

"One of the great French intellectual  
activities of the twentieth century"  
—David Harvey

"The last great classical philosopher"  
—Frederic Jameson

# Critique of Everyday Life, Henri Lefebvre,

The three-volume text by

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resistance fighter in the youth, was  
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## Critique of Everyday Life

*Henri Lefebvre , John Moore (Translator) , Gregory Elliott (Translator) , Michel Trebitsch (Preface)*

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**Critique of Everyday Life** Henri Lefebvre , John Moore (Translator) , Gregory Elliott (Translator) , Michel Trebitsch (Preface)

Henri Lefebvre's magnum opus: a monumental exploration of contemporary society.

Henri Lefebvre's three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* is perhaps the richest, most prescient work by one of the twentieth century's greatest philosophers. Written at the birth of post-war consumerism, the *Critique* was a philosophical inspiration for the 1968 student revolution in France and is considered to be the founding text of all that we know as cultural studies, as well as a major influence on the fields of contemporary philosophy, geography, sociology, architecture, political theory and urbanism. A work of enormous range and subtlety, Lefebvre takes as his starting-point and guide the 'trivial'; details of quotidian experience: an experience colonized by the commodity, shadowed by inauthenticity, yet one which remains the only source of resistance and change.

This is an enduringly radical text, untimely today only in its intransigence and optimism.

## Critique of Everyday Life Details

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# From Reader Review Critique of Everyday Life for online ebook

## Steven says

I won't pretend to be qualified (yet) to write a proper and just review of this book. I will limit myself to say what it was to me: difficult, challenging, exciting, and fun. The first and third volumes are easier to read than the second, mainly because of the way Lefebvre wrote them, in plain language, Volume two on the other hand seemed to have more of an academic and philosophical tone that I could not always get or follow. The whole thing opened my mind to the everyday as I had not seen it before, as the main stage of events of life itself, where the good stuff happens, in some way or another. I am sure I will be rereading this book again sooner than later, hopefully more prepared to comprehend contexts, terms and conclusions, and draw my own in a proper way.

That said, I recommend this reading wholeheartedly. Lefebvre develops themes that are still very much alive today, and he wrote about them in the 40s, 60s and 80s as if he were alive in 2015, seeing them unfold. For example topics related to identity, differentiation and particularities, that right away reminded me of identity politics and his 'preview' of the information age and how he'd thought it would unfurl (some of what he wrote seems almost prophetic).

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## Gary Beauregard Bottomley says

The only way to understand each separate volume is to read all three. To read all three volumes is to realize the masterpiece that is unfolding, to read each volume in isolation would be as experiencing a disjointed set of frustrated notes limited to the time period under consideration. Lefebvre changes while growing over time. One could not pick three more interesting years, 1947, 1961 and 1981 or a more polished author than Lefebvre to have a reflection of what the everyday meant and its potential for change.

I can only give hints at why this book is so much fun to read. The breadth of topics covered will keep all readers highly entertained and edified. The second law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy, the only law that matters is woven in the story, information theory and why it matters is too, and the nature of cycles, signal and semantics theory, time, science, Hegel, Heidegger, and stray observations beyond an old foggy complaining about change as well as a lot of that too. The social versus the individual and the particular and how the person matters beyond the totality. Hegel's dialectic in the first two volumes, the conscious negating the unconscious leading to its negation and then to the thought itself through the dialectic movement and then by the third volume the negation of the negation is only barely mentioned and that is just in order to dis Adorno on regarding the need for an ideology past Marxism instead of the end of ideology itself. He didn't seem to like Adorno, but yet the first volume has lots of similarities with 'Dialectic of Enlightenment'. Both seem to embrace a theme that everything that is happening with modernity makes us less aware of the everyday.

Marx is all important in the first volume and Das Kapital Volume I is clearly its inspiration. Alienation, mysticism, fetishism with reification of the object as real predominate the understanding of the everyday (I really enjoyed Das Kapital Volume I, but if that's not your cup of tea, I would recommend 'Infinite Jest' by D.F. Wallace because he too has those themes within his book). Hegel and the Dialectic run throughout the second volume. 'Sex, labor and information' dominate the third volume. The author had a weird thing about

sex (as does Sartre, and this author likes the Existentialist and still clings to the Psychoanalysts, and a footnote in volume two mentioned that Sartre liked this book but Lefebvre did not care for Sartre's philosophy in general). He also misfires on the status of women completely within both volume one and volume two, he makes the status quo the real for women. Women magazines distract and control he says, and he never envisions and doesn't seem to want the empowerment of women or gives any hints that they will be full contributors to society in the future.

