WHAT IS LIFE?

PAPER AT THE CONFERENCE „WHAT IS LIFE?“, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON IN PORTLAND, USA, APRIL 6 - 8 2017

Jörg Becker
Marburg University
Germany
• Marx: second nature
• constructivism: constructed reality
• both views are only partly true
● The Nazis coined the word “lebensunwertes Leben” (life which is unworthy to be kept alive).
● Albert Schweitzer developed his concept of a “reference to live” to include men and animal.
● Theodor W. Adorno gave his famous book “Minima Moralia” the subtitle “Reflexions from Damaged Life”.
MARXIST THEORY OF THE SOCIETY

- Capital
- Labour
- Missing link: every day life
MARXIST THEORETICIANS OF EVERY DAY LIFE

Jürgen Kuczinski (GDR)

Henri Lefebvre (France)

Antonio Gramsci (Italy)

Ágnes Heller (Hungary)
The relation of the three categories to each other

- on the one hand capital and labour do not determine form and content of every day of life completely

- on the other hand it is difficult to isolate the remaining part from labour and capital.
Methodological problems

- transfer between micro and macro
- economics and political sciences vs. sociology, anthropology, ethnology and cultural studies
- neglect of the societal feedbacks between the individual and the society
- subjectivism, romanticism and esoterics of societal problems
Frederic Engels: The Condition of the Working Class in England (1844)

- cottage and truck systems, bad health, deformities, sexual irregularities, death ceremonies, restricted language code
- methodological problem: deficit syndrom by the bourgeois observer
Living Conditions and Every Day Life (2)

different form and content of every day life according to the different social milieus

- hedonistic
- traditional proletarian
- rigid Protestantism
- non-materialistic, alternative
The Media

- increasing media/information consumption of the individual per day
- increasing media/information work of the individual at his/her workplace
- increasing media/information production everywhere (digital capitalism)

- socialisation patterns, effects, functions and consequences?
Thank you for your attention!