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Work and Recognition

Reviewing New Forms of Pathological Developments

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abstract: The article deals with the relationship between work and recognition, taking Axel Honneth's social-philosophical theory of the struggle for recognition as its point of departure. In order to give sociological substance to Honneth's theory, we turn to three contemporary social theorists – Jean-Pierre Le Goff, Christophe Dejours and Emmanuel Renault. In spite of many differences, their work is united by a critical description of the logic of work and its consequences for individual individuation. These theorists agree that the growth of autonomy, flexibility and mobility has destabilised individual and collective identity formation and has led to an increase in social pathological illnesses such as stress and depression. By juxtaposing these analyses with Honneth's theory on recognition, we conclude that the contemporary logic of work is unable to provide adequate forms of recognition. Individuals are seemingly caught up in a continual battle for recognition without ever having the possibility of receiving proper respect.

keywords: Axel Honneth ◆ Christophe Dejours ◆ critical theory ◆ emergence of new pathologies ◆ Emmanuel Renault ◆ Jean-Pierre Le Goff ◆ neo-liberalism ◆ recognition

Introduction

Axel Honneth is regarded as the leading third-generation theorist (Critchley, 1998: 35; Seidman and Alexander, 2001: 4) of the Frankfurt School.[1] In spite of his growing international status, he is yet to have his 'breakthrough' in mainstream sociological literature. In the following, we show how Honneth's recognition theory allows sociology to be normatively informed and thus able to make value judgements about current structural developments. Honneth points to work as an essential category for a contemporary critical theory, since work serves as a sphere in which the individual can realize her/his abilities, skills and talents, and sees work as a specific and separate sphere of recognition. However, his contemporary diagnosis of structural developments of work is insufficiently elaborated (1).[2] In order to give it sociological substance we therefore focus on some of the contemporary French diagnoses of the status of work: Jean-Pierre Le Goff's study of the constant modernization process and the influence of management strategies on the character of work (2); and Christophe Dejours (3) and Emmanuel Renault (4), who both juxtapose the concept of work and recognition in a productive critical analysis. Consideration of these French studies enables us, in a purely tentative and descriptive manner, to fill in Honneth's normative ideas concerning work as a specific sphere for individual self-realization (5).

1. Honneth: Erosion of the accomplishment principle

In a key article, 'Pathologies of the Social: The Past and Present of Social Philosophy' (1994), Honneth locates himself within social philosophy, a realm he considers a distinct residual discipline. He thereby invites a sociology which wants to ground its claims normatively, and a moral philosophy which wants to be empirically informed. Honneth traces the genesis of social philosophy back to the critiques of civilization made by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau was not interested in determining the legal conditions under which the state could maintain civil order, but rather in the developments which led to its degeneration (Honneth, 1994: 12). Rousseau was therefore more interested in a diagnosis of the radical consequences of modernity than in the structural construction of the modern social order. Honneth examines how Rousseau, and subsequently Hegel, Marx, Lukács, Nietzsche, Horkheimer and Adorno, identifies and explores the conditions which prevent individual self-realization in modernity, and he aspires to formulate a methodological and systematic justification for a normative critique of western capitalist societies. In *Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (1996b) he seeks to construct the formal conditions for human self-realization by returning to an anthropological argumentation,[3] which takes its departure in Hegel's early Jena writings. In the work of Hegel, Honneth finds a model for the struggle for recognition, which he reconstructs using the social psychology of George Herbert Mead and the object-relations theory of Donald W. Winnicot. When he argues that the struggle for recognition can be said to have an anthropological character, this is mainly because the individual cannot develop a personal identity without recognition. The need for recognition is anthropologically anchored, because our personal identity depends on it; without a minimum of recognition, the question 'who am I?' will simply be left unanswered (Heidegren, 2002: 436). Without recognition, the individual cannot be fully individuated, that is to say, cannot consciously relate to her/his own inner self. Therefore, it is only valid to examine social pathologies when we can relate it to a formal idea of the good life – that is the basic conditions on which human self-realization are based. When we use Honneth to unveil certain pathological conditions, we are not making some kind of clinical diagnosis but rather we are concerned with the 'determination and discussion of those developmental processes of society that can be conceived as processes of decline, distortions, or even as social pathologies' (1996a: 370). The methodological justification of a critical diagnosis is then based on the formal conditions of individual prospects for self-realization. Honneth contends that such an idea of the good life is best justified by a weak formalistic anthropology, which sets few, but fundamental, conditions for the individual's self-realization (1994: 60). It is these few fundamental conditions Honneth presents in his theory of recognition.

