a preoccupation with the significance of language, which Saussure (1916) had originally described as a system of arbitrary signs that express ideas and meaning. Poststructuralists, including Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan picked up on the arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified and as a result, destabilised the foundations of meaning which had been traditionally thought to have been fixed to the intrinsic relationship between the signifier and signified. For the poststructuralists,

the signified is only a moment in a never-ending process of signification where meaning is produced not in a stable, referential relation between subject and object, but only within the infinite, intertextual play of signifiers (Best and Kellner, 1991: 21).

These developments problematised knowledge itself. For the poststructuralists, the foundations of knowledge could no longer be taken as given. The analysis of meaning and the inquiry into knowledge would require different methods and techniques than those that had assumed a stable relationship between the signifier and the signified. Alongside these intellectual developments, political upheavals were underway. The student uprisings of 1968 in Paris (and more broadly around the world) were perhaps the most explicit examples. This political movement had a deep and lasting impact on poststructuralism and probably played a significant role in the self-reflexive orientation of postmodernism. Best and Kellner (1991: 24) contend that it was around this time that poststructuralists began to pay more attention to 'subjectivity, difference, and the marginal elements of culture and everyday life'. While the poststructuralists had abandoned the traditional agency and autonomy of the Enlightenment subject, they were concerned with 'how individuals are constituted as subjects and given unified identities or subject positions' (Best and Kellner, 1991:

24). In this respect, everyday life became an important area of investigation as a fluid and dynamic arena in which subjectivity is constituted.

These developments are central to the ways in which the theorisation of everyday life becomes an important motif in the social philosophies of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. As a predominately French intellectual phenomenon, poststructuralism had more impact on Castoriadis and Lefebvre than it did on Heller. Lefebvre had already picked up the concept of everyday life well before the advent of poststructuralism. His attention to the existential and social conditions of everyday life via a unique existentialist Marxism had already positioned his theory to be well prepared for the theoretical upheavals of structuralism and, later, poststructuralism. In the late 1950s and early 1960s he had already anticipated much of what poststructuralism would introduce later. This why, in Lefebvre's later works, one is struck by the resilience of the subject amongst the fluid and dynamic conditions of meaning and signification.

Castoriadis developed his mature social philosophy in the 1960s and 70s. With similar concerns to those of the poststructuralists, Castoriadis' theoretical innovation was framed by his critique of Marxist determinism. Responding to Lacanian psychoanalysis and presumably Foucault's important volumes *The Order of Things* (1970) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Castoriadis was attentive to individual and social configurations, and to the dynamism of signification that underpinned the relationship between the signifier and signified. In contrast, Castoriadis did not limit his interpretation to language. Instead, he integrated a theory of doing alongside his theory of language via an innovative elaboration of two proto-institutions: *legein* and *teukhein*³⁶. Taking account of the poststructuralist interventions, Castoriadis was able to respond accordingly while positing a theory that grounded itself in the dynamism of everyday doing.

The political elaborations of poststructuralism influenced the development of postmodernism. In particular, postmodernism took up the insights of poststructuralism and turned them against itself. The label 'postmodern theory' casts a large shadow,

often over many who themselves are not always comfortable with their own identification with postmodernism. In part, the difficulty of the term rests on the ambiguity associated with the circularity of what it proposes. On the one hand, postmodern theory describes an epoch, while on the other, it cannot avoid articulating its own orientation as a product of the epoch. At its most general, to be postmodern is a form of historical consciousness that self-reflexively situates knowledge of its own transiency and relativism as an integral but paradoxical prerequisite for any pursuit of knowledge itself. Postmodern theoretical perspectives are many. At risk of an unwarranted generalisation regarding a disparate yet related collection of theoretical perspectives, what stands out in postmodern theoretical viewpoints is the intention to map the fragmented narratives, discourses, images and signs that facilitate ever-changing modes of shared signification – and to do so with an awareness of the transient subjectivity that frames the act of viewing itself. Whilst postmodern perspectives brought the diversity and detail of everyday life to the fore, it was presented as hyperdynamic, fragmented and lacking coherence. In the words of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2004: 42 [1983]):

we live today in the age of partial objects, bricks that have been shattered to bits, and leftovers. We no longer believe in the myth of the existence of fragments that, like pieces of an antique statue, are merely waiting for the last one to be turned up, so that they may all be glued back together to create a unity that is precisely the same as the original unity.

In the postmodern society these theories describe, metanarratives no longer provide historical coherence (Lyotard, 1984). Everyday life is characterised by ungrounded ‘pastiche’ (Jameson, 1991) and the actuality of our everyday lives is increasingly confused with mass media representations (Baudrillard, 1994). While some emphasised the exploitation of this situation and domination of human life by concentrations of power and knowledge, others, such as de Certeau (1988), were consoled by the spontaneity of human life which could always generate a ‘tactics’ of subversion in the face of such oppression. While some took these developments as regressive (Bell and Jameson) insofar as they clouded and obscured our clarity, others (Vattimo, Foucault, Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari) celebrated the new epoch as a

liberation and an opening up of new possibilities (Best and Kellner, 1991: 29). Regardless, like poststructuralism, postmodernism's critique of foundations provided limited potential to galvanise cohesive political and philosophical clarity. The difficulty in finding a positive narrative, the distrust of progressive ideals and humanist values limit postmodern theory's ability to meaningfully interpret our world and society or construct an effective politics.

Postmodern theory was popularised late in the lives of Lefebvre and Castoriadis and neither of them embraced it as a theoretical orientation. Lefebvre anticipated many of the theoretical trends that would later be picked up by postmodernism. For example, Jean Baudrillard, whose ideas were deeply influenced by Lefebvre's project and who was at one time a student of Lefebvre, went on to become one of the most significant postmodern theorists (Kellner, 1989: 4). While Lefebvre's project, his writings on everyday life, space and rhythm analysis, have provided good starting points for postmodern investigations (Goonewardena et al., 2008), his own firm grip on Marxism kept him from following the same path.

Castoriadis was resolutely dismissive of the trends in postmodern theory. His article 'The Retreat from Autonomy: Postmodernism as Generalised Conformism' (1997g) articulates a deep mistrust of theoretical perspectives that deny the possibility of agency and present a world of relativistic nihilism. Notwithstanding, there are some tenets of postmodern theory with which Castoriadis was in agreement. These include: the 'rejection of the overall vision of history as progress or liberation' and the 'rejection of the idea of a uniform and universal reason' (Castoriadis, 1997g: 41).

Of the three, Heller was the only one to pick up the postmodern label in the positive sense. Alongside her husband, Fehér, she adopted the notion of postmodernity in her own terms. For Heller and Fehér, what was most important was to be able to describe a new historical epoch characterised by a reflective attitude towards a world without solid epistemological foundations or a unitary social order. In their account, emphasis is placed on 'being after' the grand narrative and instead developing a reflective sensitivity to the present (Heller and Fehér, 1989: 1). Rather

than viewing human societies throughout history, we come to know our society *in* history. In this way, postmodernity does not escape modernity, but rather, modernity comes to see itself from the inside out rather than the outside in.

Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre took the succession of ideas of structuralism, poststructuralism and postmodernism into account. Their social philosophies responded to the rupture of epistemology and ontology that entailed as a result of the questions that poststructural, and later postmodern theory, posed. However, in comparison to many of the poststructuralists and postmodernists, the efforts of each of the three retain more clarity and political potential. I suggest that it is the way that the significance of everyday life is integrated into their social philosophies that helps to retain the political and interpretive efficacy of their projects. Although each of the three problematises knowledge of everyday life in various ways, everyday life emerges in their social philosophies as a paramount location of reality. Furthermore, they each discover ways in which to retain and describe effective agency of individual and collective activity. In each of their accounts, we can detect attempts to discover a productive or stabilising tension between the various antinomies raised by structuralism, poststructuralism and postmodernism. What is most significant about each of their elucidations is that they all integrate the subjective, intersubjective and a-subjective aspects that comprise society whilst remembering the cosmological context of *physis*. Reconciled with both cosmic and social indeterminism and contingency, the three are not tempted by nihilism, instead opting for theories that highlight humanity's ability to negotiate the constant features and the alterity of human life.

The purpose of this chapter is to expound the concept of modern everyday life as it is established in Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's social philosophies. Despite the alignment of their attitudes, each of their contributions approaches modern everyday life with a different lens, with different emphases and with different combinations of theoretical apparatus. This chapter puts these three approaches towards modern everyday life alongside each other. The result is not a comprehensive account of modern everyday life, but a variegated and impressionistic one, exhibiting both contradictions and consensus. I begin with Lefebvre's account. As the original

critic and celebrant of everyday life, Lefebvre asks us to problematise the alienation of modern everyday life whilst imputing the category of the everyday with the spontaneity and vitality of nature. Everyday life forms the impetus of history whilst paradoxically remaining at its whim. In this way, his account rests on the ambivalence of hope and despair. Secondly, I discuss Castoriadis' theorisation of social and individual 'doing' and the social-historical insofar as they relate to a concept of everyday life. I argue that while Castoriadis did not directly concern himself with questions of everyday life, the notion of everyday life resonates with his theory. Everyday life in the context of Castoriadis' concept of society is the manifestation and aggregate of human doing. From this angle, everyday life becomes the theatre for the unfolding of the social historical and the forum of the social imaginary. Finally, I examine Heller's account. Here, I focus on the transition from Heller's earlier writings on everyday life – which were inspired by the radical ferment of the 1960s and 70s – to the more measured account of the significance of everyday life in her later writings. Heller's earlier writings construct a systematic philosophical account of everyday life, the thrust of which centres on a theory of intersubjective objectivation. The essence of this paradigm informs her later writings. However, she loses the terminology and opts for a more literary philosophy that navigates the vicissitudes of modernity and is more attentive to the heterogeneity and embodied experience of everyday life.

This chapter presents the related social theoretical approaches of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre insofar as they each respond to the significance of modern everyday life. Herein, I highlight the value of conceptualising everyday life for philosophy and social theory in their respective strivings to interpret and understand modernity. In addition, the chapter also provides some insight insofar as it interprets and describes several different paradigms that aid our understanding of the vicissitudes of modern everyday life. This analysis draws attention to the significance of everyday life for the theoretical approaches of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. They remain at a level of theoretical abstraction – thereby avoiding, where possible, the idiosyncratic complexities of each of their social philosophies – that is conducive to a productive discourse among the three theorists, and one that is appropriate to the scope of this thesis. Alongside each other, these accounts generate several

problematic paradigms – both in the collective voice and as points of contention between the three – that are taken up as themes throughout the remainder of the thesis. With different emphases, each of them describe a paradoxical modern everyday life. This chapter brings the tensions implicit in this paradox to the fore. In this way, notions of freedom and the political potential engendered by the concept of everyday life – themes taken up in chapters below – are given preliminary treatment insofar as they are of direct relevance to these three engagements.

3.1. Henri Lefebvre: the critique of everyday life

Henri Lefebvre's contribution to the scholarship of everyday life is centrally located amongst the various attempts in the twentieth century to interrogate and theorise the profound significance of modern everyday life. His lifelong project to discover the everyday – to elevate it and attribute to it the potentials of social transformation – traverses the differing currents of thought. His prolific account overlaps with phenomenology and existentialism, with structuralism and poststructuralism and the critical efforts of Western Marxists. Despite these correlations, Lefebvre's philosophy and critique emphasise a discordant totality of everyday life that demands a comprehensive response. Lefebvre's many writings on everyday life reflect this requirement, filling his oeuvre with systematic theoretical presentations that are frequently disrupted by long and seemingly incongruent digressions. The result vacillates between a call for the total transformation of everyday life and thoughtful meditation and acceptance of its constant features.

In this section, I begin by accounting for the inception of Lefebvre's investigation of everyday life. I contend that Lefebvre's discovery of first Nietzsche followed by Hegel and then Marx provides him with a conceptual apparatus that guides his response to the perceived *inquiétude* in the post-World War I era and the more general malaise with modernity. This configuration inspires his lasting interest in everyday life. Second, I discuss how Lefebvre reconstructs his philosophical interest in everyday life from a critique of traditional philosophical ignorance of the everyday.

Third, I examine Lefebvre's notion of everyday life as an open and fragmented totality, and account for his call for a critique of everyday life as a rejuvenation of sociology. Finally, with recourse to Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, Lefebvre's oeuvre on everyday life is characterised as a redemptive tragedy – full of both hope and despair for the future of modernity.

3.1.1. The inception of Lefebvre's critique

The crystallisation of Lefebvre's conceptual framework for both interpreting and celebrating modern everyday life was a product of the encounter between his early intellectual endeavours as an active participant of *Philosophies* and his (and their) discovery of Hegel, and later Marx. *Philosophies* had sought to respond to the *inquiétude* that had become an undercurrent in French society and philosophical thought post-World War I. Alongside those of other groups at the time, their own contributions rejected 'bourgeois morality' (Burkhard, 2000: 28), which they believed could no longer retain its legitimacy after the horrors of World War I. Burkhard (2000: 28) argues that what distinguished *Philosophies* was their attention to an ethics that queried 'the problem of living and acting in the world'. Their discovery of Hegel, whose writings were introduced to them by the Surrealists, was helpful in this respect. Hegel was to have an enduring impact on Lefebvre's thought. In Hegel, Lefebvre discovered the mode of spirit that he needed to express the *inquiétude*. In this way, Lefebvre identified a form of moral rationality that had recourse to the actual. Likewise, Marx's elaboration of Hegel's philosophy, especially in the *1844 Manuscripts* (which Lefebvre translated, together with Guterman, into French in the early 1930s) further inspired him. Lefebvre was especially taken by the central notion in Hegel's philosophy that understood an interplay between the rational and the actual³⁷. This idea was reworked by Marx who contended that the 'world's becoming philosophical is at the same time philosophy's becoming worldly' (Marx, 1997 [1839]: 62). Thinking alongside Hegel and Marx, Lefebvre's innovation was to replace the 'actual' or the 'world' with the concept of everyday life. Their corresponding elaborations of alienation resonated with Lefebvre as they spoke to the concerns that had troubled him since his youth. These

same concerns were foundational for *Philosophies*. Lefebvre found much in these accounts of alienation that assisted his interpretation of modern everyday life.

In Marx's early writings as a doctoral student, he directs Hegel's formula against itself, evoking the myth of Prometheus:

just as Prometheus, having stolen fire from heaven, begins to build houses and settle on the earth, so philosophy, having extended itself to the world, turns against the apparent world. So now with the Hegelian philosophy (Marx, 1997 [1839]: 52).

Where Marx set about returning Hegel's philosophy to the world with his own materialist and anthropological corrective, Lefebvre comes to understand this movement as typical to the human condition and amplified in modernity. Implicit to the similitude of Prometheus' gift of fire to humanity are the conscious creative potentials of humanity. Inasmuch as humanity can create within the material world with the enlistment of Prometheus' gift, humanity also creates abstractions that exacerbate the division of the world between form and content. Marx warns us of the precarious position of humanity: intrinsic to its own essence contains the potential for its enslavement to its own creations.

In Lefebvre's concise text *Dialectical Materialism* he collates Marx's ruminations of the concept of the dialectic and the latter's critiques of Hegel. While acknowledging that Marx himself did not employ the term 'dialectical materialism', Lefebvre makes it clear that it is a central tenet of his reading of Marx (1968 [1940]: 86). In Lefebvre's reading, Marx (and Engels) provide a corrective to Hegel whose speculative philosophy, they think, prioritises the abstract mind over the real material conditions of human life. The problem, argues Lefebvre (1968 [1940]: 81), is that Hegel 'believes he is constructing the world in the movement of his thought, whereas he is only systematizing and arranging with his abstract method thoughts that are in everyone's head'. In contrast, he contends that Marx makes the case 'that the conditions men live under determine their consciousness' (Lefebvre, 1968 [1940]: 83) and that 'this complex content of life and consciousness is the true reality that we must elucidate' (Lefebvre, 1968 [1940]: 85). According to Lefebvre, the solution to the

problem cannot rely on either a pure materialism or a pure idealism. Rather, it must find a way to negotiate between the two:

There can be no pure abstraction. The abstract is also concrete, and the concrete, from a certain point of view, is also abstract. All that exists for us is the concrete abstract (Lefebvre, 1968 [1940]: 88).

With some conjecture, Lefebvre articulates dialectical materialism as the method that Marx employs for understanding the movement of history and as the foundation of praxis. Lefebvre describes the movements of dialectical materialism as follows:

The dialectic, far from being an inner movement of the mind, is real, it precedes the mind, in Being. It imposes itself on the mind. First of all we analyse the simplest and most abstract movement, that of thought that has been stripped as far as possible of all content. In this way we discover the most general categories and how they are linked together. Next, this movement must be connected up with the concrete movement, with the given content. We then become aware of the fact that the movement of the content or of Being is made clear for us in the laws of the dialectic. The contradictions in thought do not come simply from thought itself, from its ultimate incoherence or impotence, they also come from the content. Linked together they tend towards the expression of the total movement of the content and raise it to the level of consciousness and reflection (Lefebvre, 1968 [1940]: 109).

Lefebvre constructs the concept of dialectical materialism from various locations in Marx's oeuvre and concludes that it is a central tenet that underpins his positions. Lefebvre's inference makes sense from his perspective. His preoccupation with the concept of everyday life helped him to distil dialectical materialism from Marx's thought. While Marx is clearly attentive to the everyday conditions of human life, the philosophical innovation he employs to comprehend the relationship between the material concrete and abstract concrete and between form and content is articulated in different terms throughout his oeuvre. In earlier writings, such as the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *The Holy Family* (with Engels), *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The German Ideology*, Marx presents a philosophical anthropology that establishes a dialectical union between the material conditions of life and its subjective

objectivations. In later writings, such as the *Critique of Political Economy* and *Capital*, more political and economic definition is given to this earlier political anthropology. In these works, economic relations are emphasised as 'the simplest relations we can find historically' (Engels cited in Lefebvre, 1968 [1940]: 85). In the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx (1987 [1859]: 263) articulates the project of his later writings: 'this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production'. This shift in focus, from a more generalised philosophical anthropology to a critique of political economy, obscures Marx's attention to everyday life. Lefebvre's interpretation brings this back to the fore.

For Lefebvre, everyday life is the theatre of the human condition, whereby a totality of human activity is in a perpetual state of transformation through the mutual configuration of the abstract and concrete: of form and content. Whilst Lefebvre embraced the dialectic in his own articulation of dialectic materialism, he distanced his theory from the historicism of Hegel and Marx with recourse to Nietzsche, whose philosophy had taught Lefebvre the fallibility of narratives of progress³⁸. In his earlier writings on everyday life (Lefebvre 1999 [1936]; 2002 [1961]; 2003 [1933]) his project is to expand the field of Marxian alienation to encompass the totality of everyday life. Whereas, in his later writings alienation was for Lefebvre an enduring and immanent condition of human societies. Lefebvre came to understand that everyday life was the forum whereby human ideas and human activity came together in perpetual tension.

3.1.2. The ordinary and the extraordinary

Part of Lefebvre's project is to draw attention to a totality of everyday life, both as ordinary and extraordinary. Lefebvre's account of everyday life differs from the descriptions its precursors. Lukács (1971 [1923], 1978 [1910])³⁹ and then later, Heidegger (2008 [1927]) devalue *Alltäglichkeit* (everydayness or ordinary life). In Lukács' (1978 [1910]) first attempt, tragedy elucidates the meaning of history in life. For Lukács:

Tragedy's fight for history is a great war of conquest against life, an attempt to find the meaning of history (which is immeasurably far from ordinary life) in life, to extract the meaning of history from life as the true, concealed sense of life (Lukács, 1978 [1910]: 167).

He sets up the 'true' sense of life in contrast to ordinary life. Likewise, after his Marxist turn; although this time 'sober ordinariness' is juxtaposed with consciousness of class struggle acquiring revolutionary significance from moment to moment:

This relation informs every aspect in its simple and sober ordinariness, but only consciousness makes it real and so confers reality on the day-to-day struggle by manifesting its relation to the whole. Thus it elevates mere existence to reality (Lukács, 1971 [1923]: 22).

Likewise, Heidegger (2008 [1927]) makes it clear that the *Dasein's* consciousness of its own modality of being elevates it from the inauthenticity of its everyday modality to the authentic 'mine-self'. As with Lukács, the implication is that 'everydayness' or 'ordinary life' are undesirable modes of human life to be transcended wherever possible. Lefebvre takes issue with this attitude towards the everyday.

Unlike Heidegger and Lukács, Lefebvre does not differentiate between authentic or meaningful life and 'everydayness'. For Lefebvre, the everyday contains within it the whole of the human experience. His critique of Heidegger, who argues that the non-everyday or authentic modality of being is aroused by the death consciousness of a *Dasein*, helps to demonstrate this point:

Our metaphysicians, who go on so much about 'the other-than-being' (to use their jargon yet again), have little to say about old age. This is because it is not exciting to think about, there is nothing other-worldly about it. It is simply a sad reality; and yet thinking about it will tell us what we need to overcome, and immediately, within each of us, no matter how young we may be, and in every moment of our everyday lives. In any case we know only too well that old people do not need to make an effort to think about death, such thoughts come naturally and there is nothing positive about them. But if young people feel the need to think about death to stimulate their sense of being alive, if they proclaim their youth arrogantly in the belief that the simple fact that they are young suffuses their lives with truth – and if at the same time their youth

becomes blighted by the obsessive thought of death – then one can only pity such premature senility (Lefebvre 1991 [1947]: 126–127).

In this passage, Lefebvre makes clear, in contrast to Heidegger, that authenticity resides in the fullness of everyday life, which involves ordinariness as much as it does meaningful experience. For Lefebvre (1991 [1947]: 127), the question is not one of transcending the everyday, but rather, the '*rehabilitation of everyday life*'. Thus, Lefebvre evokes his Marxism, pitching the socio-political character of the problem rather than an existential dilemma of the human condition⁴⁰.

Lefebvre's critique of Heidegger and Lukács is of their misconception of the intertwined relationship between everyday life and philosophy. For Lefebvre (2005 [1981]: 19), in Lukács and Heidegger's accounts 'daily life, speculatively conceived, amounts to a chaos, a disorder of sensations and emotions, prior to the forms conferred on it by aesthetics, ethics, or logic – in other words philosophy'. He adds that, in this view, 'everydayness is a sort of primitiveness. At best, daily life is defined as spontaneity, flux, irruption, and hence as pre-logical'. Lefebvre argues that by elevating the exceptional moment, everyday life is denigrated into the background of human life. The reason, he argues is that: 'the paroxysmal moment dispossesses mundane, everyday existence, annulling it, denying it. *It is the very thing which denies life*: it is the *nothingness* of anguish, of vertigo, of fascination' (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 124–125). In contrast to Heidegger and Sartre, Lefebvre wants to invert the gaze from death and nothingness towards life and vitality. Lefebvre's point is that the spontaneity, flux and irruption of everyday life form an integral condition for the generative orientation of philosophy itself. In later works, Lefebvre (1989 [1959], 2002 [1961]) includes his own theory of moments. I return to this in detail below (5.2). However, briefly, in Lefebvre's equation the paroxysmal moment emerges from everyday life ephemerally, realising the totality of the fragmented whole before withdrawing back into the everyday, bringing with it definition and orientation. Lefebvre's theory of moments evokes a unique concoction of Hegelian *Aufheben*, Marx's anthropology and Nietzschean eternal recurrence and perhaps to a lesser degree, Heidegger's self-aware *Dasein*.

The critique of philosophies and arts that seek to transcend the everyday without realising its generative significance and being an end in itself is enduring in Lefebvre's writings. Much of the interest generated towards conceptualising everyday life in the twentieth century is, for Lefebvre misguided. Despite brief alliances with groups such as the Surrealists and then later the Situationists⁴¹, these relationships are undermined for Lefebvre by the insistence of both groups on the need to transcend modern everyday life. While both the Surrealists and the Situationists focus their attentions on the everyday, they seek interventions that aim to transcend the inauthenticity and alienation⁴² brought about by modern everyday life. Lefebvre's issue is with the schism between the everyday and the extraordinary that these programmes entail. Elevating the extraordinary over the banality of everyday life or celebrating the transcendence of everyday life as other, only serves to exacerbate the dispossession and alienation of everyday life (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 120). This attitude 'dispossesses mundane, everyday existence, annulling it, denying it. It is the very thing which denies life: it is the nothingness of anguish, of vertigo, of fascination' (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 124–125). On the contrary, the bizarre and extraordinary are located in everyday life. They are integrated into its fabric by means of the spontaneity and indeterminacy that characterises much of everyday life. For Lefebvre, the point is to resituate everyday life as the centre of our world; as the centre of the totality. Here the bizarre and extraordinary are dispersed throughout everyday life inseparable from its banality and repetitive features. This is why Lefebvre (1991 [1947]: 27) chooses Joyce and Chaplin over Rimbaud and Baudelaire. Joyce, because he understands the epic quality of everyday life and Chaplin, because he celebrates the magical irony of everyday life that resides in its banality.

3.1.3. Interpreting the totality

Lefebvre's writings on everyday life are a comprehensive contribution to exploring the significance of modern everyday life. What distinguishes Lefebvre from others who found philosophical interest in everyday life was his celebration of the everyday, complete with its banality and its exceptional moments. We can also detect this feature of Lefebvre's thought, although perhaps not as explicitly, in that of

Castoriadis and Heller. His thinking differed from those in the Marxist tradition who understood everyday life as the site of a dialectical unfolding of a historical *telos*. Instead, along Nietzschean lines, he saw value in understanding everyday life as constant totality of difference through repetition. For Lefebvre, everyday life was worthy of philosophical and sociological attention not so that we might discover a hidden secret to historical becoming or that we might be able to transcend its inauthenticity, but rather, that such an excavation might yield insights that could be employed so as to discover the possibilities of human life in modernity.

While Lefebvre acknowledges some other twentieth century investigations into everyday life, he is critical of their inability to account holistically for everyday life. The everyday life phenomenology of Schutz et al.'s *Lebenswelt*, like existentialism, is limited insofar as it can only interpret the everyday from the experience of the subject (Lefebvre, 2001 [1946], 2003: 6–13). Similarly, Lefebvre charges the structuralists and semiologists with taking a unidirectional approach, this time from a structural level of society (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968]: 108). While he makes recourse to both structuralist and semiologist traditions, his project endeavours to combine them alongside his concept of dialectical materialism. To understand the everyday, argues Lefebvre, one must be willing to approach the totality from multiple directions. No one theoretical approach or discipline can grasp it in its entirety. This is a crucial paradoxical aspect of Lefebvre's approach – on the one hand, he emphasises the totality of everyday life; on the other, he views everyday life as being resistant to totalising interpretations.

Lefebvre's concept of totality is complex and paradoxical. He asks us to accept the wholeness of human life as both historical and in its momentary expressions. Lefebvre (1968 [1940]: 108) emphasises the paradoxical openness of the totality, the structure of which can only become intelligible through its becoming:

The totality of the world, the infinite-finite of Nature, has a determinable structure, and its movement can become intelligible for us without our having to attribute it to an organizing intelligence. Its order and structure emerge from reciprocal action, from the complex of conflicts and solutions, destructions and creations, transcendings and eliminations, chances and necessities, revolutions

and involutions. Order emerges from the Becoming; the structure of the movement is not distinct from the movement.

At the same time, he acknowledges that this is a fragmented totality of compartmentalised activities and particular expressions. Lefebvre confronts these contradictions from different angles. On the one hand, he approaches them from a sociological perspective – analysing the distinct components, diversity of activities and the fragmentation that comprises the dynamic totality of everyday life in modernity. From this direction, Lefebvre stresses that the variation of everyday life involves the wealth of all that pertains to being human. It is profoundly related to all activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, and their common ground. It is the sum total of relations in everyday life where human wholeness takes its form (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 97). On the other hand, Lefebvre develops a philosophy of everyday life that accounts for the paradoxes of wholeness-fragmentation and reproduction-alterity. To make this move Lefebvre draws on Hegel's dialectical method, the worldliness of Marx's philosophy and the rhythms of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence.

Lefebvre characterises modern everyday life as fragmented. Where pre-modern everyday life was more cohesive and integrated, modern everyday life gives way to a separation and compartmentalisation of life activities. Distinction is attributed in both attitude and practice to the various realms of life activity. However, regardless of this fragmentation, Lefebvre stresses that 'work, leisure, family life and private life make up a whole which we call a 'global structure' or a 'totality' on condition that we emphasise its historical, shifting, transitory nature' (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 42). This division of life activities is in part responsible for the dynamism of modern society and everyday life. Lefebvre argues that through this fragmentation modern everyday life contains immanent tension. For example, the historical development of the notion of leisure time is in itself a form of critique of everyday life. Leisure understood as an entertainment or abstraction appears as the non-everyday within the everyday (Lefebvre 1991 [1947]: 40). Leisure is 'critique in so far as [it is] *other* than *everyday life*, and yet in *everyday life*, [it is] *alienation*', it holds 'a real content, correspond[s] to

a real need, yet still retain[s] an illusory form and a deceptive appearance' (Lefebvre 1991 [1947]: 42). Modern technological development further demonstrates the immanence of critical practice to everyday life:

far from suppressing criticism of everyday life, modern technical progress *realizes it*. This technicity replaces the criticism of life through dreams, or ideas, or poetry, or those activities which rise above the everyday, by the critique of everyday life from within: the critique which everyday life makes of itself, the critique of the real by the possible and of one aspect of life by another (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 7).

What distinguishes Lefebvre's (1968 [1940]) concept of concrete totality from others such as those of Lukács, Gramsci and Korsch (Jay, 1984: 295) is twofold. Firstly, he firmly situates his totality in everyday life – a decentring from traditional Marxist lines, which gave primacy to economic production. Secondly, he attributes to the totality a dynamic of ambivalent historicity. The result is redolent of the ahistorical Hegel of the *Phenomenology* removed from his historical system and endowed with the material worldliness of Marx:

The "totality" envelops nature and its becoming, man and his history, his consciousness (conscience) and his knowledge, his ideas and ideologies. It determines itself as "sphere of spheres," infinite totality of moving, partial totalities, reciprocally and deeply implicated in and by conflicts themselves. At the limit, the totality of knowledge coincides with the universe itself (Lefebvre cited in Jay, 1984: 297).

Lefebvre's totality is the eternal ferment of cosmological and anthropological nature in contrast to a determinist historical totality. For Lefebvre, the impetus of human societies rests on the partial division of cosmological and anthropological nature. He explains the division as such:

Man splits into 'nature' and 'history'. Philosophy and ontology divide up what is given into a dichotomy, with the result that the concomitant analysis becomes one-sided. It loses the benefit of the double determination, that is to say, the dialectical movement within this confusion. It separates the cosmological (and being) from the anthropological (and from thought) (Lefebvre, 1995 [1962]: 134–135).

To conclude this passage, Lefebvre quotes Marx from the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*: 'thought and being are distinct, but at the same time they are in unity with one another' (Marx cited in Lefebvre, 1995 [1962]: 135).

Lefebvre provides greater depth to these insights by evoking Nietzsche's (2008 [1883–1891]) notion of eternal recurrence. The eternal return is a powerful although ambiguous metaphor in Nietzsche's oeuvre. The notion is equally ambiguous in Lefebvre's work. For both authors the point is to keep the metaphor vague and undetermined. This way the notion has the flexibility and elusiveness to do justice to the enigmatic phenomena it describes. In my reading⁴³, Nietzsche's riddle of eternal recurrence describes a perpetual moment of self-affirmation. This is a continuous process of the will to self. Here, the self discovers fleeting form in an ephemeral moment of recurrence of totality of past experience that engenders the self. This moment exists as both the identity of self – providing the continuity of self – and the alterity of the self-becoming in a world. The eternal return involves both the same and difference. Lefebvre (cited in Elden, 2004: 179) picks up on this point: 'from the beginning then, a paradox: the generation of difference through repetition'. Lefebvre expands Nietzsche's formulation to interpret everyday life. In this configuration, recurrence and alterity give coherence and temporality to human life. The familiarity of everyday life is returned to us in each moment as both recognisable and other. Underlying this movement is the tension and unison between cosmological and anthropological nature.

The totality of the world comes into being in each and every moment as a result of all activity. The totality does not discover its form through a *telos* of history, but on the contrary: its form is realised in each moment as the indeterminate totality of all human and doing in nature. Its coming into being is repeated as the cycle that forms the structure of history. For Lefebvre, the everyday is the theatre whereby cosmological and anthropological nature are joined together in the performance of the totality of our world. This understanding emphasises the quotidian rhythms that comprise the historical symphony. Lefebvre's point is that both the universal and the

particular movements can be heard in each and every moment as both recurrent and in alterity:

cyclical time underlies all quotidian and cosmic duration. Everyday life is composed of cycles within wider cycles; beginnings are recapitulations and rebirths. The great river of Heraclitean becoming has many a surprise in store: it is linear; symbols, words and their repetitions reveal ontological correspondences that are fused with Being; hours, days, months, years, epochs and centuries intermingle; repetition, recollection, resurrection are categories of magic and of imaginary but also a reality concealed within the visible; Ulysses is Bloom, and Bloom re-enacts Ulysses and the Odyssey; quotidian and epic merge like Same and Other in the vision of Perpetual Recurrence (Lefebvre, 1971 [1968]: 6).

