

Pedagogies of Salvation: The Micro and Macro-Politics of Yoga in Euro-American Societies

Saturday 25 May 2024 09:30 (30 minutes)

Positioning yoga at the intersections of the fitness and wellness industry, therapeutic culture and the landscape of contemporary spiritualities, this contribution presents an ethnographic and micro-sociological study of the ways in which modern postural yoga is taught, transmitted and interiorized in Euro-American yoga studios today. While most of the available literature to date concerns itself with the genealogical reconstruction or philological study of yoga, this presentation, by focusing on the micro and macro-sociological dimensions of the practitioners' bodies, self-conduct and every-day life, answers the important question of how yoga informs our Western views of the body, self-care and the reception of Asian traditions in our present zeitgeist.

Starting from several years (2018 –current) of immersive fieldwork within the Milanese branch of Odaka Yoga, an innovative style of postural yoga blended with martial arts elements, the presentation discusses what the author calls the pedagogies of salvation and the processes of apprenticeship of the modern yogi. It conceptualizes the teacher-student relationship as the main channel of socialization through which the bodies, minds, and souls of practitioners are normalized, disciplined, and transformed so as to match current post-Fordist, neoliberal working requirements and therapeutic culture.

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