

A social subject's identity in everydayness: a reflection on waldenfels's legacy

Tatiana Fanenshtil^{1,*}, Olga Ivenkova²

National Research Tomsk State University, 634050, Tomsk, Russia
Smolensk State University, 214000, Smolensk, Russia

Abstract. Bernhard Waldenfels formulates the concept of everydayness as a “crucible of rationality”, in which everydayness is viewed as a social boundary and non-reflective social background of the subject's interactions with the world of social reality. We explore the potential of everydayness in the detection of the identity of a social subject and rethink Waldenfels's concept of everydayness. The research method is a phenomenological analysis. In everyday activities of the subject, structures of the humanity's material culture are replicated and changed. The role of everydayness is growing in the modern world, along with the subjective role of a particular individual. The identification of the social subject in everydayness occurs at the level of natural and social corporeality, which is provided by the heuristics of the adaptive response to the transformation of social processes in the context of the subject's everyday interactions. Everydayness is represented as constituent and constructive modes of the social being of the subject.

Introduction

In his article “Everydayness as a Crucible of Rationality”, Bernhard Waldenfels creates an image that has firmly entered socio-philosophical discourse as a stable association with everydayness (Waldenfels, 1991). The image of a melting crucible combines various facets of everydayness that are problematized and thematized both in social philosophy and in the adjacent cultural, historical, sociological and linguistic studies. In the Russian tradition of socio-philosophical studies of everydayness, the image of a crucible as a heatproof vessel for melting materials has become a reflexive symbol of the external strength and internal complexity of this phenomenon and, at the same time, of its close connection with the world of social reality. In essence, this symbol marks the tendency to an interdisciplinary research of everydayness and the desire for integrity in the researcher's inquiry into the invariant characteristics of everydayness and into its external determinants.

* Corresponding author: fan_tan@mail.tsu.ru

More than 30 years ago, Waldenfels defined his concept of a crucible through the following characteristics: everydayness as the social border of “everydayization” and “overcoming everydayness”, everydayness as an interactive background of social processes, everydayness as a non-reflexive replication of social structures. In this article, we aim to comprehend the essential, according to Waldenfels, aspects of everydayness in the modern conditions of social reality and in the established tradition of everydayness studies.

A Social Subject’s Identity at the Borders of Everydayness

The trend of social reality’s dynamization does not allow thinking of it otherwise than of a reality of social interactions, in which cognizing subjects discover their being at different levels. Social subjects are identified in the structures of social interactions through cognition. The ability to understand who the subject is, to feel the subject’s potential and versatility manifested in social interactions stems from a sense of identity (Trufanova, 2010, 2017). The key identifying question in the social cognition of the subject is “Who am I?”. It is in this question and through it that the problem of a social subject’s identification is posed. Elena Zolotukhina-Abolina emphasizes the interactive nature of the social subject’s identity in her work *Everydayness: Philosophical Mysteries*: “The social world presents us with ourselves. No matter how much we wish to be “something else”, even in this desire of ours we are deeply social. The most original, capricious, extraordinary subjects are nevertheless correlated with the group they belong to . . . Subjects shape their individuality by identifying themselves with others and separating themselves from others” (Zolotukhina-Abolina, 2005). We see everydayness as one of the interactive levels of social reality, in accordance with the level approach.

The concept of the level methodology of socio-philosophical research was developed by Vladimir Barulin in the 1980s–1990s. The methodology was applied in the study of Russian identity (Barulin, 2000). In the framework of the level approach, social reality is considered as a methodological concept of the interactive levels of social processes, of social functions and structures, as well as of the social microlevel of everydayness. Each level is characterized by a certain disposition of the subject in interaction with the social world, including the degree of reflexivity. The description of the microlevel of everyday social interactions coincides with Waldenfels’s description of everydayness as rationality scattered in experience and in everyday replications. It is in this social vein that Waldenfels defines everydayness as the border of “everydayization” and “overcoming everydayness” processes and emphasizes the exclusively social and practical nature of its “border” nature. We see everydayness as a social hybrid that belongs simultaneously to the physical, biological and social worlds (Fanenshtil’, Chibir, 2018). Everyday reality is, in essence, a vital global social interactive sphere of human survival practices which is localized in individual bodies in the real time mode.

Through natural corporeality, subjects integrate into social reality, enter into the structures of social time and space, reproduce and maintain the background of social reality, ensure their own survival. By replicating the background, subjects take root in the social world and thus form their social corporeality (images of their bodies). In this regard, socially constructed processes (social mode, social space, social time, social dramaturgy, social consumption, etc.) become part of the everyday reality of subjects’ natural corporeality.

Thus, a social subject’s identity within the borders of everydayness is determined through knowledge, ideas and feelings that generate the experience of self-identity, when one can say: “This is me, this is mine” (Emelin, Rasskazova, Tkhostov, 2018). Everydayness, as the

social border between the natural and the social, contains two streams of the subject's self-discovery: fitting into the social reality of the natural human body and forming the subject's social body.