By volume three, he realizes that most of what he had been saying is different from what he wanted to say in 1981. He walks away from the everyday qua everyday and focuses on the day to day (quotidian). He is prescient on information as the ultimate commodity and how it alienates us from ourselves (he foresees Harari's 'Home Deus' vision of the world 35 years before that book comes out). He's becoming post-modern and anti-humanist and embraces Nietzsche and even said that most of Nietzsche's sayings on 'will to power' are mostly a critique of it.

The everyday starts off as the human experience of being-in-the-world proximally and for the most part by understanding itself in terms of its world as the world reveals itself as itself and not as a Self outside itself (the hammer is the hammer and we know it is for nailing without having to first reflect upon it, pre-reflection points us to our ownmost self, to our everyday self). The author doesn't word it exactly that way, but he definitely falls into a Heideggerian way of thinking about the self as self and the everyday for the first two volumes.

Each volume is different and sees itself for what it thinks it should be, but by the end the reader knows 'A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds' and the author knows that understanding the everyday in order to radically transform it will be better served by creating a new self than destroying an old self (the author gives an analogy of pirates not transforming but creating a new world). The author realizes that his project needs to change with the times and does just that.

By the third volume he makes the statement that he uses the subject predicate copula formation such as 'the rose is red' in order to be understood and that he doesn't want to get bogged down in the philosophical nature of 'being qua being'. (I'm making a paraphrase out of something he said in the third volume).

The three volumes as a whole is a disclosing of how we learn to think about ourselves and our understanding is always developing as it should. Overall, when this project is looked at as a project about a project (which can only come after all three volumes are written) and the richness of learning to look at how we thought about ourselves thinking about ourselves over time this book can be a very edifying (and entertaining) read.

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## **Bjørn Kleiven says**

A mastermind, I wonder what the volume IV would be, had he written today.

I rate this 5 because of the enormous field covered, the depth of knowledge behind and within.

It's a hard book, and I had to iron work.

cheers dialectic, I just read that some others find it difficult to explain;

however Henri Lefebvre managed excellently.

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## **David Anderson says**

Excerpts from and links to two overviews of Lefebvre's work:

"Historically speaking, Henri Lefebvre's three-volume *The Critique of Everyday Life* was a great influence on the New Left, '68 and all that. Lefebvre also continues to be an influence on the work of David Harvey, Fredric Jameson etc. Rather than discussing Lefebvre's historical importance, this summary will outline Lefebvre's argument and emphasizing *The Critique of Everyday Life*'s contemporary relevance.

"Lefebvre's premise is that 'the only real critique was and remains the Critique of the Left...Because it alone is based on knowledge.' Lefebvre acts on this premise by arguing for a Marxian endeavour at odds with the vacuous formalism of the official Stalinist Marxism of his time. Emphasizing the sociological basis of Marx's thought and the central importance of Marx's concepts of alienation, fetishism and mystification, Lefebvre's argues these categories should be used to critique everyday life."

<https://futuresandpasts.wordpress.com...>

"Lefebvre extends Marx's analysis by discovering new forms of alienation, and arguing that capitalism not only organizes relations of production in an exploitive manner (which produces several forms of alienation in workers) but that every aspect of life is emptied of meaning or significance, which is then purchased back in the form of spectacular commodities. Rather than resolving alienation, consumption is part of the mis-recognition of their alienated state by modern consumers."

<https://sites.ualberta.ca/~rshields/f...>

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## **Geoff says**

Hey look at me being a marketing schmo for Verso: all three volumes of Lefebvre's Big Ass Book (848 pgs.) in one BUCH half price right now: I bought one: so might you: what else are you doing with your money?: paying for LOVE?: watching GAME OF THRONES? GRRMARTIN no longer needs your cash: publishers of dead Marxists do:

<http://www.versobooks.com/books/1623-...>

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## **Jacob says**

After having read all three volumes I contend that the following phrases from Henri Lefebvre's *CRITIQUE OF EVERYDAY LIFE* (Verso) would make great metal song titles:

"Burdened Living Reality with a Parasitic Growth" (p. 77)

"A Mysterious Punishment" (p. 186)

"Nothingness Activated" (p. 239)

"Capable of Dying" (p. 454)  
"Death Grasps the Living" (p. 454)  
"Abandoned by Death" (p. 456)  
"Betrothed to Death" (p. 457)  
"The Black Sun of Empty Anguish" (p. 642)  
"The Desolation of Everyday Life (Emptiness And Ennui)" (p. 642)  
"Do Moments Die?" (p. 647)  
"Perhaps Successes Are Merely Monstrosities Which Chance Has Smiled Upon" (p. 651)  
"The Era of the Void" (p. 660)  
"Where Unhappiness Takes Shapes" (p. 668)  
"Everything Is Dead Already" (p. 739)  
"Misfortune, Not Nothingness" (p. 743)  
"Gift of Oblivion" (p. 801)

And the album could be called "Is Carrying Chaos Within Oneself Sufficient to Give Birth to a Star?" (p. 740)

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