

From employee to 'entreplooyee' – towards a 'self-entrepreneurial' work force?*

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Abstract: This paper presents the argument that we are currently witnessing a fundamental transformation in society's disposition of labor capacity, as witnessed in changes in the labor strategy of large employers. This may be leading to new type of labor power that–because of its particular features–could be called 'self-entrepreneurial'. In the paper's first part the concept of the 'entreplooyee' (*Arbeitskraftunternehmer*) is presented briefly, after which, in the second part, several important theoretical objections to the concept–raised in the course of current German debate–are examined.

Key words: employee autonomy, new forms of work, labor relations, New Capitalism, work force, labor power, labor process

In the mid-1980s sociologists at Munich University's Special Research Project “Perspectives on the Development of Labor” (Sonderforschungsbereich 333, “Entwicklungsperspektiven von Arbeit”) suggested for the first time that employees are increasingly being forced to act as a kind of 'entrepreneur of oneself' (see Jurczyk/Treutner/Voß/Zettel, 1985). A few years later a great amount of public interest was stimulated by a similar argument, first put forth in the neo-liberal program of the German “Commission for Future Problems of Bavaria and Saxony” (Kommission ... 1996/97, 1998), and later, in the controversial recommendations for German labor reform presented by the so-called “Hartz Commission” (Kommission ... 2002) with its highly controversial slogan "Ich-AG" ('Me Inc.'). Later the present authors, independently of these recommendations and with different scientific and political intentions, elaborated the idea of an increasing 'entrepreneurial' handling of one's own work capacities into the thesis that we are now facing a fundamental transformation of

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the character of labor: the typical 'employee' prevalent until now in most sectors is being replaced by a new active type of labor power (Marx)** , the *Arbeitskraftunternehmer* (called here 'entreployee') (see Voß/Pongratz, 1998; Pongratz/Voß, 2000; Voß, 2001; Pongratz/Voß, 2003). This formulation caused broad debate in industrial sociology in Germany and eventually far beyond. In the first part of the following paper, this thesis is explained and the 'ideal type' of the *Arbeitskraftunternehmer* characterized. In the second part the scope and consequences of related developments are assessed by considering some of the significant objections made in the subsequent sociological discussion.

The socio-diagnostic basis of the thesis of an emerging 'self-entrepreneurial' type of labor power is the supposition that we are not experiencing the "end of working society", as some sociologists postulated in the 1980s, but instead, a transition to a *hyper-working society* and highly flexible *New Capitalism* (cf. Sennet, 1998), characterized by more gainful employment in all spheres, but an employment assuming new forms, some of whose foreseeable effects seem highly problematic (see Appelbaum, 2002). One of these effects may be an intensified (but altered) capitalist interest in the use of labor power (the *subjectification* of labor), resulting in a *new logic of corporate labor control*, and therefore in a fundamental change in the nature of employment.

From employee to 'self-entrepreneurial' labor power

Structural changes in the organization of the labor process

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** 'Labor power' is the usual term in English for the abstract Marxian category '*Arbeitskraft*', i.e. the 'power' of labor in a general sense (similar to work capacity), but meaning neither the individual working person, nor collectively, 'personnel' or 'work force' in society or an enterprise (Ger. '*Arbeitskräfte*'), nor even the actual execution of the work (Marx's 'expenditure' or 'application' of 'labor power').

In recent years processes of corporate reorganization of a hitherto unknown kind have been taking place in almost all sectors of modern economies. They are comparable to the fundamental economic and social changes of 19th and early 20th-century industrialization. Mainly because of the aggravation of competitive conditions corporate management is increasingly forced to reduce costs massively and, more importantly, increase their companies' possibilities for flexible and innovative reaction to turbulent business environments. The strategy of subjecting employees to a highly rigid and detailed surveillance of work activities (often based on Taylorist principles) that has prevailed in most firms up to now, is now increasingly considered a severe obstacle. Today the attempt is taking place – not everywhere, but at least in several areas – to free up the usual boundaries of the traditional employee in the workplace in nearly all dimensions – time, space, content, qualifications, cooperation etc. – and enhance their own responsibility through strategies of increased flexibility and 'self-organization' in the workplace (for the German discussion of this see for ex. Kratzer, 2003; Minssen, 2000; Voß, 1998).

