

Definitions

by **SI 1958**

constructed situation

A moment of life, concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of unitary environment and the free play of events.

situationist

Relating to the theory or practical activity of constructing situations. One who engages in the construction of situations. A member of the Situationist International.

situationism

A word totally devoid of meaning, improperly derived from the preceding term. There is no situationism, which would mean a theory of interpretation of existing facts. The notion of situationism was obviously conceived by anti-situationists.

psychogeography

The study of the precise effects of geographical setting, consciously managed or not, acting directly on the mood and behaviour of the individual.

psychogeographical

Relating to psychogeography. That which manifests the direct effect of geographical setting on mood.

psychogeographer

One who studies and reports on psychogeographical realities.

dérive

An experimental mode of behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique for hastily passing through varied environments. Also used, more particularly, to designate the duration of a prolonged exercise of such an experiment.

unitary urbanism

The theory of the combined use of art and technology leading to the integrated construction of an environment dynamically linked to behavioural experiments.

détournement

Used as an abbreviation for the formula: détournement of prefabricated aesthetic elements. The integration of past or present artistic production into a superior environmental construction. In this sense, there cannot be situationist painting, or music, but a situationist use of these media. In a more primitive sense, détournement from within old cultural spheres is a form of propaganda, which lays witness to the depletion and waning importance of these spheres.

culture

The reflection and prefiguration at any given historical moment, of the possible organization of daily life; the complex of mores, aesthetic, and feelings by which a collective reacts to a life which is objectively given to it by its economy. (We define this term only from the perspective of the creation of values, and not of their teaching.)

decomposition

The process by which traditional cultural forms have destroyed themselves, under the effects of the appearance of superior means of dominating nature, permitting and requiring superior cultural constructions. We distinguish between an active phase of decomposition, effective demolition of older superstructures -- which ends around 1930 -- and a phase of repetition, which has dominated since then. The delay in passing from decomposition to new constructions is tied to the delay in the revolutionary liquidation of capitalism.

Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation

by **SI 1958**

“The construction of situations begins beyond the ruins of the modern spectacle. It is easy to see how much the very principle of the spectacle — nonintervention — is linked to the alienation of the old world. Conversely, the most pertinent revolutionary experiments in culture have sought to break the spectators’ psychological identification with the hero so as to draw them into activity. ...The situation is thus designed to be lived by its constructors. The role played by a passive or merely bit-part playing ‘public’ must constantly diminish, while that played by those who cannot be called actors, but rather, in a new sense of the term, ‘livers,’ must steadily increase.”

—Report on the Construction of Situations

Our conception of a “constructed situation” is not limited to an integrated use of artistic means to create an ambiance, however great the force or spatiotemporal extent of that ambiance might be. A situation is also an integrated ensemble of behavior in time. It is composed of actions contained in a transitory decor. These actions are the product of the decor and of themselves, and they in their turn produce other decors and other actions. How can these forces be oriented? We are not going to limit ourselves to merely empirical experimentation with environments in quest of mechanistically provoked surprises. The really experimental direction of situationist activity consists in setting up, on the basis of more or less clearly recognized desires, a temporary field of activity favorable to these desires. This alone can lead to the further clarification of these simple basic desires, and to the confused emergence of new desires whose material roots will be precisely the *new reality* engendered by situationist constructions.

We must thus envisage a sort of situationist-oriented psychoanalysis in which, in contrast to the goals pursued by the various currents stemming from Freudianism, each of the participants in this adventure would discover desires for specific ambiances *in order to fulfill them*. Each person must seek what he loves, what attracts him. (And here again, in contrast to certain endeavors of modern writing — Leiris, for example — what is important to us is neither our individual psychological structures nor the explanation of their formation, but their possible application in the construction of situations.) Through this method one can tabulate elements out of which situations can be constructed, along with *projects to dynamize these elements*.

This kind of research is meaningful only for individuals working practically toward a construction of situations. Such people are *presituationists* (either spontaneously or in a conscious and organized manner) inasmuch as they have sensed the objective need for this sort of construction through having recognized the present cultural emptiness and having participated in recent expressions of experimental awareness. They are close to each other because they share the same specialization and have taken part in the same historical avant-garde of that specialization. It is thus likely that they will share a number of situationist themes and desires, which will increasingly diversify once they are brought into a phase of real activity.

