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EVERYDAY LIFE AS CRITIQUE: REVISITING THE EVERYDAY IN IPE WITH HENRI LEFEBVRE AND POSTCOLONIALISM

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that critical International Political Economy has used an undertheorised notion of everyday life and that Henri Lefebvre's approach to everyday life, when augmented by attending to specifically colonial modes of domination, provides a necessary theoretical basis for IPE to engage with the everyday. It thus explores the connections between critical IPE, the critique of everyday life, and postcolonial thought. It begins by examining the "turn" to the everyday in IPE, examining the consequences of its reliance on an untheorised notion of the everyday. Lefebvre's critique of everyday life is then examined to address these shortcomings. But Lefebvre's provocation about the colonisation of the everyday also requires greater conceptual clarity. Thus the article next examines the affinities between postcolonial thought and the critique of everyday life. This underscores the indispensability of Lefebvre's critique to IPE in terms both of everyday life and of the international as constituted by colonisation.

KEYWORDS: Everyday life, Henri Lefebvre, colonialism, postcolonial, IPE

EVERYDAY LIFE AS CRITIQUE: REVISITING THE EVERYDAY IN IPE WITH HENRI LEFEBVRE AND POSTCOLONIALISM

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In the second volume of his *Critique of Everyday Life*, first published in 1961, Henri Lefebvre suggests that everyday life replaced the colonies (see Lefebvre 2005, 26) or, more precisely, that the techniques of colonial domination were being applied to everyday life (Lefebvre 2002, 315-316). In more recent years, a contemporary generation of critical scholars in International Political Economy (IPE) has turned to the everyday with a similar intent: to find the international in the everyday. As Lefebvre later recognised (Lefebvre 2005, 27), his idea was both suggestive and needed further work. Can the turn to the everyday in IPE sharpen Lefebvre's thesis? In this article, I offer a critique of IPE's turn to everyday life. A wide range of literature has turned to descriptive accounts of everyday activities as a way to ground the international processes and dynamics they examine (e.g., Enloe 1990; George 1992; Davies and Niemann 2002; Tickner 2003) but only a handful of authors in IPE have attempted to explicitly conceptualise the everyday itself (e.g., Davies 2006; Davies 2015; Hobson and Seabrooke 2007; Langley 2008; Konings 2009). Leaving everyday life un- or under-theorised undermines much of the critical intent of turning to the everyday because the neglect of everydayness as a specific temporal and spatial

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arrangement impedes the critique of everyday life. The thrust of the literature in IPE neglects this primal separation of the international from the everyday and thus tends to overlook how everydayness is a specific residue left after and by this separation.

However, if Lefebvre's critique of everyday life begins to address some of the shortcomings of the turn to the everyday in IPE, the notion that the everyday is dominated under a colonial relation also requires greater conceptual clarity: Lefebvre's assertion did not do enough to specify *colonial* forms of domination (Kipfer and Goonewardena 2013). IPE, at least as far as it has been open to postcolonial thought, could make an important contribution to addressing this shortcoming. Thus, this article argues not only that a more theoretically informed conception of everyday life is necessary for a critical IPE but also that examining the mutually constitutive relationships between the spatialities and temporalities of the everyday and of contemporary international power relations made possible by colonial practices is the most important contribution a turn to the everyday can make to IPE. Critical theoretical practice in IPE must politicise both the everyday and the international, as these are shaped by colonisation.

The article begins with an examination of how IPE scholars have imagined everyday life. This discussion entails a sustained theoretical interrogation of the ways that IPE's conceptions of everyday life situate agency and the possibilities for politics and for the transformation of social relations. In the main, IPE's view of everyday life tends to be one-sided: either defining it as the locus for a politics of resistance or as an inert space in which domination manifests itself. In order to develop a more complex conception of everyday life, one that does not reduce it to either inertia or resistance, the next section explores Henri Lefebvre's contributions to the critique of everyday life as constituted in specific temporalities and spaces. Lefebvre's critique of everyday

life will be shown to be, as indicated above, a double critique: not only everyday life as the critique of the “higher activities” of the international, as the critical intent of IPE’s turn to the everyday seeks, but also everyday life as an object of critique. In the following section, this latter critique is taken up by examining Lefebvre’s suggestion that everyday life had replaced the colonies, confronting it with postcolonial scholarship in order to give some specificity to the description of the relationship between the international and the everyday as colonial. This will show the affinities between postcolonial thought and the critique of everyday life, providing a strong theoretical foundation for a turn to the everyday for critical IPE scholarship.

How Does IPE Imagine Everyday Life?

The turn to everyday life in IPE builds on the idea that for the activities defining the field of International Political Economy even to take place, there are processes and people to be accounted for that the field’s understanding of the “international” makes invisible and irrelevant. This was the implication of the arguments of scholars as diverse as Graham Allison (1999), Robert Cox (1987), and Cynthia Enloe (1990). Since these efforts, references to everyday life have proliferated in analyses of international relations, not only in critical IPE but also in related disciplines such as geography and sociology as these concerned themselves with globalisation. Some of this literature examines the effects of international or global scale processes on people’s daily lives. Others look to everyday life as a site where international relations are constructed, performed, or enabled. These various efforts have contributed to increasingly sophisticated and interesting theoretical conceptions of IPE but they have tended to leave everyday life itself un- or undertheorised. This reliance on an undertheorised notion of everyday life as a site for

IPE reproduces in scholarship the separation of higher activities from the space of everyday life that tended to make the latter invisible or irrelevant, thus blunting the critical intent of the “turn” to the everyday.

