

SOCIOLOGIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE: FROM ALIENATION TO THE PRODUCTION OF MEANING

Paolo Terenzi
University of Bologna

/// The Dualist Character of Everyday Life

In recent years there appears to have been a “new turn” in the sociology of contemporary culture, towards an increasingly explicit, systematic focus on “everyday life” as a fundamental subject of social analysis (Gardiner 2000; Sztompka 2008). This shift in focus is clear from the fact that in the last ten years a number of important, much-discussed essays have been published on the subject (Hurdley 2016; Johnson 2008; Kalekin-Fishman 2013; Neal & Murji 2015). In sociology, there are three approaches to the study of “everyday life”: as a concept, as an avenue of research, and as an area of study in itself. In the first case, studying everyday life means questioning what specifically defines it and what relationship exists between everyday life and other areas of social experience. Pursuant to this approach, everyday life is one of the problems dealt with by the sociology of knowledge. In the second case, everyday life is analysed as a specific avenue of research, where the focus is very much on what is considered of marginal importance in society, and for this reason falls outside of the scope of “grand theories.” Finally, everyday life can be seen as an area of study that focuses on material culture, that is, on the cultural significance of living, of eating, of objects, of forms of transport, and other similar subjects. This paper intends to focus on the first of these three spheres of study, and begins by highlighting the dualistic, oscillatory nature of the idea of everyday life that has characterized Western culture since classical times. The two paradigmatic notions of everyday life formulated in sociol-

ogy will be identified and analysed, and it will be shown that these notions also contain this original dualism, albeit expressed in other terms. Finally, we shall try to deal with the contradictions that emerge, considering them within a broader analytical framework.

This essay starts from a work by Gouldner (1975), which Donati (2002b) mentions and whose method of historical analysis he shares. In Gouldner's view, a dualistic, oscillatory understanding of everyday life runs through the development of Western culture, and in certain phases the composition of this dualism is provisional. What Arendt (1978: 23ff.) defined as the "theory of the two worlds" had already been codified in ancient Greek culture. The everyday is the realm of appearance and material needs, and as such contrasts with the world of ideas. This distinction established a binary code that was to have profound, lasting repercussions on European civilization and that subordinate the values of everyday life to the values of true life. Work is considered of less importance than philosophy, and is deemed of purely instrumental value. The time of manual labour is the inauthentic time of necessity and of the satisfaction of the basic needs of life. In this framework, whoever manages to avoid working, by cultivating the more noble faculties of the spirit (the intellectual faculties) is considered superior to other men. Euripides's tragedies are an exceptional case in ancient Greek culture. In Euripides's works, the heroes are people who were generally relegated to a marginal role in society (women, the elderly, anonymous individuals). Euripides's promotion of the everyday, of the prosaic, of the contingent and its fragility, is certainly important; however, it is not representative of Greek society as a whole (Nussbaum 2001). On closer examination this contrast between two notions of everyday life can also be found in early Christianity, where everyday life is not only the place of earthly concerns and affections, from which people must detach themselves, but also the place where religious faith can be experienced and demonstrated (the *Epistle to Diognetus* is a case in point). Work is still chiefly considered as a means with which to procure the material means of sustenance; work is extraneous to any fully human purpose. The contrast between the ascetic separation from the sphere of labour, and its full acceptance as part of human existence, was also evident in medieval culture. The monasteries, in particular those founded by the Benedictine Order, made a vital contribution to the organization of life along precise temporal lines: this regularity and this order symbolize the attempt to find a living unity between immanence and transcendence, manual labour and spiritual activity, working days and feast days. The everyday is organized