A constructed situation must be collectively prepared and developed. It would seem, however, that, at least during the initial period of rough experiments, a situation requires one individual to play a sort of “director” role. If we imagine a particular situation project in which, for example, a research team has arranged an *emotionally moving gathering* of a few people for an evening, we would no doubt have to distinguish: a director or producer responsible for coordinating the basic elements necessary for the construction of the decor and for working out certain *interventions* in the events (alternatively, several people could work out their own interventions while being more or less unaware of each other’s plans); the direct agents living the situation, who have taken part in creating the collective project and worked on the practical composition of the ambiance; and finally, a few passive spectators who have not participated in the constructive work, who should be *forced into action*.

This relation between the director and the “livers” of the situation must naturally never become a permanent specialization. It’s only a matter of a temporary subordination of a team of situationists to the person responsible for a particular project. These perspectives, or the provisional terminology describing them, should not be taken to mean that we are talking about some continuation of theater. Pirandello and Brecht have already revealed the destruction of the theatrical spectacle and pointed out a few of the requirements for going beyond it. It could be said that the construction of situations will replace theater in the same sense that the real construction of life has increasingly tended to replace religion. The principal domain we are going to replace and *fulfill* is obviously poetry, which burned itself out by taking its position at the vanguard of our time and has now completely disappeared.

Real individual fulfillment, which is also involved in the artistic experience that the situationists are discovering, entails the collective takeover of the world. Until this happens there will be no real individuals, but only specters haunting the things anarchically presented to them by others. In chance situations we meet separated beings moving at random. Their divergent emotions neutralize each other and maintain their solid environment of boredom. We are going to undermine these conditions by raising at a few points the incendiary beacon heralding a *greater game*.

In our time functionalism (an inevitable expression of technological advance) is attempting to entirely eliminate play. The partisans of “industrial design” complain that their projects are spoiled by people’s playful tendencies. At the same time, industrial commerce crudely exploits these tendencies by diverting them to a demand for constant superficial renovation of utilitarian products. We obviously have no interest in encouraging the continuous artistic renovation of refrigerator designs. But a moralizing functionalism is incapable of getting to the heart of the problem. The only progressive way out is to liberate the tendency toward play elsewhere, and on a larger scale. Short of this, all the naïve indignation of the theorists of industrial design will not change the basic fact that the private automobile, for example, is primarily an idiotic toy and only secondarily a means of transportation. As opposed to all the regressive forms of play — which are regressions to its infantile stage and are invariably linked to reactionary politics — it is necessary to promote the experimental forms of a game of revolution.

Theory of the Dérive

by **Guy-Ernest Debord**

One of the basic situationist practices is the *dérive* [literally: “drifting”], a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.

But the *dérive* includes both this letting-go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities. In this latter regard, ecological science — despite the narrow social space to which it limits itself — provides psychogeography with abundant data.

The ecological analysis of the absolute or relative character of fissures in the urban network, of the role of microclimates, of distinct neighborhoods with no relation to administrative boundaries, and above all of the dominating action of centers of attraction, must be utilized and completed by psychogeographical methods. The objective passional terrain of the *dérive* must be defined in accordance both with its own logic and with its relations with social morphology.

In his study *Paris et l’agglomération parisienne* (Bibliothèque de Sociologie Contemporaine, P.U.F., 1952) Chombart de Lauwe notes that “an urban neighborhood is determined not only by geographical and economic factors, but also by the image that its inhabitants and those of other neighborhoods have of it.” In the same work, in order to illustrate “the narrowness of the real Paris in which each individual lives . . . within a geographical area whose radius is extremely small,” he diagrams all the movements made in the space of one year by a student living in the 16th Arrondissement. Her itinerary forms a small triangle with no significant deviations, the three apexes of which are the School of Political Sciences, her residence and that of her piano teacher.

Such data — examples of a modern poetry capable of provoking sharp emotional reactions (in this particular case, outrage at the fact that anyone’s life can be so pathetically limited) — or even Burgess’s theory of Chicago’s social activities as being distributed in distinct concentric zones, will undoubtedly prove useful in developing *dérives*.

If chance plays an important role in *dérives* this is because the methodology of psychogeographical observation is still in its infancy. But the action of chance is naturally conservative and in a new setting tends to reduce everything to habit or to an alternation between a limited number of variants. Progress means breaking through fields where chance holds sway by creating new conditions more favorable to our purposes. We can say, then, that the randomness of a *dérive* is fundamentally different from that of the stroll, but also that the

first psychogeographical attractions discovered by dériviers may tend to fixate them around new habitual axes, to which they will constantly be drawn back.