Honneth's concept of recognition is divided into three separate spheres: (a) the private sphere comprising family and friendships, (b) the sphere of rights and legal entitlements, and (c) the sphere of cultural and political solidarity. Each sphere entails a mode of practical relations to oneself: first, emotional support, which triggers the prerequisite for the individual's basic *self-confidence*; second, universal respect gained from rights, which triggers a *self-respect* as a citizen; and finally, the *self-esteem* that is redeemed in social solidarity, where values are shared (Honneth, 2000: 182–3). Each form of recognition constitutes, on one level, an integrative aspect of the social order and, on another, an ontogenetic step in the development of the individual, that is to say, each form must be experienced to ensure the three basic modes of practical relations to the self. If the individual is not recognized, or unable to get emotional support, respect through rights and social esteem, she/he is at risk of losing the practical self-relation. The absence or withholding of recognition can cause the individual to lose her/his positive relation to self, but so too can a number of other corresponding violations. Because the different forms of recognition constitute the normative idea of the good life, the

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corresponding modes of violation must be the basis of understanding the motives or reasons for the struggle for recognition. Each sphere of recognition is thereby accompanied by different sorts of disrespect that constitute the internal connection between moral and recognition (Honneth, 1996b: 131–39). In primary emotional relations, physical abuse, rape and torture can be seen as examples of violations which damage physical integrity and basic self-confidence. In the sphere of rights, when the moral responsibility of the bearer of rights is disregarded, it can damage and even destroy the individual's self-respect. Illustrations of these kinds of violation are fraud or discrimination against particular groups by the legal system. In a community of shared values, moral wrongdoings are represented by instances where one or more people are humiliated, violated or abused in a way that does not recognize their skills and talents. These kinds of violations damage the self-esteem of the individual or the group and the sense of significance in a given social community (Honneth, 2000: 179– 84).

It is Honneth's third sphere of recognition which is the normative point of reference for our further analysis of the relation between work and recognition. For Honneth, the theoretical connection between the concepts of work and recognition is to be found in the normatively structured capitalistic principle of accomplishment (Petersen and Willig, 2002: 274). The principle suggests that every member of society is entitled to recognition for her/his contributions to the reproduction of society, that is to say, for contributions that fall under the category of work (Petersen and Willig, 2002: 274). Honneth believes that the principle of accomplishment emerges as an extension of the premodern notion of honour, according to which honour was reserved for a small élite in the social hierarchy. Now, instead of a particular and restrained notion of honour, rigidly connected to certain fixed forms of status, the emphasis upon individual accomplishments grows proportionally with the industrial division of labour. This historical transformation leads to a 'meritocracy', since every member of society can allegedly enjoy social appreciation as a working citizen with regard to his or her accomplishments. It is obvious that this new principle had, from the beginning, an ideological character. According to Honneth, the hegemonic ideological values of the bourgeoisie set the parameters for what could be defined as a legitimate contribution to the reproduction of society. In this way, recognition rested on the dominant values and interests of certain groups, and hence a variety of accomplishments were not deemed eligible for recognition. We can, therefore, perceive the contemporary struggle for recognition as forms of contestation focusing on the right to receive recognition for abilities, skills and accomplishments that have hitherto been denied proportionate recognition. Thus Honneth, like Hegel and Marx,[4] believes that work is not just economic in nature, but also possesses an emancipatory potential in terms of self-realization. According to such a perspective, where the notion of work is not reduced to a mere instrumental category, but rather is expanded as an external-ization of the essential creativity and talents of the individual, it becomes possible to conduct a different type of social criticism. Here it is not only the material conditions of the physical functioning of the individual that are examined, but also the mental conditions for individual self-realization.