It is with Heraclitus – with the help of Kostas Axelos (Lefebvre, 2009 [1992]) – that Lefebvre reconciles Nietzsche with Hegel's and Marx's historicity. Heraclitus' fragment – that one never steps into the same river twice – expresses Lefebvre's paradox. In this way, the river is forever in flux; history charges onward down the valley, but the river also remains stationary and eternally the same⁴⁴. The same too with the totality of everyday life. For Lefebvre (along Marxian lines), it is the creative human will (or anthropological nature) imbued with the spontaneity of cosmological nature that propels history and, in a tragic turn, returns to itself through the imposition of its own created forms onto the flux that is its creative self. In short, for Lefebvre, it is human nature as a creative force that paradoxically endows everyday life with the tragedy and tension that consummates its timelessness and historicity.

Resonating with Nietzsche's affirmation of life through the eternal recurrence of the will to self, Lefebvre expands these logics to encompass the whole of human life activity or everyday life. For Lefebvre, paradoxical as it may be, everyday life understood as the aggregate of human life activity is itself the affirmation of the will to collective human life. For this, he proposes a vast survey of 'how we live' (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 196). The result is his critique of everyday life. In essence, Lefebvre is proposing a generalised form of sociology, the objective of which is to unite the various streams of social inquiry through the lens of everyday life. His project involves examining the totality of human life activity: to attempt to understand 'how we live'

through the existential, phenomenological, psychological conditions of life as they collide with and create the institutional, political and social conditions of life. Lefebvre's argument is that everyday life is the centre of this encounter. It contains and constitutes the critique in practice as the totality of everyday life. However, following Hegel's (1977 [1807]: 18) famous maxim: *Das Bekannte überhaupt ist darum, weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt*: 'the familiar, just because it is familiar is not cognitively understood', Lefebvre's project is therefore the becoming conscious of everyday life – of becoming acquainted with the familiar (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 15). His project of the critique of everyday life is 'to extract what is living, new, positive – the worthwhile needs and fulfilments – from the negative elements; the alienations' (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 42).

3.2. Cornelius Castoriadis: the a-subjective institution of the world

It is perplexing that Castoriadis never took up the paradigm of everyday life as a significant aspect of his theory of society. Castoriadis' break with Marxism was in part a response to the inadequacies of assuming the centrality of production in human societies. The development of Castoriadis' mature theory from the 1960's onwards expands the focus of his politics from the categories of work and production towards a more comprehensive political project that incorporates all aspects of human life. Castoriadis did not participate directly in empirical research. However, his political activities and psychoanalysis provided opportunities for him to engage intellectually with people's daily lives and experiences. I think it was this connection and understanding, more than any theoretical innovation that helped Castoriadis expand the scope of his project beyond traditional Marxist lines. While he does not explore the concept of everyday life directly in his theory, it acts as an implicit reference point for his understanding of society and our world. For Castoriadis, everyday life is a natural strata or a *topos*. It is a place that facilitates all aspects of human life. In one of the few passages that Castoriadis (1984a: xxv) employs the term 'everyday life', he grants it profound significance:

the world of everyday life, where we live, which we make live and which makes us live, is unshakeable ... it is or seems to be the first and last ground of evidence ... it is the terrain on which all evidence must give witness to itself.

In this passage, Castoriadis positions everyday life as the pivotal location of all that pertains to being human. However, Castoriadis neither develops an explicit theory of the everyday nor conceptualises it as a motif in his social philosophy. Instead, in his theory it is granted a privileged but elusive location that serves as a junction for our collective and individual experiences and significations. It is for these reasons that Castoriadis, along similar lines to Habermas⁴⁵, is wary of the seduction of a static ontological figure of everyday life that both detect in the *Lebenswelt* social philosophy of thinkers such as Schutz, Luckmann and Berger. For Castoriadis, designating conceptual significance to the everyday detracts from the milieu of interactions and processes that make what it is to be human possible. I argue that there is value in demarcating the outlines of everyday life given the lack of such a conceptualisation in Castoriadis' social philosophy. In this respect, the advantage of Castoriadis' conceptual apparatus that intersects in the terrain of everyday life is demonstrated throughout this thesis.

In this section, I briefly recount Castoriadis' dissatisfaction with Marxist theory that led him to develop a more comprehensive theory. It is in this later period that we can detect the significance of everyday life to his social philosophy. This mature thought is the focus of the remainder of this section. I examine the significance of 'doing' in Castoriadis' theory in order to demonstrate the close theoretical proximity and value it provides for describing modern everyday life. His meditations on the proto-institutional conditions of human ontology that he describes as 'ensemblistic' and 'identitary' logic lay the foundations for a social theoretical contribution that emphasises the active institution of society on an 'a-subjective' basis. The result demonstrates significant correlations between Castoriadis' concept of the social-historical and concepts of everyday life.

3.2.1. From Marxism to everyday life

During the 1960's Castoriadis began to identify problems with Marxist interpretations of modern twentieth century capitalism. His concern for the growing dominance of bureaucratic capitalism and its penetration into all aspects of human life was a product of his earlier critiques of Soviet totalitarianism and bureaucracy. Castoriadis sought to understand a deepened sense of individual depoliticisation, privatisation and commodification that he attributed to new developments of modern capitalism. His most systematic critique of these phenomena was laid out in his essay 'Modern Capitalism and Revolution'. Here, Castoriadis (1988c, p. 229) began to articulate how crises no longer stem from a crisis of capitalism itself, but are emerging amongst all social activities and in every domain. For Castoriadis (1990a, p. 7), 'the revolutionary problematic was being enlarged beyond the problems of production and of power to the entirety of the problems of life in society'. These ideas were further developed in his later article 'Recommencing the Revolution':

The crisis of culture and of traditional values increasingly raises for individuals the problem of how to orient their concrete life both in the workplace and in all its other manifestations (relationships between man and woman, between adults and children, with other social groups, with their neighbourhood and immediate surroundings, even with "disinterested" activities), of its modes of being [modalities], but also, in the end, of its very meaning (Castoriadis, 1992a, p. 42).

Here, Castoriadis (1990a, p. 7) 'abandoned the idea of the privileged role of the proletariat' and reconfigured his revolutionary programme to involve the whole of society: 'if the revolutionary programme is indeed what we are saying that it is, it concerns all aspects of human life – not just workers, but practically all people in society'. In these discoveries, Castoriadis' trajectory resembles Lefebvre's early writings on everyday life and Heller's initial inspiration for her investigation into everyday life. However, unlike Heller and Lefebvre, Castoriadis did not explicitly turn towards a study of everyday life. Instead, the expansion of the field of inquiry from the relations of production to the whole of human society prompted Castoriadis to develop an 'elucidation' of society and history. The innovation of his project was to conjoin the

two terms into a theory of the social-historical via an analysis of human doing in the place of 'being'. This established a framework that could begin to interpret the fluidity of meaning and pave the way for a more generalised revolutionary theory that could account for the relationship between the historical becoming of society and its significations.

3.2.2. A-subjective doing

In Castoriadis' social theory, doing takes precedence as a mode of being. From this angle, his interpretation characterises society and our world as creation. In contrast to Foucault (1970), he rejects an understanding of history as stratified and instead opts for an account of society and history, the social-historical, as a fluid mode of historical being. Everyday life does not need to be understood as ontologically static or as an object of investigation. Instead, everyday life is perhaps better understood in terms of Castoriadis' vocabulary. From this perspective, we can see how his philosophy of 'doing' and concept of the social-historical can roughly equate with a social theorising of everyday life.

A concept of everyday life is implicit in Castoriadis' account. The everyday is present as the substrata for the doing of the anonymous collective: the combined a-subjective⁴⁶ thought and action that has recourse to knowledge already formed, changing and indeterminate. The a-subjectivity of this collective form of doing is important. This perspective helps to interpret the sum of individual intentional and non-intentional doing that cumulates in the social-historical orientation of society and contributes to the indeterminacy and contingency of society. From this perspective, everyday life is the domain of human life activity in the act of becoming amongst the indeterminacy of time and space which makes it possible and to a large degree, intelligible. In this way, the primacy of world formation falls on human activity and knowledge taken a-subjectively and on the grounding of its historical institution. An interpretation of everyday life permeates the fabric of Castoriadis' understanding of society, rendering it inconceivable without recourse to everyday human life activity. This last sentence is redundant. Any other way and it would be nonsensical: the

possibility of any interpretation of a society without recourse to everyday life activity is of course absurd. This is perhaps one of the achievements of Castoriadis' contribution: that the understanding of society requires a formulation of this very presupposition. Human societies are not static objects that we can study, but rather, they are more elusively the aggregate of the constant flux of human life activity.

Castoriadis' approach goes beyond more recent attempts to articulate indeterminate modalities of being on phenomenological or existential basis⁴⁷. His point is illustrated by his commentary on the following passage from Proust's *Swann's Way*:

At the bend of a road I suddenly experienced that special pleasure which was unlike any other, when I saw the two steeples of Martinville, shining in the setting sun and appearing to change position with the motion of our carriage and the windings of the road ... As I observed, as I noted the shape of their spires, the shifting of their lines, the sunlight of their surfaces, I felt that I was not reaching the full depth of my impression that something was behind that motion, that brightness, something which they seemed at once to contain and conceal (Proust, 1996 [1927]: 215–216).

For Castoriadis (1984a: xxiv) the vantage point of perception is itself problematic: 'Neither being nor thought are to be compared with the steeples of Martinville, to be gazed at by humanity from the successive vantage points offered by its itinerary'. Castoriadis' point is that 'being' and 'thought' need to be understood as socio-historical institutions that exist in altering the existing background or given horizon in which they themselves can be instituted. The problem with existential or phenomenological orientations is that they struggle to account for themselves as being situated in a mode of being as a-subjective and as creation. In a similar vein, some philosophical and social theoretical elaborations of the concept of everyday life⁴⁸ could be subject to the same critical logic.

At the most rudimentary level of his theory of society, Castoriadis prioritises the significance of 'doing' over 'being'. Or, perhaps more precisely, he argues that in order to approach an understanding of 'being', we must interrogate the notion of 'doing'. For Castoriadis, the philosophical preoccupation with 'being', 'true being' or the 'being of

being' has neglected the concept of 'doing'. He argues 'there has not been the slightest concern with knowing what *doing* means, what the being of doing is and what it is that doing brings into being' (Castoriadis 1987: 168). In this charge, Castoriadis echoes Hegel's critique of representational thought that ushers in his speculative philosophy. He writes in the preface to the *Phenomenology*:

what is the truth is not an *originary unity* as such, that is, not an *immediate* unity as such. It is the coming-to-be of itself, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal and has its end for its beginning, and which is actual only through this accomplishment and its end (Hegel, 1977 [1807]: 18).

While Castoriadis enlists a similar logic to describe society and all of the forms that compose it, unlike Hegel, he avoids completing the circle. Castoriadis rejects a unity of the actual in any form, opting rather for an indeterminacy of being via doing that, at best, is conducive to the ordering of representational significance.

3.2.3. The social historical

Castoriadis' ontological perspective of being as creation underpins his theory of society and binds it to the historical. I suggest that everyday life can be understood as the fluid ground of concrete human life activity that acts as both the impetus and receptacle, the vehicle and passenger, of this mode of being. While Castoriadis does not accentuate the significance of everyday life in his account of society, it is worthwhile explicating its elusive omnipresence in his conceptual apparatus. Castoriadis utilised the term 'the social-historical' to describe society as creation. By this he wanted to avoid the treatment of society as a thing or a discrete system but instead as a perpetual flux of self-alteration (Castoriadis, 1987: 205). In this way, the social historical is understood as the aggregate of human doing on the basis of the history of human doing and on the incessant institution of the magmatic social imaginary. Furthermore, the social historical is bound to nature (as *physis*) both insofar as it unfolds in the receptacle of time and space and by its 'leaning on' nature through the radical imaginary of psyche (Castoriadis, 1987: 229–237)⁴⁹. From this perspective, society is in each and every moment reinstituted in a mode of constant alterity through

the creation and destruction of forms (Castoriadis, 1997h: 398–399). Whilst seemingly contradictory, the point is clarified by understanding the social-historical as both simultaneously instituting and instituted. The mechanism for this is underpinned by two moments of human doing of the anonymous collective.

On the one hand, Castoriadis explains how form is imposed on the formlessness of the world as creation through his description of identitary and ensemblistic logic. This logic is fundamental to our ability to choose, distinguish and create in such a way that we can make sense of the indeterminate flux of the unfolding social historical and, furthermore, it contributes creatively to this historical flux. He explains the possibility of identitary and ensemblistic logic on the basis of the two proto institutions of *Legein* (distinguishing-choosing-positing-assembling-counting-speaking) and *Teukhein* (assembling-adjusting-making-constructing) (Castoriadis, 1987: 238). Taken together, these proto institutions form the basis of human objectivation both in regard to our interactions in the material world and as the ability to make the world understandable and sayable through the symbolic. In short, their making possible identitary and ensemblistic logic facilitates our making comprehensible the world despite its modality as indeterminate alteration or social-historical becoming. On the other hand, human doing is bound to the flux of the radical imaginary. Here, indeterminacy rules. The radical imaginary exists at once as the generative component of psyche and of the social-historical. In both forms it is that which creates ‘images’ which are ‘figurations or presentifications of significations or meanings’ (Castoriadis, 1987: 369). In psyche, the radical imaginary is ‘representative/affective/intentional flux’ a spontaneous amalgam of drives, sensation and instituted imaginary (Castoriadis, 1987: 369). In the social-historical, it is ‘an open stream of the anonymous collective’ (Castoriadis, 1987: 369), that comprises the magmatic social imaginary. This generative stream of radical imagination and radical imaginary forms both the impulse and ground for human doing. These two counterparts of human doing, that of the radical imagination and ensemblistic and identitary logic – taken together as a-subjective – establish the impetus of the social-historical and the possibility of the instituted social imaginary that makes this world as

social-historical becoming both what it is, and what is comprehensible to us. Hans Joas (1989: 1192) makes the point that

he [Castoriadis] is not seeking to establish the exclusive, privileged status of this indeterminacy, as did Bergson and Heidegger; rather, he acknowledges the pragmatic necessity of determinacy for everyday action and speech.

Castoriadis' account is analogous to other conceptions of everyday life. His articulation of society and the world on the basis of creation via human doing paves the way towards understanding the social historical as the aggregate of human life activity. This focuses attention on everyday doing; the collective thinking, speaking and making that give both form and content to the social world which exists as social-historical alteration. Stepping back from the particulars of Castoriadis' theory for a moment we can see how his emphasis on human 'doing' in all of its interwoven manifestations and in sum closely approximates the way Heller and Lefebvre describe everyday life. Heller (1987c: 297) insists that everyday life is not a thing or object as such, but rather: 'the shared modern life experience on which our intersubjective constitution of the world rests'. Likewise, Lefebvre (1991 [1947]: 97) articulates everyday life as 'profoundly related to all activities ... it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground'. Furthermore, for Lefebvre, it is the sum of these activities that establish the social totality as both eternally recurring and dynamic. The social-historical comes close as a description of everyday life but its grandeur and scope neglect the immediacy and materiality of everyday life. While Castoriadis refrains from tackling the concept of everyday life directly, if one were to have his paradigm conform to the constraints of a systemic diagram, everyday life would be indicated by the junction of intersecting arrows that connect his conceptual apparatus. In this way, Castoriadis' understanding of everyday life is that it is ephemeral and elusive: the background that makes possible the constituents of the social historical.

Castoriadis is situated amongst the twentieth century tradition of humanist Marxism that sought to shift the emphasis that orthodox Marxism placed on the experiences of the proletariat in the factories. Their projects expanded the field of

critique to encompass the whole of society and privileged the significance of modern everyday life. Central to his contribution was the conviction that we must understand society not as an object or thing as such but instead as alterity and creation. For this, he articulated the modality of society as social-historical. Crucial to Castoriadis' account is a thorough examination and explanation of human doing, which taken a-subjectively forms the impetus for the social-historical. While Castoriadis does not directly attempt to integrate a concept of everyday life into his elucidation, it is clear that much of his account of human doing overlaps with what others have described as everyday life. Furthermore, it is perhaps Castoriadis' reluctance to conceptualise the everyday, his wariness to relegate collective human life activity to ontological stasis, that makes his contribution complementary to other concepts of everyday life.

3.3. Agnes Heller: From Marx to Aristotle

In order to trace the trajectory of Heller's investigation into the significance of everyday life an archaeological approach is useful. Heller's various theoretical paradigms are biographically and historically stratified in the edifice of her contribution. Heller's attention to the everyday has varied in its focus over the past half a century. We can distinguish roughly three different approaches amongst her writings, with each corresponding to a different period of her life and to the three geographical locations she has called home. Continuous throughout her work has been both an emphasis on intersubjective reproduction of the social via everyday life and the complex processes of human objectivation. Her earliest attempt to address the subject was inspired by the radical stirrings of the 'new left' in response to the politics stimulated by the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968 and May 68 in Paris. In her 1970 book *Everyday Life* (1984b)⁵⁰, Heller undertook a phenomenology of the everyday and integrated it with a sense of historicity that looked hopefully toward the prospects of social transformation⁵¹. Fifteen years later Heller revived the notion. In articles such as 'Everyday Life, Rationality of Reason, Rationality of Intellect' (1985a) and 'Can Everyday Life be Endangered?' (1987c) her enthusiasm for the radical transformation of society is absent. However, the mechanisms of Heller's earlier attempt remained,

albeit, repackaged in a more postmodern attire in order to address the dangers of modernity. Heller focuses on the special significance of everyday life in modern society and the necessity for it to be maintained in such a configuration that it can withstand the tensions inherent to modernity. In this paradigm, the possibilities are many, providing they fit the frame set by the modern. Heller's later writings that cumulate in her *A Theory of Modernity* (1999a) switch the frame of reference to the conditions of modernity. In these writings, Heller employs notions that had been unearthed throughout her earlier studies. For this, she develops a new paradigm with a reconfigured emphasis that focuses its attention on the modern paradox of freedom. The notion of everyday life remains present; however, it becomes much more an assumption than a focal point. It is here, in the transition, that we find Heller's unique contribution on everyday life.

3.3.1. Everyday life and system

Heller began to think about the significance of interpreting everyday life within totalitarian communism. From this perspective, the simple logics of centralised need satisfaction assumed by the state were inadequate for the nourishment of human life⁵². Lukács' late writings on aesthetics were a major influence on Heller, providing her a starting point for her investigation into everyday life. In his two volume work on aesthetics, Lukács (1969) articulated the problem that Heller would reconstruct with her own terminology in *Everyday Life*⁵³. Like Lefebvre, Lukács employs the metaphor of the river:

If we imagine everyday life as a great river, then reality's receptive and reproductive forms of a higher order, science and art branch off, become differentiated from it, and develop in accordance with their peculiar aims, achieving their pure forms in this peculiarity which was brought into existence by the needs of social life, only to join once again with the river of everyday life by virtue of their influence upon the lives of men. This [great river] then, constantly enriched by the most remarkable accomplishments of the human mind, assimilates them ... to branch them off once more as higher objective forms of new questions and demands (Lukacs cited in Kiralyfalvi, 2015: 41–42).

Heller wrote *Everyday Life* at the time of the radical movements of the late 1960s that led to a reconfiguration of the new left and expanded the site of social transformation beyond traditional Marxist categories of social emancipation (Heller, 2010: 32). Similarly to Lefebvre and Castoriadis, Heller's Marxism ambitiously intended a broader frame of critique that investigated the complexities of human life beyond the confines of the paradigm of labour and production. In line with the general orientation of Western Marxism, Heller returns to the Hegelianism of Marx's *Paris Manuscripts*, understanding alienation as a dialectical condition that permeates the entire content of modern life. As with Lefebvre, Heller explicitly identifies everyday life as a site of modern day alienation (Ward, 2016: 103). However, Heller is not satisfied with the explanation this provides alone. Her aim is to develop a comprehensive theory of everyday life and for this she requires analytical tools beyond dialectical anthropology. Heller (1984b: ix) drew on Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian existentialism for this purpose. As with phenomenology, Heller placed significance of the world of things in themselves (Wolin, 1987: 296). However, redolent of Hegel's earlier phenomenology, *Everyday Life* emphasises that the phenomenological experience of a world of things must be understood insofar as it is determined by the unfolding of the social-historical. While Heller (1984b: x) acknowledges the constants of everyday life she is critical of the Heideggerian position. Along similar lines to Lefebvre's critique of Heidegger, Heller (1984b: x) argues that everyday life 'can be changed, humanised and democratised'. At the time of her writing *Everyday Life* Heller remained convinced of the revolutionary potentialities of modern everyday life⁵⁴.

In part, Heller's text is a phenomenology of everyday life. In this respect, her system resembles Schutz's (1967) phenomenology. However, more striking is the underlying sense of political project that drives the book and her attempt to understand the collision of everyday life with modernity. Despite the descriptive qualities of the text, the question emerges: what are the possibilities that reside in modern everyday life? From this angle *Everyday Life* becomes an extension of the social emancipatory lineage that stretches back from Lukács, through to Marx and Hegel – an intellectual genealogy that Heller does not shy away from conceding upon reflection in her 1984

preface to the English edition. While Heller's method draws on phenomenology, her attention is captured by the condition of modern alienation and its conscious overcoming.

Heller juxtaposes the 'in itself' with the 'for itself': her description of everyday life as the site of the intersubjective reproduction of human life requires a cross pollination of Marxian and Hegelian terminology. For this, she articulates two paradigms of species essential objectivation⁵⁵: species essential objectivations 'in itself' and species essential objectivations 'for itself'. Species essential objectivations 'in itself' establish the fundamentals of human life. It is by appropriating this sphere of objectivation constituted by tools, customs and language that humans initiate their becoming in nature (Heller 1984b: 118). For Heller (1984b: 134), objectivations 'in itself' form the basis of human life activity in the realm of everyday life. Species essential objectivations 'for itself' operate at a higher level of human societies providing the basis for the human generic activities such as religion, art, science and philosophy. *Everyday Life* is predominantly concerned with the relationship and transfer between these two expressions of species essential objectivation.

The mode of this dialogue takes on two interrelated registers in modern societies. On the one hand, the very structure of modern societies is oriented to the transfer between objectivations from the everyday to the generic. On the other hand, Heller identifies the potential development of the 'individual' attitude as a means of appropriating the movement between the two spheres. Heller's agenda centres on the development of this attitude. She distinguishes between the particular and individual attitudes. The particular attitude accounts for the mode of everyday being, while the individual attitude points to a self-awareness of the condition of being in the world with others. The human subject, thrown into a world, engages this world on the basis of the terms already set and in place. From this orientation, the subject appropriates the norms and conventions of the world that it negotiates. The mode of life activity of the particular attitude is taken for granted, assumed as an endowment bestowed on the subject from the moment of birth. Cut off from a direct recourse to the sphere of objectivation 'for itself', the particular attitude navigates its life within the confines of

the sphere of objectivation 'in itself'. Heller maintains that this particular mode of being is fundamental to the constitution of society, providing the forum that facilitates the intersubjective reproduction of society primarily as the constitution of the sphere of objectivation 'in itself'.

Modernity opens the possibility of subjects developing a direct recourse to the sphere of objectivation 'for itself'. Heller describes this aspect of the modern subject as the 'individual attitude'. The individual attitude operates in the world on the basis of an orientation of self-consciousness. Along similar lines to Hegel's development of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, this self-conscious orientation synthesises the generic with the singular (Heller 1984b: 20). On this basis, the individual reflects the paradox of the individual and society as the dynamic process of becoming through its conscious and plastic orientation. Whereas the particular person 'orders his own individual activity within the totality of praxis' (Heller 1970b: 217) the individual person 'is never complete but is always in a state of flux' (Heller 1984b: 15). In other words, the individual attitude operates dynamically in the world, guided, but not determined by his or her *Weltanschauung* (worldview) in contrast to the particular person whose *Weltanschauung* determines his or her action.

In her more radically orientated paper, 'The Marxist Theory of Revolution and the Revolution of Everyday life', written shortly after the publication of *Everyday Life*, Heller sets up a paradigm of redemption for modernity's tragic propensity towards alienation. Repeating Marx and Lukács' respective theories of alienation and reification in her own lexicon, Heller (1970b: 213) describes a modernity whereby species-orientated objectifications – labour, science, politics, law, religion, philosophy and art – become increasingly divorced from everyday life alongside the simultaneous alienation of human subjects from their communion of 'species being'. Implicit in Heller's account is the teleological transition from the cohesive traditional/religious community whereby human life is structured on the basis of a static disconnection between the spheres of objectivation 'in itself' and 'for itself'. In contrast, modernity begins the process of a dynamic transference between the two spheres of

objectivation. For Heller, a part of the modern project is directed towards developing a mature self-consciousness of society's species-essential objectifications.

In this context, Heller proposes the development of the individual attitude as a self-conscious mediator between the species-essential objectifications 'in themselves' and 'for themselves'. Without neglecting everyday life as the fundamental sphere whereby individuals and society can be intersubjectively reproduced, Heller suggests that the development of the individual attitude can work towards a social dexterity that commands the relationship between the spheres of objectivation 'for itself' and 'in itself'. In short, Heller's utopian proposition involves the development of a reciprocal relationship between everyday life and the higher sphere of ideal human creations that pertain to meaning through the development and reproduction of self-conscious individuals whose life activity is structured on the basis of 'being for us'. The radical project that is conceived in *Everyday Life* is complementary to Marx and Lukács' projects of emancipation. Along similar lines to Lefebvre, and with recourse to Hegel, Heller (1970b: 223) argues that any programme of revolutionary Marxism must encompass a transformation of everyday life and morality alongside its political project.

Heller advances a Marxism that takes everyday life seriously by combining a phenomenological approach complemented by anthropological Marxism and the historical dynamism of Hegel. She understands that everyday life is an essential component of the human condition and of our historical becoming. Similarly to Lukács and Heidegger, however, her account risks relegating the banal and repetitive features of everyday life into the background, while promoting to the foreground the exceptional and 'higher' aspects of the human experience. Heller emphasises the revolutionary potentiality posed by the development of individuals who have direct recourse to the higher sphere of species essential objectivation 'for itself', which undermines the value of the everyday. Highmore (2002: 37) observes that Heller's everyday life 'is no more than a gateway, a threshold: The everyday must be transcended'. Likewise, Gabriella Paolucci (2007) warns that Heller's paradigm risks a negative understanding of everyday life by distinguishing between the everyday and non-everyday. There is truth in these critiques. In contrast to Lefebvre, who argues for the complete elevation of

everyday life as the condition of human life and as the basis of revolutionary possibility, Heller situates everyday life as a fundamental condition of human societies yet distinct from the non-everyday which is where a self-conscious and autonomous society must focus its attention. As suggested by both Paolucci and Highmore, Heller's commitment to her particular form⁵⁶ of revolutionary Marxism at the time of writing *Everyday Life* left her unable to integrate the revolutionary potentials of everyday life into her philosophy.

3.3.2. The survival of everyday life

Heller's approach became more persuasive when she returned to the concept in the 1980's. Here we find a movement towards interpreting the sphere of everyday life as it pertains to the spheres of human meaning and social institutions. No longer did Heller focus her attention on the higher reaches of human experience as a pathway towards social transformation. Rather, she emphasised a concept of 'modern everyday life' as the fundamental basis for human societies in the face of modern precariousness.

During this period, Heller's central problematic deviated from questions of transcendence and social transformation towards the vicissitudes of modernity and its internal potentialities. Having moved from Hungary to Australia in 1977, by the mid 1980's Heller absorbed and compared life in these two diverse but distinctly modern societies. This experience clearly reorientated Heller's questioning. Distancing herself from the Marxist paradigm of social emancipation, Heller's attention was drawn to the overarching condition of modernity and its permutations therein. Heller maintained much of the phenomenological paradigm she had established in *Everyday Life*; however, by shifting her focus from modern historical development to modernity as a model defined by various parameters conducive to alteration, everyday life became less a condition to transcend and more a site of cohesion to maintain, both individually and collectively.

Heller wrote two significant essays during this period which articulate her revised approach to the notion of everyday life. Her extensive essay 'Everyday Life,

Rationality of Reason, Rationality of Intellect' (1985a) set out to systematically define the parameters of modern everyday life⁵⁷, whilst the succinct article, 'Can Everyday Life be Endangered?' (1987c) coalesced the complexity of the problem into the question of the precariousness of modern everyday life. In both essays, Heller resituates everyday life as the focal point of modern life and society. She explains that the problematic character of everyday life is not only a defining condition of modernity but is also central to modern philosophy and to sociology (Heller, 1985a: 80–81). This problematic form of everyday life and corresponding elaborations of rationality come to define the modern epoch. For Heller (1985a: 205), the contingencies of modernity underpin modern orientations of rationality which at its foundation pertains to the ways in which life is lived and ultimately to the Aristotelian notion of the 'good life'.

In Heller's revised account of everyday life, she emphasises the tri-spherical paradigm of modernity and its various permutations. Reiterating the significance of the sphere of objectivation 'in itself' again equating it with everyday life, she describes everyday life as the fundamental sphere of human existence, the sphere where the human condition resides: 'Everyday life consists of constant and variable features', Heller (1987c: 299) tells us, adding, 'the human condition resides only in the constant features of everyday life'. While the content of everyday life is constantly changing, its stable features and its structure rarely changes. When it does, it has profound consequences for the orientation of a society. This brings us to a crucial distinction in Heller's thought between the modern and the pre-modern. The transition from the pre-modern to the modern entails a dramatic reorientation of everyday life, such that the mechanisms by which society is reproduced take on a different mode from that of the pre-modern (Heller 1987c: 300). Heller's paradigm is carefully designed in order to capture this distinction. This orientation of Heller's revised approach is telling: no longer is she emphasising the historical possibilities of society but rather the social-historical as seen from a paradigmatic perspective.

According to Heller, in modern societies a new relationship is established between everyday life and the meaning (in the singular) ascribed to the sphere of objectivation 'for itself'. As religion's monopoly over the sphere of objectivations 'for

itself' is weakened, room is created within the sphere for a plurality of particular objectivations 'for itself' including science, art and philosophy, opening up of the possibility of direct relationship between subjects and the sphere of objectivations 'for itself' (which Heller had already articulated in *Everyday Life* by means of the development of the 'individual attitude'). In addition, Heller emphasises the institutional sphere (or the sphere of objectivations 'for and in itself') as taking on a heightened significance in modernity. In premodern societies the fundamental sphere is charged with ordering or stratifying the society, entrenching the corresponding norms and hence organising each subject's types of access to the institutional sphere (Heller, 1987c: 307). In modernity, the fundamental sphere no longer fulfils this function. Instead, 'the organisation of society, division of labour and stratification is carried on then by the institutional sphere' (Heller, 1987c: 308). In this account of modernity, everyday life becomes increasingly heterogeneous. While persons in all societies must express a certain amount of flexibility and freedom in order to navigate the normative conditions that are dictated by the fundamental sphere of everyday life, in the modern paradigm individuals are born into historical contingency. Here, not only are they confronted with the cosmic contingency that permeates the meaningfulness of everyday life but also the historical contingency of modern pluralism. The composition of one's life – social status, livelihood, world view and so on – is not determined as fixed in the fundamental sphere on the basis of an inaccessible sphere of the 'for itself', but rather, these become contingencies dependent on fluid social conditions and the permutations of freedom in modernity. Heller welcomes and defends this social order even if she is wary of the complexities and dangers it poses.

3.3.3. The good life

During the 1980s Heller's interests were varied and she undertook several major projects that can be roughly grouped thematically. Her anthropological focus examined the embodied human experience, addressing human instincts, feelings and emotions (Heller, 1979a, 1979b). Her moral and ethical philosophy accounted for the mode and possibilities of ethics and morals for the modern (and postmodern) condition (Heller 1987a, 1988, 1990, 1995a), while her historical and sociological interests

attempted to understand the world historical development of modernity and its essential qualities. (Heller, 1982, 1993, 1999a). Whilst these projects are not inconsistent with one another, they do evoke different theoretical orientations and vocabulary in order to explore these areas of investigation. Her theoretical framework of everyday life did not conflict with these other approaches; however, it was inadequate as an overarching paradigm to tie them all together. Heller (2010: 36) reflects on her exhaustion of the paradigm as follows: 'I would never return to the subject of everyday life ... this is not because I gave up on my conception, but because I had said about it all I had to say'. While this may be true inasmuch as she drops her theoretical terminology and systematic approach to everyday life, her later work is imbued with the insights and general framework that she developed in these works.