Thus much of the contemporary scholarship examining everyday life in IPE retains the givenness and taken-for-grantedness of everyday life that appears in more canonical studies. In 1992, for example, Jim George, reflecting on the resistance of the field of IR to engage with critical theory, examined the “givenness of everyday life” in the dominant realist and positivist approaches understood in terms of security dilemmas and sovereignty problematics. Similarly, everyday life makes an explicit appearance in Tickner’s (2003) critique of the exclusion of Third World perspectives from International Relations theorising: for her, the everyday experiences of violence, decolonisation, and relative deprivation in the Third World shape theorising the international in ways that the dominant conceptions of the field ignore. For these scholars, though in different ways, everyday life matters as a given context for the activity of scholars.

If everyday life is consequential for scholarship regarding the international, does it also give the contexts for international political economy? Davies and Niemann (2002) argued that to uncover an emancipative potential in IR theory, it would be necessary to find new ways of framing questions for IR that could engage with everyday life. Following Henri Lefebvre’s account of everyday life from the first volume of his career-spanning studies of the topic, they asserted that international relations were shaped by and in turn shaped work, family life, and leisure. In her contribution to the *International Political Sociology* forum on everyday life, Enloe (2011) similarly highlighted the ways that her experiences as a researcher uncovered the everyday practices and experiences of power in the private sphere as these

constitute and are causally connected to international power in IPE. Agathangelou and Ling (2004a) assessed the foregrounding of new problems posed by the 9/11 attacks and the responses to them. They point to ways that everyday life becomes an object for international political forces in the state-led responses to terrorism:

“[transnationalizing] insecurity militariz[es] daily life” (p. 525); “Neoliberal economics enables globalized militarization.” (p. 531); and “...elite privilege ... underpins such violence” (p. 533).

Most efforts in the theoretical practice of IPE to engage with everyday life could be classified in this way, that is, as either emphasizing the capacities of the powerful to guide, constrain or programme the lives of ordinary people or emphasizing the constitutive force of the everyday in contingent international relations. These efforts seek to problematise received understandings of what the “international” in IPE might be. What might be described as a gap in these efforts, however, is the lack of any theory of the everyday itself. In other words, however sophisticated the theoretical critique of the international that emerges from these writings, this critique rests on a highly descriptive understanding of everyday life as what “ordinary” people do in their daily lives.

Another body of critical IPE scholarship that attempts to overcome this dichotomy between the everyday and the international through a theoretically informed conception of everyday life. Dunn (2009), on contesting state spaces, is exemplary in this regard. In a critique of reified conceptions of the state that have produced poor understandings of state power in Central Africa, Dunn emphasizes the performativity of the state, especially near its borders. State power, for Dunn, is most evident in its habitually enacted performances, such as those of the military units deployed to be visible to tourists visiting national parks. The everyday here is not a

separate and externally related realm from the international; rather, the international also appears as performances of everyday routines connected to state practices – routines such as monitoring, visiting, supplying aid. Le Baron (2010) argues in Braudelian terms that neoliberal restructuring and ongoing enclosures have condensed people's time outside of the capital relation and thus subjected households to deeper commodification: daily or material life thus both produces and is subsumed under the “level” of capitalism. Crane-Seeber (2011) notes the blurring of the boundaries in counterinsurgency between exceptional acts, such as war operations, and the mundane work of military training, intelligence gathering, and long-term occupation, with consequences for the experiences of the work of long-term military occupation. Chisholm (2014) demonstrates the importance for IPE of these mundane security operations through her analysis of the incorporation of Third Country Nationals in global labour supply chains for private military security companies. She shows how the working conditions and remunerations of Gurkhas are kept inferior to their white counterparts through the interactions of neoliberal economic restructuring of security work and racialised colonial histories. Dunn (2009), Le Baron (2010), Crane-Seeber (2011), and Chisholm (2014) thus all highlight the co-constitution of everyday activities and international processes and forces.

The notion of everyday life is given one of its most explicit and sophisticated formulations in Hobson and Seabrooke (2007), where “everyday politics” confronts the global in the guises of the “weapons of the weak” in trade unions, peasant organizations, and the like. It is important to note that from the outset, Hobson and Seabrooke (2007: 16-17) work with a binary in which the “Regulatory IPE” (RIPE) of the study of institutions and global processes is set in opposition to their “Everyday IPE” (EIPE). RIPE is oriented towards the study of coercion and conformity, EIPE

looks instead at “defiance”, “mimetic challenge and hybridised mimicry”, and “axiorationality” as sources of “bottom-up” change.

Hobson and Seabrooke set out their three categories of “everyday politics” to encompass the breadth of the concerns of the contributions to their book. “Overt defiance is commonly stressed by those who seek to understand how everyday actors repel elite coercion through their *overt resistance* activities” (Hobson and Seabrooke 2007: 16, emphasis in the original). This first conception is highly relevant to their project of opening the field of IPE up to agents and actors that remain invisible to the concerns of RIPE, but it hints at the first problem in their conception of the everyday: once agents take up overt resistance, in what ways can they be said to be engaged in *everyday* activities? Does overt resistance not imply a break from the everyday? Even for activists, whose ability to partake in gestures of overt resistance such as going on strike or occupying public spaces depends on “everyday” forms of reproduction taking place elsewhere, the very gestures of resistance entail a departure from routine.

“Mimetic challenges” come closer to speaking to a concern with everyday life: Hobson and Seabrooke link these approaches with James Scott’s notion of the “weapons of the weak.” The idea here is that the normative discourses of the elite are mobilised for the purposes of the subordinate actors. This then entails a weakening of the elite/marginalized or coloniser/colonised dichotomy.