An insufficient awareness of the limitations of chance, and of its inevitably reactionary effects, condemned to a dismal failure the famous aimless wandering attempted in 1923 by four surrealists, beginning from a town chosen by lot: Wandering in open country is naturally depressing, and the interventions of chance are poorer there than anywhere else. But this mindlessness is pushed much further by a certain Pierre Vendryes (in *Médium*, May 1954), who thinks he can relate this anecdote to various probability experiments, on the ground that they all supposedly involve the same sort of antideterminist liberation. He gives as an example the random distribution of tadpoles in a circular aquarium, adding, significantly, “It is necessary, of course, that such a population be subject to no external guiding influence.” From that perspective, the tadpoles could be considered more spontaneously liberated than the surrealists, since they have the advantage of being “as stripped as possible of intelligence, sociability and sexuality,” and are thus “truly independent from one another.”

At the opposite pole from such imbecilities, the primarily urban character of the *dérive*, in its element in the great industrially transformed cities — those centers of possibilities and meanings — could be expressed in Marx’s phrase: “Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive.”

One can *dérive* alone, but all indications are that the most fruitful numerical arrangement consists of several small groups of two or three people who have reached the same level of awareness, since cross-checking these different groups’ impressions makes it possible to arrive at more objective conclusions. It is preferable for the composition of these groups to change from one *dérive* to another. With more than four or five participants, the specifically *dérive* character rapidly diminishes, and in any case it is impossible for there to be more than ten or twelve people without the *dérive* fragmenting into several simultaneous *dérives*. The practice of such subdivision is in fact of great interest, but the difficulties it entails have so far prevented it from being organized on a sufficient scale.

The average duration of a *dérive* is one day, considered as the time between two periods of sleep. The starting and ending times have no necessary relation to the solar day, but it should be noted that the last hours of the night are generally unsuitable for *dérives*.

But this duration is merely a statistical average. For one thing, a *dérive* rarely occurs in its pure form: it is difficult for the participants to avoid setting aside an hour or two at the beginning or end of the day for taking care of banal tasks; and toward the end of the day fatigue tends to encourage such an abandonment. But more importantly, a *dérive* often takes place within a deliberately limited period of a few hours, or even fortuitously during fairly brief moments; or it may last for several days without interruption. In spite of the cessations imposed by the need for sleep, certain *dérives* of a sufficient intensity have been sustained for three or four days, or even longer. It is true that in the case of a series of *dérives* over a rather long period of time it is almost impossible to determine precisely when the state of mind peculiar to one *dérive* gives way to that of another. One sequence of *dérives* was pursued without notable interruption for around two months. Such an experience gives rise to new objective conditions of behavior that bring about the disappearance of a good number of the old ones.[1]

The influence of weather on *dérives*, although real, is a significant factor only in the case of prolonged rains, which make them virtually impossible. But storms or other types of precipitation are rather favorable for *dérives*.

The spatial field of a *dérive* may be precisely delimited or vague, depending on whether the goal is to study a terrain or to emotionally disorient oneself. It should not be forgotten that these two aspects of *dérives* overlap in so many ways that it is impossible to isolate one of them in a pure state. But the use of taxis, for example, can provide a clear enough dividing line: If in the course of a *dérive* one takes a taxi, either to get to a specific destination or simply to move, say, twenty minutes to the west, one is concerned primarily with a personal trip outside one's usual surroundings. If, on the other hand, one sticks to the direct exploration of a particular terrain, one is concentrating primarily on research for a psychogeographical urbanism.

In every case the spatial field depends first of all on the point of departure — the residence of the solo *dériveur* or the meeting place selected by a group. The maximum area of this spatial field does not extend beyond the entirety of a large city and its suburbs. At its minimum it can be limited to a small self-contained ambiance: a single neighborhood or even a single block of houses if it's interesting enough (the extreme case being a static-*dérive* of an entire day within the Saint-Lazare train station).

The exploration of a fixed spatial field entails establishing bases and calculating directions of penetration. It is here that the study of maps comes in — ordinary ones as well as ecological and psychogeographical ones — along with their correction and improvement. It should go without saying that we are not at all interested in any mere exoticism that may arise from the fact that one is exploring a neighborhood for the first time. Besides its unimportance, this aspect of the problem is completely subjective and soon fades away.