Honneth's discussion of the contemporary status of recognition within the framework of modern capitalist society tends to be pitched at a high level of philosophical abstraction, but one does find more specific analysis, albeit fragmented, in *The Fragmented World of the Social. Essays in Social and Political Philosophy* (1995). In this book, Honneth identifies two primary processes which have led to the current devaluation of industrial work. First, the growing service sector, where reflexive activities have taken over from mechanical industrial operations, has played an important role. These activities differ from earlier performances, partly because they are extremely heterogeneous and unreliable when it comes to validating accomplishments, and partly because the service sector lacks clear and uncontroversial criteria for economic efficiency, which can be made the object of the conditions for receiving

recognition. Second, industrial work not only loses economic status, but also its collective status. The traditional biographies of the individual, who are recognized for their continuous and lifelong accomplishments, are therefore under pressure from a constantly altering labour market. Industrial work as a cultural ethical medium where the worker uncovers his self-knowledge and finds recognition, and, furthermore, sees her/himself as a moral person, is under enormous pressure. In Honneth's words:

> . . . traditional patterns of self-realization lose their cultural support in the lifeworld's long practiced forms of recognition. [. . .] Everyday cultural praxis is freed step-by-step from its received value commitments and traditions without them having already been replaced by comprehensive patterns of orientation, within which the individual subjects' attempts at self-realization could find intersubjective recognition. (Honneth, 1995: 229)

To Honneth the normative principle of accomplishment, which has so far functioned as a source of integration, is being eroded. This is due not just to the demise of industrial work, but also to the growing possibilities of financial rewards which are difficult to justify: those accrued from the furious ups and downs of the stock market, increasing real estate speculation, and state and media sponsored competitions, where success is wholly down to luck rather than any notion of accomplishment. Honneth's point is that the principle of accomplishment is too narrow to incorporate types of work which cannot be ascribed recognition value in the reproduction of society. This leads to three more sociological hypotheses. First, that we will see an increase in recognition struggles as to what can be evaluated as work. Second, a need arises to expand the concept of work, so that it will include all forms of accomplishments and thereby enjoy the recognition of society (Petersen and Willig, 2002: 274). Third, the new organization of work leads to a greater sense of status confusion, disorientation and a rise in psychological disturbances.

2. Le Goff: Neo-liberalism as 'light barbarism'

In this section we consider some of the key contributors to the current social theoretical debate in France on the contemporary organization of work. Their writings (a) share a number of important assumptions, which (b) enables us to present a critical description of the Western work logic of our time, and (c) explore the psycho-social consequences for the individual.

(a) Jean-Pierre Le Goff, philosopher and sociologist, has, within the past decade, drawn attention to himself with writings on the entry of management strategies into working life (1992, 2000), and what he terms the 'blind modernization process' of work (1999). His fundamental idea is that the need for perpetual adaptation to constant modernization has gone ahead unquestioned and must be challenged. As a result of this uncritical acceptance, the negative consequences of the modernization process, in particular its tendency to erode the foundations for constructing social communities, has been neglected. What Le Goff refers to as 'light barbarism' (barbarie douce) (1999) follows in the wake of this blind modernization. It is 'light', because it is supported by modern normative demands, such as increased autonomy, transparency and responsibility; it is 'barbarism' because these normative demands pave the way for new forms of manipulation and repression, the consequences of which are mainly manifested in the sphere of work. The novelty of these normative demands is that they seem impenetrable and irresistible. By this Le Goff means that the normative demands are totalitarian in the sense that any attempt not to comply with them is bound to fail. So, what emerges is a *take it, or take it* scenario. In short, Le Goff understands blind modernization's infinite need of alteration as extremely destabilizing, because the mental capacity of the individual finds it hard to keep up with the permanent shifts in the organization of work. Hence, 'light barbarism' refers to a sort of constant, cultural revolution transforming the life, actions

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and way of thinking of the individual and simultaneously denying her/him sufficient time for adequate adjustment (1999: 8).