Both the “overt defiance” and the “mimetic challenge” approaches nonetheless identify the “everyday” with resistance and with the subaltern, where instead the notions of resistance and of the subaltern might have been better conceptualised with reference to everyday life. In other words, the politics of what Hobson and Seabrooke refer to as “everyday politics” appears here as a given: they reduce everyday life to the politics of resistance of the subaltern. In analytical terms, as understandings of

everyday life these approaches foreclose the questions of how subalternity is produced in everyday life or why – or whether – resistance is the characteristic form that politics takes amongst subaltern actors. The everyday cannot be identical to resistance or subalternity not only because the connotation of “everyday” is in part a suggestion that the social relations are reproduced, rather than resisted, but also because for many of the global poor and dispossessed, the predictability and routines of everyday life would be at best an aspiration.

Hobson and Seabrooke’s strongest conception, or at least the conception of everyday action that comes closest to preserving the sense of “everydayness” in everyday life, is their idea of axiorationality:

...axiorationality provides a contrast with systemic constructivism’s emphasis on temporary moments of radical uncertainty/crisis. Rather, ‘axiorationality’ is habit-informed, reason-guided behaviour within which an actor still retains a concept of interest ... axiorational behaviour is where an actor uses reason to reflect upon conventions and norms, as well as the interests they inform, and then chooses to act in ways which are in accordance with broader intersubjective understandings of what is socially legitimate” (Hobson and Seabrooke 2007: 17).

With the notion of axiorational behaviour, Hobson and Seabrooke seek to examine the broad aspects and experiences of everyday life *not* necessarily characterised by resistance.

Axiorationality as an approach to everyday life enables an understanding of politics that is not contingent on the actions and systemic determinations that are generated by the dominant. It is also important insofar as it enables an examination of values – an axiology of everyday life opens the field of research and analysis to the

ethical and aesthetic considerations that shape everyday actions, which in turn opens up political and aesthetic possibilities beyond domination and resistance. However, by introducing the notions of rationality and of interest and through their suspicion of “systemic” approaches, Hobson and Seabrooke put forward a methodologically individualist understanding of everyday life. In axiorationality, everyday life becomes a screen on which are collected an aggregation of value-informed rational decisions. It yields a positive, objective account of the everyday; it does not capture the negativity of everyday life as messy, fuzzy, shifting, or unreflected and thoughtless.

A focus on the objective or positive face of everyday life also drives Martijn Konings (2009) examination of global finance’s connections to the mundane world of ordinary aspirations to economic security and independence. Konings’ theorization of everyday life, however, differs from Hobson’s and Seabrooke’s. Where the latter two writers emphasize the constitutive power of the everyday, Konings deploys a conception that emphasises the power of the powerful: “Bringing the everyday back through the deconstruction of our most abstract categories is therefore often less about making visible the efficacy of everyday agency and resistance than about showing how the habitus of accepting and rationalizing particular institutions results in the creation of networks of connections of which the particular actors are unaware and serves to bolster the capacity of dominant actors to control the dynamics of social life” (Konings 2009: 77). Konings, in his theorizing of the everyday as habitus, inverts the direction of influence asserted by Hobson and Seabrooke. The efforts of these authors all surely represent advances in critical IPE through their sophisticated efforts to theorise the realm of the everyday and the resulting de-naturalizing of the reifications of IPE. They do not, however, overcome the dilemmas of whether to prioritise the international or the everyday in the critique because they treat each as

positive, objective, and describable realms that can be brought into relation with each other externally.

In contrast to both Hobson and Seabrooke and to Konings, Paul Langley's (2008) account of the everyday life of global finance does not hinge on rationality, interest, or an identification of the everyday with subalternity or subordination. Langley turns to everyday life as a setting where globalised financial systems and societies have begun to interact in novel ways. He critiques the binaries that preserve the reified conceptions of power usually deployed to explain the epochal emergence of global finance. Langley focuses instead on the changes in the everyday practices of saving and borrowing in Anglo-American banking and how these are constitutive of the social networks of finance, its power and identities, and the possibilities for dissent.

Significantly, Langley notes that in order to understand the importance of everyday life for finance, everyday life must be given conceptual definition rather than being deployed as a descriptive label. As in Henri Lefebvre's formulation, discussed more fully below, for Langley everyday life appears initially as a "residue" of social life confronted by the specialized and abstracted activities of Wall Street and the City of London. However, this residue is not inert: it brings together commonalities and differences, homogeneity and hierarchy. Thus the everyday practices of borrowing and saving, while substantiating the operations of global finance, also sort people according to financialised identities and situations of credit-worthiness. Thus the category of everyday life also brings political and normative concerns into the analysis of finance. In the first instance, and again following Lefebvre, the everyday practices of borrowing and saving become objects for programming in a "bureaucratic society of controlled consumption" (Lefebvre 1984,

cited in Langley 2008: 13); but in the second instance, the persistence of inequalities and difference indicates political possibilities that emerge in the practices of dissent that reveal the “incomplete, fragile, vulnerable, and contradictory” (Langley 2008: 37) power relations produced and reproduced in programming. Thus, what Langley terms “financial dissent” may not take on the character of rational, organised or collective resistance emphasised by Hobson and Seabrooke; instead it may be multiple, ambiguous, and compromised – just as everyday life itself is.

The first set of literature discussed above, the literature that rests on “top-down” or “bottom-up” relations between externally related realms of IPE and everyday life, was critiqued for not theorizing everyday life. This critical move reproduces one crucial element of Henri Lefebvre’s theory of everyday life: the separation of “higher” activities from the everyday. One of Lefebvre’s notable early descriptions of everyday life was as the “residue” that remains once “higher activities”, such as philosophical reflection or planning, are separated out. Notably, International Relations, including IPE, constitutes itself as a higher activity, even after the “high politics” of diplomacy and war-making are made to share the stage with the “low politics” of international economics and institutions emphasised in IPE.