In contrast to the complexity of Heller's theory of objectivation, her later thought revolves around her reworking of the Aristotelian concept of the 'good life'⁵⁸. Heller's (1987a) discussion of the good life completes her investigations into moral and ethical philosophy. The concept contributes to the less technical and more literary style of her later writings and establishes a theory of incomplete rationality that underpins her ethical framework. Heller's concept of the good life opens a new lexicon by which she can account for everyday life in modernity. She no longer requires the revolutionary language of the individual/particular dichotomy, nor does she rely on the rigid theory of the spheres of objectivation. Instead, she adopts a more fluid and flexible terminology that mediates between the different lives of individuals, their shared interactions in the public sphere and across the spirit of congregation (Heller, 1993). From this angle, Heller places more emphasis on the heterogeneous life experiences of late modernity.

The heterogeneity of everyday life is one of the distinguishing features of modernity – unlike the premodern, where the social arrangement is characterised by the social allocation of needs based on the various estates that comprised the hierarchy of the premodern social arrangement (Heller, 1999a, 2005: 72). In contrast, the modern social arrangement is characterised by the functional allocation of social positions and their corresponding needs (Heller, 1999a, 2005: 72). The diversity of

modern everyday life is a product of the mediation of freedom by meritocracy and the freedom of cultural life *per se*. Heller best illustrates this in her article: 'Where are we home?' (1995b). Here, she distinguishes between several qualitatively different modalities of home in modernity including the cultural, political, spatial and temporal homes (Heller, 1995b). The sense of home found in these different locations overlaps with the diversity of everyday life in modernity. The effect is twofold. The dispersion and fragmentation of everyday life is simultaneously complemented by a growing homogenisation of life experience. In this respect, Heller approaches Bauman's (1991, 2000) interpretations of an 'ambivalent' or 'liquid' modernity, whereby life in modernity is characterised by uncertainty, ambivalence and fluidity of social positions. For Heller, this situation is not a problem in itself as it is for Bauman. However, it does expose the precariousness of modernity.

Heller's concept of the good life expresses a form of modern rationality that maintains an equilibrium between the three spheres of objectivation that featured in her original account of everyday life. Freedom is central to this modern rationality. However, modern freedom is necessarily paradoxical. On the one hand, freedom exhibits a positive force insofar as we moderns can ascribe truth and meaning to our world and on the other hand, freedom involves a critical negativity that problematises meaning in our world. While I discuss Heller's paradoxical understanding of modern freedom in detail below (4.3) it suffices to say that these two faces of modern freedom establish the foundations of modernity and contribute to its fragility. Everyday life is the theatre of this paradox and instability. It is everyday life that feels the sway of modernity's pendulum. For Heller, the forms of rationality that engender the good life provide an anchor for modernity. The good life is both a condition of modernity – a living content that reinforces its existence by virtue of its transcendence from the everyday into higher spheres of human existence and back again – and the possibility of a redemptive politics for modernity.

3.4. Problematising everyday life and modernity

Each of these accounts of everyday life elaborated aspects of Marx's philosophy and responded to the limitations therein. Alongside other twentieth century thinkers, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all expand the focus of the Marxist field of inquiry out of the domain of production to incorporate all domains of human activity. Twentieth century transformations in Western capitalism that saw the increasing penetration of capitalism into all aspects of human life and the insights gained from the failures of 'really existing socialism' led each of the three theorists to take seriously the paradigm of everyday life. Marx's theory of alienation played a significant role in this reorientation. For Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre alike, the significance of alienation was not reserved to the relations of production but a condition experienced in all aspects of human life. Furthermore, they each came to understand alienation as an enduring condition of human societies rather than a dialectical condition of labour that propelled forward the *telos* of history.

The expansion of the site of contestation in modernity from the relations of production to the all domains of human activity came to Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre at different historical moments and from different avenues in their intellectual journeys. Lefebvre's discovery of Marxism through Hegel had helped him to understand the *inquiétude* that had troubled him in his youth. He employed it to respond to the problems and alienations he accorded to the modernisation of French society. He blamed modern capitalism and sought to understand how it had penetrated everyday life and produced diverse experiences of alienation. In doing so, he transformed his Marxism into a critique of everyday life. Castoriadis shared similar concerns with the modernisation of French capitalism; however, his direct contact with Stalinism in Greece before relocating to France in 1945 made the critique of the excesses of totalitarian socialism imperative to him. His writings on the tendency of 'really existing socialism' and of the Marxist revolutionary organisation towards exploitation informed his critique of bureaucratic capitalism and its expansion into all domains of life. Heller's 30 years of living in communist Hungary gave her a different vantage point. For her, the reduction of everyday life to simple needs satisfaction in

the communist system was intolerable. She too turned to the Marx of the *Economical and Philosophical Manuscripts* via Lukács' *Aesthetics*, asking the questions: How can alienation be transcended? And: How is a meaningful life possible? While Heller came to reject Marxism in her later years the sentiment of these questions remained. All three came to the problematic of everyday life from their own idiosyncratic intellectual and biographical trajectories; this was the point of departure for each of their unique and compelling investigations.

Despite the differences in the ways in which modern everyday life features in their social philosophies, they share the ability to incorporate multiple narratives of philosophy and social theory into their contributions. They step out beyond the confines of Marxism and interrogate the dominant canons of twentieth century social theory and philosophy. Existentialism, phenomenology, semiotics, structuralism, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis are all taken seriously. These approaches are supplemented by classical philosophy alongside the insights garnered from cultural and artistic production. What separates Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre from many of their contemporaries is their ability to navigate and learn from these traditions without surrendering their independence of thought or restricting themselves to the limitations of a particular paradigm. As is discussed in more detail below, it is this attitude that helps each of them balance modern and postmodern approaches to interpreting modernity.

The concept of everyday life, as it appears in each of their contributions, is a pivotal locus of this balancing act. Their three sketches of everyday life in modernity each conceive of everyday life as a fluid base of modern society. In each of their accounts, modernity exacerbates this paradox of everyday life as both fluid and foundational. In pre-modern societies, the normative structures of such societies are more highly integrated into the fabric of the society making for more cohesion that mitigates the contingency of alterity. In contrast, modern societies are more susceptible to the fluidity of everyday life. In Castoriadis and Lefebvre's accounts, this fluidity is rendered as a deepening of the dialectic between the forms and content of society. In Lefebvre's account, the dialectic of the concrete/abstract dominates.

Modern society negotiates the constant flux of the everyday with the creation and adaptation of social forms and structures that shape the everyday. However, the totality of everyday life evades the imposition of social forms and structures giving definition to the alienation and spontaneity of everyday life. For Lefebvre, the aleatory of everyday life produces a residue or remainder that defies the forms and structures of society. The result is a cyclical interpretation of the everyday that, via Nietzschean eternal recurrence, returns to reveal everyday life as both alterity and constant. Likewise, Castoriadis' concept of the social-historical captures the necessary reinstitution and constant difference that characterises the doing of the anonymous collective. His social philosophy emphasises the tension between the content of life – human doing in and of the world – and ontological representation. Along similar lines to Lefebvre, Castoriadis underscores the indeterminacy of our world. In Castoriadis' formulation, the tension is expressed by the discrepancy between world formation and the collective and individual activity that animates our world. Heller's approach is different. She approaches the problem from a more historical perspective that investigates the tension as it appears explicitly in modernity. Along similar lines to Castoriadis and Lefebvre, she problematises the tension between human objectivation and human activity. However, Heller's theory of history compels her to emphasise the instability of this arrangement in modernity. In later works, Heller articulates modernity's precariousness on the basis its inherent motivation: freedom. While this is addressed in the following chapter (4.3 and 4.5), suffice to say here that in Heller's account the problem of everyday life in modernity is paradoxical insofar as the contingency, and therefore uncertainty of everyday life, is exacerbated by freedom understood as the foundation of modernity.

In this chapter, I have introduced the ways in which concepts of everyday life appear in Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's social philosophies. I have sought to lay out the parameters of their respective theoretical orientations. While there are similarities in their interpretations of everyday life, each have different concerns that shape their theories and elucidations. For Lefebvre, it is the disquiet and malaise of modernity that he attributes to the incongruence between nature and the actual conditions of human life. For Castoriadis, it is his desire for an autonomous society in

response to the solidification of power and conformity. And for Heller, it is the precariousness and stability of modernity in the face of the potential of a degeneration into totalitarianism. Modernity is the context for each of their engagements with the concept of everyday life. In this setting, everyday life is disrupted and fragmented by the double-edge of modern freedom. Whilst modernity is not reducible to any one property or attribute, it is the paradox of modern freedom that animates the significance of everyday life in each of their interpretations of modernity. Modern freedom exacerbates the indeterminacy, aleatory and contingency of everyday life and engenders a more dynamic and volatile relationship between the forms and content of society. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre each agree that the relationship between everyday life and freedom is integral for a social philosophy to make sense of modernity and its vicissitudes. The following chapter (Chapter 4) unpacks their accounts of modern freedom in order to further develop the expositions of everyday life provided in the present chapter.

Chapter 4. The Riddle of Freedom: The Foundations of Modern Everyday Life

For there can be no question of not having feelings can there? Any more than there can be a question of ceasing to choose, and to act. And this is where the highest and deepest irony begins.

Henri Lefebvre (1995 [1962]: 48)

Freedom is a pivotal concept of European Enlightenment thinking. The philosophical discourse of freedom undertakes several reconfigurations throughout the modern period as philosophers have responded to freedom as it has manifested throughout society and as attitudes towards its value have been revised. Alongside this philosophical trajectory, human life has experienced extraordinary transformation on unprecedented scale. The sphere of everyday life has, by its very nature as the expressive and practical realm of human life, borne the brunt of this revolution. The accelerating dynamics of all facets of human life that have culminated in modernity and our present are driven by freedom in its various forms. In this sense, freedom is not singular. There are, rather, simultaneous conceptions and interpretations of freedom in action.

Understanding and interpreting freedom as it is expressed throughout the fabric of contemporary everyday life is the concern of this chapter. Furthermore, and fundamental to the premise of this thesis, questioning everyday life is in itself quintessentially modern and the very possibility of this questioning is aroused by modern freedom. Freedom does so because it establishes the possibility that everyday life could be otherwise. The repercussions of this play out in modernity in complex and tumultuous ways, exacerbating social fragmentation and the difficulties involved in understanding our historical becoming. The acceleration of technical progress and constant institution of new forms of sociality and identity put pressure on our political imaginaries, making it increasingly difficult for us to maintain coherent narratives. It is for these reasons that Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre take up the task of thinking

freedom and modernity. Whilst this in itself is not unique, what makes their approaches of particular interest is that all three theorise the way freedom has profound bearing on modern everyday life. This chapter draws on some of the findings of the previous chapter, especially those that articulate the indeterminate and contingent character of modern everyday life. The accounts of freedom that follow help to interpret some of the problems and paradoxes that arise in this respect. The trajectory and vicissitudes of modern freedom are responsible for the ambivalence and incongruence of modern everyday life; however, at the same time, freedom remains foundational for an enduring project of modernity.

Philosophies of freedom are present in their various configurations throughout the thought of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre, each of whom return to the various aspects of Enlightenment philosophy in order to develop their particular interpretations of freedom. The most conspicuous of these traditions pertain to (albeit not exhaustively): the negative freedom of liberalism; the Kantian notion of a limited freedom in the form of autonomy; Hegel's equation of freedom with the unfolding of intersubjective self-consciousness and philosophy; the essentialist paradigm of freedom expounded by Marx; and the understanding of freedom as a modern human condition put forward by existentialists such as Sartre. While Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre problematise and make recourse to various configurations of these approaches to understanding freedom, all three posit unique and innovative conceptions of freedom.

This chapter examines freedom as a part of modern everyday life as interpreted by Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre respectively. My focus is on the position that freedom can be understood as foundational to modernity. While the three partake in and react to the philosophical legacy of freedom, they each approach the problem with different emphases. First, I explain and interpret each of their accounts independently so as to establish a firm grounding for understanding each of their particular positions. Second, I conduct a comparative and critical exposition of their perspectives alongside one another. Finally, I return to a discussion of freedom as it pertains to the accounts of everyday life discussed in the previous chapter.

Lefebvre's understanding of freedom develops throughout his oeuvre. In his earlier works such as the first volume of *The Critique of Everyday Life* the concept of freedom appears as an elaboration of Marx's understanding of freedom. It is not until the late 1950's – coinciding with his departure from the PCF – that Lefebvre's own unique interpretation takes form. Having left the communist party in 1957, it is in his 1959 text *Introduction to Modernity* where his most thorough engagement with the problem of freedom and modernity is developed. On the surface Lefebvre upholds an interpretation of freedom along similar lines to the grand narratives of the Enlightenment. He builds his concept of freedom out of Marx's philosophy; however, in contrast to Marx (and Hegel) he situates his dialectic as an incessant condition of modernity with a less certain *telos*. This move is innovative; it retains a theory of freedom and necessity but with far more ambivalence. Lefebvre avoids the problematic notion of historical determinism that haunts Hegel and Marx; opting for a theory of a dynamic society that juxtaposes the indeterminacy of everyday life with the reification of human creations.

Castoriadis' break with Marxism forces him to rethink freedom. These ideas are crystallised in his major work: *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. His rejection of deterministic thought severs any recourse to the essentialist thinking of Marx or the pure ethical moment of Kantian rationality. The result is the development of a conscious and creative freedom in the form of autonomy. For this, Castoriadis proposes the simultaneous development of the autonomous individual and an autonomous society. Freedom as autonomy is bound to consciousness of the authorship of society. In contrast to heteronomy, autonomy requires that the individuals that compose society are conscious and active in the creation of their society. From this perspective, freedom is inseparable from the inception of democracy, philosophy and politics.

Of the three, Heller is the one to make a definitive break with the philosophies of the Enlightenment. In contrast, she directs her attention toward the paradox of freedom as integral to the modern condition. This understanding arises out of shortcomings she perceived in her earlier writings on everyday life (Heller 1984b) and

comes to define her theory of modernity, which is developed throughout her series of books on history: *A Theory of History* (1982), *The Postmodern Political Condition (with Fehér)* (1989), *A Philosophy of History in Fragments* (1993) and *A Theory of Modernity* (1999a). Here, freedom is ambivalent and its excesses provoke her apprehension. Even so, Heller places her bets on a precarious modernity. The stakes are high but in her mind we have little alternative but to negotiate the vicissitudes of freedom from within modernity. Heller's interpretation of freedom is fundamental to her understanding of modernity.

The comparison and critique of these three accounts is illuminating. Put alongside each other, the encounter forces a deeper exploration of the constituents of their interpretations. Here we identify correlations that facilitate greater insight into the relationships between freedom and everyday life and their configurations in modernity. The redolence of inherited philosophy becomes more apparent, but so too do the efforts of each of the theorists to transcend the limitations of these philosophies. While their interpretations overlap, they are also divergent, confirming the significance of the particularity that each of their personalities brings to the problem. The result is that while the strengths and weaknesses of each interpretation become more pronounced, a more comprehensive understanding of freedom and its relationship to modernity emerges.

The final section of this chapter expounds the relationship between the three interpretations of freedom and modern everyday life. What is apparent is that Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all structure their respective understandings of freedom on the basis of its realisation in the theatre of modern everyday life. Just as for Lefebvre the relationship is explicit, insofar as his interpretation of freedom is inseparable from the ferment of everyday life, it is a similar case for Castoriadis and Heller. Castoriadis overlaps with Lefebvre's approach, although for Castoriadis the priority is the social imaginary, which is itself inseparable from everyday doing. In contrast, for Heller, freedom does not emerge from doing; instead, freedom paradoxically presupposes the practice of freedom – it is the foundation of modern everyday life. The conclusion is such that while freedom is a condition of modern

everyday life, it also begets the questions: *How are we to live? What kinds of life are possible?* And, finally, *is it possible to collectively respond to these questions?* While each of our protagonists responds with their respective recommendations, they all agree that we can only address these questions on the basis of recourse to everyday life.

4.1. Henri Lefebvre: the dialectic of everyday spontaneity

Lefebvre positions his understanding of freedom between the spontaneity of nature and human creative powers. His discovery is not unproblematic and it is herein that he identifies the paradoxes that underpin modernity. Lefebvre builds on the understanding of freedom that he finds in Marx. Lefebvre's reading of Marx emphasises that the nature which he evokes is not only external, objective nature, but it is also human nature itself. This move, in contrast to more material interpretations of Marx, returns Marx's philosophy to its Hegelian origins. In some ways Lefebvre's concept of freedom seeks to reconcile freedom as it is interpreted by Hegel and Marx. However, Lefebvre also takes his understanding of freedom beyond the limitations of both Hegel and Marx's respective philosophies. Necessity, for Lefebvre, becomes a much more ephemeral notion than it is understood by either Hegel or Marx. For Hegel, freedom is bound to the recognition of the intersubjective necessity of the development of self-consciousness and for Marx it is realised on the basis of a realm of necessity reconfigured by the development of human essential powers over nature. Lefebvre's innovation is to interpret necessity as an eternal return to nature (Gardiner, 2000: 87; Lefebvre, 1971 [1968]: 6). For this, everyday life is a crucial component as it is the effervescence of everyday life that constantly conflicts with human creative powers over nature (both external nature and human nature), forcing their alteration. Here, freedom is realised by the totality of the rhythm and mastered by the consciousness of this process.

Lefebvre makes his argument on the basis of alienation. While he takes his inspiration from Marx, with the aid of Lukács' (1971 [1923]) theory of reification

Lefebvre develops the notion so that it incorporates a much broader frame of reference than in Marx (whose theory of alienation is largely, despite its ambiguity, limited to the realm of production). For Lefebvre (1995 [1962]: 121), as humanity strives toward mastery over nature (both human and external nature) by developing the social and economic spheres of human life, more autonomy is manifested in these creations themselves. In order to illustrate this, Lefebvre's allegory of the modern town is helpful. In this reflection, Lefebvre (1995 [1962]: 118) presents 'the new town'⁵⁹ as a rational and functional 'machine for the living' where every object has a use and a distinct and specific function. This town, whilst functional and pragmatic, is reduced to a world of objects stripped of their symbolism and cultural significance down to the level of mere signifier. In this modern town, human essential powers over nature – over technology and society – are realised, but they are also unfulfilled. The problem is that while the creation of the new town realises human nature as freedom it simultaneously constrains the praxis of everyday life which is itself an expression of human nature. In the case of the new town there is 'a moment when', as human creative powers are developed,

the forces begin growing for themselves, almost as though they were autonomous: technology, demography, art, science, etc. Everything becomes disjoined, yet everything becomes a totality. Everything becomes reified, yet everything starts disintegrating (Lefebvre, 1995 [1962]: 121).

Lefebvre's point is that it is due to the autonomy of our own social creations that alienation resides in the modern world. Part of the characterisation of modernity is that it strives toward the satisfaction of human needs through technological and social development. Lefebvre (1995 [1962]: 145) suggests, however, that there is an unintended consequence of modern mastery over necessity, that 'when a necessity is mastered, it becomes modified, transformed into 'something else', and often in an unforeseen way'. To this point, the scaffolding of Marx's dialectical materialism remains in Lefebvre's conception even though it has been expanded to account for the whole of human life in modernity.

Lefebvre's experience of the twentieth century – the failures of Marxist-inspired revolution and the expansion of capitalism into all aspects of human life – compelled him to further develop his understanding of freedom. At this point Lefebvre sheds the teleological and deterministic reading of Marx's (and Hegel's) theory. He comes to understand alienation as an enduring condition of modern society rather than a state to transcend through the realisation of communism or the development of absolute spirit (Lefebvre 1995 [1962]: 144). The novelty of his approach is to account for the development of human creative powers as they are also expressed through everyday life as praxis. He retains from Marx that freedom involves that we transform our objective realities. However, the paradox is that because of the indeterminate ferment of everyday life, it cannot entirely conform to the contortions of our modern creations. Here, nature and human creation collide from several directions: the unconsciousness and spontaneity of nature, present in the anonymous collective that is everyday life, collide with our own technological and social creations (Lefebvre, 1995 [1962]: 132). For Lefebvre, it is through the sparks of this collision that freedom is located.

This paradoxical relationship between human nature and the products of human nature are perhaps better understood by conceiving of a dual conception of human freedom (Lefebvre 1995 [1962]: 142). On the one hand, Lefebvre describes the exoteric revelation of human essential powers – the development of industry and productive forces; and on the other, the esoteric revelation of human essential powers – the development of culture and civilisation. Lefebvre identifies two possibilities for the esoteric revelation, one that prioritises ethics and the other that prioritises aesthetics. The ethical model assumes that the esoteric will emerge from the development of the exoteric. This model is perhaps the most familiar to us through the logics of development, be it of socialist or liberalist persuasion, whereby the development of industry, of human power over external nature, facilitates the development of the ethical dimensions of human societies. In contrast, the aesthetic interpretation sees that the esoteric revelation is realised through the development of art, not as a specialised activity, but as an attitude towards the entirety of human life. It is by means of this understanding that Lefebvre adds greater depth to his understanding of the unfolding of the social historical. It builds a greater picture of the

development of human culture and civilisation, and its relationship to human everyday activity. Freedom is practised by human societies in several directions that permeate and transform the totality of human society.

However, as we have alluded to above, this is only one side of Lefebvre's theory of freedom. The complete picture is cyclical, involving an eternal return to nature by means of nature itself. In modernity, the exoteric and esoteric revelations are fully engaged through the development of industry and technology on the one hand and social institutions and culture on the other. For Lefebvre, this epoch is exacerbated by the autonomisation of these created forms and the disjuncture of everyday life itself transformed by the same human creations. It is under these conditions that Lefebvre anticipates the return to nature. Human activity returns to nature insofar as it refuses to be contained by a reified world of our own creation. Freedom is realised upon the creation of new forms that respond to the alienated remainder of everyday life. It is the incessant ferment of human life activity which, as amorphous content untameable by form, provides the impulse for freedom as creation in response to necessity. Lefebvre removes the teleology from historical materialism; in its place remains a cycle of human freedom and alienation. Social emancipation is no longer an inevitable unfolding of a determined history. In short, history is what we do across time. It is our willingness to become conscious of the repercussions of our creations, with the acceptance of our own paradoxical essence as both nature and anti-nature, as we look back and move forward as self-conscious and self-reflexive agents of our own destinies.

4.2. Cornelius Castoriadis: freedom as autonomy

Freedom as a condition and freedom as a political project converge in Castoriadis' theory. Castoriadis precisely locates the historical moment in which freedom enters the human world. It enters the world *ex-nihilo* after the 8th Century BC in ancient Greece with the development of democracy and philosophy. Its entry into the social-historical is the simultaneous inception of the autonomous individual and an

autonomous society. The structure of this freedom is neither grounded in nature nor is it an abstract rational absolute; it is rather the unfolding awareness of the self and consciousness of the human authorship of social institutions, representations and meaning. Freedom is therefore, for Castoriadis, autonomy: the conscious positing of one's own *nomos*. The culmination of the efforts of the European Renaissance and Enlightenment embodied by modernity upholds this tradition of freedom. For Castoriadis, the condition of freedom in contemporary modernity is the crisis of this tradition and of the tendency toward the unlimited expansion of (pseudo) rational mastery. His account of freedom is immanent in modern everyday life. However, his equation of true freedom with autonomy in this context is somewhat problematic, especially when Castoriadis' political project approaches his theory of the social ontology. Notwithstanding these difficulties, this section aims to unpack his understanding as it stands. I return to these problems in detail below (4.5) and especially (5.5).

At its most basic, Castoriadis' concept of freedom involves transcending the limits of inherited thought insofar as there is an understanding that society and meaning are of our own creation. Castoriadis puts this in terms of the project of autonomy. The inception of this project comes into being with the awareness that human institutions and representations are the product of human creation. Such institutions and representations are not the creations of the gods or of nature, but rather, they are human creations (Castoriadis, 1991f: 38). For Castoriadis, this revelation is a moment of rupture that coincides with the birth of 'true' politics and 'true' philosophy. In this way, politics takes up the project of the 'calling into question of our institutions and of the changing them through deliberative collective action' and philosophy, calls 'into question of the instituted representations and meanings and changing them through the self-reflective activity of thought' (Castoriadis 1991f: 38). Put simply, questions that pertain to the organisation of everyday life such as: 'what ought we to think? What ought we to do? How ought we to organise our communities?' (Castoriadis, 1991b: 80, 1997f: 17, 1997d: 72, 1997e: 84) become possible. For Castoriadis, this is what freedom entails. Furthermore, insofar as it transcends the limits of inherited thought, it is freedom bound by its own necessity.

As with Hegel, Castoriadis structures his concept of freedom on the basis of the self-consciousness of the individual and inter-subjectivity. In order to evade the trappings of an abstract freedom, whereby freedom is reduced to nature or pure reason⁶⁰, Castoriadis conceives of freedom as reduced to neither reason nor nature but merely as possible. This possibility is pushed to the threshold of impossibility by the condition that it must unfold as the simultaneous creation *ex-nihilo* of both individual autonomy and social autonomy⁶¹. The mechanism for such an event is the alteration of the radical imaginary⁶². The radical imaginary exists at once as psyche and as social-historical (Castoriadis, 1987: 369). In both forms it is that which creates “images” which are what they are and as they are as figurations or presentifications of significations or meanings’ (Castoriadis, 1987: 369). In the psyche, the radical imaginary is ‘representative/affective/intentional flux’ and in the social-historical it is ‘an open stream of the anonymous collective’ (Castoriadis, 1987: 369). The becoming autonomous of the individual is the reflective moment whereby the ego adopts the discourse of the unconscious internal other as its own (although never entirely) and thereby unleashes the radical imaginary as a source of conscious individual creation and alteration (Castoriadis, 1987: 103, 1991c: 165). In short, it is the becoming aware of the flux of social representations, of drives and of their mediation through sensation; it is self-consciousness.

While the argument is circular, Castoriadis insists that the creation of the autonomous individual is dependent on there being a free society and likewise, an autonomous society necessitates that its composition is of free individuals. This movement is the autonomous elaboration of the ‘the strange dialectic of the real and the [social] imaginary’ (Castoriadis, 1984b: 40). The autonomy of the individual ‘cannot appear unless the social-historical field has already altered itself in such a way that it opens a space for interrogation without bounds’ (Castoriadis, 1991c: 166). As the very structure of the psyche is in part cultivated by the social imaginary, it can only be so that the reflective moment springs forth from a cultured internal radical imaginary of the unconscious. Conversely, that the radical imaginary of the anonymous collective can be unleashed as the autonomous orientation of society presupposes that the content of such a radical imaginary must be cultured by the composition of

autonomous individuals. Finally, it cannot be otherwise that the autonomous individual must necessarily *will* the autonomous orientation of society. Castoriadis argues that this is because the autonomous individual as a self-conscious being can only realise its own autonomy through the understanding of the structure of itself, its own self-consciousness as intersubjective. That is, our *nomos* is inseparable from the *nomos* of its society (Castoriadis, 1991c: 167).

This movement, between the autonomous individual and society, forms what Castoriadis calls 'the project of autonomy'. Once the germ of autonomy, of politics, democracy and philosophy, erupts on the historical scene, the project of autonomy forms a central signification of the instituted social imaginary that projects itself through the social-historical as a project of creation and alteration. It is important to clarify here that what was described above as an 'autonomous society' is not autonomous in totality; just as the autonomous individual is not in each and every moment autonomous. The autonomous society described above is only autonomous insofar as it demonstrates a propensity toward autonomy amongst the multitude of heteronomous significations.

In describing the modern (and postmodern) condition, Castoriadis develops his critique of traditional concepts of freedom. In this scenario, the project of autonomy exists alongside another dominant social imaginary signification; the unlimited expansion of (pseudo) rational mastery. This signification is born of the unity between capitalist accumulation and the pursuit of a single (pseudo) rational end (Castoriadis, 1997g: 38). It takes on the orientation of negative freedom – as purely abstract freedom – product of the rationalistic enlightenment. On the one hand, freedom posited as recognition of necessity (Hegel and Marx), and on the other, freedom in accordance with a final ethical norm (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant and Johann Fichte) (Castoriadis, 1991d: 196). Alongside this pseudo-rationalism, the signification also develops an attitude of infinite progress and unlimited expansion⁶³. During the quintessential modern epoch (for Castoriadis (1997g: 40), between 1750-1950) the project of autonomy and the unlimited expansion of (pseudo) rational mastery dominate the modern social imaginary. Mutually contaminated, they establish a

productive tension that Castoriadis (1997g: 39) describes as the ‘development and the persistence of social, productive and ideological conflict’.

It is on this basis that the grand social projects of modernity emerge. Here, the tension between the dual imaginary is evident. On the one hand, autonomy is expressed by the awareness that society is ours to create and on the other, rational determinism reduces the schema to a teleological absolute. In this way, the unlimited expansion of (pseudo) rational mastery appears as the heteronomous institution insofar as it represents social historical closure. For Castoriadis (1997g), the crisis of Western modernity is a result of the exhaustion of the productive tension of the dual institutions of society: autonomy and (pseudo) rational mastery. From the mid twentieth century onward, Castoriadis observes the retreat of autonomy leaving an unchecked tendency toward technological development, pseudo-rationalism and unlimited accumulation. The repercussions of this eventuality is the realisation of an empty freedom, ‘freedom as pure arbitrariness’ (Castoriadis, 1991d: 197). This empty freedom is for Castoriadis an impotent freedom. Autonomy, in contrast, is a positive freedom. ‘True’ freedom, freedom as autonomy, as Castoriadis conceives it, presumes its own necessity. When the Greeks first posed those questions: ‘what ought we to think?’ ‘what ought we to do?’ With these questions comes responsibility:

There [was] no longer any evasion of responsibility, choice, and decision. We have decided that we want to be free – and this decision is already the first realisation of this freedom (Castoriadis, 1991b: 80).

4.3. Agnes Heller: freedom as the foundation that does not found

Heller’s (1984b, 1985b, 1987c) earlier investigations into everyday life initiated her endeavour to theorise modernity. The result configures much of her thought into a systematic description of history and modernity (Heller 1982, 1993, 1999a). Freedom is central to Heller’s understandings of history and modernity. It manifests itself as an interwoven thread that binds modernity. Freedom, for Heller, is not unidirectional. To

the contrary, it is rather more like a permutation that expands outwards from its inception before condensing into several interrelated paradigms that splice modernity across its various axes. Freedom is not the saviour, but it does underlie what is to Heller's mind the best option on the table. It is because of freedom that within modernity we can approach the best (and potentially the worst) organisations of human life.

Heller (1999a: 12, 2005: 63) argues that freedom is the foundation of modernity that does not found:

The moderns are sitting on a paradox. This is the constellation of the modern world: it is grounded by a principle which, in principle, does not ground anything; it is founded on a universal value or idea, which, in principle, negates foundation (Heller, 1999a: 15).

Freedom is the critique and negation of all foundations, is an *archē* – but it is an *archē* as abyss (Heller, 1993: 17, 2000a: 4). Heller (1992: 13) argues that this empty freedom of social contingency is the presupposed condition of far richer 'concepts of freedom such as creativity, autonomy, being empowered, self-realization'. This freedom is *the* condition of Heller's modernity. Kant is aware of the paradox but evades it with a forceful transcendental move (Heller, 2005, p. 65). Heller (2005: 64) points to Hegel as the first to formulate philosophically 'that modernity is the sole world that is not destroyed but maintained and revitalised by the ongoing process of negation'.

In Hegel, Heller finds the earliest philosophical elaboration of this concept of freedom. Hegel's attempt to evoke a philosophy without presuppositions on the back of a compelling critique and deconstruction of metaphysics⁶⁴ posits a philosophy of negation that for Heller (1999a: 22) is fundamental to modernity. It is here that Heller formulates her two interrelated constituents of modernity: the dynamic of modernity and the modern social arrangement (Heller, 1992, 1999a). The dynamic of modernity, the destructive force of negation, leaves nothing sacred from its interrogation. Marx's (1976 [1848]: 487) famous declaration, that 'All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify', gives metaphorical

resonance to the dynamic of modernity. However, crucial to Heller's paradox is that the dynamic of modernity cannot destroy modernity itself, 'just as the sea cannot be destroyed by the waves' (Heller, 1999a: 43).