(b) With blind modernization there follows a professionalization of life whereby the individual must test and live out her/his autonomy and responsibility. This is due to a parallel invasion, especially in Western societies, of management strategies, the normative demands of which have had a powerful effect on the character of work. The common denominator of these strategies has been the breaking down of the hierarchical organization principles associated with the Taylorist mode of organization and the incorporation instead of the 'complete human being' in work (Le Goff, 2000: 16; see also Cohen, 1999). This means, first, that the integrative competencies of the individual are qualities such as mobility, flexibility and reactivity. These competencies are introduced as being self-developmental, and hence they ensure the employability of the individual in an increasingly complex and constantly changing world. Second, the mode of accomplishment emanates from the dictum that the working individual should always be able to motivate and optimize her/his accomplishments, based on a vision about the desirability of being able to incorporate one's entire knowledge into work (Le Goff, 1999: 32). According to Le Goff, the flexibility and mobility of the individual are defined according to his or her mental flexibility and elasticity (1999: 26; see also Sennett, 1998). These two concepts refer to the mental ability to cope with constant variability, that is, that the individual does not immediately return to any specific focal point. Therefore, no limits exist to flexibility and elasticity, which is why the versatility of the individual is given such great significance. Le Goff also considers the notion of autonomy as one of the most important dynamics of modernization, because it is an integral part of the extended responsibility ascribed to the individual. Genuine autonomy is not something that can be 'ascribed to', however, but rather must be actively 'conquered' by the individual her/himself (1992: 276). In addition, the individual has to fulfil the company's efficiency and productivity demands. For this reason, companies carry out an increasing number of evaluation processes, where the capacity of the individual to perform the flexible, mobile and versatile work is examined (Le Goff, 1999: 30). The expectation of individual autonomy is devalued by the individual's need to follow the requirements of efficiency and productivity and her/his exposure to constant efficiency tests.

(c) All this places the individual in an extremely contradictory and destabilizing situation in which she/he experiences a kind of pseudo-autonomy and pseudo-responsibility. This paradox does not fulfil the individual's aspirations for self-realization in work. Thus, the increasing focus on responsibility and autonomy can become a strain, striking at the individual as she/he attempts to act out the normative demands. While the phasing out of the Taylorian workplace should ensure an increasing humanization in work, Le Goff's point is that the post-Taylorist focus on individual accomplishments and obligatory autonomy in work has caused a new dehumanization of work. Work's focus on precisely individual accomplishments and obligatory autonomy has changed its character to such an extent that it has been reduced to a tool by which to fulfil the objective of individual competencies, projects and strategies. This contradicts Le Goff's normative perception of work, where work is not just a question of generating individual competency portfolios, but to a high degree is perceived as a world in which the individual is confronted with the borders of what is collectively possible, and where she/he, in co-operation with others, takes possession of the habits and values which are constitutional for both an individual and a collective identity (1999: 35). The pressure on the mental capacities of the individual is increased to such an extent that the individual feels uncertain in its work and finds no time or space to stabilize her/his competencies in regard to work (Le Goff, 2000: 79). In the name of constant transformation the societal concept of work has been reduced to the ability to adapt continuously. Yet, when there is a disjuncture between the overriding expectation of adaptation and the actual possibilities for change, the individual is left

to her/his own devices and insecurity. The potential for collective practices is eroded, which is why 'the light barbarism appears as a meaningless machinery, which de-stabilises individuals and collectives' (Le Goff, 1999: 112).[5] In using the term 'meaningless' Le Goff is referring to the fundamental consequence of light barbarism – the emptying of the substance of balanced and fair normative demands. Consequently, the increased autonomy of work often appears more frustrating and confusing than illuminating, liberating and transparent.