In the "possible rendezvous," on the other hand, the element of exploration is minimal in comparison with that of behavioral disorientation. The subject is invited to come alone to a certain place at a specified time. He is freed from the bothersome obligations of the ordinary rendezvous since there is no one to wait for. But since this "possible rendezvous" has brought him without warning to a place he may or may not know, he observes the surroundings. It may be that the same spot has been specified for a "possible rendezvous" for someone else whose identity he has no way of knowing. Since he may never even have seen the other person before, he will be encouraged to start up conversations with various passersby. He may meet no one, or he may even by chance meet the person who has arranged the "possible rendezvous." In any case, particularly if the time and place have been well chosen, his use of time will take an unexpected turn. He may even telephone someone else who doesn't know where the first "possible rendezvous" has taken him, in order to ask for another one to be specified. One can see the virtually unlimited resources of this pastime.

Our loose lifestyle and even certain amusements considered dubious that have always been enjoyed among our entourage — slipping by night into houses undergoing demolition, hitchhiking nonstop and without destination through Paris during a transportation strike in the name of adding to the confusion, wandering in subterranean catacombs forbidden to the public, etc. — are expressions of a more general sensibility which is no different from that of the *dérive*. Written descriptions can be no more than passwords to this great game.

The lessons drawn from *dérives* enable us to draw up the first surveys of the psychogeographical articulations of a modern city. Beyond the discovery of unities of ambiance, of their main components and their spatial localization, one comes to perceive their principal axes of passage, their exits and their defenses. One arrives at the central hypothesis of the existence of psychogeographical pivotal points. One measures the distances that actually separate two regions of a city, distances that may have little relation with the physical distance between them. With the aid of old maps, aerial photographs and experimental *dérives*, one can draw up hitherto lacking maps of influences, maps whose inevitable imprecision at this early stage is no worse than that of the first navigational charts. The only difference is that it is no longer a matter of precisely delineating stable continents, but of changing architecture and urbanism.

Today the different unities of atmosphere and of dwellings are not precisely marked off, but are surrounded by more or less extended and indistinct bordering regions. The most general change that *dérive* experience leads to proposing is the constant diminution of these border regions, up to the point of their complete suppression.

Within architecture itself, the taste for *dériving* tends to promote all sorts of new forms of labyrinths made possible by modern techniques of construction. Thus in March 1955 the press reported the construction in New York of a building in which one can see the first signs of an opportunity to *dérive* inside an apartment:

“The apartments of the helicoidal building will be shaped like slices of cake. One will be able to enlarge or reduce them by shifting movable partitions. The half-floor gradations avoid limiting the number of rooms, since the tenant can request the use of the adjacent section on either upper or lower levels. With this setup three four-room apartments can be transformed into one twelve-room apartment in less than six hours.”

(To be continued.)

Bibliography

A slightly different version of this article was first published in the Belgian surrealist journal *Les Lèvres Nues* #9 (November 1956) along with accounts of two *dérives*.

Perspectives for Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life

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A tape recording of this talk was presented 17 May 1961 at a conference of the Group for Research on Everyday Life convened by Henri Lefebvre in the Center of Sociological Studies of the CNRS.

To study everyday life would be a completely absurd undertaking, unable even to grasp anything of its object, if this study was not explicitly for the purpose of transforming everyday life.

The lecture, the exposition of certain intellectual considerations to an audience, being an extremely commonplace form of human relations in a rather large sector of society, itself forms a part of the every day life that must be criticized.

Sociologists, for example, are only too inclined to remove from every day life things that happen to them every day, and to transfer them to separate and supposedly superior spheres. In this way habit in all its forms - beginning with the habit of handling a few professional concepts (concepts produced by the division of labor) -- masks reality behind privileged conventions.

It is thus desirable to demonstrate, by a slight alteration of the usual procedures, that everyday life is right here. These words are being communicated by way of a tape recorder, not, of course, in order to illustrate the integration of technology into this everyday life on the margin of the technological world, but in order to seize the simplest opportunity to break with the appearance of pseudo-collaboration, of artificial dialogue, established between the lecturer "in person" and his spectator. This slight discomforting break with accustomed routine could serve to bring directly into the field of questioning of every day life (a questioning otherwise completely abstract) the conference itself, as well as any number of other forms of using time or objects, forms that are considered "normal" and not even noticed, and which ultimately condition us. With such a detail, as with everyday life as a whole, alteration is always the necessary and sufficient condition for experimentally bringing into clear view the object of our study, which would otherwise remain uncertain -- an object which is itself less to be studied than to be altered.