The dynamic of modernity and the modern social arrangement are the two sides of freedom in modernity. The modern social arrangement is established on the basis of the deconstruction of pre-modern hierarchy. Once the dynamics of modernity have been unleashed and dissolve the existing order of the pre-modern social hierarchy, the modern social arrangement takes on a form whereby the functional allocation of social positions is determined by men and women themselves (Heller, 1999a: 50)⁶⁵. It is within this paradigm that we moderns find ourselves born into contingency and therefore into freedom. In contrast to the pre-modern social arrangement whereby the question of what one's life entails is preordained, in the modern social arrangement one's destiny is contingent and therefore 'one transforms one's own contingency into one's own destiny' (Heller, 1999a: 57)⁶⁶. As Heller succinctly puts it: 'free and equal opportunities constitute the model of the modern social arrangement' (Heller, 2005: 65). In terms of the two constituents of modernity, freedom expresses a form of autonomy describing the self-legitimizing impetus of modernity. Whilst the two are inseparable, on the one hand, freedom is expressed as an incessant negative and destructive force, and on the other, freedom is posited in terms of social contingency.

With this structure of freedom as the foundation of modernity in hand, Heller turns toward the modern imagination. The imagination, the question of meaning and signification, can disguise the paradox of freedom. However, it can also – and this is Heller's hope – reveal the paradox of freedom insofar as the dominant significations of the social imaginary are celebrated in their tension. This is what Heller describes as the double bind of the modern imagination. Enlisting her terminology in the sense of Castoriadis' (1987) social imaginary significations and incorporating a semblance of Heidegger's (1977) notion of *Gestell* or 'enframing', Heller conceives of freedom as a dual imaginary of historical and technological imagination⁶⁷. In this way, the modern imagination is enframed by these imaginations insofar as they bear the load of modern

truth and the ephemeral sources of signification. While these imaginations are not the only modern imaginations that pertain to truth and meaning, they are the two that best embody the paradox of truth/meaning and freedom. The technological imagination, with limited recourse to the rationalistic enlightenment⁶⁸, is 'the carrier of the modern concept of truth, which identifies truth with true knowledge ... and with the unlimited progression of knowledge, technology and science' (Heller, 2005: 66). In short, it is the pseudo-rational accumulation of knowledge pertaining to the modern world. In contrast, the historical imagination is meaning rendering. It is by means of the interpretative qualities of the historical imagination that meaning can be attributed to the modern world. The historical imagination encompasses contextualisation: it is a hermeneutical enterprise of contemplation and creation. Without foundations, freedom notwithstanding, the historical imagination intervenes into the emptiness generating meaning and signification (however transitory) within the world. While the historical imagination is characterised by limits (*peras*) and the technological imagination is characterised by the limitless (*aperion*), that the dynamic of modernity will always come up against the world insofar as it is realised, necessitates that both will respond to the tension of *peras/aperion*, to freedom and truth.

That modernity is enframed by these two imaginations is the basis for Heller's double bind. Moderns are bound to both imaginations. The double bind of modernity is apparent through the organisation of modern society and its politics⁶⁹. It manifests through the tension between utility and meaning, between ideology and rational pragmatism. Heller's paradigm of the double bind finds its inception in the thought of Hegel. In Hegel's *Phenomenology* the double bind is put in terms of the dialectic of the Enlightenment between *pure insight* and *faith*; between thought and subject. Hegel's project involved the sublation of the two terms into the absolute unity of the infinite and finite via spirit (Taylor, 1979: 15). It is here that Heller takes her leave from Hegel. Instead, it is by means of this tension that freedom remains for modern men and women as the very basis of the modern world and as the possibility of realising freedom as both a political and social reality. Heller's double bind is the paradox of freedom in the modern world that both puts modernity on a precarious footing whilst furnishing moderns with the potential to balance their world.

4.4. Continuities and discontinuities

The continuities and discontinuities between the three accounts of freedom and modernity above open a space whereby some of the vicissitudes of freedom and its foundational relationship to modern everyday life can be explored, problematised and hopefully explicated with all the ambivalence the subject demands. In this discussion the biographical context discussed above is reinforced. Here, Castoriadis' characterisation as a thinker of the Enlightenment, Lefebvre's enthusiasm for the ironic and therefore the spontaneous, and Heller's prudent caution toward modernity's excesses, are all on display. One can detect a negative component throughout each of the three interpretations of freedom. Whilst Heller's observation that freedom is the foundation that does not found might resonate for each of the three, notions of nothingness, void, chaos and contingency offer divergent understandings of the structure of freedom. Regardless of these enigmatic orientations, the aura of Rousseau, Kant and Hegel remains present throughout the expositions above. While Heller does best to escape the contortions of these philosophical giants, Castoriadis and Lefebvre continue to grapple with the repercussions of freedom as reason and of freedom as the recognition of necessity. Hegel's account of freedom as recognition of necessity alongside its more materialist reconfiguration in the thought of Marx and Engels⁷⁰ also pervades the three perspectives. Heller is conscious and attentive to this understanding of freedom throughout the development of her philosophy. However, in Heller's understanding necessity does not conform to any absolute or rational imperative: this realisation frees her to discover a radically contingent freedom. Lefebvre, via Marx, reposit the idea stripped of teleology and placed elusively between nature and human creation. Likewise, Castoriadis in his militancy against determinism criticises the essential and teleological underpinnings of the concept; however, a similar configuration surreptitiously finds its way into his theory of autonomy with distinct Hegelian flavour. Both Heller and Castoriadis evoke the notion of the dual imagination (albeit along slightly different lines). Their comparison emphasises the differences in their orientations but also posits a productive tension. Alternatively, Lefebvre confronts the problem from the perspective of a dialectic between form and content⁷¹.

The negativity of freedom enters the work of all three theorists. It appears through notions of nothingness, emptiness, chaos, void and abyss in correlation to contingency, indeterminacy and the aleatory. It is Heller who champions this articulation in a movement that understands it as but one side of freedom (its other side acting as a necessary limiting counter force). Lefebvre would agree. In his account it manifests as both philosophical and historical irony. Likewise, Castoriadis stresses the social-historical magnitude of discovering the chaos but somewhat problematically does not attribute its primacy to the unfolding of freedom.

The example of tragedy, especially that of Sophocles' *Antigone*, elucidates the negative movement of freedom. In *Antigone*, the two main protagonists, Antigone and her stepfather Creon, represent two fundamental pillars of social organisation that between them are irreconcilable. On the one hand, Antigone represents the social institution of the family, and, on the other, Creon, the city's collective institutions. Creon's eventual indecisiveness demonstrates the irreconcilability of the two positions: that both are true and therefore there can be no ultimate reference point that can guide Creon's action. With this example in mind, Castoriadis (1991e: 118) argues that tragedy shows us that being *is* chaos:

chaos is exhibited here, first, as the absence of order *for* man, the lack of positive correspondence between human intentions and actions, on one hand, and their result or outcome, on the other. More than that, tragedy shows not only that we are not masters of the consequences of our actions, but that we are not even masters of their *meaning*.

What *Antigone* makes explicit is contingency: the unknown and the precariousness of our mastery over our world. The play provokes our thoughtful critique. No longer are we to accept either natural law or human law as is, nor are we to expect that they can be evoked without prior motivations. Both are to be put into question. The abyss is open. While Castoriadis is acutely aware of indeterminacy, he neglects its primacy when he focuses his analysis of the play toward his thesis that democracy, politics and philosophy simultaneously explode on the scene *ex-nihilo* during the Athenian polis⁷² (Castoriadis 1991e, 2007a). In this way, Castoriadis

attempts to ground his normative project of autonomy. Heller's paradigm seems more fitting; these freedoms, the freedoms of which Castoriadis speaks, are preceded by the discovery of contingency. On this Lefebvre would agree. Aleatory, as he puts it, is an integral aspect of history and our world. The awareness of such contingency is the emergence of irony, congruent with the emergence of philosophy. For Lefebvre (1995 [1962]: 144), the uncertainty of history is exacerbated by modernity, by the gulf between the two sides of human nature.

Lefebvre returns the conversation to an essentialist paradigm of freedom, but he does so in such an intriguing manner that it stands on its own without seeming anachronistic alongside the anti-determinism and postmodernism of Castoriadis and Heller. With his return to nature, via extensive anticipation and elaboration of Marx's understanding of human 'esoteric' nature, he also returns to necessity. Lefebvre's concept of necessity is intangible. It is the unpredictable collision of nature and everyday life. Whilst we cannot locate it directly, we can detect it through the remainder. Necessity, transformed in desires, pervades the whole of human life. It is that remainder of everyday life praxis that evades the confines of our creations – our technologies and institutions – that exposes necessity. The result is a triangulation of needs, alienation and freedom; freedom and alienation go hand in hand whilst necessity bonds them to nature. Lefebvre's innovation is to strip the teleology from Marx and Hegel's concepts of freedom. What remains is closer to Heller's paradigm than to Marx's; a self-regulating arrangement with no clear directions.

In contrast, despite Castoriadis' best efforts to circumvent any form of determinism, his commitment to a normative programme of revolutionary autonomy partially leaves his concept of freedom snared by Hegelian necessity. Heller (1989: 166) makes the charge that Castoriadis 'smuggles a normative element into *physis*'. She argues that according to Castoriadis, history is *auto-poiesis* – via the psyche/imaginary self-instituting schema – and therefore, *all* societies should be regarded as autonomous⁷³. Heller's point is that Castoriadis cannot have it both ways. For Heller, there is a difference between an autonomous society and a society that fosters individual autonomy. If the *auto-poiesis* of society is to be described

ontologically then the normative directionality of his account must be lost. Likewise, if the project of autonomy is to be understood as a self-reinforcing social historical eventuality, then it cannot be structured with recourse to *physis*.

Heller's critique largely holds⁷⁴. In addition, the detection of Hegel's recognition of necessity in Castoriadis' account adds weight to her argument. Just as for Hegel the becoming self-conscious of the individual is bound to the intersubjective unfolding of spirit, for Castoriadis the becoming autonomous of the individual is bound to the becoming autonomous of society. The justification for Castoriadis, as with Hegel, is the recognition of the other. That is, in discovering itself, the autonomous individual finds that its very condition of self-awareness is structured on the basis of intersubjective self-awareness. Where for Hegel freedom is realised on the basis of the recognition of this interdependent relationship between self-consciousness and the development of intersubjective spirit, freedom for Castoriadis is realised on the basis of a mutual dependency between the autonomous individual and an autonomous society; the autonomous individual necessarily *wills* an autonomous society just as an autonomous society necessarily fosters autonomous individuals. It is here that one can detect an inkling of determinism. Castoriadis could not resist but to bind the psychical possibility of self-consciousness grounded in *physis* and *nomos*, to an immanent historicity. In this way, it seems that Castoriadis – in his fine balancing act between *physis* and *nomos* – slips, and always on the side of *nomos*.

Perhaps the greatest affinity between the three theorists is their understanding of the exigency of the paradoxical configuration of freedom, the technological imagination⁷⁵ and modern everyday life. Here, echoes of Marx, Weber, Lukács and Heidegger contribute towards a resonance throughout the thought of our three protagonists. Their point of agreement returns us to Hegel's dialectic between pure-insight and faith, between freedom and truth. Alienation is crucial to this connection. For all three thinkers, alienation cannot be surmounted but rather is both generative and paradoxical. The technological imagination cuts through each of their respective modernities along different axes. Heller remains immersed within the unresolved Hegelian dialectic stressing the tension between the two ways in which freedom

approaches truth in modernity. Castoriadis – convinced by a positive signification of freedom – argues that modernity comes to be dominated by two imaginary social significations: the project of autonomy on the one hand and unlimited expansion of (pseudo) rational mastery on the other. The concept of the technological imagination is somewhat less useful to describe Lefebvre's contribution. For him, the dialectic appears in the form of an all-encompassing *anti-physis*: the mutual development of abstraction and tools, and its irreconcilable domination of a world that is founded on the basis of the aleatory of everyday human doing, itself inseparable from such *anti-physis*.

Castoriadis and Heller's approaches to freedom and the technological imagination are closely related; Heller for her part borrows the conceptual framework of the social imaginary from Castoriadis. Their divergence is inseparable from their attitudes toward modernity. Heller, concerned by the stability of a precarious modernity, frames her theory along such lines. Whereas Castoriadis, as a thinker of the Enlightenment, so to speak, cannot but maintain the possibility of an enduring political project. Thus, we find that Heller establishes that the political and ethical possibilities of modernity are confined within modernity's own limits. Freedom fluctuates within this boundary, driven by the tension – the double bind – between its elaboration in the historical and technological imaginations. Alienation is kept in check provided neither the historical nor technological imagination dominate the imaginary or that they unite to form a totality of signification in the form of political totalitarianism. For Heller, if these two dimensions of freedom, on the one hand as negation and rationality and on the other as meaning rendering, can be maintained as discordant harmony, then other manifestations of freedom are possible.

In Castoriadis' account freedom is not rendered in such a paradoxical manner. Instead, freedom remains pure in the form of the project of autonomy. Castoriadis' project, the imaginary signification of autonomy, contains aspects of Heller's dual concept of the imagination, as the project of autonomy is both meaning rendering and a negating force, but not entirely. Castoriadis describes the development of another dominant social imaginary signification, that of the unlimited expansion of (pseudo)

rational mastery, in order to account for the rise of the capitalist imaginary which places positive signification on infinite progression and that which can be counted⁷⁶. With an implicit autonomy of its own, the unlimited expansion of (pseudo) rational mastery propagates heteronomy which in contemporary society Castoriadis (1997g, 2007b) argues takes the form of the generalised conformism of postmodernity. However, alongside Heller's theory of modernity, what becomes noticeably unaccounted for in Castoriadis' social philosophy is that the logics of this heteronomising social imaginary signification are buried within the project of autonomy itself. In light of the discussion above, that the becoming aware of contingency is the inception of the negative force of freedom, one can see that this germ finds its way into the logics of unlimited expansion of (pseudo) rational mastery. In this way, freedom escapes the self-limitation of individual and social autonomy. It develops its own autonomous logic of incessant interrogation and negation and hence, becomes a source of heteronomy. In short, Castoriadis' configuration cannot account for the impartiality of freedom. Impeded by his commitment to revolutionary politics he neglects the dangers that freedom, unleashed from rational or essential determinism, can present for modernity.

Lefebvre tackles the problem within the self-imposed constraints of Marx's philosophy. Lefebvre's reworking of Marx results in an insightful rearticulation of the *physis/nomos* disjuncture. On his part, Castoriadis finds his resolution to the dilemma of *physis/nomos* in the relationship between the structure of psyche and the instituting imaginary. However, his solution is reliant on a rational presupposition of intersubjective necessity, a case for which has been made above⁷⁷. In contrast, Heller (1989: 165) disposes of the problem arguing that it is not a problem at all, but rather, that although paradoxical, it is the very foundation of the human condition itself. Lefebvre's (1995 [1962]: 136) understanding is sympathetic to both accounts: with Castoriadis, insofar as nature penetrates the social imaginary via the structure of psyche. However, as with Heller, he does not force a resolution. Lefebvre's approach maintains human creative essentiality from Marx. However, freedom is not realised on this basis alone. Paradoxically, freedom presents itself through the eternal return to nature via the aleatory of everyday life praxis, itself nature. Put simply (and with a hint

of sophistry), freedom is expressed through the dialectic of human doing and human creation; the eternal return of *nomos to physis*.

Lefebvre's description of modernity resonates with both Castoriadis and Heller's enlistment of the dual social imaginary. His elaboration of Marx's esoteric and exoteric revelation of man's essential powers is suggestive of Heller's technological and historical imaginations, likewise is his treatment of Marxian rationality and Baudelairian romanticism which he evokes in order to elucidate the unfolding of the two sides of these essential powers (Lefebvre 1995 [1962]). His conclusion, echoing Castoriadis, is that the twentieth century sees the development of human esoteric and exoteric powers exacerbated to the point that technology, accumulation and industry, on the one hand, and the realms of art and morality on the other, have become largely dehumanised and divorced from the totality of human everyday life. Human creative forms have become emptied of their content; or, better yet; the content can no longer be contained by forms that have become estranged from their content. Despite this prognosis, for Lefebvre (1995 [1962]: 144), such estrangement is opening a space, 'leaving more and more room for inventiveness and creativity (and therefore for freedom), but also for doubt and uncertainty'.

Lefebvre's attention to ambivalence builds on Marx's contribution. While he retains a hold on the idea that our fall is our redemption, it is not inevitable. There is no hidden nature that will guide us through history. On the contrary, we can only hope for a greater awareness of ourselves as a paradox of nature. Lefebvre's (1995 [1962]: 49–55) depiction of Sophocles' Oedipus is a fitting appendix to the discovery of contingency. Armed with irony, humanity is free to unleash its creative potentials: it can, like Oedipus evoke this irony to elude nature, but only for so long. Hubris will prevail as folly – an opening for nature to make its return. But as Oedipus discovered as an old man on the verge of death (and surely imparted to the good people of Athens), our return to nature will not redeem us on its own. For this we must understand the riddle that is ourselves.

The concept of freedom as a foundation for modernity takes divergent paths in the respective thought of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. The three accounts share a similar point of departure and intersect at several points. However, their disagreements mark important and sometimes irreconcilable differences in their understandings of modernity. Both Lefebvre and Castoriadis leave more room for connecting the political and existential interpretations of freedom, whereas Heller is adamant not only that they cannot be reconciled but also that they *should not* be reconciled. Alternately, it is evident that there are overarching affinities that, stripped of the baggage of the individual perspectives, provide insight into the matter of freedom as a foundation and central signification of modernity. The redolence of a central paradox of form and content, of truth and freedom, is present in each of their oeuvres. Freedom in all three accounts is realised on the basis of this kind of dialectic. In all three of their conceptions freedom is a dialectical condition, a tension that may or may not be harnessed in the form of a more reflected freedom. Unlike Hegel, there is no point in which this tension is sublated into absolute spirit. It is instead the unfolding of the modern social-historical.

4.5. Freedom and everyday life

Theories of modernity respond to modern self-reflexivity and the freedom that it engenders. For this reason, everyday life has become a major area of investigation. In the accounts of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre, everyday life is positioned as a central category of human inter-subjectivity, world formation and a-subjective social doing. Each agree that freedom, in its various manifestations, has been instrumental in the design of the forms of modern (or postmodern) everyday life. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's approaches to interpreting modern freedom are reflective of this. These concepts of freedom, with the particular nuances that each ascribes it, are inseparable from everyday life, both insofar as freedom structures and transforms everyday life but also because everyday life provides the necessary substrata for freedom to be actualised. Heller shows us that modern everyday life is characterised by contingency and therefore that a paradoxical and dual configuration of freedom orchestrates its

vicissitudes and the lives lived therein. Lefebvre stresses that it is the return of cosmological nature to anthropological nature that animates the ferment of modern everyday life. Castoriadis emphasises freedom as the consciousness and self-limitation of the self-creation of society. In his account, freedom is animated by the alterity and indeterminacy of everyday life that his positive account of freedom as autonomy must respond to. All three demonstrate that any discussion of freedom removed from the pulse of everyday life has limited significance. Freedom, ambivalent or not, is centrally located in modern everyday life insofar as it is in everyday life that it emerges and finds its expression.

The philosophies that emerged from the European Enlightenment were preoccupied with freedom. Situated in a world of constant alterity, freedom had become the ultimate value and condition of this unfolding modernity. Philosophy, until the twentieth century, had largely neglected everyday life. In doing so, it had failed to discover the ultimate location of freedom as transformative of and emergent from everyday life. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre have, through each of their particular formulations, sought to correct this shortcoming. This chapter has endeavoured to expound the conditions of each of their interpretations of freedom in modernity. That each of them are, to varying degrees, theorists of the everyday, presupposes that each of their contributions understand freedom as intricately woven into the fabric of everyday life. In this way, everyday life forms both the substrata and impetus for their understandings of freedom.

Of the three, Lefebvre is the most concerned with the everyday. He develops his understanding of freedom explicitly on the basis of everyday life. In his account, freedom is located in the spontaneous ferment of everyday life. Here, freedom is mobilised as an eternal return to nature whereby human nature discovers, paradoxically, its own internal dialectic. Human creative forms involving the technological, institutional, aesthetic and cultural all combine to transform everyday life. Everyday life, whilst susceptible to such transformations, resists total compliance with the contortions of our own creations because of its incessant spontaneity, itself a manifestation of human praxis. Both sides of the dialectic pertain to freedom, but it is

only through the continuous undulations of this dialectic that freedom is realised. While this model provides an account of the ambivalent unfolding of the social-historical, Lefebvre contends that the realisation of a positive freedom requires the becoming conscious of this paradox of human nature.

For Castoriadis, the simultaneous unfolding of individual self-conscious and social self-consciousness is congruent with freedom as such. Where the incessant institution of society, the work of the anonymous collective, is conceived of as radical alterity, it is only by means of the understanding of this unfolding of the social historical as self-institution that freedom is actualised. Freedom in this way is autonomy – the conscious and creative authoring of society. On this basis, autonomy is inseparable from the simultaneous creation of philosophy and democracy insofar as an autonomous society can only be realised on the basis of the critical capacities of philosophy and the intersubjective political authorship of democracy. Despite Castoriadis' concentration on freedom as a political project, his social philosophy is insightful insofar as it describes the presuppositions of freedom in the form of the radical imaginaries and the coming to terms with indeterminacy.

Heller takes the paradoxical conception of freedom as her starting point. Here freedom is understood as an existential condition of modernity. While Heller is not ignorant of the historical development of freedom (she too, alongside Lefebvre and Castoriadis, traces the inception of freedom to ancient Greece) her focus is on freedom as the foundation of modernity that does not found. What Heller has in mind is the incessant negativity of a freedom that uncovers no permanent footings, only empty void: precarious foundations that do not ensure the stability of modernity. Heller's understanding of freedom in modernity is a paradoxical corrective to this. On the one hand, freedom is characterised as truth rendering – a positive but empty form of freedom, and on the other as truth negating – a negative but self-legitimising expression of freedom. Put in terms of the historical and technological imaginations, Heller presents this paradox as the double-bind of modernity. In this configuration, moderns are bound to both imaginations. The incongruence of these imaginaries is the very paradox that forms a stabilising tension in modernity ensuring the possibility

of contingent, but meaningful, freedom. Echoing Castoriadis and Lefebvre, Heller argues it is the paradoxical double bind that ensures the positivity of freedom.

Each of these accounts shares an understanding of freedom as a continuing condition of modernity. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all reject historical determinism. Their interpretations are neither determinant nor teleological. Castoriadis conceives of a positive freedom in the form of autonomy. Autonomy is a conscious self-authoring of society, a continuous project fuelled by the transition of the autonomous into the heteronomous and the radical alteration of indeterminacy. Lefebvre accepts alienation as a perpetual condition of freedom; both of which, together, form the dynamic of modern society. Heller makes the strongest case for a break with traditional philosophy. Her concept of freedom accounts for the foundation of a society that is characterised by its paradoxes, whereby its very basis is founded on its own indeterminacy. All three understand nature and society as indeterminate. This is the precondition of freedom. All three accept freedom as dialectical. However, in defiance of their philosophical inheritance, they no longer anticipate an ultimate synthesis. While tragedy serves a purpose of elucidating contingency – an awareness that presupposes freedom – freedom is also itself a tragic condition. Despite their divergent agendas, Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's all demonstrate this tragic dimension of freedom. For them, freedom is a perpetual project; an equilibrium of both creation and destruction.

This is not the only innovating approach to freedom that can be detected in each of their thought. Their inference that any philosophy of freedom that is divorced from everyday life will neglect the conditions of freedom is an important contribution. Elaborations of freedom have been the cause of the massive transformations of everyday life that have occurred globally since various configurations of modernity have been exported around the world. However, freedom cannot be imposed on people's everyday lives, it must be practised; even then it risks the tragic. Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's conceptions of the practice of freedom in relation to the everyday differ. Regardless, in its most rudimentary form, each of the three would agree that enduring freedom involves an awareness of everyday life practice. It

requires humanity to engage a self-reflexive attitude towards everyday life and the social forms to which it is subject. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre each develop different projects of how this interpretation of freedom is realised. However, that each of their respective schemes make recourse to everyday life on the basis of freedom is significant in itself.

Chapter 5. The Politics of the Possible: Between the Modern Project and the Postmodern Condition

The extremities⁷⁸ and atrocities of the early twentieth century deterred Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre from advocating utopian visions for the modernity that we inhabit. Ideology, communism and, in the most extreme form, National Socialism, confirmed the paradox and the excesses of human freedom and creation. Freedom, they understood, cuts both ways. Nevertheless, all three envision the premise of a society that they would each choose. All three choose modernity despite their perceived ambivalence of the age. In doing so, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre traverse three distinct but parallel social theoretical pathways. Perhaps the best description for this orientation is that of 'postmodern humanism': those who maintain the Enlightenment values of freedom and life even if its foundations have all but completely eroded. While I discuss this postulate in more detail in Chapter 6, the orientation of the politics described in this chapter emerge from all three of the authors' attention to the everyday and the permutations that animate it as a result of the paradoxes of freedom in modernity. They each understand modernity as paradoxical, albeit with different emphases. Present for each is the tension between our ability to respond to reality and reality itself. It is in this movement that the significance of everyday life becomes exigent for Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre.

Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre remain within the tradition of Hegel and Marx. The project of rationalising the world and making rationality worldly loosely underpins each of their political paradigms. In contrast to Hegel and Marx, their projects are more fluid and less determined: the grand system of the absolute has retreated and along with it the possibility of an entirely rational human society. Rather, for these late moderns the paradigm of rationality remains with positive signification, however, for each of the three it has become imperative that rationalities (in plural) become more dynamic and responsive with recourse to our ever-changing world of human existence.

Throughout this thesis, I have placed emphasis on everyday life as the locus of *our* world and have read each of the respective theorists through this lens. While it

is not the only lens by which they can be read, it remains a productive one. From this point of view, and with the insights of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre, one can understand everyday life as the junction of anthropological inter-subjectivity, a-subjectivity and, of cosmological nature. The theoretical interpretation of everyday life is well situated as the starting point from which to examine each of the three theorist's political philosophy as the everyday forms the intersection of both their philosophies and their politics. It is from this location that this chapter takes form.

In this chapter, I investigate the prescriptive elements of Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's theoretical contributions insofar as they relate to the theoretical paradigms of everyday life and modern freedom explored in this thesis. While there are correlations between each of the theorist's orientations, they each offer different arguments as to how best to manage, transcend or develop the particular expressions of modernity that have emerged during the latter part of the twentieth century to the present day. In part, their divergence rests on their varied biographical experiences in different times and places, which the insights of Chapter 2 helped to account for. However, that they share the same temporality of modernity is also demonstrated in the ways in which they agree.

I begin with Lefebvre, who conjures up a future-oriented romanticism. As we saw in Chapter 2, Lefebvre's thought oscillates between the city and countryside. He looks back into the rural past in order to look forward into the city's future. For Lefebvre, the traditional rural setting offers a glimpse into the human condition where anthropological and cosmological nature collide. In modernity, this tension is exacerbated. Modern freedom dissolves the equilibria that traditional human societies had compromised throughout history. Lefebvre's solution is not to look back into an idyllic past, but instead to look forward into a future of possibility. Here, everyday life takes centre stage. Lefebvre's challenge is to articulate how modern everyday life can overcome the alienations caused by an over inflated anthropological nature. His answer rests on our conscious choosing of the kinds of life we want to live. This focus helped him to navigate the contradictions that modernity and, perhaps more importantly, that the revolutionary project itself raised. In this respect, Lefebvre's (2012

[1957]) innovation was to orient his romanticism towards the future with 'the dialectic of the possible'. It is from this perspective that he articulates his critique of everyday life. Lefebvre's philosophical project is informed by a continual interest and development in the kinds of empiricism that can be detected in his commitment to sociology and its extension into the politics of space that address the city, the urban, architecture and so on. In doing so, Lefebvre establishes a pragmatic and critical framework whilst simultaneously realising the tragic irony that underlies modernity. The result is a revolutionary project stripped of its modern confidence but with an apparatus that draws on what is possible in modernity.

Second, I discuss the complexities of Castoriadis' revolutionary politics. Throughout his life Castoriadis rarely strayed from these politics that motivated his wide interests; be it philosophy, mathematics or psychoanalysis. In his later writings, he remains faithful to the revolutionary enthusiasm of his younger years. However, the practical significance of this all but dries up in his later works despite his guiding of all the themes he addresses toward the significance of the project of autonomy. In contrast to his contributions in the pages of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, this later work is more a social philosophy than the outline of a political programme. Regardless, Castoriadis is consistent in his attempt to situate the project of autonomy in both a cosmological and anthropological constellation. This tendency in Castoriadis' thought is problematic. However, his theorisation of the social imaginary and the social historical yield much that can help to understand how politics are situated in society and in everyday life. In this way, Castoriadis provides a sociological account of his politics. Furthermore, his contribution is valuable politics that desire the conscious transformation of society. Here, his innovation is understanding that a politics cannot be imposed on a society, but rather, that it permeates the social imaginary and everyday life activity.

Finally, I explore Heller's cautious response to modernity. In contrast to both Castoriadis and Lefebvre, Heller looks inwardly at modernity. She aims to discover the possibilities of the good life and what it might mean for 'a Politics' in the postmodern context. Her investigations take her deep into the permutations of modernity. Heller's

proposal is cautious. For her, modernity's non-founding foundation of freedom makes it a precarious social arrangement and it therefore must be carefully managed. Heller returns to modernity's scaffolding, the democratic and liberal values that developed during the Enlightenment, and couples this with the cultivation of the modern individual complete with her feelings, emotions and idiosyncrasies. Disposing of the language of revolution, Heller indicates the direction toward a pluralistic, liberal and democratic modernity. Despite this, she remains faithful to the general orientation of her earlier and more radical writings. In her mature *oeuvre*, Heller reconfirms the significance of everyday life despite her original terminology being veiled by her less systematic and more literary style. In these works, everyday life is the central locus of a movement that propels the individual from the sensual conditions of his/her familiar experience through to the vast expanse of the congregation of human spirit and back again.

In part, it is the paradoxes of modernity that draw these three theorists together in these pages. Each of their prescriptions address the problematic nature of the disjuncture between the creations of society: its forms, institutions and ideologies, and the actuality of our lived experiences. Everyday life is a measure of such experience and also the forum whereby the conflict and unison of form and content takes shape. Each of their orientations rely heavily, via Hegel, on the development of social consciousness. Lefebvre enlists a critique of everyday life, Castoriadis, the project of autonomy, and, Heller, the development of the good life towards these ends. Even so, their conclusions are reserved. They each understand that it is the very substance of modernity, our everyday lives, that demands their attention and, paradoxically, evades our interventions. While their recommendations are inconclusive and divergent the essence remains the same: that it is only through a project rather than a plan and on the basis of modernity itself that we can strive towards a modernity of our own choosing.

5.1. Henri Lefebvre: transforming the everyday

The answer is everyday life, to rediscover everyday life – no longer to neglect and disown it, elude and evade it – but to actively

rediscover it while contributing to its transfiguration; or, to be precise, an invention of language – for everyday life translated into language becomes a different everyday life by becoming clear; and the transfiguration of everyday life is the creation of something new, something that requires new words (Lefebvre, 1971 [1968]: 202).

This quotation captures the essence of Lefebvre's project. It was Lefebvre's attention to the possible – the worldly limitations of social transformation – that allowed him to hold on to the postulate of 'philosophising the world and making philosophy worldly' that he had extracted from Hegel and Marx. Lefebvre took up the critical mode that Marx had discovered in Hegel and magnified its practical orientation with a pragmatic touch. For Lefebvre, the revolution was to be tactical and visceral as much as it was conscious and organised. Like Castoriadis, he understood that the revolutionary transformation of society was as dependent on transforming the mindset of a society as it was about formal politics. However, Lefebvre took this notion a step further by explicitly situating the 'style' of everyday life as central to this paradigm. Furthermore, he complemented his attention to the aesthetics of everyday life with a project that sought to understand the conditions of everyday life in modernity, in the context of historical and social becoming in time and space, as mutual configurations of our world.

In this section, I trace the motifs that animate Lefebvre's thought in order to identify the essential aspects of his politics. Lefebvre does not intervene with explicit political programmes, but rather, he attempts to articulate what is important for life in modernity and furthermore, what would be required to work toward these directions. First, I identify Lefebvre's 'new romanticism', which guides his thought and seeks the 'possible' on the basis of consciously choosing the forms of life we moderns might want to live. Second, I discuss his notion of the 'festival', which Lefebvre evokes to introduce to modernity the sensibilities of rural traditions. Lefebvre's intention is not to look longingly into the past for solutions to the present but rather to identify the enduring rituals of human sociality that elucidate our condition and bind us together. Third, I examine Lefebvre's theory of moments. Here, his debt to Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche is on display. For Lefebvre, moments bring our essentially alienated world

together in fleeting experiences whereby language, society and sensuality are united before dissipating beyond our cognition once more. In this way, Lefebvre's project closely parallels Hegel's phenomenology of consciousness but without Hegel's sense of historical inevitability. I conclude the section with a discussion of Lefebvre's more practical proposals that work toward the realisation of his philosophical contributions. Here, Lefebvre advocates a program of sociology that puts the conscious transformation of everyday life at its centre.