To the extent that they overcome the “top-down” versus “bottom-up” image, the underlying problem in the more theoretically informed accounts of everyday life and IPE is their tendency to dissolve the international into the everyday. Surely, it may be objected, this is the point: however difficult it is to theorize power rigorously and account for the micropolitics of everyday performances along with the macropolitics of dominant agencies and institutions, the point is to undermine the reifications that sustain the illusion of “top” or “bottom” levels in the relationship. The “international” in IPE rests upon its self-understanding as a realm “above” the

practice of everyday life coupled with the lack of self-understanding of everyday life as a realm of unconsidered banality; if both of these work together to deny the possibilities for a politics at a scale other than the territorial state in relation to other states, then the practice of theoretical critique surely must be to relocate politics to politicise both the international and the everyday.

Whatever suspicions of IPE have been suggested so far, and however much it appears as a reification in its own efforts to describe itself as a specific field, the “international” in IPE is the effect of the separation of this aspect of politics and of sociability from the everyday. Thus to dissolve the international into the social and the everyday is not so much an error as it is premature. The task in hand is to continue the critique taken up by scholars such as Dunn, Hobson and Seabrooke, Konings, and Langley: that is, to produce a theoretically informed critique of everyday life for the critique of IPE. This task has two indispensable components: first, the logic of separation is constitutive of the everyday as much as of the international, so theorizing everyday life has to account for the real but artificial separation of the international (and other “higher activities”). Second, a theoretically informed account of everyday life has to come to grips specifically with the *everyday* character of everyday life: everyday life as rhythms, repetitions, habits; banal, mundane, unreflected upon.

Separation Anxiety: Henri Lefebvre and the Critique of Everyday Life

Although a range of theoretical approaches to everyday life could be deployed in such a conceptualisation (see, e.g., Gardiner 2000 and Roberts 2006), Henri Lefebvre’s work is especially relevant because it enables the everyday to be seen specifically in relation to the international as a “higher” activity abstracted from daily practices. Lefebvre did not produce *a* theory of everyday life: the critique of everyday

life was a life-long project for him and everyday life changed dramatically during his lifetime. His approach to theorising the everyday, a dialectical approach to theory that emphasised the contingent and artificial underpinning of the everyday, addressed specifically the task of accounting for the emergence of everyday life in modernity along with the resulting, and changing, character of everydayness. The conception of everyday life that this style of theorising produced asserted several key components to the concept that necessarily complicate our understanding of it. Everyday life in modernity is not only separated from the “higher activities” but it is also subordinated to them. Thus everyday life is largely performed and acted upon unselfconsciously. Separation also indicates how everyday life is historical: it emerges in a particular time and space and operates through particular temporalities and spatialities. Everyday life is thus not merely positive, in the descriptive, sociological sense: it is a space and time of negativity and thus can become a form of critique in its own right.²

What lies behind the separation of the sphere of the international from the sphere of the everyday? For Lefebvre, everyday life takes its characteristic form in modernity. He asserts that in pre-modern daily life, religious rituals, magic, and superstition permeated the rhythms and activities that organised day-to-day life (Lefebvre 1991a, 303). With modernity, philosophy – reflective thought – increasingly abstracts itself from the everyday (Lefebvre 1991a, 30). The Cartesian

² The dynamic movement of the everyday that emerges as a result of separation is examined in slightly different terms in Dorfman (2014) and in Roberts (2006). Dorfman argues that modernity separates the everyday (as repetitive) from experience (as concrete and foundational) and seeks the conditions that permit habitual and immersed reflection. Roberts, like Lefebvre, understands the everyday as a remainder but argues that it loses its critical edge inasmuch as it is seen as the site of symbolic displacement and recoding and thus of a hermeneutic counterhegemony separated from revolutionary history (Roberts 2006: 98-99). These contributions treat modernity abstractly – i.e., not in relation to modern politics and economics as these emerge internationally. How modernity generates these separations in relation to the international will be examined below, through contributions from postcolonial thought.

cogito starts with scepticism towards the external and objective world, finding certainty only in its reflection upon itself. The refelective and reflexive nature of specialised activities follow this path, reinforced not only by the separation of the functional logic of mental labour from increasingly beast-like manual labour as the division of labour becomes more extensive (Lefebvre 1991a, 29-31; Davies 2010), but also by the concentration of administrative roles in the city through urbanism and by the spatial and social separation of classes (Lefebvre 2003, 109-110).

Thus the routine of everyday life comes to be increasingly unreflected and unworthy of reflection. Everyday life is degraded to the level of the mundane, banal, and prosaic. It is the “reality without truth,” counterpoised to the “truth without reality” of philosophy (Lefebvre 1984, 14). It is the “soil” in which the “flowers and trees” of creative human activity grow (Lefebvre 1991a, 87). It is the object of programming in a “bureaucratic society of controlled consumption” (Lefebvre 1984). “In appearance, it is the insignificant and the banal. It is what Hegel called ‘the prose of the world,’ nothing more modest” (Lefebvre 1988, 78).

With the abstraction of reflective activities from the everyday and the rendering of the everyday as banal, mundane, and “without truth”, the practice and performance of everyday acts can take place without selfconscious reflection. As a result, Lefebvre argues, “people in general, *do not know their own lives very well, or know them inadequately*” (Lefebvre 1991a: 94, emphasis in the original). People are not inevitably deluded or stupid or in thrall of ideologies; rather everyday life is such that we can, or sometimes must, live as if we were. As reflection and reflective activity turns back to everyday life, they do so in the guise of planning and programming. Thus the hierarchical relationship we can see between the planning and control functions of mental labour and the executive functions of manual labour

reproduces itself in everyday life in general: everyday life is subordinate to the separated “higher activities”.