I have just said that the reality of an observable entity designated by the term "everyday life" stands a good chance of remaining hypothetical for many people. Indeed, the most striking feature of the present "Group for Research on Everyday Life" is obviously not the fact that it has not yet discovered anything, but the fact that the very existence of everyday life has been disputed from its very inception, and increasingly so with each new session of this conference. Most of the talks we have heard so far have been by people who are not at all convinced that everyday life exists, since they haven't encountered it anywhere. A group for research on everyday life with this attitude is comparable in every way to an expedition in search of the Yeti, which might similarly come to the conclusion that its quarry was merely a popular hoax.

To be sure, everyone agrees that certain gestures repeated every day, such as opening doors or filling glasses, are quite real; but these gestures are at such a trivial level of reality that it is rightly objected that they are not of sufficient interest to justify a new specialized branch of sociological research. A number of sociologists seem disinclined to recognize any aspects of everyday life beyond these

trivial ties. They thus accept the definition of it proposed by Henri Lefebvre -- "whatever remains after one has eliminated all specialized activities" -- but draw a different conclusion: that everyday life is nothing. The majority of sociologists -- and we know how much they are in their element in specialized activities, in which they generally have the blindest faith! -- recognize specialized activities everywhere and every day life nowhere. Everyday life is always elsewhere. Among others. In any case, in the nonsociologicistic classes of the population. Someone said here that it would be interesting to study the workers as guinea pigs who have probably been infected with this virus of everyday life because they, having no access to specialized activities, have only everyday life to live. This condescending manner of investigating the common people in search of an exotic primitivism of everyday life - and above all this ingenuously avowed self-satisfaction, this naive pride in participating in a culture whose glaring bankruptcy no one can dream of denying, this radical inability to understand the world that produces this culture -- all this never ceases to astonish.

There is in this an evident will to hide behind a development of thought based on the separation of artificial, fragmentary domains so as to reject the useless, vulgar and disturbing concept of "everyday life." Such a concept covers an uncatalogued and unclassified residue of reality, a residue some people are averse to confronting because it at the same time represents the standpoint of the totality; it would imply the necessity of an integral political judgment. Certain intellectuals seem to flatter themselves with an illusory personal participation in the dominant sector of society through their possession of one or more cultural specializations; these specializations, however, have placed them in the best position to realize that the whole of this dominant culture is manifestly moth-eaten. But whatever one's opinion of the coherence of this culture or of the interest of one or another of its fragments, the particular alienation it has imposed on these intellectuals is to make them think, from their position in the heaven of the sociologists, that they are quite outside the everyday life of the common people, or to give them an exaggerated idea of their rank on the scale of human powers, as if their lives, too, were not impoverished.

Specialized activities certainly exist; they are even, in a given period, put to a certain general use which should be recognized in a demystified manner. Everyday life is not everything - although its osmosis with specialized activities is such that in a sense we are never outside of everyday life. But to use a facile spatial image, we still have to place everyday life at the center of everything. Every project begins from it and every realization returns to it to acquire its real significance. Everyday life is the measure of all things: of the fulfillment or rather the nonfulfillment of human relations; of the use of lived time; of artistic experimentation; of revolutionary politics. It is not enough to recall that the old stereotypical image of the detached scientific observer is fallacious in any case. It must be stressed that disinterested observation is even less possible here than anywhere else. What makes for the difficulty of even recognizing a terrain of everyday life is not only the fact that it has already become the ostensible meeting ground of an empirical sociology and a conceptual elaboration, but also the fact that it presently happens to be the stake in any revolutionary renewal of culture and politics.

To fail to criticize everyday life today means accepting the prolongation of the present thoroughly rotten forms of culture and politics, forms whose extreme crisis is expressed in increasingly widespread political apathy and neolliteracy, especially in the most modern countries. On the other hand, a radical critique in acts of prevailing everyday life could lead to a supersession of culture and politics in the traditional sense, that is, to a higher level of intervention in life.

"But," you may ask, "how does it happen that the importance of this everyday life, which according to you is the only real life, is so completely and directly underrated by people who, after all, have no direct interest in doing so - many of whom are even far from being opposed to some kind of renewal of the revolutionary movement?"