in accordance with set practices, each of which has its own specific time (Zerubavel 1985), but all of this is confined to places—monasteries—that are separated from the everyday lives of the majority of people. In medieval culture, a gradual increase in appreciation for the value of labour can be seen: people use both manual abilities and rational capacities in their work. Both work and involvement in civic and economic life begin to be considered things that are not contrary to religious life (Chafuen 2003). Late medieval culture tries, without fully succeeding, to reconcile the active life and the contemplative life; instrumental activity and rational activity; material needs and ideal requirements. As Weber has shown, the Reformation exalted commitment to earthly activities and seems to have given a new impetus to everyday life; however, on closer inspection this exaltation is merely apparent, since it transforms the world without transforming the meaning of the world (Donati 2002b). The religious notion of labour is not seen in relation to the virtues, and to a finalism inherent in human beings, but rather is perceived from the functional viewpoint. In Enlightenment culture, the “inner-worldly asceticism” analysed by Weber is gradually transformed into the emptying of transcendentalism in favour of immanence. The “world” becomes the only sphere of life in which Man’s needs are met, and in which Man can attain happiness. This gradual rendering absolute of the earthly dimension of everyday life was challenged by Romantic culture, which could not accept that the everyday should be considered a pacifying, all-engaging horizon. Everyday life could no longer be enlightened by the relationship with the sacred; the repetitiveness of technical rationality cannot be overcome by the expectation of a transcendental future. On the one hand, therefore, we have the ordinary, gray, meaningless lives of the majority, who are forced to abide by the logics of instrumental and bureaucratic rationality: “in daily life individuals experience the division between the human and the social as lack of meaning, as an absence of ends, as disorder, and as dramas of reality” (Donati 2012: 24); on the other hand, there is the opportunity, reserved for the select few, to render everyday life meaningful through the creativity of the human spirit and/or grand exploits.

Anti-heroes, alienation, and black-and-white lives, on the one hand. Heroes, meaning, and colourful lives on the other. These appear to be the terms of the dialectics of everyday life (Featherstone 1992). Western culture appears to be wavering between the debasement of everyday life and its exaltation. This dialectic, as we have seen, derives from Greek culture, and after various alternations it finds itself in the historical period marking the

advent of sociology, and subsequently in the frame of sociological enquiry itself. Having outlined the historical-cultural framework within which the “problem” of everyday life arose for the first time, we shall now see that sociological thought is also characterized by a dualistic, dialectical notion of the everyday.

/// The Sociology of Everyday Life: From Alienation to the Production of Meaning

The two principal sociological schools of thought concerned with the study of everyday life are Marxism and the phenomenological sociology of culture (Donati 2002b). The first school of thought criticizes the alienating, inauthentic character of everyday life, while the other perceives and analyses the everyday as the context in which, within the bounds of common sense, cultural meaning is produced. Numerous other subsequent developments may be traced, directly or indirectly, to these two models (the one critical, the other descriptive). Of course, it is not possible here to reconstruct the complex, detailed reflection on everyday life to be found in Marxism (for an introduction to this topic, see, e.g., Maycroft 1996) and in phenomenological sociology: instead, we simply offer a brief overview of relational sociology’s new interpretation of the role of everyday life in these two schools of thought. According to Marx, “everyday life” proceeds within the bounds of commodity fetishism: everyday life goes on between the two opposing poles of science and reality on the one hand, and appearance and ideology on the other. Everyday life is the inauthentic life of the subordinate social classes, of non-heroic cultures and their battle against oppression and alienation. The focus is clearly on the economic structures that determine the socio-cultural conditions of alienation, rather than on everyday life conceived abstractly. In Marx and the Marxist tradition, overcoming the dualism of everyday life by means of political revolution is not the only possible solution. There are Marxist scholars of everyday life who, although referring to the original paradigm, have nevertheless tried to formulate an original perspective and, at least in part, a certain independence from mainstream thought (Heller 2016; Lefebvre 2014). The most systematic, relevant analysis from a sociological viewpoint is that of Lefebvre, whose writings were highly influential not only in the field of sociology, but also in the historiography of the “Annales.” Everyday life is examined in the light of the dialectical relationship between authenticity and inauthenticity, a question that Lefebvre associates not only with Marx, but