Given its limits and peculiarities, we should be able to outline the particular times and spaces of everyday life. The emergence of a distinctive everyday life in modernity through the abstraction of reflective activities from the everyday has a parallel in the historical development of space in Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space (Lefebvre 1991b). So just as daily life was infused with reflective rituals, such as superstitions or magic, before these are elevated to “higher” activities in philosophy and planning, Lefebvre’s concept of absolute space was marked by the investment of particular spiritual meanings in particular places: mountains where gods dwell; the healing waters of miraculous springs. Abstract space subsumes absolute space, rendering space generally equivalent, quantifiable and marketable, abstracting from it the spiritual powers that had governed it. Thus everyday life becomes an unreflected space, the space where everyday life and the urban begin to coincide: dwellings, houses, factories, malls, schools, the arteries that connect these, the infrastructures that support them.

Everydayness is also a peculiar temporality. Everydayness is a rhythm (Lefebvre 2004): repetition lies at the basis of banality where there is no need to reflect. However, everyday life is, concretely, polyrhythmic. There are rhythms of the body – such as sleep/wake, eat, work/rest – which encounter the disciplining of the body through “dressage” (Lefebvre 2004: 38-45). Marcel Mauss (2007) made similar observations about culturally specific forms of embodiment. There are also rhythms of the street, rhythms of commerce (opening and closing times), the rhythms of the media day, and so on, and the spatial and temporal rhythms of embodiment are not

singular or stable but change in time as they become objects of programming, as Crary shows (Crary 2013).

All of this indicates how the separation behind the abstraction of the international as a “higher activity” from the everyday renders everyday life as subordinate, as an object of the higher activities. And yet, everyday life is also becoming a problem *for* International Relations. International Relations has found itself increasingly concerned with substantive problems of everyday life. Some of the most obvious examples can be found in the ways that in order to respond to disruptions from the international level and scale, states increasingly overtly intervene in everyday life. The international debt crises that have shaped the global economy since the 1980s have given rise to ever more sophisticated and generalised versions of “structural adjustment” and austerity, instrumentally reshaping the state, citizenship, and economic behaviour to secure the conditions for the unfettered operations of global finance. Similarly, the securitization of all airline travel in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington is a very specific case of re-programming habitual, routine behaviour in an extremely intimate manner, governing mobility through what Amoore (2006) calls “biometric borders”.

To see why the everyday could become problematic for the international, how the everyday is not merely inert and passive, we need to consider two more of Lefebvre’s conceptual arguments about everyday life. First, from his earliest considerations on everyday life as arising from the development of capitalist modernity, it was clear that for Lefebvre, everyday life is historical. First in 1947 (reprinted in 1958 with a new introduction, English translation 1991a), then in 1961 (English translation 2002), and finally in 1981 (English translation 2005), Lefebvre published three volumes specifically titled “Critique of Everyday Life” and each

began with a lengthy re-consideration of what he had written before and what historical events had transpired. In the wake of the Liberation of France from Nazi occupation, Lefebvre was very optimistic about the possibility of changing life, of a revolution in everyday life. To begin his second volume, which launched a major research project into everyday life, Lefebvre “clears the ground” by revisiting his previous arguments in light of the changes that had taken place in everyday life in France through the 1950s. This research and the university courses in which it was pursued and developed were summarized in 1967 in Lefebvre’s most pessimistic appraisal, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (1984), in which everyday life now appeared as an object for “bureaucratic programming of controlled consumption.” Life was indeed being changed by the extension of capital into the deepest recesses of everyday life. By 1981, with Thatcher and Reagan in power at the dawn of the neoliberal age, Lefebvre incorporated considerations on the permeation of everyday life by the media, what this meant for mediation, and how it opened new avenues for critique. Philosophy had changed as well: no longer able to sustain itself in scholasticism and repeated histories of itself, philosophy had begun to seek relevance in the everyday. The flowers were beginning to recognise the importance of the soil. Thus the everyday is a moving target: the concept of everyday life that emerges from Lefebvre’s theoretical investigations is dynamic, not static; one in which as some possibilities are foreclosed, others open.

Thus the second argument Lefebvre provides for us in his conception is that the critique of everyday life is not to be conducted only from the elevated, “higher activities” of philosophical reflection; everyday life is itself the critique of everyday life (Lefebvre 1991a, 87). This is a doubled critique (Lefebvre 1991a, 89): everyday life is not only an object to be critiqued but it also produces a critique of “higher

activities”, of separation, and of itself. Everyday life cannot be merely positive: it is not an inert, objective matter shaped by interventions from “above” or “outside.” Descriptions of everyday life as absorbing the demands placed upon it by “higher” authority (as in Agathangelou and Ling 2004; or Konings 2009) or as subversively *detourning* these demands (as in Hobson and Seabrooke 2007) are valuable analytically but they remain one-sidedly positive.

The separation that scars the everyday is also a negation of its organic relation to thoughtful or specialised activities and the everyday is therefore a site of negativity: “In terms of these activities, the first definition of everyday life is a *negative* one” (Lefebvre 1991a, 86, emphasis in original). As Schmid (2008) argues, the role played by negativity in Lefebvre’s understanding of the dialectic is *productive*, through its negation of claims to absolute truth: Lefebvre habitually answers his own rhetorical questions “yes *and* no” (Schmid 2008, 30-32). Everyday life cannot be reduced to a positively objective “reality” because it is also always unpredictable *possibility*, negating its givenness. The relation between negative and positive, then, is not a decision between absolute positions. It is more akin to the Gestalt notion of figure and ground (Coole 2007, 165-166): the separation of the international as a “higher” or specialised activity from the everyday puts them into a comprehensive, mutually determining and articulating relation. This is what enables everyday life as a critique and what makes it a problem for those who would seek to manage it.