These 'new forms of labor', with greater necessity for the 'self-organization' of employees in this sense, are manifold (see Overview 1), but it is difficult to assess their exact quantitative scale. In Germany the amount of work done in teams or groups was estimated at up to 12% for 1998 with a definite upward tendency (see Nordhause-Janz and Pekruhl, 2000); project-based work has meanwhile become a fairly normal form of labor control in many corporate sectors. We believe this change is significant in quantity and quality because the structural relation between company and labor is essentially different: the former detailed, hierarchical structure of work supervision is being increasingly replaced by market-like relations (see Moldaschl, 1998). This means that employees are permitted – and in fact *must* organize their work more independently than ever before. This more or less far-reaching 'autonomization' of work does not always entail any real new freedom for the people involved.

More often than not the independence is of limited scope, is always in accordance with company goals and often accompanied by considerable pressure. Nevertheless the 'new forms' of work represent a substantial increase in opportunity for many, and therefore should be an important topic for future work-related research, as well as for unions and labor policy makers (cf. Peters, 2001; Pickshaus, 2000).

Overview 1 - Forms of work characterized by enhanced 'self-organization'

- in *conventional employment*:
 - group and team work
 - management by objectives
 - Cost Center, Profit Center
 - highly flexible working hours (time accounts, trust time)
 - new forms of computer-based telework, mobile work , etc.

- in *relations between businesses*:
 - outsourcing to pseudo-independent occupations
 - cooperation with freelancers, self-employed, subcontractors, etc.
 - virtual companies, etc.

As a theoretical aside, industrial sociologists realized early on – drawing on Marx's important though long undervalued idea – that by employing personnel companies acquire actually only the right to their capacity for work for a definite period of time (see Braverman, 1974 and the “labor process debate”; Knights/Willmott 1990). Although this right is assured in labor contracts, it does not guarantee that the expected performance will actually follow. Thus companies are faced with the fundamental problem of 'transforming' the purchased 'latent' working potential into real or 'manifest' performance by means of specific measures, e.g. directives and monitoring, in short: by 'labor control' (Braverman). For a long time rigid forms of technological and organizational labor control in this sense have been considered the ideal 'transformation' strategy for most firms. While exceptions exist, especially for some types of expert and managerial jobs where strategies of 'responsible autonomy' are applied instead of 'direct control' (see Friedman, 1977), rigid surveillance after

Taylorist principles has been the more or less leading orientation in theory as well as in practice for nearly all other categories of labor (especially mass labor in production and administration). Yet this strategy has always encountered limits in many work situations: monitoring costs are considerable, and employee innovation and flexibility discouraged.

At present, we are seeing in many business sectors an actual reversal of what was considered up to now standard practice: a *focused reduction of direct labor control practices and the active promotion of employee responsibility*. This does not mean anything like an abdication of central governance in corporations, but a systematic extension of indirect forms through the strategic targeting of performance parameters and goals such as costs, turnover, quality, customer satisfaction etc. This development means turning over increasingly to employees themselves the complicated task of transforming their labor potential into concrete performance, i.e. the previous management functions of work control. In other words, management seeks to *externalize*, on a new structural level, the notorious transformation problem. 'Outsourcing' is also an externalizing strategy, well known for more than two decades, but this is outsourcing of a special kind: it affects a key business function – employee management – of the capitalist enterprise. Paradoxically, it hands the problem over to those who cause it – and have to resolve it while coping with the consequences simultaneously.

The entreployee – a new 'entrepreneurial' type of labor power

If the tactic of shifting the transformation problem to those working in new forms of employment were extended systematically (and there are many indicators supporting this supposition), it would have not only consequences for individual groups of employees, but (our central thesis) also for the general disposition of labor capacity in society.

Heretofore a type of work force has predominated that was trained to put standard capacities at a company's disposal for a flat-rate of remuneration; expected advancement according to standard professional patterns; been subject to heteronomously fixed requirements; enjoyed very limited scope for independent decisions and creativity; and had to do with fixed resources. Now, we are witnessing the actual reversal of this orientation, towards an active, self-actuating behavior for the 'general good' of the enterprise, job requirements that sometimes must first be defined, and for which not rarely resources must be found by those directly involved. In this reorientation process the hitherto passive 'employee' is becoming a much more active worker, not only continuously redefining their own capacities and potentials within the company by organizing the work process in a self-determining, 'entrepreneurial' manner, but also on the larger labor market. This new type of labor power, which we call the 'entreplooyee' (*'Arbeitskraftunternehmer'*), being a product of quasi-entrepreneurial efforts, requires the same entrepreneurial development and commercialization (of personal and professional capacities) as does any product of a business enterprise. Entreplooyees exhibit three important characteristics (see Overview 2):