also with Heidegger. The German philosopher and Lefebvre both viewed everyday life as the starting point for their reflections, and as the necessary link between Man and nature, and between Men, as well as being the inauthentic mode of this relationship. While in Heidegger's view, everyday life is the time of forgetting about death, Lefebvre saw it as the time in which our understanding of the essence of social relations eludes us. The French scholar's critique does not so much focus on any abstract condition of the spirit, as on the fundamental problem of Western industrialized societies, namely, alienation. Lefebvre believes his critique to be in keeping with the ideals of Marx, seen as the person who wanted more than anything to change everyday life, real life (Lefebvre 2014). The French sociologist wanted to overcome the economic reading of Marx, and was interested in recovering Marx's early works, in which the term "production"—the mediation between the natural and the human spheres—is given a broad meaning. In Lefebvre's view, the term "production" not only refers to the manufacture of objects, but also to "spiritual" production and the production of social relations (which in turn implies the reproduction of those social relations). The chance to escape the social mechanisms perpetuating the aforementioned state of alienation is to be found in revolution: a revolution conceived not so much as the conquest of political power, as pursued by early Marxism, or as the victory of sexual freedom as conceived by psychoanalytical Marxism, but rather as a change in everyday life—a revolution that delivers everyday life from the grip of the products of capitalism—manipulation, consumerism, advertising and industrial culture. Thus in Lefebvre's view, everyday life is a dialectic experience in which false consciousness and the processes leading to the overcoming of false consciousness, face up to one another. The critique proposed by Lefebvre aims to show how everyday life (perceived in micro-sociological terms) can become a place where human values are recovered and alienation overcome after the phase of (economic and cultural) production, in which what has been produced takes on an independent status from that of the producer. The analysis of everyday life conducted by Heller (2016), on the other hand, is based on three thematic areas: everyday knowledge; the concept of social reproduction; and the distinction between everyday life as an historical experience, and everyday life as an analytical category. Heller investigated the "contents" and the "anthropological character" of everyday knowledge. The former term referred to the sum of our knowledge of reality that we actually use in everyday life. This knowledge varies from one historical epoch to another, and depends on the social posi-

tions of the persons in question. It takes two forms: “knowing what” and “knowing how,” with the former generally leading to the latter, except in the case of religion. Conveying everyday knowledge is the task of the adult generations, even though each society assigns this role to specific persons and institutions. The process of conveying this knowledge is always a dynamic one in which any superfluous knowledge is cast aside, while new knowledge is introduced in the light of a changing social environment. In Agnes Heller’s view, “if individuals are to reproduce society, they must reproduce themselves as individuals. We may define ‘everyday life’ as the aggregate of those individual reproduction factors which, *pari passu*, make social reproduction possible” (ibid.: 3). This understanding differs from the existentialist interpretation, whereby everyday life comprises the conventions that are repeated each day in a cheerless manner, and from that of Lefebvre, who perceives everyday life as mediation between nature and society. Despite the fact that as a rule everyday life is spoken of as if it had its own ontology, Heller points out that apart from the recurrent aspects of that life, societies know various ways of interpreting and experiencing the everyday. In capitalist societies, everyday life is basically the alienated life of individuals who pursue their self-preservation and who tend to submit to society’s demands. Pending the advent of a non-alienated society, Heller argues that even in capitalist societies, certain individuals are capable of a personal revolt whereby they declare war on the alienating aspects of everyday life. This revolt occurs when an individual is capable of channelling his or her energy into a specific sphere of activity outside of everyday life and removed from everyday concerns (for a critical view of this approach, see Gardiner 2006). From this point of view, the question of the pursuit of beauty plays a key role in Heller’s work (2012). The anthropological emphasis and the insistence on the individual represent the work’s originality, which distances her from Marx’s position, and is why her thought is still influential today.

In the phenomenological sociology of culture, everyday life is the sphere in which a world of meaningful relations is created that transcends the purely material. It is in the sphere of the everyday that people give meaning to their experiences and to society. When Alfred Schütz (1972) reflects on the inter-subjective world of everyday life, he starts by attempting to understand how adult people relate to this reality and how they act with their fellow men. His reflections on everyday life gave significant impetus to the phenomenological school, and led to a number of original developments in the sociology of knowledge. Individuals live in diverse

realities he calls “finite provinces of meaning”: at any one time, only one such province comes to the fore, while interest in the existence of other provinces is suspended. Each finite province of meaning possesses something by means of which it is temporarily capable of considering itself as reality; but only everyday life (also called the “natural attitude”), constituted by a specific form of *epoché*, represents a world taken for granted, where all doubt regarding the existence of such is suspended. According to the phenomenological viewpoint, the formal nature of people’s conduct in everyday life is typified by the certainties of common sense. From the pragmatic point of view, a series of abstraction procedures are utilized in everyday life that permit people to implicitly, and repeatedly, adopt the “and so forth” formula, thus reducing the complexity of society (this aspect has subsequently been developed in particular by ethnomethodology). From the ontological point of view, it is taken for granted that the world and other individuals exist independently. The world perceived by common sense existed before we were born, and our predecessors gained experience of it, interpreting it as an organized world.