The International and the Everyday: Did Everyday Life Replace the Colonies?

Thus everyday life is not itself the totality, it is not universal, and it is not merely a positive object for investigation and theory or for bureaucratic programming. If the separation of the level of the international as a “higher” activity from the level

of the everyday as banal leaves gaps in our ability to comprehend the international, as critical IPE scholars have argued, so also does it leave lacunae in the conception, perception, and practices of everyday life. The prevailing image of everyday life given by IPE – whether it takes a “top down” view of the exercise of power at the international level over the everyday or whether it takes a “bottom up” view of the tactical capacities of “everyday” actors – retains a notion of everyday life as a reified category, a level “under” that of the international. Henri Lefebvre’s dialectical conception restores a critical edge to IPE’s engagement with everyday life by showing how everyday life generates a critique of itself, of the higher activities, and of their initial, generative separation. If this restores any value to the idea of the critique of everyday life for IPE, then the question that remains is whether there is any value to pursuing this critique from the perspective of IPE. What can IPE add to the critique of everyday life?

Lefebvre provided a hint of how a connection might be made between IPE and everyday life when in the second volume of *The Critique of Everyday Life* (2002) he asserted the notion that everyday life had “replaced” the colonies. In the wider context of the early 1960s, the loss of the colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia, and Algeria had profound effects on cultural and political life in France. Lefebvre’s idea was that capitalists had turned their attentions to the domestic market, treating “daily life as they once treated the colonized territories: massive trading posts (supermarkets and shopping centres); absolute predominance of exchange over use; dual exploitation of the dominated in their capacity as producers and consumers” (Lefebvre 2005, 26).

The effects of colonisation and decolonisation on the metropole have been examined elsewhere (see especially Kristin Ross’s lucid analyses, Ross 1995). The

contribution that a critical IPE could make to the critique of everyday life begins to become clear when these effects are “provincialised” (Chakrabarty 2000; Seth 2009), that is, taken not as the signifiers of a universal history containing, shaping, and directing all social development but as politically contingent outcomes of relations of conquest and domination. Postcolonial theories along with critiques of IR and of IPE influenced by postcolonial thought provide useful indicators of how to flesh out a concept of everyday life “replacing” the colonies, that is, how to give some conceptual specificity to this colonial relation. There are remarkable affinities between the postcolonial critique of the international and the critique of everyday life but these affinities have not been examined in much detail. Indeed, *International Political Sociology* has published forums on postcolonial thought (in 2009) and on everyday life (in 2011) but there was no cross-referencing between them. Just as Henri Lefebvre’s critique of everyday life opens the possibility for a theoretically informed concept of the everyday, the critique of the international by diverse postcolonial theorists has indicated some ways in which IPE might contribute to this critique.

The affinities between postcolonial critique and the critique of everyday life emerge from colonisation as a specific form of domination involving the “theft of land, violence, and slavery” (Krishna 2001: 401) and the process of abstraction (Krishna 2001; Seth 2009 and 2001; Grovogui 2001). Regarding the latter, Lefebvre’s criticisms of philosophy and of planning and technocracy as “higher activities”, discussed above, showed how abstraction lies behind the processes of separating the higher activities from the everyday and is related to their capacity to dominate the everyday. This is homologous to classical political economy’s disposition to assert the dominance of the general over the particular in analytical and moral terms (Blaney

and Inayatullah 2010, 44-45) and as an epistemological commitment, it is tied to the abstraction of economic value by money (Sohn-Rethel 1978). It is also homologous to International Relations' "fetishizing" of the production of theoretical abstractions, through which the discipline brackets questions of colonial domination (Krishna 2001, 401-402). Just as in Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, where he examines how the production of abstract space separates space from the spiritual forces invested in particular places (Lefebvre 1991b: 231), postcolonial theory argues that the epistemological consequences of the abstraction of the international enable the political dominance of "Western ways of knowing" (Seth 2013a) even when these rest on discredited racist dispositions (Grosvogui 2001). And just as everyday life retains elements of magical thinking in the face of the abstraction of the commanding "higher activities" (Lefebvre 2002, 289-290), the belief in magic on the part of the colonised native is a source of a "vicarious subjecthood" (Shilliam 2009, 132).

The notion that the "international" (in IPE) is always at least implicitly a theory and practice of colonization has been central to postcolonial theory's influence on the discipline (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Seth 2011; Shilliam 2015). R.B.J. Walker (1993) argues that theories of International Relations start by distinguishing a self-identical "inside" that relates to an other, "outside." For there to be a relation, this outside must remain other but the nature of the relation is such that the outside is brought inside – inside a relation, for example. More prosaically, with reference to the "international" in IPE, sovereign territorial states enter into international relations with other states and external agents as well as with the logic of an anarchical system. Both are distinct from and outside of a particular state. To secure the "inside" of the sovereign territorial state, however, the task of International Relations is to bring external agents inside the system and to bring the logic of the system inside the

strategic capacities of the state. Outside is distinguished from inside in order to bring the outside back in, under control or at least managed – as with everyday life, bureaucratically programmed. The other outside is thus made, in theory, to be like the self-identical inside (Grovgoui 2009, 329; Krishna 2001, 420; Grovgoui 1996).

