ABSTRACT

THE QUESTIONABLE NATURE OF EVERY DAY LIFE

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The aim of the paper is to provide a critical concept of the everyday life. The intended concept would firstly provide a way to look at the mundane and “small life” aspects of life -- like domestic chores -- as special kind of contacts with the world (rather than seeing the everyday life as a sphere or even a place). Secondly it would make the gendered nature of the everyday visible and searchable. Thirdly the critical concept of the everyday life would help us to see and analyse the power structures (violations as well as empowerment) in the quotidian. All these three “claims” for a good concept are intertwined with change. Questions like “why does the everyday change so slowly, especially regarding the division of labour according to gender”? and “does the change begin from the everyday life”? are discussed. The embodied and thoroughly social nature of the everyday is also considered. The division between the “micro-power” in the everyday and “structural and institutional power” in the rest of the life is problematised.

Theoretically, the paper rests on the phenomenology of the body on the one hand, and on the (feminist) post-foucauldian thinking on the other, trying to show that in certain cases it makes sense to use both of these schools simultaneously. An analytical map of the everyday consisting of five facets is developed: time (routine); space (sense of home); pace (a central embodied individual sensation); the social configuration (touching and choral singing); the gender structure (domestic and private spheres of the everyday are connected to female modalities whereas public spheres of the everyday are connected to male modalities).