Schütz’s position is based on two beliefs: firstly, the belief that the common sense governing everyday life relies on the “solidity” and certainty of reality (when manipulating the reachable objects in the world, an individual realizes that they offer resistance); secondly, common-sense knowledge perceives reality as a whole that is ordered to a certain degree. In virtue of these two characteristics, the reality of everyday life is familiar and pre-acquired, and as such is taken for granted. The world known through an individual’s common sense is not only “solid” and ordered, but also appears originally as an inter-subjective world: we live as people among other people, linked by reciprocal ties and influenced by our understanding of others and others’ understanding of us. This inter-subjectivity manifests itself in three ways. It involves the reciprocity of perspectives, the social origins of knowledge, and the social distribution of knowledge. A reciprocity of perspectives means that in the natural attitude of common-sense knowledge, in everyday life, everyone takes it for granted that all people can know the world. According to Schütz, the reciprocity of perspectives enables a generalization to be made, namely that everyone takes it for granted and presumes that the others do likewise, and that despite starting from a different point of observing reality, it is nevertheless possible to adopt the perspective of another to a certain degree. In everyday life, only a small part of what we know is the result of our personal experi-

ence. The majority of what we know and remember has been conveyed to us by others: by our parents, teachers, friends, and ancestors. In everyday life, overall knowledge differs from one person to another: each is an expert in a limited field of knowledge, and knows little or nothing about the majority of other fields; this is another reason why a certain degree of faith is called for in social life. It would be impossible to individually re-tread the path leading to a certain type of knowledge each time such knowledge was called for. The theories regarding the link between common sense and everyday life were the point of departure for the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), in which everyday life became the object itself of the sociology of knowledge: this area of sociology deals with what people recognize as real in everyday life. Everyday life is a collection of routines, in relation to which people act and reflect for the best part of their time; it is their habitat. The reality of everyday life is a world taken for granted; a world that is spatially and temporally ordered and inter-subjective. In Berger and Luckmann's view "common sense contains innumerable pre- and quasi-scientific interpretations about everyday reality, which it takes for granted" (1966: 34). In common-sense knowledge, reality is taken for granted. Berger and Luckmann, as well, believe that the reality of everyday life possesses an order that is not bestowed upon it by the single individual, because everyone already has a place within that order. The reality of the everyday world existed before the birth of individual men and women, and shall remain after they die. Everyone lives in a finite state. The everyday world is constituted by numerous realities that also include phenomenon not present here and now. The world is shared with others: we are born, we grow, we learn, we do things together with others who are important for us, people who are different from us but in certain respects share the world with us. They differ from us because they have aspirations, interests, and plans that are different from ours (and this may give rise to conflict), but at the same time they have something that unites them to us because in any case we can understand them and be understood by them; we can put ourselves in their shoes and live with them in a shared world. The common-sense knowledge present in the everyday world is taken for granted until something happens that forces people to question their acquired certainties and try to find a meaning. This questioning of common sense was developed in particular by Garfinkel and the ethnomethodology that investigates everyday life, beginning from the separation between the world of everyday experience and the global social structure produced by modernization and rationalization. The development of communication in