I think this happens because everyday life is organized within the limits of a scandalous poverty, and above all because there is nothing accidental about this poverty of everyday life: it is a poverty that is constantly imposed by the coercion and violence of a society divided into classes, a poverty historically organized in line with the evolving requirements of exploitation. The use of everyday life, in the sense of a consumption of lived time, is governed by the reign of scarcity: scarcity of free time and scarcity of possible uses of this free time.

Just as the accelerated history of our time is the history of accumulation and industrialization, so the backwardness and conservative tendency of everyday life are products of the laws and interests that have presided over this industrialization. Everyday life has until now resisted the historical. This represents first of all a verdict against the historical insofar as it has been the heritage and project of an exploitative society.

The extreme poverty of conscious organization and creativity in everyday life expresses the fundamental necessity for unconsciousness and mystification in an exploiting society, in a society of alienation.

Henri Lefebvre has extended the idea of uneven development so as to characterize everyday life as a lagging sector, out of joint with the historical but not completely cut off from it. I think that one could go so far as to term this level of everyday life a colonized sector. We know that underdevelopment and colonization are interrelated on the level of global economy. Everything suggests that the same thing applies at the level of socioeconomic structure, at the level of praxis.

Everyday life, policed and mystified by every means, is a sort of reservation for good natives who keep modern society running without understanding it--this society with its rapid growth of technological powers and the forced expansion of its market. History--the transformation of reality--cannot presently be used in everyday life because the people of everyday life are the product of a history over which they have no control. It is of course they themselves who make this history, but not freely.

Modern society is viewed through specialized fragments that are virtually incommunicable; and so everyday life, where all questions are liable to be posed in a unitary manner, is naturally the domain of ignorance. Through its industrial production this society has emptied the gestures of work of all meaning. And no model of human behavior has retained any real relevance in everyday life. This society tends to atomize people into isolated consumers, to prohibit communication. Everyday life is thus private life, the realm of separation and spectacle.

It is thus also the sphere of the specialists' resignation and failure. It is there, for example, that one of the rare individuals capable of understanding the latest scientific conception of the universe will make a fool of himself by earnestly pondering Alain Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic theories or by sending petitions to the President of the Republic in the hope of convincing him to change his policies. It is the sphere of disarmament, of the avowal of the incapability of living. Thus the underdevelopment of everyday life cannot be characterized solely by its relative inability to put technology to use. This

trait is an important, but only partial, consequence of the everyday alienation as a whole, which could be defined as the inability to invent a technique for the liberation of everyday experience.

In fact many techniques do more or less markedly alter certain aspects of everyday life: the domestic arts, as has already been mentioned here, but also the telephone, television, the recording of music on long-playing records, mass air travel, etc. These elements arise anarchically, by chance, without anyone having foreseen their interrelations or consequences. But on the whole this introduction of technology into everyday life - ultimately taking place within the frame work of modern bureaucratized capitalism - certainly tends rather to reduce people's independence and creativity. The new prefabricated cities clearly exemplify the totalitarian tendency of modern capitalism's organization of life: the isolated inhabitants (generally isolated within the framework of the family cell) see their lives reduced to the pure triviality of the repetitive combined with the obligatory absorption of an equally repetitive spectacle. One can thus conclude that if people censor the question of their own everyday life, it is both because they are aware of its unbearable misery and because sooner or later they sense - whether they admit it or not - that all the real possibilities, all the desires that have been frustrated by the functioning of social life, were focused there, and not at all in the specialized activities or distractions. That is, awareness of the profound richness and energy abandoned in everyday life is inseparable from awareness of the poverty of the dominant organization of this life. Only the perceptible existence of this untapped richness leads to the contrasting definition of everyday life as poverty and as prison; and then, in the same movement, to the negation of the problem.

In these conditions, repressing the political question posed by the poverty of everyday life means repressing the depth of the demands bearing on the possible richness of this life - demands that can lead to nothing less than a reinvention of revolution. Of course an evasion of politics at this level is in no way incompatible with being active in the Parti Socialiste Unifié, for example, or with reading *Humanité* with confidence.

Everything effectively depends on the level at which this problem is posed: How is our life? How are we satisfied with it? Dissatisfied? Without for a moment letting ourselves be intimidated by the various advertisements designed to persuade us that we can be happy because of the existence of God or Colgate toothpaste or the CNRS.