5.1.1. Towards a new romanticism

One of the more striking differences between Lefebvre's contribution and those of Castoriadis and Heller is the romantic flavour of his revolutionary posture. Lefebvre's rural sympathies inspire him to account for the role of nature – in both its anthropological and cosmological expressions – as a force in modern society in the form of a romanticism that cannot be detected in either Castoriadis or Heller's contributions. Lefebvre's romanticism unfolds as an internal dialogue throughout his intellectual life. The result was a marriage of the revolutionary orientation and a critique of everyday life. Whilst a union of some compromise, the move saved Lefebvre both his Marxism and his romanticism. In this way, he evaded the same dilemma that tormented Lukács, whose soul, as Löwy (1981: 92) describes 'was torn between an enlightenment outlook and an "anti-capitalist romantic demon," from which he would not free himself'. In contrast, Lefebvre was able to account for the necessity of the revolutionary attitude to address both the practicalities and the sensibilities of everyday life.

Lefebvre focused his new romanticism towards the future oriented 'possible'. In contrast, the 'old romanticism' looked backward into the past. For Lefebvre (2012 [1957]: 293), the old romantic was '*man in thrall to the past*'⁷⁹. The old romanticism gambled all or nothing. It placed its lot on nature or abstraction but nothing in-between. Its limitation, Lefebvre observes, is that it 'would remain stranded on the level of empirical living, blind and spontaneous. Or it would shrink to the level of an ideology' (Lefebvre 1995 [1962]: 312). The significance of this charge in Lefebvre's thought

cannot be overstated. From this perspective, he could challenge those movements influential to his own thinking such as the Surrealists and Situationists – for their dreamy, or even violent, spontaneity, and likewise, towards ideological socialists and fascists – whose utopias or mythologies could never frame the spontaneity of life itself. Lefebvre's (1995 [1962]: 318) project rejected the old romanticism which he thought had severed 'the cosmological from the anthropological, dissolving their conflictual unity and giving predominance to the former'. It is the fallout of this rupture that Lefebvre took most issue with, detecting it amongst the materialism, existentialism and the cultural or structural idealism of his own time.

Lefebvre took his cue from Stendhal's reorientation of romanticism in response to dilemmas that modern individualism posed to the 19th century artist. Put simply, newfound freedoms and challenges to the authority of tradition had freed the artist and at the same time initiated an emptying out of his or her work. In response, Lefebvre (1995 [1962]: 271) recounts, 'art became simultaneously *a way of living, a way of saying, a way of making*, and both life and the work of art were revealed through style'. This eventuality presented a riddle for the artist whose objective of creative production turned inwardly towards the very act of production itself. The art became both the orientation, the situation, the activity and, finally, the final creation of the artist. Stendhal's solution, Lefebvre (1995 [1962]: 271) continues, was 'the pleasure principle in all its breadth and depth, uniting usefulness with dreams and physicality with fiction'⁸⁰. In doing so, Stendhal had brought romanticism's fixation on the past into the present. Lefebvre's innovation was to take the essence of Stendhal's solution and extend it as a model for the possibilities of a 'style' of modern everyday life⁸¹.

Stendhal's solution to the problem of style spoke to a cultural elite, whereas Lefebvre had set for himself the much larger task of the revolutionary agenda of society at large. The analogue for what Lefebvre described as the 'pleasure principle' in Stendhal's orientation was in Lefebvre's grand approach a far loftier notion that reached inwardly into the cosmological essence of humanity and outwardly toward the anthropological structure of society. Unsurprisingly, Lefebvre (1995 [1962]: 355) looks to Marx:

Marx thought that one day men will live out their everyday lives practically, rediscovering in the process something which perhaps had been accomplished by some societies now lost; they will grasp the physical world with cultivated eyes, and love with senses formed by the art of living, instead of having to refer to objects and works of art. If life is to become the art of living, art must die and be reborn in life.

In this passage, Marx's early philosophical writings speak loudly. For Lefebvre, it is only by means of a rediscovery of the pleasure of living: of interacting and living in and through nature – the satisfaction of one's species essentiality (in Marx's terminology) – that style can be re-appropriated towards a radical transformation of everyday life. Wary of the materiality of this equation, Lefebvre emphasised the more Hegelian aspects of anthropological unity. Lefebvre integrated the social orientation of Hegelian spirit into his account⁸². In doing so, he posited the possibility of a style of everyday life informed by the tension between the social creation of form and the objective conditions of human life. This style could realise itself as the content of human life that is conscious of the tensions and unity of the two dimensions of human nature: the cosmological and anthropological.

Lefebvre's (2012 [1957]: 296) revolution of everyday life involved a reorientation of everyday life on the basis of a dialectic of the possible. He considered his new romanticism as 'more of a movement, an ever repeated departure, a perpetual challenge, an already practical prescience of what is possible and what is impossible' (Lefebvre 1995 [1962]: 363). In this way 'the new (revolutionary) romanticism affirms the primacy of the impossible-possible and grasps this as essential to the present' (Lefebvre, 2012 [1957]: 297). Lefebvre's intention was a society transformed on the basis of an everyday life that tested the possible. His hope rested on the creation of a style of modern everyday life that would have structural and aesthetic consequences for the production and reproduction of our modern forms and institutions.

5.1.2. From the rural festival to the revolutionary festival

The 'style' of modern everyday life that Lefebvre intended was a form of human consciousness that tested the fractures between the concrete and abstract by realising their unity in what he described as 'moments'. Lefebvre's theory of 'moments' is enigmatic. One feels the gravity and significance that Lefebvre intended for his theory of moments. However, conversely, one also detects the difficulty that Lefebvre had in resolving the concept⁸³ into a coherent whole. Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche are present in the theory in their full force. This amalgamation left Lefebvre with a difficulty of resolving the dialectical properties of the Hegelian moment with the eternal recurrence of the Nietzschean moment. Where Hegel's moment was one of *Aufheben*, Nietzsche's moment was one of confirmation and difference: of reinstitution and alterity. Nevertheless, his theory of moments, however ambiguous, is of central significance to his thought and provides the impetus for a far more diffuse revolution of everyday life than Lefebvre would like to let on.

Lefebvre's theory of moments sits alongside his concept of 'festival'. The moment mirrors the structure of the festival and, in its most intense form, it is a constellation of moments that comprises the festival itself. The festival is an important motif for Lefebvre and establishes a significant aspect of his ability to think between the countryside and the city. His idealised presentation of the peasant's festival describes how the banality and separation of everyday life could irrupt in unison in times of festival. The festival, according to Lefebvre (1991 [1947]: 202), 'differed from everyday life only in the explosion of forces which had slowly been accumulated in and via everyday life itself'. Festivals 'were like everyday life, but more intense; and the moments of that life – the practical community, food, the relation of nature – in other words, work – were reunited, amplified in the festival' (Lefebvre, 1991 [1947]: 207). For Lefebvre, the disparate particularities that defined the everyday lives of each member of the community came together in times of festival so as to be expressed as moments of a shared universal experience.

Georges Bataille's (1997 [1948]: 215–216) elaboration of the festival is similar: 'the festival is the fusion of human life. For the thing and the individual, it is the crucible

where distinctions melt in the intense heat of intimate life'. For both Lefebvre and Bataille, festival is an expression of the spirit of the community in the Hegelian sense. Bataille's account stood in contrast to Hegel's dialectic insofar as it perceived the limitations of the festival as the limitation of *Aufheben*. Instead of the sublation of the dialectic he suggests a third space in excess of the dialectical movement (Bataille, 1997 [1948]: 251; Grindon, 2013: 211–212). While Lefebvre's (2002 [1961]: 344) account shares some affinity with Bataille⁸⁴, he is more sympathetic to the Hegelian dialectic, whilst shifting the emphasis away from Hegel's historical moment towards a more immanent dialectical pulse that centred around the dialectic of the possible/impossible. More importantly, Lefebvre understands the festival as a constellation of moments that bring together a totality of human life, reconciling in reality (however briefly) the individual's particular experience in the context of a universally shared experience. In this way, the festival is a joyous and tragic moment: one whose very possibility relies on the impossibility of its continued existence.

Likewise, there is also a degree of affinity between Lefebvre's notion of the festival and Bakhtin's (1965, 1973 [1963]) 'carnival'⁸⁵. For Bakhtin, the carnival serves as an alternative life to the drudgery of the everyday. The 'carnival is the people's second life, organised on the basis of laughter. It is a festive life' (Bakhtin 1965: 7). Here, the people are released from dogmatism and authority. The hierarchies that dominate people's lives are relieved, temporarily exposing the possibilities of a more equal society. The overlap between Lefebvre and Bakhtin's contributions are limited. They would agree that the festival registers visceral reality that is often obscured in everyday life. However, Lefebvre would disagree with the exceptionality of Bakhtin's presentation of the carnival opting for a more integrated understanding that privileges the festive moment as the coming together of material and abstract components of human life.

Lefebvre took up the theme of the revolution as festival in two key texts: *La Signification de la Commune* (1962) and *La Proclamation de la Commune* (1969a). In these texts, he spells out the tragic orientation of the revolutionary festival through the

example of the Paris Commune of 1871. Lefebvre (2003 [1965]: 188) spares no enthusiasm in describing the events of 1871 in these terms:

it was for one thing an immense and, epic festival ... A spring festival in the Cité, a festival of the disinherited and the proletarians. A revolutionary festival ... a total festival, the greatest of modern times, which unfolded at first with magnificence and joy.

From Lefebvre's perspective, the revolution burst forth from the conditions of social life in Paris in much the way that the peasant's festival emerged as an expression of the totality of rural life. Lefebvre (2003 [1965]: 189) praised the revolutionary festival and its success:

Paris lived its revolutionary passion ... the community became the communion [it was] a basic will to change the world and life as it is, and things as they are, a spontaneity conveying the highest thought, a total revolutionary project.

Similar ideas emerge in the writings of the Situationists⁸⁶ and Bataille, whose accounts envision the revolutionary festival in perpetuity. Where the Situationists promote the revolution as the 'eternal festival', Bataille 'maintains the possibility of revolution-as-festival, but only on the condition that it be endlessly violent' (Grindon, 2013: 218). In contrast, and despite Lefebvre's enthusiasm, his revolutionary festival would always necessarily end in tragedy: just as the rural festival would suffer a necessary tragic fate on the basis of its own impossible possibility, so too would the revolution as festival. Rather than the eternal revolutionary festival, Lefebvre situated the revolutionary festival as a cyclical historical enterprise much like the peasant's festival. However, it differed insofar as the modern tragic mode incorporated the negative dimensions of modern irony (Lefebvre, 1995 [1962]). For Lefebvre (1962: 19), these moments of revolutionary exuberance could only be understood as a historical modality that transcended the limitations of the schema of Aristotelian causality. Instead, they would generate a mode of historical becoming whereby a totality could emerge dialectically from within the totality itself:

History may present itself as a succession of stops along an itinerary, periods of stagnation and (relative) equilibrium, separated by

creative impulses, *les revolutions*, which the historian is unable to exhaust in their content or meaning. These are the genuine events. These periods, some of creation, some of calm development, are not separate. The latter complete the germs initiated by the former. The former are the germ at the core of the latter (Lefebvre, 1962: 19).⁸⁷

Here, we discover a crucial component of Lefebvre's thought that underpins his revolutionary orientation. For Lefebvre, revolutionary upheaval no longer assumed the privileged position as the onset of a new historical epoch. It instead became the creative impulse of a broader totality of historical becoming. 'Events are always original, but they become reabsorbed in the general situation' (Lefebvre 1969b: 7), explains Lefebvre in his commentary on the 1968 Paris student movement – his thinking was closely resembled by Badiou's (2005) later detailed theorising of 'the event'⁸⁸. In the few years surrounding the 1968 movements Lefebvre veered towards the excitement of revolutionary activity and the reunion it could generate between the festival and everyday life (Lefebvre, 1969b, 1971 [1968]: 204). However, despite his enthusiasm during the late 1960's, the consistent theme in Lefebvre's oeuvre is a more pedestrian form of revolution distributed throughout the vicissitudes and constant features of everyday life.

5.1.3. A theory of moments

Lefebvre's (1989 [1959], 2002 [1961]) theory of moments returns his thought to the everyday and the possibilities of social transformation therein. The theory employs a medley of concepts deriving from Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche. At its highest level, the theory responds to alienation as intrinsic to the human condition. His theory takes on a positive orientation with 'an effort to give language significance and value' (Lefebvre, 2002 [1961]: 343). In doing so, Lefebvre intended the theory as an attempt to initiate a project of reconciliation between everyday forms and the actual content of everyday life. Lefebvre's moment is a necessarily elusive concept. At its most rudimentary, it refers to the significations of language in relation to lived experience. More importantly, the moment evokes a communion of human experience. Lefebvre seems to intentionally blur the lines between the moment as intentional human

becoming and the moment as an intrinsic human condition. On the one hand, moments provide a mechanism for the authentication of language via everyday life and on the other, they are the 'instances of intense experience in everyday life that provide an immanent critique of the everyday' (Highmore, 2002: 115).

Lefebvre's ambivalence here hinges on his original employment of the philosophies of Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche. His early thinking⁸⁹ on the concept of moments reveals his debt to Hegel as the following passage from *Dialectical Materialism* demonstrates:

Between 'moments' there cannot exist either a purely external finality or a purely internal one, either a harmony or mechanical collisions. Being elements of a totality, having been transcended and maintained within it, limited by each other and yet reciprocally determined, they are the 'ends' one of another. There exist ends without finality. Each moment contains other moments, aspects or elements that have come from its past. Reality thus overflows the mind, obliging us to delve ever deeper into it – and especially to be ever revising our principles of identity, causality and finality and making them more thorough (Lefebvre, 1968 [1940]: 96–97).

Here, Lefebvre's conceptualisation of the moment sits comfortably within the paradigm of Hegel's phenomenology of spirit. While his theory of moments shares much affinity with Hegel's usage of the notion of the 'moment', his later conceptualisation avoids privileging the moment as central to the historical becoming of consciousness in general. In comparison to Hegel's non-subjective approach to consciousness in *The Phenomenology*, Lefebvre (2002 [1961]: 344) emphasises the history of the individual. In doing so, he evokes Nietzsche's notions of 'eternal recurrence' and 'will to power'. The moment of individual historical becoming is dependent on the intense experience of signification: a moment of recurrence and self-affirmation. In contrast to the other forms of repetition that cumulate in the constant reproduction of everyday life, 'the moment is a higher form of repetition, renewal and reappearance, and of the recognition of certain determinable relationships with otherness (or the other) and with the self' (Lefebvre 2002 [1961]: 344).

Lefebvre employs the examples of 'love', 'rest' and 'knowledge' amongst others as examples of moments. The experience of these moments is part of a process of approaching an absolute experience of the moment in a meeting of the universal and the particular alongside their counterparts of cosmological and anthropological nature. For Lefebvre (2002 [1961]: 348), it is 'the attempt to achieve the total realisation of the possible'. However, just as with the festival, the moment is necessarily ephemeral and suffers a tragic retreat from an absolute due to the inevitability of its impossible possibility. It is the fate of the individual to be unable to realise an enduring universal precisely because of its particularity. However, it is within this movement, this advance and retreat, that the universal derives its substance. Here, the moment has both a positive and negative orientation. Positive, insofar as it reinforces meaning and signification through repetition, confirmation and its realisation of an absolute, and negative, in that this absolute is an impossible possibility: an absolute denied by the impossibility of a universal approached on the basis of the particular. 'Simultaneously', Lefebvre (2002 [1961]: 349) explains, 'this act singles out a meaning and creates that meaning'. Here, we can see parallels with Castoriadis' elucidation of the social imaginary. Just as the a-subjective 'doing' of Castoriadis' theory reinstitutes and provides the social imaginary with new signification, so too does Lefebvre's theory of moments inform the 'semantic field'⁹⁰. The juxtaposition between the two theories distinguishes the revolutionary potential that Lefebvre identifies in modern everyday life. Where in Castoriadis we find an emphasis on the development of social imaginary significations towards revolutionary ends, in Lefebvre the focus is on the dialectical mediation of everyday life, nature and language.

Lefebvre intends his theory of moments as distinct from, and as an intervention to, the everyday reproduction of social life. Moments are higher levels of experience that incorporate our social condition into our individual subjective experience. Additionally, and perhaps most pertinently in the current context, moments elaborate a simultaneous experience of alienation and disalienation. In this way, 'moments make a critique – by their actions – of everyday life, and everyday life makes a critique – by its factuality – of paroxysmal moments' (Lefebvre, 2002 [1961]: 356). Moments arise out of the dialectic between the chaos and the structures of everyday life. On the one

hand, 'nature appears to us like a gigantic wastage of beings and forms, like a frenzy of creation and destruction. Outrageously playful, immeasurably tragic, its failures, monstrosities, abortions and successes are incalculable' (Lefebvre, 2002 [1961]: 357). On the other hand, everyday life brings some order to this chaos through its constant rhythms of reproduction. In contrast, moments encompass both this chaos and order. Thus, they have the potential to re-present, re-produce and create the orientation of our society's significations. For Lefebvre, the human condition is intrinsically alienated. This alienation manifests itself throughout everyday life. Moments provide the opportunity for individual agency, collective consensus and the potential reorientation of human society by mediating but never eradicating this alienation. The intimacy that moments share with everyday life prioritises everyday life in this paradigm. Lefebvre (2002 [1961]: 357) illustrates this by returning to the familiar edaphological metaphor: 'everyday life is the native soil in which the moment germinates and takes root', to bluntly extend the metaphor: just as the rhizosphere transforms the makeup and health of a soil, so too do moments transform the content and orientation of everyday life.

Lefebvre's theory of moments was intended to animate a practical orientation towards transforming human society. Our becoming aware of the significance of moments and, in turn, the intentional orientation of everyday life towards the cultivation of moments, is centrally located in Lefebvre's philosophy and sociology. He argues that,

The theory of moments will allow us to follow the birth and formation of moments in the substance of the everyday in their various psychic and sociological denominations: attitudes, aptitudes, conventions, affective of abstract stereotypes, formal intentions, etc. Perhaps it will even permit us to illuminate the slow stages by which need becomes desire, deep below everyday life, and on its surface. But most importantly, it must be capable of opening a window on supersession (Lefebvre 2002 [1961]: 358).

5.1.4. Space, rhythms and a sociology of the everyday

The project outlined above is a mature constellation of Lefebvre's practical philosophy and sociological orientation. If the publication of *Critique of Everyday Life*

Vol. I represents his original identification of the problem, *Critique of Everyday Life Vol. II* crystallises his project on the basis of a sophisticated social philosophy of society⁹¹. Where Lefebvre's earlier writings depended heavily on his understanding of dialectical materialism via Hegel and Marx, his later writings involved a greater sensitivity to the more constant features of everyday life and the dialectical pulse therein. In this way, Lefebvre distanced himself from the drama of revolutionary overcoming, instead accounting for everyday life as constant dialectical process. In contrast to the political objectives of the revolution, he advocates a project of interrogating the whole of everyday life, across all of its dimensions: from its social orientation to individual experience and with constant recourse to the tensions and mutuality between nature and culture. In this way, Lefebvre's political project is less interested in political activism than it is in social philosophy. This gives good reason for his sociological orientation, a critical sociology that advances an elucidation of society that prioritises the content of everyday human life.

Alongside his critique of everyday life, Lefebvre's later writings emphasised the significance of space and rhythms. These additions made for a compelling finale to Lefebvre's oeuvre and helped to articulate and further solidify his project of social transformation in terms of a sociological and anthropological elucidation. These writings developed out of his writings on the urban (Lefebvre 2003 [1972])⁹². They were a pragmatic attempt to make his philosophy practical by interrogating the modern forms that shaped everyday life. In these later works, Lefebvre elaborated his indebtedness to both Heidegger and Nietzsche whilst maintaining his Marxist/Hegelian method. Lefebvre's influential book: *The Production of Space*, sought to rebalance the privilege modern scholars had given to 'time' over 'space'. He took seriously Heidegger's notion of 'being-in-the-world' or '*Dasein*' (Heidegger, 2008 [1927]) and the complementary notion of 'dwelling' (Heidegger, 2008) and enlisted it as the basis of a third conceptualisation of space to complement the Cartesian dualism between perceived and conceived space (Elden, 2004: 187). This triadic understanding of space – the perceived, conceived and lived (Lefebvre, 1991: 46) – establishes for Lefebvre the conceptual apparatus to analyse the production of space on the basis of its social-historical dimensions as well as its manifestations as the material and lived

experience of human life. The retention of his Marxist orientation in this configuration allowed Lefebvre to make a twofold critical intervention. On the one hand, he could emphasise the materiality of space as a constant force on human societies, and on the other, he could take aim at the consolidation of power through the administration and monopoly of socially (and politically) produced space.

On the back of his work on the production of space, Lefebvre returned to the notion of time and its significance in modernity. Lefebvre's final book: *Éléments de rythmanalyse* (1992), published in English as *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (2013 [1992]), links together and unifies Lefebvre's thought. Here, Lefebvre's reflections on the quotidian (the repetitive qualities of everyday life) return to the fore, and again, Nietzschean eternal recurrence underpins the movement. The urban form is under investigation – a topology he had already elaborated in his writings on space. By acknowledging the significance of lived space, Lefebvre demonstrated a spatial temporality that required his attention; the fluidity of everyday life simultaneously grates with rigid spatiality, whilst incorporating the dynamism of produced space into its own rhythms. Lefebvre's intention was to bring to the city a redolence of the natural rhythms of the countryside and Nature, juxtaposing them against the abstracted linearity of the city:

Cyclical repetition and the linear repetitive separate out under analysis, but in reality interfere with one another constantly. The cyclical originates in the cosmic, in nature: days, nights, seasons, the waves and the tides of the sea, monthly cycles, etc. The linear would come rather from social practice, therefore from human activity: the monotony of actions and of movements, imposed structures ... the antagonistic unity of relations between the cyclical and the linear sometimes gives rise to compromises, sometimes to disturbances (Lefebvre, 2013 [1992]: 8).

The result is an analytic tool (a science) that Lefebvre anticipated could be enlisted to interpret and analyse modern life. He equates the job of the rhythm analyst to that of the psychoanalyst: 'he will listen to the world', Lefebvre (2013 [1992]: 19) says of the rhythm analyst. Again, and with a similar tone to his call for a critique of everyday life, Lefebvre returns to a sociological orientation towards the world. In this

final concept, he returns full circle but with a greater awareness of the object under scrutiny. Having addressed the spatial and temporal conditions of modern everyday life, Lefebvre reinforced his understanding of the modern social condition as a fluid totality. However, Lefebvre's reliance on the dialectic had dissipated significantly. Where it had once stood prominently at the centre of his analysis, in these later writings it had almost lost all sense of *telos*, sidelined by the growing significance of spatiality and rhythmic temporality.

Regardless, Lefebvre never strayed from his desire for a revolution of everyday life. His romanticism, as a celebration of the possible on the basis of the impossible, remained central to this theme. To be sure, throughout his intellectual biography we can see periods where he was enthusiastic for more dramatic radical upheaval in society, but overall the general trend in his work is towards a transformation of society on the basis of sociological investigation of the fluid totality of modern everyday life. We can see how his various paradigms work towards these ends. In the first instance, Lefebvre's project is to align the forms and contents of modern everyday life by way of their mutual transformation. Perhaps more significantly, it accounts for the constant dance of cosmological and anthropological nature, which emphasise the inescapability of human creation from the internal pulse of external nature. Lefebvre's ability to marry his politics and his philosophy hinged on his theory of moments. Fittingly, the elaboration of this discovery occurred mid-career and provides a pivotal moment between his disillusion with the formal revolutionary project and his reorientation towards sociological analysis as a mode of social transformation. His theory of moments made exigent the analysis of social forms and content with pragmatic intervention in mind. It was through moments that human life could be lived to its full potential, both as a mode of critique and of consolidation. On this basis, his late writings on the urban, the production of space, and rhythmanalysis make sense as pragmatic analytic tools intended as interventions in the social totality towards social transformation.

5.2. Cornelius Castoriadis: trapped in the labyrinth

Castoriadis' revolutionary political project is interwoven with his theory of modernity. Marxism guided him for many years until the results of a sustained interrogation of state communism forced a schism in his orientation. The exhaustion and dissolution of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* sent its various contributors off in several directions. For his part, Castoriadis felt it necessary to break with the paradigm of Marxism. He was convinced that it was not only the perversions of Marx's thought witnessed in the horrors of totalitarianism or the rigid dogmatism that dominated orthodox Marxism that were at fault, but that the germs of these perversions were already present within Marx's original formulations. From this point of deviation, Castoriadis embarked on a project of discovering the radical and autonomous pulse that undulated below the surface of modernity and provided the impetus for conscious social transformation and creativity. Castoriadis' critique of Marx provided the launching pad for this project. His project took shape based on two subsequent intellectual investigations: firstly, of psychoanalysis and then a study of the political organisation of the ancient Greeks.

The result was Castoriadis' *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. This work underpinned the majority of Castoriadis' subsequent writings. The work began with his previous critique of Marx, historical determinism and ideology and responded with his own theory of society and history that contained therein a project of autonomy that married the autonomy of the individual with the organisation of an autonomous society. This work was a cornerstone in Castoriadis' thought and it tied together several themes that had emerged in his formative years whilst providing the groundwork for many subsequent studies.

The concept of freedom is a fundamental component of Castoriadis' social philosophy and is the focal point of his revolutionary project. Whilst we have discussed the mechanics of his theory of autonomy above, in this section I make account of the viability of Castoriadis' revolutionary project. One of the significant aspects of his project was to bridge the divide between the ontological institution of society and a

revolutionary orientation. In this respect, the simultaneous ambivalence and intentionality of everyday life takes centre stage, and, I argue, is the source of a troubling but insightful discrepancy in Castoriadis' theory. On the one hand, Castoriadis looks towards the transformation of the social imaginary orientated towards the project of autonomy. On the other hand, he emphasises the auto-poietic nature of social-historical a-subjectivity. Castoriadis' later works seem implicitly to address this difficulty but fail to resolve it convincingly. His difficulty here is perhaps a helpful indication of an enduring paradox of the human condition: the incongruence of subjectivity and a-subjectivity. Notwithstanding, Castoriadis' later contribution elaborates a theory of creation across *nomos* and into *physis*. In this respect, he struggles to dovetail his political project with his theory of society. Regardless, Castoriadis' political project is a valuable contribution and, likewise, his insights offer convincing elucidation of the ontological foundations of our society.

Castoriadis' political project asks us to intervene in the processes of the unfolding of the social-historical. The project enlists his account of freedom as autonomy and situates it at the centre of human doing. In the context of the present thesis, we can see how this project attempts to wed the auto-poietic social-historical that derives its momentum from the aggregate of human everyday doing (3.4) with his particular understanding of 'true' freedom as autonomy (4.4). Castoriadis' project is twofold. He elaborates a theory of praxis as intentional doing towards the autonomy of the other and relates it to the significance of the elucidation of the social historical world. Castoriadis most clearly articulates this version of the revolutionary project on the back of the critique of Marxism in the first part of *The Imaginary Institution of Society*.

While Castoriadis worked unceasingly towards a revolutionary political project throughout his life, for our purposes here we are primarily concerned with his later thought which develops in response to problems that arose throughout his engagement with Marx and Marxism and amongst his comrades of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. Despite this, many of the motifs that come to animate his later thought form a direct lineage with his earlier political writings published under pseudonyms in the

pages of the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and collected in English translation in the three volumes of his social and political writings (Castoriadis, 1988a, 1988b, 1992). Castoriadis most clearly articulates these ideas in a series of articles entitled 'On the Content of Socialism'. Here, he spells out what a socialist society might look like. His concerns concentrate on the transparency of the organisation of society (Castoriadis, 1997b: 55). His solution works towards the creation of an autonomous society via direct democracy facilitated by autonomous workers. In his ensuing article 'Recommencing the Revolution' Castoriadis (1997a: 415) made it clear that we could no longer attribute to the proletariat 'the privileged role imputed to it by classical Marxism' and that it was instead necessary that the revolution was dispersed throughout the whole of society. His vision of a radical democratic society required its grounding in a transformed social imaginary. The character of such a social imaginary hinged on the flourishing of the network of social imaginary significations that he understood as pertaining to autonomy.

5.2.1. The project of autonomy

Castoriadis' revolutionary project entails an elaboration of the project of autonomy that came into being during the fifth century BCE in Ancient Greece. As discussed above (4.4), from Castoriadis' perspective, the project of autonomy can be interpreted as the entry of freedom characterised by explicit and unlimited interrogation of a society from within. With this comes a political project. The implications of this political project entail the creation of

a new social-historical *eidos*: reflectiveness in the full sense, or self-reflectiveness, as well as the individual and the institutions which embody it. The questions raised are, on a social level: Are our laws good? Are they just? Which laws *ought* we to make? (Castoriadis, 1991c: 163).

The advent of this *eidos* is synonymous with the onset of a consciousness of the social-historical as self-creation. With this awareness Castoriadis claims that politics (in contrast to The Political) is created and, 'freedom is born as social-historically *effective* freedom' (Castoriadis, 1991c: 164). Thus, for Castoriadis, politics

is unleashed with the potentiality to govern the processes of social-historical creation with recourse to the explicit and unlimited interrogation of society. As a collective enterprise, it is this orientation that Castoriadis (1991c: 164) understands as *autonomos*: '(to give to) oneself one's laws'. As *germ*, it is the creation of this orientation that is both the subject of Castoriadis' elucidation and that underpins his own radical project.

It is in this context that Castoriadis' concept of society as social instituted via the imaginary comes into play. This paradigm provides the ground in order to understand how the project of autonomy manifests in the social imaginary as a social imaginary signification. Castoriadis' notion of the imaginary is integral to the relationships between the institution, the symbolic and society. The imaginary requires the symbolic not only to express itself, but also to exist in itself (Castoriadis, 1987: 127). It is the collective faculty that allows the individual to conceive, whilst also dictating what will be conceived. The actual imaginary (understood in temporal stasis and in contrast to the more accurate 'instituting imaginary') is what carries the relation between the signifier and the signified, and therefore directs this relation. This means that the signified, which results from the signifier, is presupposed and intended by the imaginary. Symbolism leans on nature and history and has an ordered coherence on this basis (Castoriadis, 1987: 125). This order resists determinism; rather, it is subject to the forces of alteration and reinstitution that are produced by the unfolding of the social historical. With the sustenance of the social-historical, the social imaginary interprets this presupposed symbolism in its own terms, and, in a twofold operation, it is simultaneously involved with investing elementary symbolism with renewed signification that plays out *ad infinitum*.

The fabric of the social imaginary is woven together by social imaginary significations. Social imaginary significations are coherent networks of symbolic meaning. They are responsible for the particular meanings represented, in the imaginary, of the symbolic world, and consequently they shape the nature and particular formations of a society's institutions. All expressions of a society and the individuals that comprise it find their basic impetus in social imaginary significations on

some level. Significations, or networks of meaning, do not find their form dictated by symbolism; they are not slaves to it. They are, however, deeply intertwined with symbolism as it is signifiers that carry them, but it is the signification that 'chooses' the particular symbols it utilises (Castoriadis, 1987: 139). Social imaginary significations are what the social imaginary is comprised of and what presupposes its expression. They are the 'invisible cement holding together this endless collection of real, rational and symbolic odds and ends that constitute every society, and as the principle that selects and shapes the bits and pieces that will be accepted there' (Castoriadis, 1987: 143).

It is in these terms that Castoriadis would have us understand the project of autonomy. Since its inception in the Athenian Polis, the project of autonomy has become a core social imaginary signification in the Greco-Western social imaginary (and for that matter all other social imaginaries that it has come into contact with). Alongside the other core imaginary signification that Castoriadis describes (the unlimited expansion of pseudo-rational mastery), the project of autonomy has ebbed and flowed periodically in the Greco-Western imaginary throughout the past two and a half millennia. Castoriadis named two historical epochs when it has flourished in the imaginary with greater significance: the period of ancient Greek Enlightenment and the European Renaissance and Enlightenment. In addition, he highlights particular moments whereby the project of autonomy is expressed with great intensity including the French Revolution, the Paris Commune and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 (Castoriadis, 1991e: 88). In these moments of intensity and distributed across broader epochs, the project of autonomy permeates the social imaginary with greater intensity, co-opting the plurality of imaginary significations and drawing their networks of signification under its spell of self-reflection. These conditions pave the way for a particular kind of human doing whereby human activity becomes subject to the imaginary conditions of self-reflexivity, of unlimited interrogation and creation. This particular kind of human doing is for Castoriadis what is understood as 'revolutionary praxis' and is what makes possible the radical and conscious creation of our world:

what we call revolutionary politics is a praxis which takes as its object the organisation and orientation of a society as they foster

the autonomy of all its members which recognises that this presupposes radical transformation of society, which will be possible, in its turn, only through the autonomous activity of individuals (Castoriadis 1987: 77).