everyday life starts from taking an innumerable series of implicit clauses for granted which entail a whole series of implicit “and so on.” The knowledge required in everyday life is addressed more to “how” than to “what”; it is a form of knowledge consisting in a series of methods of use, of techniques, of ad hoc procedures, that people utilize in an attempt to establish an agreement about the meaning of what is happening and what is said in everyday life. Therefore, expertise does not consist in shared knowledge, as Berger and Luckmann argued, but rather in the capacity to use, in a constant, methodical way, interpretative procedures or basic rules with which to attribute a rational, normative character to everyday actions and experience. Garfinkel’s approach to reality is more radical than that of Berger and Luckmann: he believes that reality appears the result of the cognitive processes that in everyday life attempt to comprehend that reality. Melvin Pollner placed the concept of “mundane reason” at the centre of the sociology of everyday life. In order to grasp social phenomena, mundane reason produces idealizations of reality (it creates limits, such as the principle of non-contradiction) which in each individual inference are considered unarguable: mundane reason “provides its practitioners with a wide range of explanations which preserve mundane reason’s stipulation that reality is coherent, determinate and intersubjectively accessible” (2010: 47). Pollner, using numerous examples taken from court hearings, tries to show that “the in-itself,” the “truth,” the “reality” that mundane reason pursues, is only knowable within certain categories established by mundane reason itself. Thanks to mundane reason, which Pollner also calls “common sense” (ibid.: 48), sociology and the practices of the actors in everyday life share a series of assumptions regarding the nature of society seen as a real, intersubjective sphere. Social practices presuppose a kind of collection of mundane inquiry, according to which “objects, events and processes in the outer world and the world as a general context are determinate, coherent and non-contradictory” (ibid.: 17). Sharing these fundamental assumptions has its advantages, not only at the epistemological level, but also in practical terms. Social life and the interaction of people may be based, in fact, on the belief that descriptions of the real world are going to be basically coherent and compatible. Should different explanations be given for the same fact, this means that one of the interpreting subjects is lying or has given a rushed judgement. What is precluded, a priori, is an inherent contradiction in reality itself. When he asserts that “the phenomenon par excellence is not the world per se but worlding, the work whereby a world per se and the attendant concerns which derive from a world per se—

truth and error, to mention two—are constructed and sustained” (Pollner 2010: 7), Pollner radicalizes the concept of social construction and applies it to the common-sense knowledge operating in everyday life. In this way, what we consider “reality” should be understood as a fiction constructed through the language used in everyday life.

We started by saying that in the phenomenological sociology of culture, everyday life refers to a common world, a sphere in which the experiences of individuals and social groups acquire meaning. The phenomenological sociology of culture tries to extend Husserl’s original aim of “Zurück zu den Sachen selbst” to the study of everyday life and culture; however, paradoxically it appears to also open the way to developments like those of the radical ethnomethodology, which go in a very different direction. The world of common sense and of “mundane reason” end up being something that needs exposing; they become a kind of second nature in which there is little room for any form of reflection that is not closed in itself.

Thus in sociological terms, the notion of “everyday life” is associated with a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, the expression brings to mind a common sense that is taken for granted, that is, a pre-scientific knowledge that has yet to be critically endorsed, or indeed an ideological form of knowledge. Everyday life evokes repetitive, prosaic, tiring aspects of existence, such as work and events of a mundane nature that characterize life in society. On the other hand, everyday life is conceived and experienced as the place and time that eludes systemic logic, as the sphere of affection and expressivity, and thus may become a kind of “Haven in a Heartless World,” to put it in the words of Christopher Lasch (1995) when describing the family’s social role in contemporary society. The risk of a unilateral reading of everyday life is implicit in sociological discourse, leaving a fundamental aspect thereof very much in the shade: this is evident from the overview of the various positions adopted by Marxist and phenomenological observers of everyday life. On the one hand, there are those who criticize everyday life immersed in the contradictions, in the social reproduction and in the alienating mechanisms of industrial (and post-industrial) society. On the other hand, there are those who describe everyday life as evolving on the basis of common-sense knowledge, and as representing the source of those meanings that individuals attribute to their own actions. In the former case, the contradiction may be overcome by reference to utopias, a theme that has recently attracted the renewed interest of the social sciences (Bregman 2017; Chrostowska & Ingram 2017); or by looking for extraordinary experiences that enable people to escape their gray, meaningless everyday

lives, at least for a while. On the other hand, while it is true that everyday life is shaped by the common-sense knowledge that has been consolidated in each community, and that constitutes the primary source of meaning for that community (Geertz 1983), it is also true that common sense may feed forms of social conformism, as the Marxist tradition—Gramsci in particular (Krehan 2016)—has argued; or it may be seen as a hermetic, ultimately illusory, horizon of daily practices, as shown by the ethnomethodological developments in Pollner's work.

/// Can Gouldner's Relational Approach Surmount the Dualism of Everyday Life?