It seems to me that this phrase "critique of everyday life" could and should also be understood in this reverse sense: as everyday life's sovereign critique of everything that is external or irrelevant to itself. The question of the use of technological means, in everyday life and elsewhere, is a political question (and out of all the possible technical means, those that are implemented are in reality selected in accordance with the goal of maintaining one class's domination). When one envisions a future such as that presented in science fiction, in which interstellar adventures coexist with a terrestrial everyday life kept in the same old material indigence and archaic morality, this implies precisely that there is still a class of specialized rulers maintaining the proletarian masses of the factories and offices in their service; and that the interstellar adventures are nothing but the particular enterprise chosen by those rulers, the way they have found to develop their irrational economy, the pinnacle of specialized activity.

Someone posed the question, "What is private life deprived of?" Quite simply of life itself, which is cruelly absent. People are as deprived as possible of communication and of self-realization. Deprived of the opportunity to personally make their own history. Hypotheses responding positively to this

question on the nature of the privation can thus only be expressed in the form of projects of enrichment; the project of a different style of life; or in fact simply the project of a style of life ... Or, if we regard everyday life as the frontier between the dominated and the undominated sectors of life, and thus as the terrain of risk and uncertainty, it would be necessary to replace the present ghetto with a constantly moving frontier; to work ceaselessly toward the organization of new chances.

The question of intensity of experience is posed today - with the use of drugs, for example - in the only terms in which the society of alienation is capable of posing any question: namely, in terms of false recognition of a falsified project, in terms of fixation and attachment. It should also be noted how much the image of love elaborated and propagated in this society has in common with drugs. A passion is first of all presented as a denial of all other passions; then it is frustrated and finally reappears only in the compensations of the reigning spectacle. La Rochefoucauld observed, "What often prevents us from abandoning ourselves to a single vice is that we have several." This is a very constructive observation if we ignore its moralist presuppositions and put it back on its feet as the basis of a program for the realization of human capacities.

All these questions are of present significance because our time is visibly dominated by the emergence of the project borne by the working class - the abolition of every class society and the inauguration of human history - and thus also dominated by the fierce resistance to this project and by the distortions and failures it has encountered until now.

The present crisis of everyday life takes its place among the new forms of the crisis of capitalism, forms that remain unnoticed by those who cling to the classical calculation of the date of the next cyclical crisis of the economy.

The disappearance in developed capitalism of all the old values, of all the frames of reference of past communication; and the impossibility of replacing them by any others before having rationally dominated, within everyday life and everywhere else, the new industrial forces that escape us more and more--these facts produce not only the virtually official dissatisfaction of our time, a dissatisfaction particularly acute among young people, but also the self-negating tendency of art. Artistic activity had always been alone in conveying the clan destined problems of everyday life, albeit in a veiled, deformed, partially illusory manner. Evidence of a destruction of all artistic expression now exists before our eyes: modern art.

If we consider the whole extent of the crisis of contemporary society, I don't think it is possible still to regard leisure activities as a negation of the everyday. It has been recognized here that it is necessary to "study wasted time." But let us look at the recent evolution of this idea of wasted time. For classical capitalism, wasted time was time that was not devoted to production, accumulation, saving. The secular morality taught in bourgeois schools has instilled this rule of life. But it so happens that by an unexpected turn of events modern capitalism needs to increase consumption, to "raise the standard of living" (if we bear in mind that this expression is completely meaningless). Since at the same time production conditions, compartmentalized and clocked to the extreme, have become indefensible, the new morality already being conveyed in advertising, propaganda and all the forms of the dominant spectacle now frankly admits that wasted time is the time spent at work, which latter is only justified by the hierarchized scale of earnings that enable one to buy rest, consumption, entertainments - a daily passivity manufactured and controlled by capitalism.