5.2.2. The individual and society, *physis* and *nomos*

For Castoriadis, the revolutionary project can only take place on account of thoughtful and knowledgeable doing. In this context, Castoriadis develops his account of *praxis* severed from the illusion of absolute knowledge. Praxis, Castoriadis (1987: 76) emphasises,

is based on knowledge, but this knowledge is always fragmentary and provisional. It is fragmentary because there can be no exhaustive theory of humanity and of history; it is provisional because praxis itself constantly gives rise to new knowledge for *it makes the world speak a language that is at once singular and universal*.

This point is fundamental to both Castoriadis' revolutionary project and to his elucidation of society. Here, we can see Castoriadis' attempt to reconcile the possibility of agency in a world that closely resembles that described by poststructuralists. Whilst Castoriadis' world is actively created by the individuals that compose it, this world creation is confined to the symbolic realm of language. It is on this point that Habermas (1990: 333) takes issue with Castoriadis:

he either has to call his agents back, as Heidegger does, from their intramundane, subject-crazed lostness into the sphere of the non-manipulable, and then into auratic heteronomy vis-à-vis the primordial happening of a self-instituting society – and this would amount only to an ironic inversion of praxis philosophy into another variant of post structuralism. Or he has to displace the autonomy of social praxis, which cannot be redeemed intramundanelly, into the primordial happening itself – but then he has to support the world-disclosing productivity of language on an absolute ego and return in fact to a speculative philosophy of consciousness.

Whilst Habermas' association of Castoriadis' account with that of the poststructuralists carries some weight, the basis for his critique rests on his perceived

limitation of Castoriadis to differentiate between meaning and validity (Habermas, 1990: 331). However, this assessment does not adequately account for the continuity of Castoriadis' social-historical modality of society or its 'leaning' on nature. In this way, Castoriadis' description of the social imaginary – however amorphous it may be – pertains to rational structuring on the basis of the historical layering of meaning and signification and to the consistent aspects of *physis*.

The second part of Habermas' charge is better placed, insofar as it points to the way in which Castoriadis attempts to furnish psyche with the possibility of spontaneous self-knowledge. However, Habermas does not sufficiently account for the aspects of Castoriadis' theory that articulate the circular configuration of the relationship between psyche and the social imaginary. This becomes apparent when Habermas (1990: 334) claims that in Castoriadis' account the 'psyche and society stand in a kind of metaphysical opposition to one another'. In contrast to his own account of intersubjective activity that pins itself to a rational discursive relationship to the contextual situation, Habermas (1990, p. 332) claims that Castoriadis neglects to include a convincing account of socialisation. He argues that Castoriadis' account cannot facilitate the kind of rational intersubjective discourse like that which underpins Habermas' theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1985a, 1990: 334).

Habermas' charge that Castoriadis does not adequately theorise the mutual relationship between the psyche and society is not convincing. Castoriadis' oeuvre from the late 1960's onwards contains many expositions of the way in which psyche is mediated by the social and vice-versa. Castoriadis' entire theoretical edifice is essentially an account of socialisation. His mechanism for socialisation does not prioritise intersubjectivity nor does it neglect it. Instead, Castoriadis describes a far broader paradigm whereby psyche is socialised by its part in the social-historical. Here, psyche is confronted by and participates in the world of human doing. This interaction with the world occurs on the basis of two inseparable processes. The first depends on *physis* insofar as the sensual experience of the world is mediated by the primordial drives of psyche. When the psychic monad is confronted by the unceasing stream of signification that pours forth from the social historical, from that point onward,

the monad is no more. The psyche engages in the triangular process of radical imagination whereby the layering of sense, drives and the stream of signification spontaneously produce representative/affective/intentional flux (Castoriadis, 1987: 369). The two ends of this open totality, the particular and the universal, come together to form the instituting ground of society and the individual. Contrary to Habermas' suggestion, Castoriadis does not exclude intersubjectivity or socialisation from his account. Rather, he theorises the workings that underpin these processes. Furthermore, in contrast to Habermas (and to Lacan), Castoriadis discovers a pathway from language to *physis* and back again⁹³.

The other implication of Habermas' complaint is that Castoriadis is unwilling to integrate a theory of rationality that is pinned to the intersubjective discourse that intertwines with a contextual reality. In this respect, Habermas is closer to the mark. This point illustrates an important and revealing discrepancy in Castoriadis' contribution. Castoriadis intentionally avoids the kind of rationality that Habermas describes. He anticipates the problems that an overarching theory of communicative action entails. The reason is that Castoriadis requires that his 'agents' remain firmly amongst the 'intramundane'. Where Habermas situates his actors in a contextual reality, he prioritises his rational paradigm of intersubjectivity. This framework struggles to encompass the radical and indeterminate pulses of world creation and creative *physis*. Castoriadis picks up this challenge and attempts to wed his politics via *nomos* to *physis*.

We discussed above (4.5) some of the difficulties with Castoriadis' theory of autonomy. To reiterate: faced with the balancing act between politics and ontology, Castoriadis' social philosophy (despite his best efforts) falls on the side of *nomos* over *physis*. The difficulty rests with how to distinguish between the world as creation and the autonomous creation of the world. Perhaps it is Castoriadis' divisive articulation of the autonomous; that his precise definition of autonomy draws an untenable line in the sand. Castoriadis' insights do well to describe the relationship between *nomos* and *physis* whilst navigating the philosophical quagmires of physical determinism and transcendentalism. The problem with Castoriadis' account is that he attempts to wed

his politics to his philosophy and in doing so he puts his theory on precarious footing and on track towards an unholy marriage between *nomos* and *physis*.

Heller banters with Castoriadis on this point. 'Of course, all philosophers believe that their solutions, and they alone, have solved or eliminated the thorny dilemma of *physis-nomos*', Heller (1989: 165) begins, she continues:

no one can blame Castoriadis that he detected the presence of this undigested dilemma in Marx and Aristotle, while insisting that he has himself brushed the problem aside. One cannot mention self deception here, because no one can practice (sic) philosophy (as a certain kind of metaphysics) without repeating the same blunder ... Obviously, the *physis-nomos* relation, the human condition as such is not a 'problem to be solved', rather the foundation of our very existence (and of the world, our world) what needs to be thought and re-thought by each and every generation.

Whilst Heller is satisfied by Castoriadis' theory of society and the creative workings of the radical imaginations, her issue hinges on his attempt to pin his politics to the ontological description of nature and society. The centrepiece of Castoriadis' social philosophy is the creativity of radical imagination. As we discussed above (4.4) the radical imaginary exists as both psychical and social-historical becoming. In psyche, the radical imaginary is 'representative/affective/intentional flux' and in the social-historical, it is 'an open stream of the anonymous collective'. This radical creation and alterity is fundamental to Castoriadis' political project because it accounts for the self-creation of society via the creation of individuals and the aggregate of their doing. Castoriadis' politics are realised once we as a society and individuals become aware of this creative process and the autonomous project begins.

Up until this point Castoriadis is on firm ground and his contribution has the benefit of both elucidating society and providing a politics in its wake. However, the problem with his account begins when he attempts to tie together these two ends in a singular moment of creation *ex-nihilo*⁹⁴. In this way, 'politics' are born *ex-nihilo* somewhere around the time of the Greek democratic polis. According to Castoriadis, this ruptured the heteronomous social imaginary. The creation of the social imaginary

signification of autonomy forever transformed the fabric of the social imaginary. From this point onwards up until the present day, the social imaginary has been infected, to greater and lesser degrees, by an ontological condition of self-awareness of creation. What is implied by this is that the social signification of the project of autonomy is a self-perpetuating condition. Heller (1989: 167) spells out the workings of Castoriadis' logic:

In creating heteronomy autonomously, radical imagination creates its own alienation, yet in creating autonomy autonomously, radical imagination takes back the same alienation. Since non-alienation is both the social and the psychological *norm*, the conceptual edifice will stand on its own.

Put simply, autonomy takes on an autonomous exigency in Castoriadis' understanding of an autonomous society. Castoriadis contends that the autonomy of the individual and the autonomy of society are mutually necessary components of autonomy. Whilst Castoriadis would agree that the degrees of individual autonomy are not homogenous – for this, one would have to assume the possibility of each and every member of a society having achieved the farcical *la passe* of Lacanian psychoanalysis (Castoriadis, 1984a) – the problem remains: once the signification of autonomy has entered the social imaginary, if it does not work towards a totalising condition of individual and social autonomy, how can it maintain an orientation of self-preservation? And, furthermore, does this mean that it is forever kept in check by a counter signification or network of significations? If this is the case, are these significations not also integral aspects of the signification of autonomy itself? Castoriadis does address some of these issues in his discussion of the other core signification of pseudo-rational mastery and fundamental (for human societies as we know them to be) proto-institutions of *legein* and *teukhein* as the basis for ensemblistic and identity logic. However, he does not convincingly elaborate how these significations, logics and proto-institutions are necessarily integrated into the signification of autonomy.

5.2.3. Indeterminacy and autonomy

This immanence of autonomy that is implied but perhaps under-theorised in Castoriadis' thought, runs into problems when we consider the strength of his description of the indeterminacy of the world. Simon Tormey (2014: 194–195) insightfully locates the problem as one that derives from Castoriadis too forcefully equating his theory of political autonomy with the ontological symbolic order:

What I think needs to be questioned is the idea that autonomy is best considered as the recovery or recuperation of the process of signification itself. I think this radically overstates our ability either collectively or individually to exercise control over the symbolic order and thus undermines the exceptionally valuable points he makes about respecting the integrity of different symbolic orders, indeed of difference and alterity per se. What he ends up constructing is a new, albeit self-consciously delimited, 'modest' metanarrative of humanity's striving after 'control' of its own process of signification when if there is a metanarrative to tell it is far better told in terms of the recovery or recuperation of social, political and economic power.

For Tormey, Castoriadis neglects the insights of his understanding of the 'postmodern' characteristics of society. On this basis, he concludes that whilst the theorisation of the social imaginary, social-historical and the role of psyche as the link between *nomos* and *physis* are worthy contributions, that the political project of autonomy is best reserved as a value and choice worth reflecting on for those that desire to work towards pluralistic self-determination and equality (Tormey, 2014: 195). Along similar lines, this is also Heller's judgement. On this point she takes Castoriadis to task and chastises him for the absence of ethical and moral institutions from his account (Heller 1989: 168). For Heller, once a normative moment is slipped into *physis*, political meaning is lost as it is only on the basis of contingency, of the impossibility of absolute knowing, that makes politics and ethics possible.

Fuyuki Kurasawa (2000: 146) describes Castoriadis' contribution as 'spiral-like' rather than linear: it unceasingly goes back on itself, not to reinforce a hermetic whole, but in a genuine striving toward self-clarification, reflection and engagement with social life'. This is both a strength and a weakness in Castoriadis' thought. Castoriadis' desire

to confirm his social philosophy sets him in motion to be trapped in his own tunnel in the Labyrinth, unceasingly trying to connect all passageways when his contribution has already helped us to understand that the truth rests on the acceptance of multiple, parallel, but discrete corridors of human understanding. Perhaps Castoriadis' greatest misstep is to fixate on the singularity of the *germ* of autonomy in the Greek polis. No doubt, this is a moment of civilizational significance; however, as a singularity it neglects the gradient of autonomy that traverses the breadth of human societies to a greater or lesser extent. The notion that heteronomy is part of the parcel of autonomy – insofar as all forms of institutional creation require reinstitution to some degree – perhaps holds a key to the problem in this respect. On this point, we are returned to Castoriadis' description of the revolutionary project: the judging and choosing that makes politics (in the Castoriadian sense) possible. In this context questions are raised: how can we choose what is interrogated and what is maintained? Can we balance the heteronomous and autonomous? And, finally, where is the line between the institution of society and unceasing interrogation?

Nonetheless, inasmuch as these questions are raised by the inconsistencies in Castoriadis' thought, philosophy and politics also provide many solutions. The problem is that Castoriadis, despite his best efforts, is influenced by the 'platonic torsion' and modern totalising projects that he so fiercely rejects. However, if we are to take Heller's (1989: 165) advice to Castoriadis seriously and accept that the *nomos* and *physis* relationship is not a problem to be solved but rather a fundamental *a priori* of the human condition itself, then perhaps Castoriadis' politics and philosophy can be maintained in productive and useful tension.

The social-historical which corresponds to everyday life is central to Castoriadis' project as is the social imaginary institution of society. The overlay of these two inseparable modes of the society and our world make the need for a politics and ethics exigent. It is the schisms between these two modes that pave the way for societies to move towards the autonomous institution of society. That the totality of everyday life grates against the institution of our society as a constant feature of the human condition provides the possibility for a society and its individuals to judge and

to choose. Furthermore, Castoriadis' identification of this very possibility to a project of autonomy and therefore to politics, democracy and philosophy provides a paradigm for a political project that sets a valuable legacy for political agency. In this respect, if we are to posit that central to Castoriadis' political contribution is an understanding of autonomy as a form of *paideia*, one that traces the ebb and flow of the social-historical, then we are better positioned to find political solutions to the problems that arise from the contingency and indeterminacy of the modernity in which we reside. For Castoriadis, it is the development and perpetuation of individual and social reflexivity as a social orientation distributed amongst the individuals that compose a society that makes the political project possible and desirable:

We have no need for a few "wise men." What we need is for the greatest number of people to acquire and exercise wisdom – which in its turn requires a radical transformation of society qua political society, thereby instaurating not simply formal participation but also actual passion on the part of all for the common affairs of humanity. Wise human beings, however, are the very last thing that present-day culture produces.

"What is it that you want, then? To change humanity?"

"No, something infinitely more modest: simply that humanity change" (Castoriadis, 1991a).

5.3. Agnes Heller: a tentative modernity and the good life

Of our three theorists Heller is the best positioned to formulate a political orientation that responds to the postmodern condition. Her comparative youth in respect to Castoriadis and Lefebvre no doubt plays a role. However, above all it is her experiences of living in vastly different variations of modernity and that give her the edge for this formulation. Her writings reveal a deep insight into both the totality of the modern condition as well as the increasingly interconnected plurality of imaginaries that cohabit this space. The result is a postmodern politics that concerns the precariousness of modernity alongside an elaboration of the hopeful possibilities contained therein. In this way, Heller chooses modernity above all other permutations

of social arrangement. Whilst she does not regard modernity as a utopia, she maintains a measured utopianism that rests in the balancing act between the paradoxical extremes of the modern orientation. At the heart of this thinking is an understanding that the creation and maintenance of the socio-political conditions that open the space for the individuals to flourish in their everyday life is also where the threat to this existence resides. Heller picks out the best bits from the modern project to elaborate her politics but stresses that it is their equilibrium that holds the key to a desirable modernity. No doubt, Heller's conservative gamble on modernity leaves her exposed to the criticism of those that have grander plans for social transformation. However, Heller's voice is one worth hearing, if not for her formidable engagement with the intellectual tradition, then for a political contribution that draws on her wealth of cognisant experiences across the spectrum of possible modernities.

This section focuses on Heller's political contribution. I attend primarily to Heller's later writings where her thought comes into full maturity and we can detect a greater sensitivity to the paradoxes of modernity⁹⁵. Heller's politics stand in contrast to both Castoriadis and Lefebvre whose projects advocate more radical proposals. However, her politics are helpful in this setting. Where Castoriadis and Lefebvre are intellectually awkward when it comes to the implications of a postmodern condition, Heller's thought thrives. Heller is more innovative than it first appears. Her experiences foster a healthy cynicism protecting her thought from the temptations of modern projects. This helps her to rethink modernity whereby she can discover the political possibilities immanent in modernity rather than thinking beyond it. In this light, her politics suggest the cultivation of the ethical and moral foundations of the individual as the basis for the political choices that permeate the relationships between the various spheres of society. Postmodernity challenges Heller to think across the narrow divide between freedom and contingency. In this light, her politics are characterised by a wariness towards the extremes of modernity. This combines thoughtful attention to the delicate balancing act involved in maintaining the modern condition alongside a hopeful account of the possible configurations within its boundaries.

5.3.1. A postmodern politics

Heller's late political thought begins to take shape in the 1980's during her time in Australia. At this time her thought undertakes a profound reorientation, although, this is not to say that there are no continuities with her previous contributions. Heller had already developed many motifs in her earlier writings that would persist in underlying her thought until the present day. *The Theory of Need in Marx* (1976), *Renaissance Man* (1978), and *Everyday Life* (1984b) had already articulated the philosophical ground that would animate her later writings. Alongside her Budapest School colleagues, Heller had developed a Humanist Marxism that sought to intervene in both Eastern communism and Western capitalism (Hegedus et al., 1976; Kammass, 2007; Lukacs et al., 1996 [1975]; Tormey, 2001). Their contributions hoped to carve out another possibility that infused socialism with democracy and liberalism, contributing to the discourse of Western variants of humanist Marxism propagated by thinkers including Castoriadis, Habermas, Lefebvre, Lukács, and Marcuse. Whilst Heller distanced herself from these variants of humanist Marxism in her later writings, it was at this time that she formulated an account of the 'individual person' and of modern everyday life. The basic premise of these two themes permeate Heller's *oeuvre* and, I think, in their various elaborations, are fundamental recourse for Heller when attempting to formulate an account of the possibilities for politics in postmodernity. It is worth briefly recounting these concepts.

The notion of individual person in contrast to the particular person (discussed in detail above 3.3) establishes for Heller the link between the reflected mode of the individual and the higher spheres of institutions and meaning. For Heller, this is where the possibility of a desirable politics resides. At the other end, the individual is necessarily located in *their* sphere of particularity; that is, they are immersed in everyday life. While in her earlier writings (Heller, 1970b, 1984b) this formulation is politicised towards a radical transformation of everyday life towards a democratic socialism, in Heller's later writings the paradigm becomes a model for a pluralist society and civic discourse. Heller retains her insistence on the fundamental requirement for the cultivation of individuals for active political participation. Indeed,

much of her three-part exploration of morals and ethics – *General Ethics* (1988), *A Philosophy of Morals* (1990) and *An Ethics of Personality* (1995a) – is devoted to this orientation. However, what is distinctly different is her approach to the institutional conditions that will facilitate and best respond to such individuals. Heller develops a wariness towards the participatory democracy that she once advocated and opts for instead contemporary models of liberal social democracy. Her justification (we will return to this in detail below) is in response to her perceived breakdown of the ‘grand narrative’ and onset of the postmodern condition. Heller comes to emphasise a carefully balanced liberalism over total democracy. In this way, she encourages a politics of pluralism and reappraises the significance of everyday life. However, this time, everyday life accounts for a sphere of greater diversity across time and space than the one elaborated in *Everyday Life*.

Towards the end of the 1980’s Heller grappled with the exhaustion of Marxism and the repercussions this would have on politics in general. Alongside her co-author and husband, Fehér, she began to accept the value of describing the contemporary condition as ‘postmodern’⁹⁶. Heller and Fehér add their own nuance to the concept. They do not do away with the conceptual scaffolding of modernity altogether, but rather they situate the postmodern as an attitude or orientation deeply embedded within the modern epoch. For Heller and Fehér (1989: 1), the postmodern takes modernity to task from an internal vantage point within modernity itself. This vantage point is disorientating. On the one hand postmoderns ‘feel themselves as ‘being after’ the entire story with its sacred and mythological origin, strict causality, secret teleology, omniscient and transcendental narrator and its promise of a happy ending’ (Heller and Fehér, 1989: 2). And on the other, they are denied the privileged vantage point that allows them to be spectators of history’s past, present and future. Instead, postmoderns are thrown into the world as actors and with their view obscured by the haze and contingency of history. Whilst one might imagine postmoderns stumbling around in the darkness at the end of history, Heller is more optimistic. For Heller, the postmodern political condition sets the record straight. The epoch is one of ‘historical consciousness of reflected generality’ (Heller, 1982). The slate has been wiped of the

totalising claims of world-historical consciousness making way for a less confident, but more transparent era.

Heller and Fehér consider the political potentiality of such an epoch with optimism⁹⁷. With postmodernity, the utopian visions of modernity collapse making 'redemptive politics of any kind ... incompatible with the postmodern political condition' (Heller and Fehér, 1989: 4). With communist totalitarianism and National Socialism in mind, they view this eventuality positively. The postmodern political condition problematises and rejects any totalising moral or ethical *Weltanschauung*. History has revealed to us the incongruence of such an orientation with human societies whose complexities and heterogeneity will always transcend the confines of such a perspective. Instead, Heller and Fehér (1989: 4) advocate 'the necessity of an *incomplete* concept of ethico-political justice'⁹⁸. In this way, postmodernity provides the conditions for a politics that could negotiate the contingency and diversity of modernity actively and situated in the world. Put succinctly, they advocate a politics that embarks

on a quest for the ties which are still capable of holding our world together, for an ethos which, we surmise, might have outlived the processes of fragmentation and which could serve as an antidote to the cynicism of absolute relativism (Heller and Fehér, 1989: 12).

5.3.2. Liberalism and pluralism

Before discussing Heller's proposition for a new ethos of civic ethics and civic virtues, it is worth reflecting on the significance of pluralism and fragmentation in her later political thought. A postmodern consciousness breaks with the totalising modern world view which seeks out universals to encompass all forms of human life. The logics of this approach were demonstrated in their most extreme forms during the twentieth century with devastating consequences. Heller makes the point that in more subtle permutations the thrust of these universalising tendencies continue to persist well into late modernity. The *telos* of Western development remains an ongoing motif and foundation for modern life. However, Heller's point is that it is the growing consciousness of fragmentation fuelled by the evitable disquiet towards the one-size-fits-all approach that articulates the character of the postmodern political condition.

Furthermore, Heller is careful to traverse the thin divide between absolutism and the relativism that often tempts the postmodernist; instead, opting for a middle path via the integration of pluralism into political frameworks of modernity (Murphy and Burnheim, 1994: 237–238).

Heller's insights into the nature of totalitarianism helped her to think about the tendencies of modernity in general. Alongside a generation of central European intellectuals, her political philosophy has its roots in the critique of totalitarianism (Tormey, 2009: 45). As a part of the collective efforts of the Budapest School, Heller makes a compelling case for the corruption of socialism via a 'dictatorship over needs' (Fehér et al., 1986). The point here is that politics in totalitarian regimes become self-referential and dislocated from the pluralities of human life activity. The premise of *Dictatorship over Needs* extends beyond the critique of totalitarian political systems and provides lessons for less authoritarian and more democratic systems of governance. It is for this reason that liberalism becomes a fundamental precondition for Heller's politics. For Heller, there is a choice between self-serving politics and a politics that serves the plurality of possible human lives. Heller understands that liberalism – understood in terms of the negative freedom described by Isaiah Berlin (1958) – does not resolve the political problematic of modernity singlehandedly. Instead, it must be integrated into the positive freedom of democracy. Heller (1987a: 121–122) articulates the logic that binds these two orientations of freedom:

The first *interpretation* of freedom is the *democratic*, the second is the *liberal* ... One can claim that each person should have equal *rights* to participate in all decision-making processes concerning his or her community or body politic, and also that each person should have the equal right to do so *and* the possibility of doing so. Thus two different claims pertain to one interpretation of freedom, the democratic. Next, one can claim that each person should have the right to decide his or her own fate, to choose his or her own way of life, to do anything that does not prevent others from doing what *they* like doing, and one can also claim that each person should also have the *possibility* (life chances) of practicing this right. Thus two different claims pertain to one interpretation of freedom.

Beyond Justice sets the scene for the central position that liberalism takes in all of Heller's later political writings. Heller comes to his position via the contrast of her curtailed liberties in Hungary to her new life amongst the comparative freedoms of Western liberal democracy. More than anything, Heller's life in Australia, and then later in New York, demonstrated to her a working model of pluralism and its potentiality. Heller chooses pluralism alongside its political counterpart of liberalism to provide the political framework that ensures that its rewards are realised. Ángel Rivero (1999: 26–27) distinguishes between Richard Rorty's democratic liberalism, that rallies society behind a common identity found in democracy and liberalism, and Heller's insistence on the contingent and pluralistic orientation of liberalism. In Rivero's (1999: 27) words, Heller intends liberalism not as

a 'we' but the articulation of a pluralistic and fragmented community that preserves both personal freedom and private lifestyles and the very institutions of society that render possible that freedom'. That is, liberalism is about *the peaceful articulation of a multitude of life projects and about society as a cooperative enterprise that contributes to the good life of all.*

Heller's understanding of liberalism has a double layer. On the one hand, she emphasises the requirement of the individual freedoms that do not impede on the freedoms of others and on the other hand, that political solutions depend on the negotiation of a plurality of contradictory political orientations. Peter Murphy (1994: 238) observes that for Heller the greatest political task of modernity is not choosing one particular utopian vision, but rather, 'reconciling, different competing utopias'. Heller rejects the doctrine of the grand narrative and this critique is as valid for liberal-democracy as it is for socialism. Modernity is not faced by the choice between capitalism or socialism, but rather, both are contained as a tendency within: 'there is no modernity without socialism and no modernity without capitalism' (Heller and Auer, 2009: 105). This situation paves the way for various configurations of liberal-democratic political order (for example: participatory democracy, representative democracy, welfare orientated, market orientated) that can coexist (with certain concessions) under the larger framework of something like the notion of 'the Great Republic' (Heller and Fehér, 1987).

5.3.3. The good life

Heller articulates two interrelated aspects of the same vision that can facilitate the negotiation of competing political orientations within modernity. The first depends on the nurturing of the 'good life' or more precisely the 'good lives' in plural. The second, on the development of ethico-political orientation of civic engagement. Heller's (1987a, 1988, 1990, 1995a) philosophical suite on ethics and morality is dominated by the statement and responding question: 'Just righteous persons exist ... what makes them possible?' (Heller, 2010: 76). The question elicits a twofold and reciprocal response. On the one hand, it places emphasis on the question of what is 'the good life' and, on the other, it questions what conditions make such a life possible. Heller's concept of the good life involves a concoction of Aristotelean ethics, Weberian pluralism and polytheism, and Kierkegaardian contingency and existential choice. In this formulation she devises her 'incomplete' ethico-political concept of justice.

Heller's account returns to the themes already developed in *Everyday Life*. However, the notion of the individual attitude is now better placed to describe the individual as a socially integrated agent and, paradoxically, as being independently situated (but not isolated) in his or her own particular sphere of life. Heller articulates her concept of the good life in these terms. First, the good life is not an absolute. In modernity, and based on its non-founding foundation of freedom, there are necessarily many possible permutations of life and therefore, of the good life. Second, the good life requires the 'good person' or righteous person. For Heller (1987a: 283),

a person can be righteous if he/she has a *conscious and self-conscious relationship* to the norms and values of the community (society) of which she is a member, and if his/her actions are continuously and consistently guided by this relationship.

The good person achieves a form of moral autonomy. Moral autonomy, however, necessarily contains an element of heteronomy. Paradoxically, this heteronomy is 'chosen' insofar as it helps to develop the good person's bonds with his or her fellow humans (Heller, 1987a: 314). This brings us to the final element that Heller ascribes to the good life, which she articulates as an 'emotional intensity in

personal attachments'. This point completes and dovetails the three components that comprise the possibility of the good life. Love, Heller argues, is the ultimate expression of freedom. It has the power to negotiate the extremities of righteousness and freedom and devise an equilibrium between them. She suggests that the project of Enlightenment was misconceived when it elevated the ideals of absolute freedom and absolute autonomy: 'we cannot step beyond the human condition', Heller (1987a: 320) writes, she continues: 'humanness is the human bond. We are in duty bound; we are in love bound'.

The human bond integrates all three elements that Heller attributes to the good life. The presupposition of freedom – the existential choice of the individual – ensures that there are a plurality of 'good lives'. In Heller's (1987a: 324) own words: 'the authentic plurality of ways of life is the condition under which the life of each and every person can be good'. This choice of life also involves that the good person chooses togetherness. Heller (1987a: 324) summaries this point as follows:

choosing ourselves means to choose the human bond and human co-operation; it is the choice of others. By choosing a form of the good life, we choose togetherness ... the good life is always shared.

It is in this movement that Heller returns us to the notion of the incomplete ethico-political orientation that provides the conditions for the good life and, at the same time, derives its orientation from the good life itself. Furthermore, Heller (1987a: 324) contends, the good person necessarily participates in the public sphere: 'the goodness of every person includes the virtue of justice and the exercise of this virtue in the public sphere'. Thus, the existential choice of the good person is the choosing of a life that is distinctive to the life of others whilst simultaneously choosing togetherness. This attitude cultivates a *phronesis* capable of negotiating, in practical terms, the possibility of 'good lives' in plural. It provides the 'final moral principles' for the emergence of the "good citizen" whose supreme virtue is a rational virtue' (Camps, 1994: 243).

Victoria Camps' summary of Heller's account of the good life in political and social contexts is helpful. She suggests that the paradigm of such a civic ethos requires three mutually reciprocal components: 1. The universal principles of freedom and life 2. Good citizens capable of best possible practice, and finally 3. The possibility of the good life for all citizens (Camps 1994: 244–245). This account of the good life and its counterpart of the ethico-political oriented citizen is Heller's requirement for survival of modernity. She stresses that it is not necessary that all persons that compose society strive towards the good life and good personhood but at least that some do. In addition, Heller refrains from dictating the form that such political organisation of society should take. Whilst she stresses the importance of democracy and liberalism, the particular orientation of this organisation of values and institutions should be the outcome of the choices and compromises of the active citizenry in the public sphere.

The ethics that Heller develops during this period serve as an important foundation for her writings on modernity⁹⁹ that followed. Whilst historical and theoretical in form, these writings on modernity are necessarily predicated on her ethical and moral philosophy¹⁰⁰. Her concept of modern freedom discussed above (4.3), and its most succinct elaboration as the double bind of modernity, is constructed on the basis of the concept of limited freedom developed in these ethico-political writings. In fact, and this is important, Heller extracts her ethical and moral philosophy from the character of modernity itself. Hers is not an ethico-political orientation that can be applied to modernity but rather it is immanent in modernity itself. Heller's concept of an ethico-political criterion starts with the double-bind. The two elaborations of freedom – the historical imagination and the technological imagination – mirror the existential choice, between moral autonomy and moral heteronomy, of the individual good citizen. We moderns look into our past and our future (Heller, 2005: 78). For Heller, this bind establishes the equilibrium necessary for the maintenance of a precarious modernity. It is for this reason that Heller chooses modernity, for the very essence of the ethico-political orientation that she champions lies in the central paradox of modernity: freedom as the foundation that does not found. Heller does not tell us how we should organise our societies. Instead, she provides an account of the conditions that hold together the fragile architecture of modernity. In this way, Heller

traverses the thin divide between the politics of conservation and the politics of project. On the one hand, she remembers the transgressions of the double-bind that led to Treblinka and the Gulags and on the other, she believes in the projects of Enlightenment. These two orientations are not mutually exclusive.

Heller's account of modernity is one of fragility and precariousness. Her fears for modernity are closely aligned with her concerns for the survival of everyday life. Modernity, Heller (1992: 13) argues, 'lacks a solid and broad foundation in everyday life'. Modernity's precariousness (Heller, 1992, 2005) is therefore bound to the fragility of modern everyday life (Heller, 1987c). Heller finds her inspiration for politics in both the framework of modernity and the sphere of everyday life. Her concept of the good life returns politics to the everyday. In this movement, she attempts to discover a means by which to reconnect the modern social arrangement to the solid base of everyday life as was the case for the premodern social arrangement (Heller, 1992: 13). However, Heller's difficulty rests in finding stability in the ephemeral and fragmented everyday life of modernity whilst avoiding the pitfalls of the static homogeneity of traditional societies. The innovation of her politics is to fortify both modernity and everyday life via a mutual dependence of the two.