Everyday Interactions: A Small Coin of a Subject's Social Being

Waldenfels opposes the initial research tradition of depreciating everydayness and reducing it to the lowest and secondary level of social reality; he assigns "a new meaning of a place of a changeable and varying rationality" to it (Waldenfels, 1991). This corresponds to the general trend of social reality's dynamization (Bordoni, 2016) and sets the perception of everydayness as a dynamic interactive environment, which, in its own way, ensures the identity of a social subject. Speaking about the "everydayization" of social reality, Waldenfels singles out its advantages for a social subject who enters into a system of interactions.

Everydayness creates a holistic and integrating basis for every day a person lives. Day after day, human life consists of an elementary, both momentary and long-term integration of natural and social corporeality into the structures of social reality (Ivenkova, 2018). In assembling social corporeality as a zero point, a certain transformation is possible, when sensations and perceptions of a biological body become representations of social corporeality, which is a certain conversion effect. Everydayness exists in close interaction with other levels of social reality; it is also influenced by general trends of modern social processes' dynamization. In this stream, the hierarchy of channels and layers of multichannel and multilayer everyday practices is changing, and we can observe their implementation that does not directly aim at the natural survival of a particular subject, which may be due to a change in the practical content of social survival in the modern world.

We understand everyday interactions as social subjects' extremely practical and utilitarian relations with the world of things at hand, objectified by the presence of subjective institutions. The dynamics of processes in social reality constantly produces the effect of the outdatedness of the knowledge of habitual action algorithms in everydayness. This leads to microfailures in everydayness, which, however, does not reduce the low reflexivity of its sociomicrolevel: despite the fact that any failure of sustainable practice takes subjects out of their framework in search for a new algorithm, the failure still remains an internal violation of everyday experience production. Changes in subjects' perception, in a social situation channel, or any other transformations, leave the everyday everyday as long as subjects' bodies exist. In everyday social processes associated with human biological bodies and with social corporeality foundation design, there is no distance, there is no reason as such for reflection, for stopping.

In this regard, the characteristic processes of everyday interactions are pragmatization, habitualization, typification. The ontological redundancy of social subjects and their deep rootedness at the level of everyday interactions are manifested in the conflict of the non-everydayness and the constant need to include one's natural corporeality into the social system again and again. At the same time, the balance of knowing the algorithms of everyday interactions and the practices that implement them maintains the effect of the reality of what is happening (and can support it throughout the life of a particular person) and ensures subjects' socio-ontological sufficiency at the elementary socio-natural level of social reality.

A Social Subject in Producing Everyday Experience: An Expert for Oneself

Everyday knowledge is pragmatic; it aims at subjects' natural and social survival. Social subjects gain everyday knowledge in interactive practices – processes of producing everyday experience, and the verity of this knowledge requires constant confirmation as pragmatism (Rakitov, 2018).

The axiomatics of a social subject's identity at the level of everydayness has a social basis: the established model of behavior is transferred through vertical and horizontal channels of social interaction, thus the following generations receive part of life experience together with identities associated with this experience (Sokolovskij, 2015). In everyday microscopic actions, such knowledge literally sews together a person's natural corporeality and the world of social interactions and thus creates the primary natural level of a person's social corporeality. For example, as Theun Pieter van Tienoven shows in his research, the microscopy of subjective disposition in everyday social interaction can reach the level of homeostatic regulation or individualized interactive replication (Van Tienoven, 2017).

The practical moment of the acquisition and existence of everyday knowledge in a socio-constructing aspect reduces the cognitive status and depth of subjects' self-reflection. Of the processes that construct social reality: habitualization, legitimation, institutionalization, transformation (Berger, Luckmann, 1966), everydayness is more focused on the habitualization of new actions and practices, it is located at the intersection of natural and social (artificial) knowledge. The adequacy of people's behavior in everyday interaction with the social world lies in their ability to act correctly rather than to describe, reflect and subsequently optimize actions. It is in this vein that Waldenfels postulates the nature of everyday rationality.

However, the current trends of social reality no longer differentiate between the everyday and the expert – an opposition Waldenfels made. The stream of microscopic interactively rationalized actions can have an element of freedom and invention (Certeau, 2015). The commonality produced by everyday replications of the social is no longer a force that determines a person's identity (Bauman, 2008). Individualization is this constructive force in modern social reality. In terms of everydayness, individualization manifests itself in the conscious technologization of one's own social being at the microscopic level.

Individualization of everydayness concerns both rationalization processes of analysis and reflection and life experience fixation, dissemination and universalization (life hacks, workshops, trainings, unique practices). As a result, in everyday interactions, leadership (a socially devalued position of a conscious practice of one's own life) becomes a social subject's optimal expert disposition, self-referential in its uniqueness.

If a reflexive entry into everyday life is a marker of everydayness complication, other levels of modern social reality may experience the opposite trend of simplification: this is how Zygmunt Bauman describes the socio-cognitive state of subjects of a liquid modernity society in his key work *Liquid Modernity* (Bauman, 2008). Social subjects, by complicating the simple, immerse deeper into the microscopic level of social interactions and lose an integral sense of the world of social reality, and of everyday interactions in particular.