(1) Workers now control the process of the transformation of their own potential into concrete performance, *enriching* the commodity 'labor power' by one decisive element: the control of work, that until now rested in the hands of the company, is becoming a new and substantial qualitative part of the acquired labor. Thus the commodity 'labor power' becomes a substantially higher-value factor of production: a higher-level work capacity organized to a large extent by the self-control of the employee. All characteristics of work are ultimately and profoundly affected: the organization of the actual work performance, flexibilization of working hours, relaxation of spatial ties, weakening of traditionally assumed social ties, job-motivation. Therefore often the attitude of companies towards these employees could be characterized by the new slogan:

“It doesn’t matter how you manage your job and what you do in detail, the main thing is you achieve at least the goals set!”

(2) Entreprenees must change their viewpoint not only towards their work as such, but also come to regard their own capacities as a commodity. The hitherto largely passive 'owner' of labor power, present only occasionally on the labor market, is increasingly becoming a high-level, strategic actor, developing and actively exploiting their only available 'capital' to secure a living – the capacity to work – in a focused, continuous effort towards potentially gainful economic usage on the larger labor market as well as within the company. The attitude of business towards the entrepreneur in this respect might well be expressed thus: *“You’ll stay only as long as you prove that you’re needed–by making profits!”*

(3) The above means a new higher level of self-‘commercialization’ of labor power in two ways: On one hand, in autonomous forms of work employees must actively and consistently generate capacities and performance, thus creating a deliberate 'production economy' of their work capacities. On the other hand, they must also 'market' their capacities on the company level to ensure that their capacities are needed, acquired, and effectively used and – paid for. The formerly passive employee is becoming, in the strict economic sense, the 'entrepreneur' of his or her own potential, in the 'individual' market-economy (as well as, of course, industry-wide).

If employees are to practice active 'production' and 'commodification' of their capabilities and potentials, it will entail profound changes in the lives of the persons concerned. The entire context of life will be 'commercialized' out of the need to systematically reorganize all individual resources. The drastic increase in privately accessed organization and communication tools (not only for managers) is evidence for this development (for similar arguments see Sennet, 1998; Hochschild, 1997). No wonder that the traditional advice to employees 'Keep your job and life strictly separate!' no longer applies, and becomes now :

"We need you totally, exclusively, anytime and anywhere, so you'll have to manage your life perfectly! We want people who are completely under control!"

What the 'producers' and 'salesmen' of their own work capacity do to rationalize their lives may be compared to the activities of those offering other commodities: they transform the production and sale of products from a rather unorganized form into a well-coordinated one, and in doing so, generate a kind of 'business'. Of course, the entrepoyee's 'business' is not a company in the usual sense; it is production and commercialization of a special product under specific conditions: their individual work capacities and expertise, but within the context of their daily life.

Overview 2 - Characteristics of the 'entrepoyee':

▪ *self-control*

Intensified independent planning, control and monitoring of work by the person responsible;

▪ *self-commercialization*

Intensified active and practical 'production' and 'commercialization' of one's own capacities and potential on the labor market as well as within companies

▪ *self-rationalization*

Self-determined organization of one's daily life and long-term plans, and the tendency to accept willingly the importance of the company (employer) as an integral part of life

Proletarians–employees–entrepoyees: the historic types of labor power

The entrepoyee or 'self-entrepreneurial' employee is a potentially new social model of labor power for the increasingly market-driven businesses of the late-Taylorist era of work organization. Previous stages of industrial society were based on other types. In a rough characterization we can distinguish three types of labor power (see Overview 3):

(1) In the early stage of modern industrial capitalism a very restrictive form of labor control dominated, as labor was a new commodity being only just

established systematically, in an emerging 'labor market'. Former peasants and craftsmen – poorly qualified to be industrial workers – were recruited primarily from nearly feudal living conditions for factory employment. The working capacity of the *proletarian worker* was in a sense only 'raw'; above all, the ability to perform disciplined work within large organized structures was limited. Thus companies sought to enforce continuous work performance by regimens of repressive control. The everyday life of those workers was highly insecure, its main feature being severe exploitation of their working capacity with only very reduced opportunities for physical recovery.