Alvin Gouldner tries to overcome the dualism inherent in the analysis of everyday life, by combining the Marxian and ethnomethodological approaches. In the essay mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Gouldner offers an historical reconstruction, and sees the concept of "everyday life" as a criticism of extraordinary lives: both those of the saints, as narrated and taken as a model in religious writings, and those of the heroes, as declaimed in secular visions of the world. The everyday is interwoven with official histories of political life and with the systemic logic of economic life, and yet it maintains an otherness in relation to such spheres, as it recalls the repetition of daily habits and practices. Gouldner's interpretation of everyday life operates at both the critical-reflective and historical levels, in a reworking of the analyses offered by Lefebvre and Garfinkel. The former, in highlighting the contradictions of everyday life and the alienation looming over it, adopts a critical perspective: the latter, on the other hand, in emphasizing the importance of common language and of the practical logic of everyday activities, offers a more descriptive vision: everyday life is the framework of meaning in which our knowledge and practices are enmeshed. In Gouldner's view, everyday life is the life that is witnessed but not acknowledged (as ethnomethodology argues)—life that ought to be rid, at the same time, of its alienating and religious aspects (as Marxists argue). Gouldner's vision is not the only way of analysing and overcoming the dualisms in question. The relational sociology of Donati tries to deal with the same problems as Gouldner: Donati suggests that we interpret everyday life by trying to go beyond the sociological tradition's recurrent polarizations and dualisms, but his reading of the everyday is very different from that of Gouldner. In the relational approach, everyday life may

also be the space and time of the relationship between immanence and transcendence, of the critical need and desire for meaning. Reflection on everyday life is incorporated into the relational theory of the social registers of time, which are the different ways of stating the difference before/after in the sequences or transitions from one condition to another of a given social being. The “time register” (Donati 2012: 180–181) may be interactional (micro), symbolic (macro) or historical-social (meso). The first of the three registers—the time of communication—refers to time as an event; the second—the time of social relations—is a lasting time, the time of memory (subjective, moral, and historical); the third register is time that goes beyond time, which according to many scholars is the time of the sacred. This classification shows that social time is experienced in different, complementary modes. In contemporary Western societies, the time of everyday life tends to be identified with the interactional register. Instead of a relationship between the three registers, what is witnessed today is the emergence of everyday life with no history, that is, everyday life based purely on interaction, where the social and cultural aspects (memory and meaning) of the relation are somewhat obscured. Time loses its link with the things and the symbols that give meaning to life, and becomes a time of mere communication. In everyday life, actions and social relations seem to have been replaced by an interactive mode which, as such, is contingent, instantaneous, and incapable of generating history (ibid.: 95ff.). Modern society increasingly tends to confer a purely superficial, impersonal character to everyday life, whereby meaningful relations tend to be revoked or fragmented, to be replaced by social relations based exclusively on a communicative dynamic: individuals find themselves increasingly alone despite being increasingly interconnected (Turkle 2011). The theorists of the postmodern age argue that the period of large-scale narration is over. Events happen now, not history: there are plenty of stories, but no “one” history. People no longer feel connected to the past, or to the future. The time of everyday life in which the interactional register prevails thus expresses the exaltation of the present, which has become detached from the past and is devoid of any future direction. The “history-less” everyday has replaced a linear conception of time with a cyclical one. In the former case, the time-frame of existence, both personal and collective, was characterized by a starting point and a meaningful life path designed to lead to a point of arrival. As a number of other well-known writers have shown, the roots of

this dynamics lie in the Christian ethos; modernity has maintained this underlying scheme of things, albeit secularizing its contents. In post-modern society, time does not unfold in accordance with any linearity or finality, either religious or secular, but on the contrary appears to implode: events repeat themselves each day without leading anywhere in particular. Time thus becomes a hypertrophied aspect of everyday life in which everything is programmed, recorded, stored (time is made absolute), without the chance of it becoming an integral part of any personal history (worldliness appears nullified).