To this point, Heller's model closely resembles that of Habermas' theory that mediates life-world with communicative action, and indeed, she gives credit to Habermas' account as one of the best possible permutations of modernity (Heller 1987c). However, Heller is modest. She leaves her own idiosyncratic model out of the equation. Where Habermas under-theorises the bodily, visceral and sensual strata of the life world and its relationship to intramundane intersubjectivity, Heller does not neglect the ground of human existence. It is this point that distinguishes Heller's model of a modern political orientation from that of Habermas. Building on themes developed in *A Theory of Feelings* (1979a), the significance of this orientation is most eloquently expressed in Heller's moving essay: *Where are we home?*

5.3.4. Home

In 'Where are we home?' Heller describes the various experiences of home in contemporary modernity. Home, she suggests, is above all, constituted by the feeling of familiarity. She qualifies this further by adding that an emotional disposition underpins the familiarity of home. In this way, homes inspire a full expanse of emotional responses. Both sensual experience and language induce feelings of familiarity and the emotions that they evoke. With this description in mind, Heller distinguishes between the traditional home located spatially and the modern temporal home of the absolute present. Whereas the former is bound to the physicality of space self-contained within a sphere of cultural meaning, the latter depends on the universalisation of symbolic language that permeates the globalised world with a thin gloss of homogeneity that provides a collective sense of home to the fragmented plurality of postmodern individuals. Both of these homes exist in modernity. In addition, Heller describes a third and fourth home in modernity. The third is a distinctly European home (although others might dwell there) and is located in high culture: the *topos* of absolute spirit (Heller, 1995b: 8). This home constitutes the hermeneutics of shared intellectual experience. It provides the familiarity of shared historical imaginary. A fourth home can be made in a democracy. Like the traditional home, the fourth home is spatially located. However, whilst both of these homes are shared, unlike the former, this is a home full of strangers bounded by state borders (Heller, 1995b: 13). In this context, Heller raises her concerns for democracy. While democracy does not necessarily lead to totalitarianism, it can engender intolerance¹⁰¹. Heller warns: 'democracy easily goes with racism; the relapse into barbarism seems to belong to the democratic civilisation in a contingent world' (Heller, 1995b: 14). Heller (1995b: 14) makes her case for liberalism: 'if one seeks remedy against intolerance, narrowmindedness, prejudices, and blind hatred, one should turn to liberalism'. However, unlike democracy, liberalism is not a home. Liberal principles, she qualifies, 'allow that everyone answer the question 'where are you home' in his or her own way' (Heller, 1995b: 17).

This point returns us to the concept of the good life. The good life necessarily transcends any one of these experiences of home. The good person has different homes whether they are spatially bound, temporal, cultural or political. Each of these homes are shared with others. Furthermore, Heller emphasises participation as necessary to the cultivation and maintenance of a home. 'To live in a home', she says, 'be it one's nation, one's ethnic community, one's school, one's family or even in the 'third home' is not just an experience but also an activity' (Heller, 1995b: 17). To live in a home requires that one actively participates in that home and this also means that one must commit and assimilate, and be responsible for the home. Just as the good life, and its extension into good citizenry, requires one to choose a limited freedom – striking the right balance between the heteronomous and the autonomous – so too does home making in a pluralist society.

The formal politics Heller recommends traverses a broad array of possibilities. Because of this, her commentators (Kammas, 2007; Murphy and Burnheim, 1994; Rivero, 1999; Tormey, 2001, 2009) add their own emphasis, whether that be democracy, socialism, republicanism, liberalism or pluralism. Heller would not disagree. However, she would serve each with a warning: that all of these political models require the limitation of the others in order to create the equilibrium necessary to maintain modernity's precarious existence. In this light, Tormey (2009: 45) is right to identify that Heller the political philosopher is first and foremost a critic of totalitarianism. However, there is another striking feature of Heller's political thought. More than any other motif in Heller's oeuvre, the notion of 'home' demonstrates the distinctive and distinguishing features of her political thought. That her politics takes seriously our *living* in the 'world' is significant. Heller's discussion of home brings this to the fore. Despite her distinction between the different homes in modernity, she implies that, above all, we are at home in our (shared) world. Heller (1995b: 18) expresses this as follows:

the home where one really lives and dwells, do oblige. In the world of the absolute present even the song of the nightingale and the shade of the chestnut tree oblige, for we cannot take it for granted that they will be there tomorrow.

For Heller, our world is our home. Our living in the world is sensual, emotional and thoughtful. These sensations are not without their counterpart in language, which provides us the formal implements to realise a shared experience of the world. Language frees us to delve into the past and reach into the future but always owing to our embodied experience of the present. Living in a shared world together requires that we oblige, that we reconstitute our world for ourselves and for others. Modernity brings the double bind of freedom into this equation. It is here that Heller's politics begin.

5.4. Situating the everyday at the centre of politics

This chapter has attempted to draw out the significance of everyday life in Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's political philosophies. Whilst the three positions are idiosyncratic, in part, owing to the distinct vantage points that their biographies have carved out across time and space, we can identify some reconciliation and productive tension amongst them. The kernel of Marx's philosophy that puts human life activity at the centre of his politics animates each of their contributions. Lefebvre is most explicit in this regard. His contribution focuses on everyday life as the central locus of human emancipation. The paradigm he constructs requires that human societies ask the question: what kind of life do we want to live? The answer, or answers, inform our critical interrogation of modern forms. Furthermore, Lefebvre evokes a discourse on cosmological and anthropological nature. Here, aleatory and contingency animate the dialectical tensions that permeate and connect these two expressions of nature. Thus, Lefebvre's politics require our attention to this underlying tension that underpins *physis* as much as it does *nomos*. He advocates a sociology of everyday life that might complement the development of individual and social consciousness and inform the political organisation of society. For Castoriadis, the significance of everyday life is less explicit in his political contribution. However, despite his problematical attempts to tie his political values to his social philosophy, he provides compelling ways in which we can think about how the social fabric fosters or impedes political discourse. In this way, Castoriadis makes a case for the core

signification of autonomy and the possibilities it creates for the political organisation of modernity. Perhaps more importantly for the present discussion, Castoriadis' description of the social-historical makes apparent the indeterminacy of everyday life activity and the correlating world of signification that any political intervention must navigate. Regardless, Castoriadis' elucidation demonstrates that political institutions and political activity are dependent on a social imaginary conducive to their implementation and, at the same time, it is precisely these political interventions that can play a role in shaping the social imaginary. In short, Castoriadis demonstrates that any form of radical politics is dependent as much on political intervention as it is on the movements and transformations of the social imaginary itself. As with Lefebvre, Heller situates everyday life at the centre of the discussion. Her attention is also given to the question of how we might want to live. However, Heller is concerned by how to reconcile universal values and the particularity of different lives in late modernity. Heller stresses pluralism – that people can choose their own distinct forms of life – and the importance that this diversity is mediated by a robust civil society. Heller sets the conditions for such a society from both extremes of the divide, and with a Hegelian movement, accounts for their mutual interdependence. On the one hand, universal values of freedom and life are practised and negotiated via a social discourse, and on the other, individuals have recourse to the embodied experience of 'home' in the world and amongst others.

Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre each have their own points of concern for the politics of modern societies. For Lefebvre, it is to draw our attention to what he understands as the point of human life: our everyday life, and to unlock its full potentiality in response to alienation. For Castoriadis, it is to investigate how the project of autonomy is expressed or could be better expressed in our collective imagination and throughout the field of the social-historical. Finally, for Heller, it is to guard against totalitarian transgressions of modernity via the fostering of individual freedom. Each of these perspectives provides plenty of room for varied political responses within the parameters that they each prescribe. Because of this variation, it is possible to imagine conflict and tension between the three contributions.

However, there are also many points whereby their thought overlaps and/or complement each other. In this way, thinking across their perspectives is helpful. More profoundly, it is this kind of versatility that is suggested by each of their contributions in the context of late twentieth century modernity. While not all of the three would be comfortable with the postmodern label, it is clear that all three of their political philosophies are deeply motivated in distinction to the grand narratives of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They each ask us to take seriously the indeterminacy and uncertainty of our world, which they understand will always defy the contortions of political and institutional impositions. All three thinkers return to the humanist ideals of the Enlightenment. In contrast to the grand humanistic projects of the nineteenth century, they place human life at the centre of Politics rather than a politics. In this way, there is no *telos* of human history and no absolute configuration of human life. However, it is to the human life (or lives) of our time that our politics should respond. Everyday life is the location where the human world takes place. Here our everyday doing and social imaginaries play out the indeterminacy of the social historical. For Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre, we cannot articulate a political programme in advance. However, this does not entail a politics of nihilism. They each choose modernity and along with it, the ideals of democracy, equality, freedom, life and society. These universals provide political guidelines but not concrete political solutions. From this humanist posturing, they each take into account the heterogeneity of human societies across time and space. They take seriously the alterity and diversity of everyday life because it is only from here that a conversation can emerge that negotiates a politics for modernity.

Chapter 6. The Plight of Humanism in the Twilight of Universalism

πολλῷ τὸ φρονεῖν εὐδαιμονίας
 πρῶτον ὑπάρχει. χρὴ δὲ τὰ γ' εἰς θεοὺς
 μηδὲν ἀσεπτεῖν. μεγάλοι δὲ λόγοι
 μεγάλας πληγὰς τῶν ὑπεραύχων
 ἀποτίσαντες
 γήρᾳ τὸ φρονεῖν ἐδίδασαν.

*The most important part of true success
 is wisdom—not to act impiously
 towards the gods, for boasts of arrogant men
 bring on great blows of punishment—
 so in old age men can discover wisdom.*

Sophocles *Antigone* (1348-1353) ¹⁰²

Through the lenses of the social theories of Cornelius Castoriadis, Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre this thesis has investigated the significance and the vicissitudes of everyday life in modernity. My intention has been to demonstrate the value of situating everyday life at the centre of social theory while constructing a narrative that spans their three social philosophies. Throughout this discussion, freedom stands out as a paradoxical modern ideal that both engenders the possibilities of social autonomy whilst exacerbating the complexity of everyday life. For each of these theorists, modern everyday life is interwoven with freedom. The distribution of expressions of freedom throughout all aspects of our society engenders tensions between social forms and everyday practice. Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's separate but parallel accounts of this relationship help to explain our contemporary society and everyday experience in terms of complexity, contingency, fragmentation, at the same time, they account for the reproduction and creation of meaningful significations that contribute to a sense of social-historical continuity.

Throughout the thesis, I have endeavoured to elaborate several insights that arise from this discussion. First, that this relationship between freedom and everyday life underlies the modality of human life in modernity. Paradoxical expressions of freedom permeate our collective and individual activities providing the impetus for an

everyday life that reproduces itself in alterity. In this respect, our world is both ambivalent and contingent and therefore, our knowledge of ourselves and our world is necessarily incomplete. Second, it is in response to this understanding that Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre develop their mature social and political philosophies. All three agree that a definitive conception of our world and society is unattainable. In recognition of this, they each suggest that knowledge of the diversity of human life and the elements that intersect in our everyday lives remains foundational for our being able to make sense of our world and for the redemption of a sense of political project. Finally, I have added, with respect to these first two points, that understanding our world – our society and our everyday lives – is best facilitated by multiple perspectives. Accordingly, a knowledge of the biographical context that shaped Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's worldviews proves useful for us to navigate the particularities of their social philosophies and helps us to construct our own understandings on this basis.

In this concluding chapter, I stress that despite the sense of tragic irony that pervades our contemporary modernity, the theoretical perspectives articulated in these pages convey a continued optimism regarding the vitality of the humanist ideals that remain at the heart of modernity. Whilst freedom infuses modern everyday life with ambivalence and contingency, it also propagates self-reflexivity and a sense of collective purpose. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all understand that the notion of a unitary modern project is not tenable. Despite this, all three share some optimism that modernity can retain a sense of project. Their social philosophies identify a dynamic approach to knowledge that is animated by the relationship between freedom and everyday life. It is from this position that they each curate their socio-theoretical and political projects.

In agreement with Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre, I contend that modernity remains an adequate periodisation of the current era. In part, this characterisation is sustained by a continued humanist orientation that permeates human life in contemporary society. This is expressed in contemporary society through individual and social reflexivity and the negotiation of positive and negative freedom. In late or postmodern modernity, these characteristics are increasingly dispersed, partial and

fragmented making it more difficult to weave them into collective coherence. In this sense Lyotard's (1984) diagnosis of a 'postmodern condition' seems fitting. However, along similar lines to Nancy Fraser (1985), I suggest that even if it does lack a sense of coherence, humanism remains a pertinent position in the present era given the continued social and individual propensity towards valuing freedom, self-knowledge and human life. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's respective contributions are equally attentive to this position and attempt to discover continuing validity for social and political orientations that maintain humanist ideals. Their projects do not return to the grand projects of an earlier modernity, but rather seek to reconcile the fragmentation of these values in meaningful ways that can guide us – individually, socially and politically – in our everyday lives. This orientation points towards a postmodern expression of humanism that combs through the fragments and ambivalence of the present era with the aim of amplifying those constructive aspects that contribute to the ideals of democracy, equality, freedom.

6.1. The tradition of Marx's humanism

Our modern awareness of everyday life is intimately bound up with the revolutions and upheavals of modernity. At the heart of this social transformation is the discovery that conscious individual and social activity could make the organisation of social life other than what it is. This brings freedom and everyday life to the fore of human existence. Marx was among the first to put these ideas together. He did so in response to Hegelian idealism and with an attentive eye for the technological, political and social transformations that were taking place across Europe. Marx's project was sociological in orientation. He devised a method that oscillated between particular and universal determinations and representations of the world in a process of mutual configuration. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre are all heirs of this direction in Marx's thought. While they integrate into their respective thought later social theoretical ideas, they are all guided by an intellectual tradition initiated by Marx.

It was Marx's particular brand of humanism that had captured their attention. The idea that the content of life matters, that it can be reflected on, and that it could be otherwise, encapsulates the substance of Marx's humanism. With this precept comes a consciousness of both freedom and contingency. This freedom is fundamental to Marx's project. In contrast to Hegel, Marxian freedom makes explicit the relations between consciousness and the material and social conditions of life. In political economy, or more precisely, within his analysis of the relations of production, Marx believed that he had located the simplest determinations of human life that he could employ to shed light on the organisation of the whole of society. Despite Marx's fixation on the centrality of production, the anthropological and philosophical underpinnings of his method and humanist orientation are consistent throughout his oeuvre. Underlying Marx's thought is a theory of objectivation. This drives Marx's positive theory of freedom and helps him to mediate the abstract and material expressions of our world. From his doctoral dissertation through to *Capital*, Marx continues to grapple with the tension between freedom and life in the context of accelerating social and technological transformation understood in terms of objectivation. In short, Marx's humanism emphasised a shared human life that bridged the divide between the abstract and the material via creation. For Marx, freedom is the consciousness and rationalisation of this existence.

In part, this thesis demonstrates how this humanist underpinning of Marxian thought inspires the projects of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. Their projects, sometimes at odds with Marx, uphold a positive orientation towards freedom and life. In their own ways, they each develop projects that advocate and consider the possibilities of freedom in modernity. Furthermore, and again in line with Marx's thinking, they each direct their projects towards everyday life. The results are quite different in detail but similar in orientation. Lefebvre's contribution most closely resembles Marx's project. He elaborates a dialectical orientation and understanding that puts everyday life at the centre of his social philosophy and politics. Castoriadis pursues a creative model of freedom-via-creation. Like Marx, he emphasises the productive tension between the individual and society that animates freedom. The theatre of this activity is the social-historical modality of everyday life. Heller's

humanism is perhaps the most removed from Marx. Her return to Aristotle and cautious conservatism tempers more radical expressions of humanism. However, like Marx, Heller focuses her attention on everyday life to inform investigations into the sites of social tension but also to those stable features that can help ground human societies. Castoriadis, Heller, and Lefebvre all have a distinct humanist quality to their thought. It is Marx's medley of freedom, everyday life and society that most profoundly animates this orientation.

In this final chapter, I employ this perspective to frame the findings of this thesis. My aim is to illustrate how each of them manoeuvre their modern sensibilities into postmodernity. By reflecting on the ways in which everyday life and freedom feature in each of their social philosophies we are better placed to understand how they respond to the vicissitudes of modernity. Not only do they all respond to twentieth century developments in social and philosophical thought, they are also sensitive to the changing nature of the modernity they inhabit. They all accept the indeterminacy and contingency of modern life that denies us the reassurance of modernity's grand projects and shape the orientation of our society. In this respect, I have suggested that all three develop a tragic account of late modernity. Their accounts are astute to the ironic and paradoxical conditions that a reflexive modernity entails. I nevertheless emphasise that their theories do not transcend modernity, but rather, the sense of postmodernism that can be detected in their orientations is better understood in terms of a 'postmodern imagination' (Heller, 2000b). In this respect, they each stir up the sediment of humanism in postmodernity. Here, the values of freedom and life are rejuvenated, even if the grandeur to which they once aspired is of a more tentative persuasion.

6.2. Everyday life, freedom and the question of politics

While Marx provides is an inspiration for each of Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's projects, the ways in which they incorporate the notion of everyday life into their social philosophies are quite different. However, above all, they are consistent

insofar as they each understand that everyday life, regardless of how difficult it is to pin down, is a paramount reality for humanity. It is the site whereby our knowledge of the world can be tested, confirmed or rethought. Likewise, for each of them it is the ultimate recourse for the creation and maintenance of any social or political programmes that they see as favourable for modernity. This attitude is part of their response to the sense of groundlessness that some twentieth century intellectual traditions brought to social and philosophical thought. For them, everyday life is a meaningful, although ephemeral, location of the human condition.

Everyday life appears in each of their accounts as a fluid yet constant foundation of social life in modernity. I have articulated this in terms of the reproduction and historical alterity of everyday life. While this underpins the historical becoming of all human societies, in modernity the amplification of historicity takes on a distinctive significance. In premodern societies, a stronger sense of social cohesion and normativity prioritises the reproduction of everyday life. The comparative impersonality, self-consciousness and technological innovation of modern societies give greater weight to the changing conditions of everyday life. At a foundational level, modern freedom drives this alterity. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's social philosophies account for this development. Throughout this thesis I have sought to underscore how this concern for the everyday is formative for each of their social philosophies and their political projects.

Chapter 2 positioned each of Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's contributions in terms of their respective biographical contexts. I argued that a social philosophy is an individual endeavour and that its unique orientation, interests and revelations are shaped by the theorist's biographical experiences. These preliminary accounts of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's biographies helped to contextualise their particular orientations so that we would be better placed to interpret their social philosophies alongside one another. In the context of this thesis, this perspective added to the more general observation that social theories derive from particular locations in the world. This insight helps us to understand how we might approach a knowledge of our world

despite its indeterminism through diverse, sometimes contradictory and inevitably incomplete social theoretical accounts.

Chapter 3 provided a reading of the three theorists that illustrated the correlations and differences between their interpretations of everyday life in modernity. The intention was to make a case that the significance of everyday life features in each of their social philosophies as an innovation that not only challenges subject-orientation social philosophies but also the growing disillusion of twentieth century philosophy. All three of these perspectives situate everyday life at the centre of our world. Moreover, for each of the three theorists, regardless of how elusive everyday life might be as a meaningful or articulated concept, that it is the ultimate grounding of our world. Their theories take this point seriously. Each of their social philosophies expand outward from this insight and attempt to remain faithful to its directive by maintaining a recursive link to the everyday.

Bound up with these expositions of everyday life is the notion of modern freedom. That everyday life becomes site of intellectual and social philosophical concern underpins the notion of modern freedom itself. While Chapter 3 gestured towards the significance of freedom's relationship to everyday life, Chapter 4 set out to investigate how we might understand the significance of freedom in modernity and its intimate relationship with the vicissitudes of modern everyday life. In part, freedom is dependent on consciousness. Awareness of the complexity of human life and historical becoming establishes an important precondition of freedom. Freedom is given life by consciousness and the possibilities that it entails exist only at the threshold of self-awareness. In this respect, freedom not only brings everyday life to the fore, but it also animates everyday life via historical alterity. If we are to accept that freedom is foundational for modernity, then this condition has profound consequences for the character of this era and for the continuities and discontinuities of everyday life.

The aim of Chapter 4 was to explore the irony and paradoxes that these insights reveal. It helped to develop an understanding of the particular formation of modern everyday life that is interwoven with paradoxical expressions of freedom. Their

accounts of freedom attribute to modern everyday life a sense of tragic irony, whereby freedom exacerbates the internal tensions of modernity. For Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre, this does not represent crisis in itself, so much as it amplifies the indeterminacy and contingency that are characteristic of the everyday. It is in this respect that the tragedy and irony of modernity become apparent. The a-subjective dispersal of freedom in its particular and embodied expressions is paradoxically at odds with the ideals of collective and individual freedom that, to a greater or lesser degree, are enacted throughout our modern institutions and socio-political organisation. Their social theories do not seek to transcend this condition. Rather, they focus their attentions on the internal dynamics with the aim of finding ways to strengthen the coherence of those discourses that elaborate the political enactment of freedom.

Chapter 5 took up the task of outlining their political philosophies with attention to the privileged position that everyday life holds in each. What stood out was their attention to freedom and its extension into the humanist ideals that are foundational for modernity. Their political philosophies all attempt to develop these ideals, not into overarching projects, but as self-reflexive social orientations that can take on dynamic and varied forms in modern society. Despite this similarity, their political projects each have a distinct orientation which, to a degree, can be understood in terms of the biographical context presented in Chapter 2. Lefebvre's romanticism draws on his romantic depiction of traditional rural communities that are intimately bound to Nature and spontaneity. He is concerned with how this can be translated into modernity. His political project centres on reconciling modern dispositions to the spontaneity of human life. He proposes a critique of everyday life as a continuous project that makes sense of the tensions brought about by the ever-changing circumstances of everyday life and of modern institutions. Castoriadis advocates a transformation of the overarching social imaginary towards the project of autonomy. Despite the grandeur of his project, Castoriadis is sympathetic to the fluctuations and diversity of everyday life. In this respect, he does not articulate the precise forms that such a project might take, but instead advocates the development of a critical and creative attitude that can take diverse forms. His hope is that these can guide our everyday doing and the creation

of social institutions. Heller stresses the plurality of human lives in modernity. Her politics centres on negotiating freedom and difference. For Heller, modernity provides the framework for diverse organisation so long as it maintains an equilibrium between its internal paradoxes and tensions.

Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's contributions stress the ways in which freedom is woven into the fabric of modern everyday life. Each of their social philosophies agree that this characterisation of modernity involves a sense of project dispersed throughout society. This takes the form of a self-reflexive consciousness towards individual and social expressions of human life. Freedom enters this equation through the individual and collective self-awareness and the possibilities of judging and choosing. Each of their politics build on this understanding with an acute awareness of the dangers and incongruence of any singular elaboration of freedom. In this respect, everyday life as a heterogeneous and dynamic theatre of the world provides a site of perpetual recourse for politics and knowledge. Modernity's intimate relationship with freedom escalates the alterity of everyday life in terms of both otherness and historicity. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre each integrate an ambivalent and contingent understanding of modern everyday life into their accounts while remaining committed to humanist ideals. This is humbling to their social philosophies. Not only do each of them, to varying degrees, understand that no singular overarching social theoretical or political project can encompass the vast terrain and indeterminacy of human life, but they also share an awareness of the limitations of their own unique perspectives. It is because of this that we can attribute a postmodern quality to the sense of humanism that I identify in each of their accounts.

6.3. Towards a postmodern humanism

Heller (n.d. [forthcoming]) describes three phases in the development of philosophy. Her periodisation articulates a useful paradigm for understanding the continuity and transition of modern philosophy. The first phase, she suggests, is classical Greek philosophy, which focused its attention on the hierarchy of the cosmos,

society and the soul. The second begins with Descartes' metaphysical philosophy, which forced a division between subject and object. The repercussions of this orientation concerned Western philosophy through to Hegel's philosophy. Her third and final period begins its journey following the critique of subject-centred philosophy and continues through to the philosophies of the present. In this phase, philosophy withdrew from its transcendentalism and repositioned itself as philosophy that is located 'in-the-world'. Heller suggests that the worldliness of this philosophical innovation initiated a deconstruction of metaphysics and the reconstruction of philosophical language. This periodisation of philosophy provides an insightful way for us to position the present state of philosophy and the development of social theory. From this perspective we can better decipher the philosophical journey from Marx through to postmodernism.

By coming to terms with the location of philosophy 'in the world', philosophers were impelled to problematise the transcendental subject-centred philosophy that preceded it. The being-in-the-world of philosophy begins to dissolve the subject/object division by becoming cognisant of its being internal to and a part of the object of its inquiry. From this perspective philosophy can no longer understand the world from a fixed position and instead discovers itself as a responsive component of world creation. We can see the early stirring of this post-metaphysical philosophy in Marx's critique of Hegelian philosophical idealism (Ingram, 2005: 242). Heidegger's critique of metaphysics (Heidegger, 2008 [1927]) serves as the pinnacle of this later philosophical phase. This is not to say that Heidegger had the last word, or that he had in some way solved the philosophical conundrum of the era, but rather, that he had located the centre of this new philosophical orientation. Heller (n.d. [forthcoming]) assesses the implications of Heidegger's innovation as follows:

What is philosophically important in the contemporary world is, in my view, Daseins-analysis. From this perspective, Heidegger's *Being and Time* is the programmatic work of postmetaphysical philosophy. All significant – and also all less significant – philosophical works, which are still concerned with going back to "the things themselves" are Daseins-analyses..

Thus, it seems fitting that philosophy that takes its cue from Heidegger is often concerned with the everyday. This does not make all 'worldly' philosophy Heideggerian *per se*, but rather, that it is Heidegger who most clearly frames the concerns of contemporary philosophy. In this respect, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre are all philosophers whose thought is firmly situated in the world. Their conclusions are not the same as those of Heidegger but the problems that their social theories confront concur with his challenge.

Thinking in the world and with recourse to everyday life destabilises the subject-object paradigm of metaphysical philosophy. The social philosophies of Castoriadis, Lefebvre and Heller problematise the philosophical paradigms of the modern era. They take issue with the possibility of a conventional understanding of truth, of the transcendental subject and with a teleological concept of time. In their theories, indeterminacy, contingency, a-subjectivity and time as reproduction and alterity replace the presuppositions of earlier philosophy. These interpretations are supported by their investigations into the mechanics of modern everyday life, which they conduct with a self-awareness of their relative situation in the world and in history. In this respect, we can understand their philosophical attitudes in terms of what Heller (2000b) has described as being framed by a 'postmodern imagination'.

My contention that there is a humanistic quality to each of their social philosophies rests uneasily with describing their thought in terms of a postmodern imagination. Heidegger's (1998 [1947], 1975 [1961]) critique connects the humanism tradition with the Cartesian duality of subject and object. For Heidegger, the tenets of humanism are necessarily grounded in metaphysics. Extending the argument, Foucault (1970) suggests that humanism divides human self-understanding into, as Fraser (1985: 169) words it, an 'epistemic object and [a] subject of power'. The implications of these critiques implicate humanism with the presuppositions that underpin modern philosophical thought that Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre have also, for similar reasons, found problematic.

Fraser (1985)¹⁰³ examines this discrepancy in response to Habermas' (1981, 1982)¹⁰⁴ critique that charges Foucault with an anti-modernism that is based on modernistic attitudes. Anticipating Habermas, Fraser frames her discussion in terms of Foucault's anti-humanism. She accounts for three readings¹⁰⁵ – a conceptual or philosophical rejection, a strategic rejection and a normative rejection of humanism – in order to problematise Foucault's anti-humanism. What stands out in this discussion, especially in regards to the first reading, is that even if humanism developed with its ideals firmly rooted within the frameworks of Cartesian dualism, metaphysics and the teleology of 'progress', that these ideals are not necessarily bound to these modern philosophical positions. As Fraser points out, Foucault's social criticism and his normative political judgements are themselves an expression of these ideals. His project does not give up 'the substantial critical core of humanism' and that he

uses other rhetorical devices and strategies to do essentially the same critical work that the humanist tried to do – namely, to identify and condemn those forms of modern discourse and practice that, under the guise of promoting freedom, extend domination (Fraser, 1985: 171–172).

By rejecting humanism, Foucault exposes his overall project to a contradiction that provokes the question: how can one justify a meta-ethical position that does not make recourse to humanist values?

I believe that the social philosophies of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all make inroads towards reconciling this puzzle. They infer their humanism from philosophical positions that are located in the world. To employ Heller's description, they are all concerned with *Daseins-analysis*. As with Heidegger, for each of them the being-in-the-world of their philosophy destabilises the subject-centre of philosophy. By situating everyday life at the centre of their social theories, they each develop conceptual apparatuses that privilege an understanding of the a-subjective construction of our world. This perception of world-creation takes into account the embodied materiality of everyday life as much as it does the collective understandings that frame and underpin human activity. The 'world' in this sense can be understood as an indeterminate, contingent and fragmented totality; a totality that no singular

perspective can take into account as a whole. By articulating everyday life as the ultimate grounding of all evidence, the three decipher a social-historical becoming of our world as reproduction and alterity. It is on these grounds that Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre determine the ethical frameworks that guide their political philosophies.

In contrast to the entanglement of humanism with modern philosophy's metaphysics, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all investigate the vicissitudes modern everyday life in order to give definition to the ideals that guide their political philosophies. The spirit of the humanism I locate in each of their contributions is responsive and self-reflexive in orientation. In modernity, Castoriadis Heller and Lefebvre identify freedom as interwoven with everyday life in paradoxical and sometimes tragic expressions. For all three, freedom exists in our society insofar as it emanates from the modern social imaginary, permeating our institutions, our language and the collective and individual activities that compose our daily lives. They realise that whilst our society is not free, it is abundant with significations pertaining to freedom. The intention of Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's social and political philosophies is to decipher those pathways by which this freedom can be expressed in ways that allow us to navigate the uneasy terrain that the social-historical constitution of our world engenders. Their hopes are that the humanistic ideals of the Enlightenment can be enacted – not in terms of any overarching social or political project, but as ongoing self-reflexive projects that respond to the changing conditions and the diversity of modern everyday life.

The postmodern imagination exists as the logical eventuality of modernity. Modern thinkers couldn't resist pulling on the loose threads of the tapestry; it was inevitable that it would come undone. In this sense, the modern imagination was perhaps always pregnant with a postmodern imagination. While Heller embraced a postmodern posture, Castoriadis and Lefebvre were devoted to the modern imagination. Without ignoring the challenge to Enlightenment thinking, they both remained hopeful that the vicissitudes of modern freedom could be woven into a social and political project. However, in contrast to modern political projects, Castoriadis and Lefebvre concede that freedom is neither essential nor inevitable for human societies.

Alongside Heller, they investigate the composition of modern society and its intersections in everyday life and find that freedom is both a choice and a possibility. Their wager is on the paradox of modern freedom. In this respect, all three belong to a family of theorists of reflected postmodernity (Heller, 2000b: 2). Their politics have no *a priori* schema; but rather, they hope to revitalise humanist ideals with recourse to the fluidity of modern everyday life. The social and political pathways they suggest are not subject to the constraints of universalisms, but respond instead to the cultivation of humanist ideals in accordance with the diversity of human lives. All three of their projects are the continuation and translation of these ideals into a relatively new philosophical era. As *Daseins-analysts* the social philosophies they articulate are dependent on a knowledge of the world from within.

6.4. Philosophy and everyday life: bringing the conversation to life

Heller and Fehér's introduction to their collection of essays *The Grandeur and Twilight of Radical Universalism* (1991) marks the demise of radical universalism along with the philosophy of praxis that radicalised it. Their intention is to usher in the new era with a critical respect for the Marxist tradition to which they owe the development of their own thought. In this setting, Marx is repositioned – somewhat ironically but with less hubris – amongst his philosophical colleagues as an interpreter once more. In this setting, Heller and Fehér rearticulate their role as philosophers. 'We offer our philosophy to men and women', they stress, 'to the so-called recipients, so that they take it or leave it according to their own needs and life experiences' (Heller and Fehér, 1991: 4–5). Echoing Bauman's (1987) distinction between 'legislators' and 'interpreters', Heller and Fehér's self-description as postmodern philosophers circles back to the observational status of pre-Marxian philosophy, but with an important caveat: that their philosophy is not so much a truth than a philosophy amongst others.

The passivity of Heller and Fehér's philosophical positioning is representative of all three of the social philosophies presented throughout this thesis. Like Heller, although less forthcoming in their admission, Castoriadis and Lefebvre also found the

philosophy of praxis to be problematic. With their philosophies situated in-the-world and with an attentive eye for the privileged location of the everyday in human societies, all three were compelled to weave the complexity of modern everyday life into their accounts. From this location, the paradoxes and ambivalence that modern freedom engenders become more apparent and sever the Marxian unity that had assumed the integration of practical politics and philosophy. While Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all continued to develop their socio-philosophical accounts of modernity, they found it difficult and/or refrained from advocating with confidence any practical forms of social and political organisation.

Castoriadis' later writings defer this problem to the conditions of the social-historical. He calls for genuine democratic political participation and critical intervention but does not articulate practical avenues to inspire or initiate his political vision. Instead, he anticipates the social-historical conditions and a social imaginary that are conducive to such a vision, not in any teleological sense but as a possible eventuality of modernity. Heller is less suspicious and therefore more optimistic about the potentials of our present era. Her theory of modernity and corresponding political philosophy set the boundaries of constructive interventions and gesture towards guiding values, but like Castoriadis, she offers little in the way of a practical programme¹⁰⁶. Of the three, Lefebvre does best to present a social and political programme. His critique of everyday life calls for a comprehensive interrogation of modern life as a means of practical political and philosophical activity. While his intention had always been a general critique, the practical enlistment of his project largely revolved around the politics of space. Lefebvre's later writings on the city¹⁰⁷, space (Lefebvre, 1991) and rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, 2013 [1992]) offer theoretical and practical analysis and strategies towards realising his project¹⁰⁸. These interventions stirred many initiatives in the fields of urban geography, planning and architecture (Schmid, 2014; Stanek, 2011). Through the politics of the modern city, Lefebvre was able to find a practical outlet to enlist the philosophy that underpinned his critique of everyday life. The programmes that his contribution has inspired offer good models. However, whereas Lefebvre's earlier call for a critique of everyday life demanded the interrogation of all aspects of human life, these enlistments of his ideas

are somewhat restricted by their orientation to a politics of urban social aesthetics. In this respect, it seems that his romantic aestheticism was affirmed by spatial politics which could be contained in ways that the complexity and incoherence of a generalised account of everyday life could not.