(2) With the establishment of welfare state institutions – social security, vocational training and industrial relations – a new type of labor power developed: the considerably higher, more comprehensive, standardized and specialized work qualification commonly known as 'occupation' or 'vocation' (Ger. *Beruf*), obtained by means of systematic education including more fundamental and general virtues valued in work such as diligence, discipline and accuracy. Within companies, repressive control was replaced by structural, technical and organizational control. The new disciplined type of '*vocational employee*' increasingly won the trust of management, supported by psycho-social management methods. The basis of this form of labor application, exemplified in the so-called Fordist production (and societal 'regulation') regime, is a well-functioning social security system with increasing wages, decreasing working hours, and a gender-separation of work within the family: women mainly support their employed husbands by caring for household and family. Thus, a way of life developed characterized by the bourgeois small family enjoying consumption-oriented leisure time in the modern sense (see Jurczyk, 1992, 1998).

(3) This vocational form of labor power, predominant in western industrial societies until now, could be being gradually replaced by the new model of entrepreneurial labor, and direct control of the labor process, by

individual self-control in combination with emerging forms of indirect labor control. Individual discipline and integrative ability, elements already recognizable in the employee model, are becoming now central qualifications. Professional, specialist qualifications are still essential, but new forms of competence, such as the active production and commercialization of one's own labor capacity, and the willingness to adjust and organize one's own requirements and private life to the requirements of a company, described by the term '*entmployee*', are becoming preconditions to a successful work career (Plath, 2000). With that the standardized vocation or profession, until now a relatively rigid form of qualification, will be transformed into what we call the *individual vocation* (Ger. *Individualberuf*; see Voß, 2001): a personalized model of specific competence and experience, integrated in a rationalized, though individual, way of life.

Overview 3 - Historic types of labor power in capitalism

- *proletarian worker (early industrialization)*
 - raw working capacity
 - rigid direct control of work
 - severe exploitation, no social protection

- *vocational employee (fordism)*
 - standardized qualifications, basic work virtues
 - structural control of work on the basis of scientific knowledge
 - milder exploitation, greater protection by the state

- *entmployee (postfordism)*
 - individualized qualifications
 - systematic self-control of work
 - self-exploitation, precarious social security

Scope and consequences of developments thus outlined

Our thesis of the '*entmployee*' has given rise to broad discussion in German industrial sociology and far beyond (see e.g. Deutschmann, 2001; Kadritzke, 2000; Kuda/Strauß, 2002; Schumann, 1999; Pickshaus, 2000; Welti, 2000).

Some critics maintain that, while there may be a few forms of labor consistent with the new type of labor power postulated, these are not prevailing trends and thus have to be considered marginal social phenomena. This criticism is understandable from the perspective of the present, but it does not do justice to our thesis as a characterizing prognosis, as we explain later. But above all it is important to realize that the 'entreployee' in our description above is a scientific construct, a theoretical model which helps clarify an ongoing empirical – and with that – historical development.

The entreployee as ideal type

The three historical types of labor power are purified 'ideal types' (in the strict Weberian sense), i.e. they represent a high density of characteristics that prevail in various and changing combinations in the empirical world. Thus the new type of entrepreneurial labor power is intended as a first step towards an analytically trenchant model, more or less near reality depending on the individual case, not a description of reality. The ideal type of the entreployee combines the various elements of the new forms of labor exploitation already apparent in different contexts of the present transformation of the capitalist economic order, with the theoretical reconstruction of that development's logic.

If the empirical observation of particular sectors of labor shows however only a few elements of this type, this does not refute the analytic power of the categorization, as long as elements occur in *typical combinations*. In an empirical survey (Pongratz, 2001, Voß/Pongratz, 2003) we showed in how far employees' attitudes towards team and project work were consistent with the entreployee type: the greatest correlation was found in the dimension of self-control (see above), while identification with self-rationalization was weaker, and with self-commercialization, the weakest.

The scope of empirical indicators

As an ideal type, the concept of the 'entremployee' can be useful as an analytical instrument only if it can be related to a broad spectrum of real cases. Although up to now there have been empirical indications of an actual expansion of the self-entrepreneurial employee type in just a few sectors, these examples were found in various sectors of labor, so that we can conclude that this is a general development. Distinctive forms of the entremployee can be discovered in some sectors of employment, primarily in the intensely project-oriented IT sector (see Baukrowitz/ Boes, 2002, Eichmann/Kaup/Steiner, 2002) as well as in media and cultural professions combining dependent and freelance work, as in journalism and television production (see Geesterkamp, 2000, Gottschall/Schnell, 2000). Similar trends are visible in areas such as *adult training and education, consulting, academics and research*.