In a society characterized by the abandonment of a linear conception of time and by the prevalence of purely interactional registers, increasingly uncertain, fragmented everyday life is in danger of appearing to be a time of alienation, of meaningless suffering, of toil and contradiction. One possible way out of this situation is represented by the frantic attempts made to break out of this gray, repetitive everyday existence. Particularly in the case of young people, the most significant example of this attitude is the pursuit of “elaborate” and/or extreme risks (Le Breton 2013). The hope of achieving radical change is linked to vitalistic experience that always goes beyond, and against, everyday life: the space and time of “life” never appear to coincide with those of everyday existence. Where there is the everyday, there is no life, and where there is life there is no everyday. However, it is the very awareness of the inauthenticity of everyday life in contemporary society that could lend plausibility once again to a “religious option” (Joas 2014). The differences between everyday life and “real life,” between immanence and transcendence, between private life and public life, are resolved in various ways. Two opposing ways of resolving this dilemma appear paradigmatic, insofar as they express common trends in the most coherent manner. On the one hand, there are those who, in an attempt to live their everyday lives in accordance with religious ideals, try to create communities that voluntarily choose to cut themselves off from public life. One example of this trend is a social phenomenon emerging in the USA that has been called the “Benedict option” (Dreher 2017): individuals, families, and groups, in an attempt to re-establish Christianity as the focal point of everyday life (not subject to mediation), withdraw from public life and create parallel communities based on the Benedictine model. In order to shape everyday life, religion thus separates itself from the public sphere. On the other hand, there are those who try to merge everyday life, religion, and the public sphere. This is what is happening with the growing phenomena of extremism (Bronner 2016), where the

religious option is utilized, often in an instrumental manner, to create totalizing social and political projects. To give shape to everyday life, religion takes over from the public sphere completely. In both cases, despite their being at opposite extremes, the dualisms and tensions inherent in everyday life are in fact resolved, but in a reductionist manner. From a relational viewpoint, the most commonly proffered interpretations and proposals regarding the return of religions and their influence on the everyday lives of individuals and on the public sphere would appear unsatisfactory. The theory of a clash of civilizations, the proposal to limit religion to the private sphere, and the attempt to create a polytheistic culture in the form of a global civil religion, are invariably reductionist. In a relational approach, on the other hand, the focus is on creating a public sphere where different world views and different ways of living everyday life may be expressed in accordance with the rules of reciprocity, and may peacefully co-exist (Donati 2002a). The relationship between different cultures of everyday life can lead to the improved awareness of the processes of alienation that characterize contemporary society as well, while at the same time permitting the establishment of a “common sense” which may serve as the basis for civil co-existence (Boudon 2007). Everyday life is the focal point for the fundamental problems in the lives of individuals and of social structures. The interaction between the relational model and the two classical models of analysis—the Marxist model and the phenomenological model—appears to offer ways of dealing with the aporias present in sociological discourse, while at the same time suggesting new ideas for further study that can lead to further developments in this area of sociological inquiry.

Bibliography:

/// Arendt H. 1978. *The Life of the Mind*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

/// Beck U. 2008. *World at Risk*, Polity Press.

/// Berger P., Luckmann T. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin Books.

/// Boudon R. 2007. *Renouveler la démocratie. Éloge du sens commun*, Odile Jacob.

/// Bregman R. 2017. *Utopia for Realists: How We Can Build the Ideal World*, Little, Brown and Company.