The impasse of translating their respective philosophies into political and social programmes has a direct relationship to their theoretical attention to everyday human life activity. The contingency and indeterminacy of everyday life that they interpret denies them an ultimate truth that can underpin practice. Of the three, Lefebvre was most reluctant to let go of the philosophy of praxis. Nonetheless, his theorising of the rhythmic aleatory of anthropological and cosmological nature via the everyday rendered the certainty that a philosophy of praxis demands untenable. Castoriadis' critique of determinism and exploration of the role of a-subjectivity took him down a similar path. Although his project can be read as an attempt to ground his philosophy of creation, Castoriadis is compelled to recognise the subjective roots of his politics. Heller makes this consideration the mainstay of her mature thought. Her attention to the contingency of the human condition and, in particular, the social contingency that is propagated by modern freedom position her political philosophy at a distance from any sense of practical social or political programme. Instead, Heller employs her interpretive social philosophy to delimitate the thresholds of the modern social order and makes clear that her recommendation is, for our own benefit, that any forms of social and political organisation should remain strictly within these boundaries.

From a more cautionary perspective, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre are all wary of the various ways in which practical expressions of philosophy can become entangled with the modern project in forms of romantic ideology and (pseudo) rational mastery. This theme is less pronounced in Lefebvre's account; however, his early exposure to German fascism made him astute to the dangers of romanticism whilst his concern for the disenchantment of human life via rationalisation remains a perennial theme throughout his writings. Castoriadis took philosophy and, in particular, Marxism to task on a similar basis. For him, any philosophy that assumed a position of absolute authority or attempted to discover fixed determinations in our world risks

being co-opted into oppressive forms of political domination. These trepidations are the *raison d'être* for Heller's social philosophy. Auschwitz and the Gulags loom heavily in her account. For Heller, they demonstrate the extremities and threshold of modernity where romantic and rationalist ideologies combine to realise the dreams of radical and politicised philosophy. That Heller (and Fehér) had firsthand experience living under communist totalitarianism is significant. These experiences underpin their categorical rejection of totalitarian logics and prompt them to defend democratic modernity in its liberal and pluralistic forms.

The pertinence of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's social philosophies owes to their being-in-the-world and their attention to everyday life. The philosophical acceptance of indeterminacy, contingency and fragmentation mirrors the postmodern, or, to employ Bauman's metaphor, liquid character of contemporary society. Their social philosophies are, so to speak, philosophies of their times. Their positioning of the significance of the everyday and subsequent interpretations of its central location amongst the workings of society make for important contributions that can help us to make sense of both the novel permutations of modernity and to interpret our own historical becoming from our present temporal location. The problem that presents itself for all three theorists is to what purpose, and with what objectives, their social philosophies can or should assume within our society.

The exhaustion of universal philosophical systems and philosophies of praxis puts into question how philosophy might continue to inform our social organisation. Heller and Fehér's (1991: 4–5) suggestion – that they offer their philosophy to whomever might take it or leave it – is one option. However, this 'take it or leave it' approach does not necessarily bode well in the mass 'democratic' societies of our contemporary era. Without the confidence that an ultimate conception of truth or the politicisation of philosophy it is difficult to imagine how the insights of social philosophies might permeate the popular imaginary insofar as they can inform social organisation and culture. Habermas' theory of communicative action attempts to bridge the divide by advocating the cultivation of intersubjective discourse directed towards rational consensus that he detects at the heart of the modern project. In this

respect, Habermas is on target. His project points to the active encouragement of a reasoning and communicative public sphere rather than to political ends themselves. This proposal cannot easily be dismissed, and provides a model of aspiration for the cultivation of modern publics. However, as Heller (n.d. [forthcoming], 1984a: 101) and the criticisms made above suggest, Habermas' propensity towards the possibility of universal consensus has the unintended consequence of detracting from the pluralistic and embodied empirical realities of our daily lives.

Habermas' theory is not dismissive of everyday life. Indeed, his account of the lifeworld is integral to determining the formative conditions of each individual's subjectivity. Our diverse experiences of the lifeworld inform the subjective diversity that he suggests can be mediated by intersubjective communication and consensus. In doing so, Habermas gambles on the possibility that all relevant aspects of human diversity can be communicated on a plain of discursive intersubjectivity. In doing so, he neglects to emphasise the plurality of human lives that are composed of distinct temperaments that derive from unique sensual, psychological and cultural experiences of daily life. This variation of human life in modernity is exacerbated by modern freedom to further animate society as an indeterminate and fragmented totality. Granted, as Heller and Fehér (1991: 9) point out, Habermas is not a radical universalist. However, his theory is universalistic inasmuch as it seeks to mitigate the contingencies, fragmentation and indeterminacy of contemporary society via transcendental universal consensus. This suggests that we moderns can register all of our differences on a discursive plain – the consequence of which might involve a flattening out of the ways these diverse life experiences are translated alongside one another. In contrast, Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's respective social philosophies draw on the variation that modern freedom fosters, and weave it into descriptions of the a-subjective composition of our society – one that cannot be fully comprehended by intersubjective discourse. They accept the conditions of contingency, fragmentation and indeterminacy as an eventuality of modernity. Their theories point to the paradoxes of modern freedom and attempt to find ways to interpret them with recourse to the centrality of everyday life. The inference of these understandings of modernity suggests the cultivation of a negotiated modernity rather than one of consensus.

The sociology of everyday life presents one possible pathway towards bringing Castoriadis', Heller's and Lefebvre's social theoretical contributions to life in the public sphere. Sociology in the conventional sense, is highly problematic for these purposes. As a modern project, it is fraught with the failings of metaphysical philosophy insofar as it determines its object from either an individual or collective stand point whilst attributing to it the ontological condition of rational causality (Castoriadis, 1991b). Moreover, it risks 'engineering' in the sense that led Bauman (1989: 3) to make the point that *'the Holocaust has more to say about the state of sociology than sociology in its present shape is able to add to our knowledge of the Holocaust'*. In response to these problematical aspects of modern sociology, Heller (Heller, 1987d) offers some conditions that could help orientate sociology towards a reflected postmodern mode of inquiry:

sociology (both empirical and theoretical, although in different ways) is the exigency of our historical age, modernity. Social sciences which raise a truth claim in their endeavours to grasp modernity have to account for both rationalisation and rationality. They have to combine systems theory and action theory. They have to operate with fetishistic (reified) categories, and they must reify actors methodologically, but they will only become true theories if they proceed to perform this task under the guidance of a philosophical paradigm (or meta-theory) which defetishises (or de-reifies) human subjects, action, speech, consciousness.

Within this framework, sociology is tasked with a tentative and self-reflexive approach to its object of inquiry. Heller's demand is twofold. She asks that the sociologist judges and chooses whilst subjecting those judgements and choices to critical scrutiny. A sociology adequate to the challenge of reflected postmodernity requires that the sociologist frame their inquiry; with an awareness of their own particular location in the world; an awareness that this position is subject to the same fluidity that animates the object of their inquiry; and an awareness that theirs is one sociology amongst others. Moreover, if we privilege everyday life as the ultimate recourse for sociology then this fluid, pluralistic and fragmented terrain will, at best, bewilder those who seek its immanent coherence or order.

Bauman's contribution makes some inroads in these directions. His investigations into modernity parallel those of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. However, his orientation is more sociological than it is philosophical. He too develops a theory of modernity, but in contrast to our three heroes, his does not theorise the centrality of everyday life in modernity so much as he approaches the sociological investigation of modern everyday life as a continual reflexive component of its own evolving social theoretical disposition. In accord with Heller's suggestions, Bauman approaches the world as a sociologist of reflected postmodernity.

Bauman set the terms of his postmodernism. He was interested in the 'sociology of postmodernity' in contrast to a 'postmodern sociology' (Bauman, 1988). He understood that the cultural phenomena that had captured the interest of postmodern theorists was a symptom of deeper transformations of the social world which were the eventuality of the logics of modernity (Bauman, 1988: 810). Investigating this profound transformation in relation to the everyday life became Bauman's sociological project. His project sought to 'defamiliarise the familiar' and to use sociological language to interpret and make sense of common everyday understandings, meanings and activities (Bauman, 1990). In a sense, his was an attempt to bring the spirit of C. Wright Mills' (2000 [1959]) 'sociological imagination' up to speed in postmodernity.

Bauman articulates his sociology as a hermeneutics of ordinary life. To defamiliarise the familiar the sociologist is required to step into the sphere of everyday life and to ask questions that speak to the concerns and preoccupations of ordinary people. This sociologist should not confine themselves to an ivory tower defended by a self-serving technical language (Bauman, 1978: 235), but rather, realise his or her place amongst ordinary people equipped with a sociological toolbox that can help to interpret the patterns that connect individuals to wider networks of interdependency (Bauman, 1990). The hermeneutical approach that Bauman (2016: 50–51) proposes

consists in the interpretation of human choices as manifestations of strategies constructed in response to the challenges of the socially shaped situation and where one has been placed.

The object of this approach transforms the nature of the hermeneutic inquiry itself. Unlike text, the sociologist's object can converse and learn. The 'conversational' orientation of Bauman's hermeneutical sociology hinges on an awareness of the subjective autonomies that compose the object of its inquiry. This perspective places the sociologist as an actor who is very much in the world, and who brings their own experience and expertise into conversation with common-sense understandings and other fields of expertise. Bauman (1978: 245–246) stresses that the

the negotiation of agreement in sociology includes its objects as 'recognised autonomous subjects'. Sociology cannot help but be permanently engaged in discourse with its own object. Consensus in sociology is, therefore, pursued in a communal negotiation whose scale extends beyond the boundaries of professional sociology proper.

By positioning his sociology as a conversation with everyday experience, Bauman creates a sociology that has the potential to be topical, interesting and accessible to ordinary people. His hope is that such a conversation becomes an on-going learning experience for both the sociologist and for society. Bauman (2008: 235–236) sums up as follows:

I came to believe that the stories sociologists tell, those secondary, derivative interpretations of experience of life-in-common which the sociologist share with 'lay', 'non-professional' storytellers, are bound to be and to forever remain stages of the on-going communication unlikely ever to grind to a halt; successive links in an unfinished and unfinishable string of exchanges. Each story is a response and a new opening; each one ends, explicitly or tacitly, with the 'to be continued' formula; each one is a standing invitation to comment, to argue, to modify, to contradict or to oppose. That dialogue neither knows of nor admits a division into blunderers and people-in-the-know, ignoramuses and experts, learners and teacher. Both sides enter the conversation poorer than they will in its course become.

Bauman's is a social theoretical perspective that keeps moving with its times. His own sociology is placed very much in-the-world. He is, in Heller's terms, a *Dasein-analyst*. He suggests that sociology should be 'a constant interpretation of, or commentary on, experience ... Not the experience of sociologists, but the experience

shared by sociologists with wider society' (Bauman, 1992: 213). This is perhaps one of Bauman's most profound contributions to the field of sociology. Evocative of Castoriadis' elusion to the 'steeple of Martinville' (3.3.2), Bauman's move is towards a sociology that no longer views the world from a privileged vantage point but locates itself in and as a part of its moving object. A sociology of this kind is not condescending, but rather it takes the world as it is without offering prescriptions. Instead, it translates everyday patterns and connects the dots in the form of a transitory sociological knowledge. He suggests that

sociology today [is] an eddy on a fast-moving river, an eddy which retains its shape but which changes its content all the time, an eddy which can retain its shape only in as far as there is a constant through-flow of water (Bauman, 1992: 213).

The liquid metaphor proves useful in Bauman's (2000) later writings, when he switches to a periodisation of 'liquid modernity'. There is a tragic character to his metaphor – it captures both the permeation of freedom into all aspects of modern life and the sense of superficiality that this entails (Bauman 2005). Like Heller, Castoriadis and Lefebvre, Bauman is keenly aware of the paradox of modern freedom.

Bauman developed his sociology as a contemporary of Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre. His theory of modernity emerges from the same traditions and shares similar concerns. The difference is that Bauman subjects his social theory to the world of everyday experience in such a way that his theory is constantly engaged in a transformative dialogue with the object of its inquiry. His sociology and the fluidity of his social theory can be thought of as a response to the conclusions that Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre arrive at pertaining to modern everyday life. As a sociologist, the philosophical awareness of the contingency and ambivalence of modern life infers to Bauman the need for novel modes of inquiry. Accordingly, his task differs from that of our three protagonists. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre all generate theories of modernity that begin to account for the ways in which the paradoxes of modern freedom animate the contingencies and indeterminacy of our social world. As *Daseins-analysts* their social philosophies are situated in the world and anchored to the terrain

of everyday life. This innovation helps to stabilise philosophy in the new era of ambivalence and indeterminacy. Sociology of the kind that Bauman suggests converses with philosophers such as Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre as much as it does with the ordinariness of daily life. Sociologies of everyday life, in the sense that Bauman intended, complement these social philosophies. They extend a bridge over the gap that divides philosophy from the everyday lives of ordinary people.

The exigency of this task responds to the broad sense of unease that is felt throughout our society as we come to terms with our awareness of contingency. Castoriadis, Heller and Lefebvre's insights have the potential to help us moderns to navigate the contingency and negotiate the fragmentation of our epoch. However, if we are to reinvigorate the project of autonomy as Castoriadis has urged, to cultivate the conditions of the 'good life' in the sense that Heller intended, or to question, as Lefebvre advocated, 'how we live' in order to discover how we might want to live, sociology of the Bauman kind seems like a good start. Habermas was correct. We need intersubjective discourse to continue the project of modernity. However, in these times, piecing the fragments of freedom together requires more than public discourse and consensus. The tragedy of modern freedom is that it has become dispersed and fragmented throughout our society. A sociology of everyday life in the form of a conversation offers one possibility. Such a conversation that mediates philosophical insight and everyday stories has much to offer the present era. The more that this kind of conversation is heard, the less daunting the task of negotiating modernity might become.

Notes

¹ Lefebvre (1971 [1968], 1988, 1991 [1947]) undertakes several discussions regarding *Ulysses* as a literary exemplar of the prominence of everyday life in modernity and as an inspiration for his critique of everyday life.

² Reference to Rainer Maria Rilke's poem 'Immer wieder':

'Again and again, although we know love's landscape/ and the little churchyard with its mourning names/ and the terrible secretive ravine in which the others/ end: again and again, we two go out/ under the ancient trees, again and again we set ourselves/ among the flowers, opposite the sky' (2014: 107–108).

³ Hegel, Nietzsche, Horkheimer, Adorno, Heidegger, Derrida, Bataille and Foucault are Habermas' main interlocutors in this volume.

⁴ Habermas does not neglect the everyday in his theory but, he privileges communication and language over other forms of doing.

⁵ Castoriadis (1997h: 399) introduces the notion of time as alterity: 'time is essentially linked to the emergence of alterity. Time is this emergence as such'.

⁶ See Jay (1984: 3) for a comprehensive list of theorists who took up this orientation, to one degree or another, within the Marxist tradition.

⁷ Goldmann (1968 [1957]) and Lefebvre (1968a) stress that while Marx can be understood as being sociological in orientation he was not a sociologist. For Goldmann, this is because of the reciprocal relationship Marx establishes between value judgements and an analysis of the 'facts'. For Lefebvre, it is because Marx's analysis incorporates a totality of human and material existence into the moment of analysis. Moreover, it is the motivation and objectives of Marx's project that situates him outside of the institution of sociology.

⁸ Emphasis is retained in quotations throughout this thesis.

⁹ See Dunayevskaya (1958), Eagleton (1997) Kioupkiolis (2012) and Meszaros (1970) as examples of detailed discussions of the concept of freedom in Marx's thought.

¹⁰ Also, but to a lesser degree, Morin, Blanchot, Taylor, Foucault and Bourdieu.

¹¹ It is noteworthy that Lefebvre read Nietzsche, Hegel and then Marx. The progression of Lefebvre's discovery of their respective philosophies helps shape his own distinctive philosophy.

¹² Here, I use the term 'postmodern' in line with Heller and Fehér's description of 'reflected postmodernity' or the 'postmodern imagination' (Heller, 1982, 2000b; Heller and Fehér, 1989).

¹³ See (5.3) for a more detailed explanation of Castoriadis' concept of the social imaginary. For a comprehensive survey of the term see Adams et al. (2015). Alternatively, Karl Smith's (2010) monograph.

¹⁴ For more comprehensive biographical and autobiographical accounts see: for Castoriadis (Castoriadis, 1990b; Dosse, 2014), for Heller (Heller, 1999b, 2010; Tormey, 2001) and for Lefebvre (Burkhard, 2000; Elden, 2004; Hess, 1988; Lefebvre, 1975, 1989 [1959]; Shields, 1999).

¹⁵ Castoriadis was born in Istanbul (then Constantinople) before his family relocated to Athens in the same year.

¹⁶ Trebitsch (1991: xvii) refers to a correspondence between Lefebvre and Guterman that indicates that Lefebvre was unaware of Lukács contribution at the time and suggests that similarity of ideas could have been read by Lefebvre through Heidegger.

¹⁷ Lefebvre (in Hess, 1988: 113) recalls his failure to complete a task he was set by the Resistance that challenged his moral positions.

¹⁸ In *The Explosion* (1969b) Lefebvre articulates his ideas concerning self-management in response to the events of May 1968.

- ¹⁹ In a late interview, Castoriadis (1990b: 11) jokes that while he no longer attempts to re-establish any sort of collective political activity, he is 'on the verge of doing so every odd day of the month'.
- ²⁰ Intriguingly, despite Portas' unwavering National Socialism and significant role in the development of the mysticism of the far right as 'Hitler's priestess' (Goodrick-Clarke, 2000), the two reconnected later in life with affectionate relations (Dosse, 2014: 20).
- ²¹ My translation from the original: *'[N]ous pensons que nous representons la continuation vivante du marxisme dans le cadre de la societe contemporaine'*
- ²² 'under the pavement, the beach!'
- ²³ Others included Jean-Marc Coudray, Jean Delvaux and Marc Noiraud
- ²⁴ Castoriadis (1990b) recalls unrequested promotions at the OECD that increased his workload to the detriment of his political activities.
- ²⁵ My translation from the original: *Introduction à la logique axiomatique*
- ²⁶ My translation from the original: *Introduction à la théorie des sciences sociales*
- ²⁷ Castoriadis was analysed by Irene Perie Roubleff from 1960-1966 (Dosse, 2014: 151) and then later with Michel Renard (Dosse, 2014: 175).
- ²⁸ Organisation psychanalytique de langue française (OPLF) or the 'Quatrième Groupe' who broke from the École Freudienne de Paris (EFP).
- ²⁹ My translation from the original: 'C'est un choc pour moi. je me dis qu'il va pas reussir a se tarie et a ecouter ses patients, qu'il ne va pas pouvoir les comprendre'.
- ³⁰ Heller's memoir is edited and curated by János Kőbányai from a series of in-depth interviews with Heller.

- ³¹ Heller (2010: 23) lists: Lucien Goldmann, Jürgen Habermas, Irving Fetscher, Herbert Marcuse, Leszek Kolakowski, Ernst Bloch, Ernest Mandel, and the Croatians, such as Gajo Petrovic, Danilo Pejovic, and Danko Grlic, as significant participants.
- ³² Jay (1984) provides a comprehensive history of the influence of psychoanalysis on the Frankfurt School and Brown (1973) documents the relationship between, psychoanalysis, the Frankfurt school and the critique of everyday life.
- ³³ As a practising psychoanalyst, psychoanalytic theory forms a more significant component of Castoriadis' theory than for either Heller or Lefebvre.
- ³⁴ I employ the term 'a-subjective' in contrast to Adams 'non-subjective' (2012a) because it is not that what is being described is the nonexistence of subjectivity so much as it is that which is without subjectivity. This term will be clarified in greater detail below (3.3.2).
- ³⁵ Each of the three theorists responds to these traditions in different ways and at different times. Located in France, Castoriadis and Lefebvre are attentive to structuralism and poststructuralism but less so to postmodernism which comes late to their theories. Whereas Heller, along with Fehér, engages directly with postmodern perspectives.
- ³⁶ These proto-institutions are explained in more detail in 3.3.3. Suffice to say that *legein* describes distinguishing-choosing-positing-assembling-counting-speaking and *teukhein* assembling-adjusting-making-constructing (Castoriadis, 1987: 238).
- ³⁷ 'What is rational is real; and what is real is rational' (Hegel, 2005: xix)
- ³⁸ Along similar lines Elden (2004: 75) suggests that through Nietzsche's thought Lefebvre comes to understand alienation as enduring to the human condition.
- ³⁹ It is unclear whether Lefebvre responded directly to Lukács or to Lukács via Heidegger.

⁴⁰ Elden (2004: 113) argues that 'Lefebvre's concept of everyday life can be seen as an application of Marx's notion of alienation to Heidegger's understanding of *Alltäglichkeit* everyday life is such that man is alienated'.

⁴¹ The Dadaists could also be included here although Lefebvre's critique is more ambivalent inasmuch that while the Dadaists negate the everyday through their nihilism, Lefebvre was attracted to their implication that the force of pure negativity presented the absolute in a moment of presence. This idea was influential to Lefebvre as he attempted to weave it into his theory of moments (Lefebvre, 1989 [1959]; Shields, 1999: 56).

⁴² While the Surrealists focused on transcending the contradictions between dreams and reality into a 'kind of absolute reality, a surreality' (Breton, 1969: 14) and the Situationists on liberating everyday life from its commodified mediation into a more authentic experience, both saw modern everyday life as alienated and inauthentic.

⁴³ For a reading along similar lines see Lingis (1977).

⁴⁴ These ideas are elaborated in Lefebvre's theory of moments. See below (5.2.3) and (Lefebvre, 1989 [1959], 2005 [1981]).

⁴⁵ Like Castoriadis, Habermas focuses on an active mediation between being and doing with his theory of communicative action (1985b).

⁴⁶ Adams (2012) makes an important contribution to understanding the 'non-subjective' aspects of Castoriadis' interplay between social doing and the social imaginary. Here, I employ the term a-subjective rather than non-subjective. In Castoriadis' account, subjects are involved in the doing of the anonymous collective; however, the point is that their subjectivity detracts from the anonymous collective modality of doing.

⁴⁷ Castoriadis is critical of Heidegger's existential phenomenology which influences Schutz's social phenomenology and Habermas's concept of lifeworld.

⁴⁸ In particular the concept of *Lebenswelt* in Schutz and Luckmann (1967; 1973).

- ⁴⁹ See also Adams (2011: 65–72) and Curtis (1997: xxxv).
- ⁵⁰ The Hungarian edition of *Everyday Life* was first published as *A mindennapi élet* (1970a). The English translation was first published in 1984.
- ⁵¹ This is followed up in more detail and with more enthusiasm in Heller's (1970b) shorter article about the revolutionary potential of everyday life.
- ⁵² This critique of socialist totalitarianism was developed in her later books, in particular *A Theory of Need in Marx* (1976) and *Dictatorship over Needs* (1986).
- ⁵³ See Johnson (2013) for a detailed discussion of Heller's reception of Lukács' aesthetics.
- ⁵⁴ Little of this revolutionary attitude is theoretically present in *Everyday Life*. Heller (2010: 34) suggests that it was perhaps more rhetoric than substance
- ⁵⁵ Heller also discusses species essential objectivation 'in and for itself'. This paradigm becomes a much more significant aspect of Heller's writings during the 1980's.
- ⁵⁶ Highmore suggests that it is Heller's return to the 'classical idea of the perfected individual' combined with her revolutionary orientation (2002: 38).
- ⁵⁷ 'Everyday Life, Rationality of Reason, Rationality of Intellect' (1985a) investigates modern forms of life on the basis of various modes of rationality as they manifest in everyday life. Heller sees the work as an attempt to systematise her significant works to date at the time of writing, including: *Everyday Life* (1984b), *Towards a Marxist Theory of Value* (1972), *On Instincts* (1979b), *A Theory of Feelings* (1979a) and *A Theory of History* (1982).
- ⁵⁸ Heller's concept of the good life is discussed in greater detail in section 5.4.
- ⁵⁹ 'The new town' refers to the post World War II experiments in new housing projects based on rational planning and intentional community.
- ⁶⁰ Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Marx and more problematically, Hegel.

- ⁶¹ Several authors have problematized Castoriadis' idea of creation *ex nihilo*. Adams (2005, 2011) points toward a more interpretive mode of creation as a possible alternative. See also: Arnason (2001), Habermas (1990) and Murphy (1993).
- ⁶² For a detailed explanation of the radical imaginary and its dual expression in the social imaginary, see Castoriadis (1987, 1997c).
- ⁶³ Castoriadis attributes the positive signification of the infinite and its application to the material world as the result of the influence of the Judeo-Christian theological notion of unlimitedness (1991d: 183).
- ⁶⁴ While Hegel's deconstruction of metaphysics is convincing he is reliant on the historical presupposition that leads toward the formation of his system (Heller, 1999a: 22).
- ⁶⁵ Heller makes clear that the historical creation of modern institutions determines social positions. This hierarchy is not extra-social, but subjected to the collective creation and destruction of social institutions (Heller, 1999a: 59).
- ⁶⁶ See Heller (1999a) for a more thorough exposition of the dovetailing of the genetic *a priori* and the social *a priori* of modern contingency.
- ⁶⁷ See Heller (1999a, 2005: 69–73) for detailed elaboration of the technological imagination and the historical imaginations.
- ⁶⁸ Heller (2005: 67) draws a loose parallel between the technological imagination and the rationalistic enlightenment as well as the historical imagination and the romantic enlightenment.
- ⁶⁹ Heller devises three logics or tendencies to describe modernity; the logic of technology; the logic of the division of social positions, functions and wealth; and logic of political power. For a detailed exposition of the three logics see Heller (1999a, 2005).
- ⁷⁰ The notion is implicit in Marx's (2005 [1844]) early philosophical writings and addressed directly by Engels (1877).

- ⁷¹ Similar to that found in Lukács (1971 [1923]) but without the same sense of historical determinism.
- ⁷² Castoriadis' (2007a) analysis of *Antigone* makes a convincing argument that the play embodies the fundamental premises of democracy – human awareness of self-creation and self-limitation – and that the play itself reveals the rupture in Athenian society at the time. He does this by comparing *Antigone* to Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* written only several years before.
- ⁷³ Castoriadis describes only two autonomous societies (the Athenian polis and the Enlightenment) designating all other societies as heteronomous societies.
- ⁷⁴ Heller's argument is perhaps weakened if Castoriadis' understanding of a world of social imaginary significations is taken into account. Social imaginary significations are characterised, to varying degrees, by autonomy and heteronomy rather than depending on such a rigid dichotomy between heteronomous and autonomous societies. However, this nuance still leaves the problem of creation *ex-nihilo*.
- ⁷⁵ In the sense that Heller (2005) employs the term.
- ⁷⁶ Castoriadis describes the inception and development of this social imaginary signification in detail in several articles. See Castoriadis (1991d) and (1997g).
- ⁷⁷ Heller (1989) also takes Castoriadis to task on this in a similar way albeit on Kantian lines.
- ⁷⁸ In the sense that Hobsbawm (1994) intended.
- ⁷⁹ See Lefebvre (1995 [1962], 2012 [1957]) for detailed analyses of what he describes as the 'old romanticism'.
- ⁸⁰ The example of Stendhal's character, Julien in *The Red and the Black* (2002 [1830]) illustrates this point insofar as he realises the pursuit of happiness in and through living in the days prior to his execution (Porter, 1995: 85).

⁸¹ Merrifield (2006: 36) observes Lefebvre's approximation of Stendhal's enthusiasm for the youth – 'the great day will come when the youth of France will awake; this noble youth will be amazed to realize how long and how seriously it has been applauding such colossal inanities' (Stendhal cited in Lefebvre, 1995 [1962]: 239) – to that of the Situationists of his own time.

⁸² While Marx's philosophical writings also involve this social orientation it is somewhat diluted from its origins in Hegel's spirit.

⁸³ Lefebvre's inability to clearly articulate the concept impedes commentaries (Elden, 2004; Harvey, 1991; Merrifield, 2006; Shields, 1999) on Lefebvre's thought. Despite providing much insight into the concept, these accounts struggle to clearly explain Lefebvre's theory of moments.

⁸⁴ Grindon (2013: 214) suggests that Lefebvre would have been familiar with Bataille's ideas but may not have engaged directly with his texts.

⁸⁵ See Gardiner (2012) for a detailed discussion of the relationship between Lefebvre's and Bakhtin's thought.

⁸⁶ There is some controversy surrounding Lefebvre's discussions of the festival and the Paris Commune with the Situationists claiming Lefebvre had taken the idea directly from Situationist discussions and draft texts. Lefebvre (in McDonough, 2004) explains the falling out in an interview. Regardless, the Situationists and Lefebvre's represent two very different interpretations of revolution as festival.

⁸⁷ My translation from the original: 'l'histoire peut se représenter comme une succession de temps d'arrêt, de stagnations et d'équilibres (relatifs) séparés par des pulsions créatrices, les révolutions, dont l'historien comme tel ne parvient à épuiser ni le contenu ni le sens. Ce sont les véritables événements. Ces périodes, les unes de création, les autres de développement plus calme, ne se séparent pas. Les seconds mènent à bien les germes lancés par les premières. Les premières sont en germe au sein même des seconds'.

- ⁸⁸ See Pero (2009) for a detailed discussion of the relationship between Lefebvre's and Badiou's concept of 'the event' via Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.
- ⁸⁹ Elden (2004: 175) observes that Lefebvre had already conceived of a theory of moments before his engagement with Hegel or Marx on the basis of his reading of Proust and others and his participation in *les philosophies*.
- ⁹⁰ Lefebvre's 'theory of the semantic field' closely approximates Castoriadis' 'social imaginary'. See Lefebvre (2002 [1961]: 276–314).
- ⁹¹ Lefebvre completed his series on the critique of everyday life with a third volume: *Critique of Everyday Life Vol. 3*. This volume served to recapitulate the ideas contained in the first two volumes and adapt the concepts to be more relevant to changed historical circumstances.
- ⁹² Elden (2004) demonstrates how Lefebvre's writings on space developed out of his work on the urban that preceded them.
- ⁹³ See Elliott (2002) and Urribarri (2002).
- ⁹⁴ See Adams (2005, 2011) and Arnason (2001) for detailed discussion and problematisation of the Castoriadis' idea of creation *ex-nihilo*.
- ⁹⁵ See Kamas (2007) and Tormey (2001) for a more comprehensive discussion of Heller's earlier political writings.
- ⁹⁶ In an earlier work, Heller (1982), had already described the postmodern condition in terms of the 'historical consciousness of reflected generality'. In these later works she adopts postmodernity as shorthand, 'a good nickname', as she puts it (Heller, 2000b).
- ⁹⁷ See Gardiner (2013) for a detailed discussion of Heller and Fehér's optimism.
- ⁹⁸ The notion of an incomplete concept of justice was developed in Heller's book *Beyond Justice*.
- ⁹⁹ In particular, Heller (1992, 1993, 1999a, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Heller (2010) explains that she put her project of a theory of modernity on hold in order to expound systematically her ethical and moral philosophy. She suggests she could not affectively write her theory of modernity until she had resolved the problems of her ethical and moral philosophy first.

¹⁰¹ See Heller (2009: 249–250).

¹⁰² English translation from Ian Johnson's (2007) *Antigone*.

¹⁰³ Other contributions to this discussion include Ingram (2005) and Han-Pile (2010).

¹⁰⁴ Habermas (1986, 1990) further developed his position in later writings.

¹⁰⁵ Fraser draws on the work of Hoys (1981) and Dreyfus and Rainbow (1983) to articulate these readings.

¹⁰⁶ In this context, I am evoking the notion of 'programme' in agreement with Castoriadis' (1987: 78) description: 'the programme is a provisional concretization of the objectives of the project on certain points judged to be essential in given circumstances, in so far as their realization would lead to or would facilitate the realization of the project as a whole by its own inner dynamics. The programme is but a fragmentary and provisional figure of the project. Programmes come and go, the project remains'.

¹⁰⁷ See Lefebvre (1996) for a collection of English translations of these works.

¹⁰⁸ See Goonewardena et al. (2008) and Stanek (2011) for comprehensive analysis of Lefebvre's contribution on these themes.

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