This reproduces the practical logic of colonisation. As Stuart Hall wrote: “colonization so refigured the terrain that, ever since, the very idea of a world of separate identities, of isolated or separable and self-sufficient cultures and economies, has been obliged to yield to a variety of paradigms designed to capture these different but related forms of relationship, interconnection and discontinuity” (cited in Seth 2013b: 21). In order to naturalise the “theft of land, violence, and slavery” (Krishna 2001) that lies at the heart of the modern international, International Relations theory presents itself as a universal theory and history, projecting the peculiar logic of the formation of national, territorial states and the development of capitalism in Western Europe onto the governing practices of the relations with the other. Inside the logic of IPE, the Western capitalist and territorial state is the standard by which the external other is measured and with which it must be brought into conformity. Dissident voices in IPE, many influenced by postcolonial theory, have highlighted how this colonial relation has been decisive in the formation of the identity of the capitalist territorial state (Grovgoui 2001). As Pasha argues: “The ontological primacy of imperial domination/colonial subordination in the making of modern subjectivity cannot be overstated. Coloniality radically alters the way modern sovereignty is conceived” (Pasha 2011, 221).

For Frantz Fanon, who we might have expected to be one of Lefebvre’s interlocutors in this intellectual context (see Kipfer 2007), colonialism had to be seen in terms of the relation between the settler and the native and the relation between the

settler and metropole. The settler mediates the relationship between the colony and the home country; violence mediates these relationships, defines the boundaries, and makes decolonisation inevitably violent. Colonial control is exercised and accomplished by the external and internalising political, economic, and social actions of settlers. The settler is the agent who defines the native – in particular, defining the native as a different species: inferior and to be judged against the standards of the metropole (Shilliam 2009: 121, 131). Thus the effort to decolonise cannot only be directed at an abstract, external signifier of empire: the settler, as both mediation and agent of colonial domination, necessarily becomes also an agent of violence and a target for counter-violence.

Thus Fanon emphasizes the importance of violence in the colonial relation and especially in decolonisation. “National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” (Fanon 1963: 35). This violent context indicates another limit of everyday life:

It is understandable that in this atmosphere, daily life becomes simply impossible. You can no longer be a fellah, a pimp, or an alcoholic as before. The violence of the colonial regime and the counter-violence of the native balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity. This reign of violence will be the more terrible in proportion to the size of the implantation from the mother country. (Fanon 1963: 88)

Fanon’s emphasis on the violence of the colonial situation – stemming from the embodied, fleshy, epidermal sorting of people into human and subhuman categories (Shilliam 2009: 123) – helps give greater analytical concreteness to Lefebvre’s assertions that in turning from the colony to the internal organisation of

everyday life, capital employs such tools as trade, exchange, and consumption. Whole ways of life are disrupted as “supermarkets and shopping centres”, for example, displace small shops, local service providers, or “informal” economies and the space defined through the former become enclosures where non-consuming or non-employment “public” activities are excluded. These are the everyday but nonetheless violent processes defining what Lefebvre would describe as a “terrorist” society, that is, a society that terrorizes people into specific functional ways of being (Lefebvre 1984: 147). Fanon’s analysis of violence takes the point further, showing how contingent everyday life would be in the face of colonisation.

Lefebvre further developed his assertion with respect to internal colonialism, giving the concept a distinctly spatial turn – and linked to the colonial practice of domination through theft of land. Lefebvre’s upbringing in provincial France had sensitised him to the politics of the state’s assertion of territorial control through the production of space (Brenner and Elden 2009; Kipfer and Goonewardena 2013): his family’s home village in the Pyrenees had long been a periphery subject to metropolitan control – in the past through Absolutism, then through industrialisation, and later through urbanisation.

Recognising the collapse of colonialism in the colonies, Lefebvre highlights the processes of colonisation within the metropole: “There are no longer colonies in the old sense of the word, but there is already a metropolitan semi-colonization that subjects rural populations, large numbers of foreign workers, and also many French workers and intellectuals, to a concentrated exploitation through the methods and maintaining the elements of a state of spatial segregation” (Lefebvre 2009/1970, 181). In his extensive study of the State, he is even more direct: “wherever a dominated space is generated and mastered by a dominant space – where there is a periphery and

a centre – there is colonization” (cited in Kipfer et al. 2008, 294). Such a conception of a relation between dominant and dominated space has a clear tie to the theft of land characteristic of the colonial enterprise. Kipfer and his co-authors see in this spatialization of the concept of the colony the possibility of sharpening the critique of domination in space by freeing the concept from its dependence on the delimited historical referent of European territorial expansion and thus giving it multi-scalar purchase: “colonization refers to the role of the state in organizing territorial relationships of centre and periphery, with the alienating, humiliating, and degrading aspects such relationships entail” (Kipfer et al. 2008, 294). These aspects of the colonial relation are precisely those that inform Fanon’s theoretical and analytical interventions and it is by spatializing the concept of colonialism that we can begin to look for their consequences in everyday life as an object of colonisation.

Thus the spatialization of the concept of colonisation³ allows it to be deployed analytically in the critique of everyday life. At the same time, the concept is much thinner analytically if when spatializing colonisation, we neglect time. In other words, if the temporal dimensions of colonialism are reduced to the linear historical time of European territorial expansion (and the logic of colonisation simply redirected to “inside” spaces), then the other *temporalities* at work in the colonial relation vanish. Blaney and Inayatullah (2010, 27) describe this foreclosing of temporalities with their notion of “temporal walls.” They show how a “stadial theory” and “universal history” of human development along a singular temporal line was at the core of and has not been sufficiently challenged or displaced from classical political economy and ways of thinking influenced by it.

³ Kipfer and Goonewardena (2013) examine more deeply the consequences of this spatialisation of the concept of colonisation in Lefebvre, linking it also to Lefebvre’s contributions to the theory of the state and *modialisation*.