- /// Bronner G. 2016. *La pensée extrême. Comment des hommes ordinaires deviennent des fanatiques*, Puf.
- /// Chafuen A. 2003. *Faith and Liberty: The Economic Thought of the Late Scholastics*, Lexington Books.
- /// Chrostowska S.D., Ingram J.D. 2017. *Political Uses of Utopia. New Marxist, Anarchist, and Radical Democratic Perspectives*, Columbia University Press.
- /// Donati P. 2002a. *Religion and Democracy: The Challenge of a 'Religiously Qualified' Public Sphere*, "Polish Sociological Review", vol. 138, pp. 147–173.
- /// Donati P. 2002b. *Senso e valore della vita quotidiana*, "Annales Theologici", vol. 16(1) , pp. 55–110.
- /// Donati P. 2012. *Relational Sociology: A New Paradigm for the Social Sciences*, Routledge.
- /// Dreher R. 2017. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, Sentinel.
- /// Featherstone M. 1992. *The Heroic Life and Everyday Life*, "Theory, Culture and Society", vol. 9(1), pp. 159–182.
- /// Gardiner M.E. 2000. *Critiques of Everyday Life: An Introduction*, Routledge.
- /// Gardiner M.E. 2006. *Marxism and the Convergence of Utopia and the Everyday*, "History of the Human Sciences", vol. 3, pp. 1–32.
- /// Geertz C. 1983. *Common Sense as a Cultural System*, [in:] *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, Basic Books, pp. 73-93.
- /// Gouldner A. 1975. *The Sociology and Everyday Life*, [in:] *The Idea of Social Structure: Papers in Honor of R.K. Merton*, ed. L. Coser, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, pp. 417–432.
- /// Heller A. 2012. *The Concept of Beauty*, Lexington Books.
- /// Heller A. 2016. *Everyday Life*, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- /// Hurdley R. 2016. *Everyday Life: The Making of a Sociological Topic, Then Making it 'Cultural Sociology'*, [in:] *The Sage Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, eds. D. Inglis, A.M. Almila, Sage Publications, pp. 372–389.
- /// Joas H. 2014. *Faith as an Option*, Stanford University Press.

/// Johnson D.P. 2008. *Phenomenological Sociology and Ethnomethodology: The Everyday Life World of Common Sense*, [in:] *Contemporary Sociological Theory: An Integrated Multi-Level Approach*, Springer, pp. 137–163.

/// Kalekin-Fishman D. 2013. *Sociology of Everyday Life*, “Current Sociology”, vol. 61(5–6), pp. 714–732.

/// Krehan C. 2016. *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives*, Duke University Press.

/// Lasch C. 1995. *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged*, W.W. Norton & Company.

/// Le Breton D. 2013. *Conduites à risque*, Puf.

/// Lefebvre H. 2014. *Critique of Everyday Life*, Verso.

/// Maycroft N. 1996. *Marxism and Everyday Life*, “Studies in Marxism”, vol. 3, pp. 71–91.

/// Neal S., Murji K., eds. 2015. *Sociologies of Everyday Life*, Special Issue of “Sociology”, vol. 49(5), pp. 811–819.

/// Nussbaum M. 2001. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press.

/// Pollner M. 2010. *Mundane Reason*, Cambridge University Press.

/// Schütz A. 1972. *Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action*, [in:] *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

/// Sztompka P. 2008. *The Focus on Everyday Life: a New Turn in Sociology*, “European Review”, vol. 16(1), pp. 1–15.

/// Turkle S. 2011. *Alone Together*, Basic Books.

/// Zerubavel E. 1985. *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*, University of California Press.

/// **Abstract**

This paper analyses the concept of everyday life as formulated in relational sociology. It shows that Pierpaolo Donati's historical analysis of the

dualist nature of everyday life is similar to that of Alvin Gouldner but that the two authors' approaches differ in terms of the possibility of overcoming this dualism. From the perspective of relational sociology, sociological interpretations of everyday life can be traced to two paradigms. The first is the Marxist paradigm, in which everyday life is primarily characterized by forms of alienation. The second is the phenomenological paradigm, in which everyday life primarily consists of producing meaning. The first paradigm examines stories and cultures of subordinate social groups, and denounces domination and alienation in everyday life. The second paradigm examines the common-sense world, and how it is taken for granted, structured, and inter-subjective. Relational sociology seeks to overcome these two paradigms by highlighting their aporias, and considers alienation to be the outcome of a deep division between the ultimate meaning of life and the culture of everyday life. While in order to overcome this dualism, Gouldner offers an immanent reading of everyday life, relational sociology tries to show how in everyday life the relationship between social practices and culture may give rise to a new form of secularism that is accepting of non-fundamentalist aspects of religious belief.

Keywords:

meaning, dualism, everyday life, common sense, relational sociology

/// **Paolo Terenzi**—associate professor in sociology of cultural and communicative processes at the University of Bologna, Department of Political and Social Sciences. He is secretary of the international network “Relational Studies in Sociology.” His publications include *Percorsi di sociologia relazionale* (2012), *Lessico della sociologia relazionale* (2016), *Ideologie. Uno studio su cultura, razionalità e politica* (2017).

E-mail: paolo.terenzi@unibo.it

