Det rationella och det normala
- om lönearbets logik, praktik och etik

av

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Abstract


The subject of this thesis concerns the tense situation of the pregnant employee in Sweden. Drawing on the critical ontology of Michel Foucault the situation is characterized as a specific problematization within a historical theme around procreation (as an eventuality). The purpose of the thesis is to explain the functioning of the current situation of the pregnant employee as an inherent conflict, but also to draw out the implications of this specific analysis in relation to general wage labor. First an objective analysis is out-lined on how free wage labor gradually develops into a) a rational way of “knowing” about wo/man, b) a normal (institutional) way of organizing this knowledge, and c) a normalized subject position for the expectant individual. Second the investigation turns towards the subjective experience of this positioning. This analysis, drawing on the works of Iris Marion Young and Erving Goffman, focus on a) the conflicts logic b) its practical management and c) the situations’ ethical implications. The empirical material for the second part consists of legal cases, diaries and discussion-threads from the Internet. The conclusions drawn suggest that the pregnant employee is a rather abstract problem but that this abstraction still is real enough to make her disqualified from the calculus regime of employment. The second conclusion states that the pregnant employee becomes temporarily “closeted” and engaged in practices of concealment and tension management. Finally the ethics of this situation is analyzed, stating that the pregnant employee becomes positioned in a situation of structural shame which she has to relate to no matter her specific employment conditions. In the end the wider implications of the analysis is drawn out, stating that wage labor has developed into a biased categorization of individuals as proper or non-proper labor power. Rational discrimination has been normalized, just as the handling of oneself as more or less deviant from norms.

Keywords: employment, labor, labor contract, wage labor, pregnancy, organization, rationalization, normalization, Foucault, Young, Goffman