The entremployee is obviously most suited to *key future-oriented work sectors*. These jobs are often in prestigious, high-qualification areas especially interesting to young university graduates. Even if in many fields of work the typical vocational employee still prevails, a tendency towards change is becoming apparent in the sectors of 'normal' labor in industry and services. The fact of reverse tendencies in a few sectors, as 're-Taylorization', (Springer, 1999) does not refute our prognosis, but simply shows that the process will not be homogenous. The extent and speed of the development remain open parameters.

The entremployee as normative model

Our thesis formulates the *prognosis that the entremployee* could act in the long term as *a normative model*, gaining importance as its implementation increasingly causes changes in working conditions. Thus, elements of the entremployee type are being already generally proposed as the *future model in many management concepts* (Deutschmann, 2001). The most incisive example (but also especially problematic) are the present schemes in human resource

development in Germany, propagated under the slogan “*Selbst GmbH*” (“Myself Ltd. Co.”) by personnel managers of respected German companies, or the term “*Ich AG*” (“Me Inc.”) proposed by a governmental commission for reform of the labor market in Germany – the so-called Hartz Commission (see *Kommission...*, 2002).

In stark contrast to our viewpoint, such management or governmental concepts do not focus enough on possible problems and risks of changes to labor structures; and furthermore they offer highly ideological models but no well-considered descriptions or analyses. Their concepts fit, at best, into the general trend of ideologizing individual success and personal performance that can be associated with the reorganizational measures of the 1990s. The possibility of becoming a freelancer and working independently is propagated as a model of success, open to all those willing and able, after the slogan: 'Be the architect of your own fortune.' And, vice versa, all professional failures and setbacks, although often inevitable for structural reasons, are to be interpreted as individual failure and thus perhaps even a legitimization of social inequality. Our thesis of the 'entreplooyee' on the other hand points to the broad range of problematic effects and contradictions that the development is obviously going to cause.

Ambivalence, paradoxes, risks and contradictions

A preliminary assessment of the possible effects of implementing the entreplooyee model is highly *ambivalent*: Employees with the necessary individual, social and economic resources may become successful 'entrepreneurs' of their own labor power, but under unfavourable initial conditions the model's disadvantages – reduced regulation and job security – could accumulate, likely producing not so small a group of – less successful – '*self-entrepreneurial*' *day-laborers*, selling piecemeal their labor capacity, a new class of the 'working poor' (see Ehrenreich, 2001). The new forms of work may

contribute, in any case, to a general *individualization* of the employment situation because of the unfavourable and isolated market position of the individual working person vis-à-vis companies.

But often even those – at first sight – successful entreployees may experience relatively new and unpleasant side-effects of their increasing self-control and self-marketing: *workoholism*, *estrangement* and stress can result and many, even the most ambitious, will not be able to cope in the long term. To the *opportunities and risks* of the new type of labor power – already closely linked to well-known predisposing factors such as education, existing wealth, social contacts, national or social origin and gender – an important new dimension of inequality might be added: the unequal distribution of capacities to cope with the specific dilemmas of self-organized work (see Plath, 2000).

Another characteristic of the entreployee is the *frequent change of job situation* in the course of a person's working life. Whereas the traditional course of an employee's career is based on continuous professional advancement in position, power, income and job security, persons working in 'flexible' work situations must reckon with – occasionally at least – setbacks as well as advancements. The given situation on the 'entrepreneurial labor market' continuously creates the necessity to prove oneself, for example in project teams or in the acquisition of orders, situations where success or failure must be frequently redefined. Individuals experience and manage this necessity differently each according to their possibilities, yet all face considerable personal existential risk, especially in later career periods.

The entreployee as entrepreneur?

The term 'entrepreneur' used in the concept 'entreployee', should make clear that a *new stage in the commercialization of individual labor power* has been reached, closely linked with specific risks, well-known to freelancers, of self-exploitation and failure. The term 'entrepreneur' denotes more than just the

popular models of the successful big businessman or trendy 'start-up founder' of capitalist industrial society; it comprises also 'freelancers' in agriculture, independent professions, trades and small businesses, amounting (in Germany) to 11% of all persons in gainful employment. These groups demonstrate that entrepreneurship does not always mean as much 'power and success' as frequent long hours, little profit, financial strain and fear for economic survival over long periods.