If we now consider the artificiality of the consumer needs prefabricated and ceaselessly stimulated by modern industry - if we recognize the emptiness of leisure activities and the impossibility of rest - we can pose the question more realistically: What would not be wasted time? The development of a society of abundance should lead to an abundance of what? This can obviously serve as a touchstone in many regards. When, for example, in one of those papers where the flabby thinking of "leftist intellectuals" is displayed - I am referring to France-Observateur - one reads a title like "The Little Car Out To Conquer Socialism" heading an article that explains that nowadays the Russians are beginning to pursue an American-style private consumption of goods, beginning naturally with cars, one cannot help thinking that one need not have assimilated all of Hegel and Marx to realize that a socialism that gives way in the face of an invasion of the market by small cars is in no way the socialism for which the workers movement fought. The bureaucratic rulers of Russia must be opposed not on the level of their tactics or their dogmatism, but fundamentally, on the fact that the meaning of people's lives has not really changed. And this is not some obscure fatality of an everyday life doomed to remain reactionary. It is a fatality imposed on everyday life from the outside by the reactionary sphere of specialized rulers, regardless of the label under which they plan and regulate poverty in all its aspects.

The present depoliticization of many former leftist militants, their withdrawal from one type of alienation to plunge into another, that of private life, represents not so much a return to privacy, a flight from "historical responsibility," but rather a withdrawal from the specialized political sector that is always manipulated by others - a sector where the only responsibility they ever took was that of leaving all responsibility to uncontrolled leaders; and where the communist project was betrayed and frustrated. Just as one cannot simplistically oppose private life to public life without asking: what private life? what public life? (for private life contains the factors of its negation and supersession, just as collective revolutionary action harbored the factors of its degeneration), so it would be a mistake to assess the alienation of individuals in revolutionary politics when it is really a matter of the alienation of revolutionary politics itself. It is right to dialectize the problem of alienation, to draw attention to the constantly recurring possibilities of alienation arising within the very struggle against alienation; but we should stress that this applies to the highest level of research (to the philosophy of alienation as a whole, for example) and not to the level of Stalinism, the explanation of which is unfortunately more gross.

Capitalist civilization has not yet been superseded anywhere, but it continues to produce its own enemies everywhere. The next rise of the revolutionary movement, radicalized by the lessons of past defeats and with a program enriched in proportion to the practical powers of modern society (powers already constituting the potential material basis that was lacking in the so-called utopian currents of socialism)--this next attempt at a total contestation of capitalism will know how to invent and propose a different use of everyday life, and will immediately base itself on new everyday practices, on new types of human relationships (being no longer unaware that any conserving, within the revolutionary movement, of the relations prevailing in the existing society imperceptibly leads to a reconstitution of one or another variant of this society).

Just as the bourgeoisie, in its ascending phase, had to ruthlessly liquidate everything that transcended earthly life (heaven, eternity), so the revolutionary proletariat - which can never, without ceasing to be revolutionary, recognize itself in any past or any models - will have to renounce everything that transcends everyday life. Or rather, everything that claims to transcend it: the spectacle, the "historical" act or pronouncement, the "greatness" of leaders, the mystery of specializations, the

"immortality" of art and its importance outside of life. In other words, it must renounce all the by-products of eternity that have survived as weapons of the world of the rulers.

The revolution in everyday life, breaking its present resistance to the historical (and to every kind of change), will create the conditions in which the present dominates the past and the creative aspects of life always predominate over the repetitive. We must therefore expect that the side of everyday life expressed by the concepts of ambiguity - misunderstanding, compromise or misuse - will decline considerably in importance in favor of their opposites: conscious choice and gamble. The present artistic calling in question of language - appearing at the same time as that metalanguage of machines which is nothing other than the bureaucratized language of the bureaucracy in power - will then be superseded by higher forms of communication. The present notion of a decipherable social text will lead to new methods of writing this social text, in the direction my situationist comrades are presently seeking with unitary urbanism and some preliminary ventures in experimental behavior. The central production of an entirely reconverted industrial work will be the organization of new configurations of everyday life, the free creation of events.

The critique and perpetual re-creation of the totality of everyday life, before being carried out naturally by all people, must be undertaken in the present conditions of oppression, in order to destroy these conditions.

An avant-garde cultural movement, even one with revolutionary sympathies, cannot accomplish this. Neither can a revolutionary party on the traditional model, even if it accords a large place to criticism of culture (understanding by that term the entirety of artistic and conceptual means through which a society explains itself to itself and shows itself goals of life). This culture and this politics are worn out and it is not without reason that most people take no interest in them. The revolutionary transformation of everyday life, which is not reserved for some vague future but is placed immediately before us by the development of capitalism and its unbearable demands--the alternative being the reinforcement of the modern slavery--this transformation will mark the end of all unilateral artistic expression stocked in the form of commodities, at the same time as the end of all specialized politics.

This is going to be the task of a new type of revolutionary organization from its inception.