Research Method

In our reflexive analysis of Waldenfels's everydayness concept, we use the phenomenological method in the variety of its modifications: a phenomenological analysis of the social and everydayness (Lefebvre, 1987; Waldenfels, 1991; Bauman, 2008), Barulin's level approach (Barulin, 2000), principles of social constructionism (Berger, Luckmann, 1966). The phenomenological method in the socio-philosophical studies of everydayness is a basic methodology focused on the study of the phenomena of multiple realities of social subjects' existence. In the analysis of everydayness, this method allows examining the reality which subjects, in their perception and behavior, establish connections with. Subjects of everyday interactions are sources of sense. Everyday sense bearing experience reveals the surrounding world as something given, primordially obvious, as an axiom. In the phenomenological tradition laid down by Edmund Husserl, such a world is referred to as "lifeworld". Social subjects create and reproduce their lifeworlds on the basis of their ideas, fantasies, interests, aspirations and doubts, which they translate outward and, in response, perceive the totality of other subjects' intentions, thereby sharing their lifeworlds with Others.

Conclusion

Having examined the problems of a social subject's identity in everydayness by reflecting on the concept of everydayness (a "crucible of rationality") as Waldenfels's legacy in the phenomenological socio-philosophical studies of everydayness, we have come to the conclusion that, along with the global processes of habitualization, typification, continuity and reproduction of social realities, everyday practices of social interactions are heuristic to a certain extent and contain a constructive potential that constitutes social subjects.

In the production of everyday experience, subjects' social being acquires a constitutive basis by fitting its natural corporeality into the structures of social interactions. Social subjects gain their identity in realizing the constructive potential of everydayness, which is seen as a level of social interactions by reflexive immersion into everyday practices. This allows understanding everydayness as a full-fledged level of a subject's knowledge-based parity interaction with the world of social reality rather than as a given inert and non-problematised social environment of human habitat.

The reflection on the legacy of the socio-phenomenological tradition of everydayness studies, conceptualized by Waldenfels, through the prism of trends of dynamization of modern social reality's processes shows us the everyday subject as a link in the model of an integral holistic subject that constructs social reality while establishing one's own social being.

References

1. V. S. Barulin, *Russian Human in the 20th century. Losing and Finding Yourself* (Aletejya, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2000).
2. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Piter, St. Petersburg, 2008).
3. P. L., Berger, T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise on Sociology of Knowledge* (Penguin Putman Inc., New York, 1966).
4. C. Bordoni, *Introduction to Zygmunt Bauman*, *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Information on <https://www.cairn-int.info/publications-of-Bordoni-Carlo--61911.htm> (Accessed 14 Jul 2019). (2016).

5. de M. Certeau, *The Invention of Everydayness. I. The Art of Doing* (Izdatel'stvo Evropejskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2015).
6. V.A. Emelin, E.I. Rasskazova, A.Sh. Tkhostov, *The Unity and Diversity of the Processes of Personal Identity Formation*, *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, **2**, 27–38 (2018).
7. T.V. Fanenshtil' E.V. Chibir, *Social Construction: Eventness and Everydayness*, *Vestnik nauki Sibiri*, Information on <http://jwtsu.ru/journal/article/view/849> (Accessed 14 Jul 2019). (2018).
8. O.A. Ivenkova, *Structures of Daily Occurrence as Factor of Formation of Values of Meaning of Life of Modern Education*, *Social transformation* (Izdatel'stvo Smolenskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, Smolensk, Russia) 85–92 (2018).
9. H., Lefebvre, C. Levich, *The Everyday and Everydayness*, *Yale French Studies*, **73**, 7–11 (1987).
10. A.I. Rakitov, *In Defense of Subjectivism (Social Reality, Social Activity, Social Epistemology)*, *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, **9**, 20–26 (2018).
11. S.V. Sokolovskij, *Metaphysics of Identity and the Study of Identification Processes in Social Sciences*, *Sibirskie istoricheskie issledovaniya*, **1**, 8–22 (2015).
12. E.O. Trufanova, *Person in Labyrinth of Identities*, *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, **2**, 13–22 (2010).
13. E.O. Trufanova, *The Self as Reality and as Construction*, *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, **8**, 100–112 (2017).
14. B. Waldenfels, *Everydayness as a Crucible of Rationality*, *Sociologos*, **1**, 39–50 (1991).
15. T. P. Van Tienoven, I. Glorieux, J. Minnen, *Exploring the stable practices of everyday life: A multi-day time-diary approach*, *The Sociological Review*, Information on https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313016330_Exploring_the_stable_practices_of_everyday_life_A_multi-day_time-diary_approach?ev=prf_high (Accessed 14 Jul 2019). (2017).
16. E.V. Zolotukhina-Abolina, *Everydayness: Philosophical Mysteries* (Nika, Moscow, Russia, 2005).