The idea of 'self-entrepreneurial' labor power should not be interpreted merely in the metaphorical sense, but as the expression of a *partial equivalent* to other categories of entrepreneurship: the calculation of profitability, especially important in the commodification of products and services, is becoming more and more relevant to individuals commodifying their own capacities and abilities. While important differences between categories of entrepreneurs should not be overlooked in the analogy – freelancers frequently base their activities on financial resources, professional rights (e.g. physicians and pharmacists), but only to a limited degree on the ability to acquire labor from outside; capitalist entrepreneurs establish corporate hierarchies to organize the exploitation of labor for profit – the traditional contradiction between the interests of capital and labor is not eliminated with the shift to 'self-entrepreneurial' labor power, but is transformed into a structural contradiction between entrepreneurs of different kinds.

Manifold causes

To limit the risks and problems of 'self-entrepreneurial' labor power is difficult because *its development has manifold causes*, even if the dynamic stems primarily, as we have postulated, from certain reorganization strategies of companies. On the part of working persons, the tendency towards a general *change of values* (cf. Inglehart, 2003) as well as an *individualization* of lifestyle

and life-course (cf. Beck, 1992) – especially in the mid-70s – must be mentioned as decisively influential factors. In socio-political terms, this means a weakening of so-called 'normal working conditions' – with the advent of *globalization* and *neo-liberalism* – which gave stability to the 'vocational' employee's existence. Yet, all in all, these developments were not homogenous, for counter-tendencies such as intensified direct control may not only be found in several production sectors (Springer, 1999) but also in newly-established service sectors (such as in 'call-centers'), leading to working conditions of an early capitalist style. As a result in the medium-term there is a broad spectrum of work and employment forms among employees and entreployees, with extremes that may endure for the time being, thus encouraging *a new variety of different working conditions and employment models*. General statements about entreployees here and employees there can thus only serve as a rough orientation. Individual cases will need exact consideration of the given intermediary forms and constellations of variables which require differentiated treatment.

Social critique of the subjectification of work

In view of the manifest changes in the world of work, the positions of *social criticism* in the research on work and work organizations are drawn anew. In a highly-regarded paper Deutschmann concluded, referring to the concept of the *Arbeitskraftunternehmer*: “If social criticism in industrial sociology is to have any relevance to present times, it should no longer concentrate on Taylorist production models but on the model of the entrepreneurial worker“ (2001: 68). The ideological critique of new management concepts as demanded by Deutschmann is without a doubt a significant approach, but should not discourage an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages, for various groups of the working population, of actual developments in the direction of entrepreneurial labor.

The tendencies we have described show that the innovative capacity of capitalist economic logic is not exhausted with the Fordist production regime. On the contrary, instead of an erosion of corporate hierarchies and work relationships in society, a new stage in the development of the relation between capital and labor is emerging that can no longer be adequately interpreted using previously dominant analytical methods and assessment criteria. Therefore a social critique of capitalism cannot do without developing innovative concepts of its own (cf. Baumann, 1999; Sennet, 1998).

To do this, one prerequisite above all is the *consistent further development of theoretical approaches* to the analysis of social developments. Here the work of Marx is still a significant point of reference, although it cannot offer a comprehensive analytical system, not to speak of any monopoly on interpretation. But from our perspective there is no doubt that the new emerging type of labor indicates a significant increase in the 'productive powers', combined with a fundamental change in practical production regimen, and thus in the Marxian 'societal means of production'. Marx developed the most important social theory of the 19th century, revealing the decisive aspects of the developmental phases of capitalist society. In the 21st century we are faced with further developments that will be understood only by creating largely new theoretical instruments based, to a greater or lesser extent, on classical theoretical elements and thought.

The thesis of the entreployee is not – and never will be – a replacement for such a social theory, but it can help formulate relevant ideas and questions. One of these is an intensified consideration of the subjectivity of the workers in order to understand the present development of working society. New scientific approaches to the '*subjectification*' of work (see Moldaschl/Voß, 2002; for similar ideas see Boltanski/ Chiapello, 1999; Hardt/ Negri 2001) are significant, as is the reappraisal of practical experiences of workers, as in the campaign

"Work Without End?" (Ger. 'Arbeiten ohne Ende') propagated by the German metalworkers' trade union *IG-Metall* (see Glißmann/ Peters, 2001).

The discussion of the *subjectification of work* centers on the resulting new ambivalence and contradictions experienced increasingly by those involved in market-based labor structures. In that process they are neither helpless victims nor revolutionary actors, but co-participants in a fundamental and for them unusual development. Socio-theoretical efforts may contribute to a better understanding of this and related problems, creating a basis not only for new and instructive forms of knowledge, but also dialogue and adequate socio-political strategies for coping with them.

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