In part, Lefebvre addresses this issue with his notion of polythyhms, discussed above; his concept of the production of space also anticipates this problem. The historical dialectic of spatial forms, in Lefebvre's analysis, proceeds not by eliminating one form with a new form but through the subsumption of historical forms into the dominant forms. For example, the emergence of what Lefebvre refers to as "abstract space" does not eliminate the intrinsic spiritual or ritual attributes of "absolute space"; it subsumes them under an emergent potential universal equivalence of spaces mediated by market exchanges. The analysis of the production of space is not merely the specification of the relations between different forms of space, it is also the analysis of the relation between different temporalities. The critique of everyday life entails conflicting temporalities and rhythms, in which the linear temporality associated with industrialised production dominates – though incompletely – the organic cycles and rhythms of the body (Lefebvre 2004). Hindess (2007) elaborates this point in the postcolonial context when he shows how modernity induces a "break in time" that makes the present into a space of freedom and the past into a space of already determined outcomes and then locates dominated people in the temporality of the past, not yet free.

Ashis Nandy also critiques colonialism not as a merely historical form but as a temporality in contact and conflict with other temporalities (e.g., Nandy 1983). Like Fanon, Nandy's background is in psychoanalysis. He finds in colonialism homologies with both the psycho-sexual production of gendered identities and with the developmental theories of childhood and adulthood. The colonised subject lives with intolerable psychic pathologies as the colonial project begins to ascribe cultural meanings to domination. Regarding the first homology, Nandy demonstrates how the assertion of colonial identity in India was conditioned by accepting the forms of

ascetic masculinity and sensualised femininity projected by the colonising subject. The negation of masculinity in this sexual universe was not femininity but a fluid, plural, and thus degraded androgyny. To accept the disciplined, militaristic vision of masculinity projected by the colonizers not only provided an explanation of the colonial situation – defeat in a contest between masculine subjects – but also confined resistance to colonialism to terms set by the colonising subject. In order to resist, the colonised subject had to become like the colonising subject: to be brought “inside” temporally – just like a developing nation, just like a dominated people, and just like the cyclical routines of daily life.

Nandy’s second homology is even more explicit with regard to temporalities. Childhood came to be defined by the British coloniser either in Calvinist terms, as evidence of sin to be contained and corrected, or as a *tabula rasa* to be inscribed with the proper values. Nandy gives a telling account of Rudyard Kipling’s ambivalent childhood, split between relative freedom and affection in his Indian context where he identified with Indian people around him and the neglect, bullying, and discipline he suffered in England. But as the child becomes something to be shaped through discipline and the instilling of correct values, so also the colonised subject is put into the place of the child. Metaphors of development only serve to perpetuate this image of the colony or the post-colony as progressing through a necessary childhood before becoming capable of full autonomy – whether that autonomy is that of the liberal subject, or that of socialism, or that of national independence. In any case, the colonised subject has been first identified as an outside to be brought inside by colonial administration, then identified as other and incapable or not yet capable of full self-hood.

The colonial relation imposes cultural forms of identity that permit the colonised to find a place in the colonial order, shaping both the prospects for accepting or rejecting that order; it also imposes spatialities and temporalities that constrain the colonised subject. Just as the space of the colony is not exhausted by the territorial expansion of European states, neither is the time of the colony exhausted by its historical boundaries. Foregrounding these spatial and temporal aspects of the colonial relation in the critique of everyday life demonstrates how the critique of the international as a form of political and social relatedness can give substance to Lefebvre's suggestion that everyday life replaced the colonies. Critical IPE's turn to the everyday has been limited in its political imagination when it reifies the everyday but it has the potential to engage in the critique of everyday life when it directs its analyses towards the constitutive processes of appropriation, domination, and violence. Such an engagement has the potential to open IPE's political imagination along lines similar to those signalled in postcolonial approaches: a politics that disrupts the invisibility of the dominated produced by violence as much as by abstraction and that recognises the critique of the dominant international and its separation generated by the everyday itself.

Conclusions

Critical IPE turned to the everyday out of necessity: just as the "low politics" of international economics had pushed their way onto the agenda of international politics for a previous generation of scholars, contemporary IPE scholars confronting issues ranging from financialisation, to environmental disruption, to consumption, and to labour migration have had to take note of the everyday acts that underpin these processes. However, the critical intent of this turn has been blunted by undertheorised,

descriptive, and one-dimensional notions of the everyday. IPE's image of the everyday therefore situates agency and subjectivity on only one side of a divide between the everyday and the international, unable to account for social change and limiting political possibilities either to the logic of domination or to resistance to it.

Henri Lefebvre's critique of everyday life expands this understanding of politics. As reflective or "higher" activities are abstracted from the everyday, the latter becomes a time and a space for routine, unreflected activity. Along with IPE scholars like Konings (2009), we must acknowledge how this separation reproduces the power of the powerful and a dominated subjectivity of the everyday. But we must also acknowledge the negativity of the everyday: the way that agency persists in the everyday in relation to its separated other. As in decolonisation, or at least its prospect, where we can see something about life under the colony that cannot be extinguished or programmed away, so also for Lefebvre everyday life is not only alienated but also contains the potential for critique and disalienation.

A stronger theorisation of IPE can contribute to the critique of everyday life – that is, the double critique that Lefebvre elaborated: the critique of the everyday and the critique that the everyday generates – and to the politics that such a critique enables. To do so, however, IPE will have to open itself to the critique that everyday life might make of it. The critique of everyday life will have to contribute to the dismantling of the colonial order embedded in the "international" of International Political Economy. For this reason, it is necessary to develop Lefebvre's critique of everyday life through postcolonial critiques of IPE. The affinities between postcolonial thought and the critique of everyday life – their critical disposition towards the abstractions produced and passed down through international relations of expropriation, violence, subjugation – highlight possible spaces and spatialities and

times and temporalities in which the persistent subjectivity of the dominated asserts itself.

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