3. Dejours: The principle of fear

(a) During the last three decades, the French psychiatrist and psychologist Christophe Dejours has analysed the mental influence of working life. In his book, *Travail. Usure Mentale* (1980) (henceforth *Travail*), Dejours describes how the development of the social and organizational division of labour demanded not only a corporal submission on behalf of the workers, but also a repression of their personality and mental condition. The analysis of work and the concept of suffering are the crucial points in Dejours' studies, and in his later work *Souffrance en France. La banalisation de l'injustice sociale* (1998) (henceforth *Souffrance*), he specifically analyses suffering based on the increasing hegemony of neo-liberal values and norms in the sphere of work. He focuses on how suffering is expressed and how the individual tries to shield and protect her/himself. Dejours' project of liberation is normatively anchored in a non-metaphysical understanding of freedom, where the individual tries to transform the conditions of the surrounding world according to her/his own specific desires (1980: 22). According to Dejours, the real, free orientation towards joy, satisfaction and recognition is obliterated by the organizational division of labour and, in particular, by the neo-liberal focus on constant competition. It is exactly in this orientation towards joy, that is to see one's talents, skills and abilities in work, that Dejours understands as freedom. Suffering, the antithesis of Dejours concept of freedom, stems from one of the key principles of neo-liberal society: competition (1998: 9–10). In spite of the fact that competition is by definition asymmetrical and leads to social exclusions, it still exists as a self-explanatory, habitual and practised part of human life. Dejours observes, like Bourdieu that '[a] whole set of presuppositions is being imposed as self-evident: it is taken for granted that maximum growth, and therefore productivity and competitiveness, are the ultimate and sole goal of human actions' (Bourdieu, 2000: 30–1).

(b) In this context of suffering, Dejours sees the integration- and production-competencies of work as the fundamental centres of rotation for the reproduction of neo-liberal society (1998: 175–6). The organization of work has come to depend on individual and not collective premises. Continuing this argument, Dejours observes that companies increasingly tend to organize their management on two types of fear. First, a constant fear of dismissal exists, and thus the fear of being 'weighed' and found wanting. This leads to a wearisome internal evaluation of one's own abilities. Second, a fear of not being profitable for the company leads to an external evaluation of individual accomplishments. As a consequence, the individual is perpetually examined as to whether she/he is performing to their maximum potential. This seems to lead to a situation where the individual has no time to become at one with her/his work, or in the words of Sennett: 'The flexible regime may seem to beget a character structure constantly "in recovery" ' (1998: 135). Dejours' point is that the latent fear of not being able to honour the normative expectations to be competitive and profitable has an extreme influence on the mental state of the individual. The fear of incompetence and permanent exclusion results in an imbalance in the individual's ability to perceive her/his real competencies. Dejours regards the latent destructive conflict of interests as a new 'state of normality', where fear and the dominance of competition has become so omnipresent and general that suffering has become normal (1998: 39). The individual, in an attempt to protect the exposed mental

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fragility, accepts the competition's expectations of efficiency and internalizes of a notion of virility. Virility is of course a social and masculine construction (Dejours, 1998: 100), but its expression on a societal level has institutionalized itself as a collective manifestation which seeks to distance the individual from the integral dysfunctions of work (1998: 127). Virility has been anchored as a social parameter of integration, because it supports both individual self-preservation and the neo-liberalistic demand of efficiency. The neo-liberal economy has become a political idea about the good life, propagated as a universal truth, and thus the social balance has been reduced to an illusionary idea of economic equality. Dejours' point is that when the logic of competition takes over the social field, the individual and the intersubjective relations become objects of strategic actions on the organizational premises of the labour market and not on the social premises. The individual is thus reduced to marketing her/his virility in order not to seem passive, unmotivated, indolent or incompetent.

(c) In *Travail*, Dejours refers to the above-mentioned conditions as forms of suffering, which characterize a new form of 'depression'. This depression can be diagnosed from the display of feelings of being passive, unmotivated, exhausted and fatigued (see also Ehrenberg, 2000), and that these feelings are forbidden in the neo-liberal logic, since they are, by their very nature, unproductive. To Dejours, the vocabulary of depression is thus an expression of an inefficient discourse in a neo-liberal universe. But actually, Dejours' point is that it is the individual's marketing of self which throws it into a depressive state – because the marketing, the exposure and the display of the self exhausts its mental capacity. The individual is therefore also stressed, worn-out and mentally broken because of the organization of work. Thus, in a neo-liberal context, depression is understood as a sign of intellectual impoverishment, mental rigidity and a lack of imagination, because the production capacity of the individual has been strongly diminished. According to Dejours, it is a permanent psychosomatic state of society, which has been embedded in all institutions, and relations of society, and virility appears as the ultimate virtue justifying social exclusion (1998: 166). The immediate consequence of a division of labour which operates with the normality of suffering is that the individual becomes uncertain of her/his abilities and skills, since the expectations are asymmetrical and she/he is constantly required to seek out recognition for her/his accomplishments. Dejours, then, views reciprocal recognition as the key to the personal development of the subject because:

> When the quality of my work is recognised, then my efforts, my anxiety, my doubts, my disappointments, my despondency also make sense [. . .] In the recognition of work, yes even in the work, the subject can subsequently introduce this on the list over the construction of its identity [. . .] When lacking recognition in work . . . the subject is condemned to suffering, and only that. (1998: 37)

Again, Dejours points to the vital self-realization aspect of work, and thus to its paramount position in the individual's search for recognition. Here, Dejours distinguishes between two modes of gained recognition. First, there is the hierarchical/vertical recognition from one's superiors concerning the usability and worth of one's work, and second, the horizontal recognition of the quality of work from one's equals and colleagues. Both modes of recognition function as a sort of symbolic payment which should be met in order to sustain and develop the personal potential of the individual (Dejours, 1998: 121). Thus, recognition is a vital element in the struggle against suffering, but the problem, according to Dejours, is that both modes of recognition are increasingly being subverted by the organization of work according to the principle of fear. The individual seeks constant recognition, but the conditions for recognition are changing faster than the individual can make use of it, and the individual is therefore held captive in a fatiguing and 'almost there' hunt for recognition.[6] This is why the individual resorts to defensive strategies, which should be understood as a defence against suffering. The problem with these defence strategies, like virility, is that they too are based on

a neo-liberal foundation which cannot meet the intersubjective premise so essential to recognition. In this way, the strategies against suffering can have the opposite effect.

4. Renault: The 'fragilization' of identity

(a) Emmanuel Renault's works include *Marx et l'idée de critique* (1995), *Mépris social – Éthique et politique de reconnaissance* (2000a), and (with Sintomer) *Ou en est la Théorie Critique* (2003). The theoretical starting point for Renault is the conviction that the last decades have been marked by a distinct depoliticization of the public sphere. Thus, politics has been controlled by a consensual reasoning which has not only weakened the real purpose, namely the generation of political struggles, debates and confrontations (Renault, 2000a: 10), but has also resulted in an increased moralization of social problems. This development, Renault believes, is the result of a neo-liberal founded colonization of the political field, where the political norms become mechanized; social problems become moral problems, and moral problems are reduced to individual responsibility. Thus, the wave of 'morality' is based on a neo-liberal inspired 'sound thought of reason', where politics distances itself from the private on the grounds that the private sphere belongs to the individual moral field of responsibility. Renault argues that this 'moral absolutism' (2000a: 13), by which he means that morals are seen solely as the responsibility of the individual, obscures the need to view social problems as supra-individual. As a result, struggles for individual and collective recognition are neglected in the public sphere. According to Renault, to resist this development it is necessary to ground politics within a normative perspective which addresses itself not to the individual but rather to a collective morality. The social optic has to change so that the point of departure becomes a recognition ethics highlighting two social modes of repugnance: the absence of recognition first as a negation of one's dignity and second as a negation of one's individual identity (Renault, 2000a: 15). Here it is important to note two essential features. First, Renault does not simply accept Honneth's assumption about the need of recognition as a weak formal anthropological disposition; he also expands on it as the principal component in an explicit politics of recognition. Second, Renault, in opposition to Honneth, puts great emphasis on alienation. Thus, he not only understands social contempt as a negation and denial of identity, but also identifies social contempt as an expression of a pathological condition generated by a socially alienated world (Renault, 2000a: 80). Renault's concept of alienation should not be understood within a traditional conceptual frame, but as anthropologically founded. By this Renault means that the world is not alienating because it does not allow the individual to realize her/his inner, radical essence of freedom, but because it is perceived as alien by the individuals who cannot (re-)find that which is meaningful and valuable for their existence. In other words, alienation emerges when the individual *cannot* or *is not allowed* to (re-)find that which is constitutive of identity. The crux of the matter, here, is the way in which Renault understands the concept of identity. By accepting the dictum of Arthur Rimbaud, that *Je est (toujours) un autre*, Renault shows that an individual is never totally identical to her/himself. The individual is, so to speak, always in transformation, and, as in Mead's social psychology (1967), the identity of the individual is always affirmed in relation to the other. Yet, the self-affirming relation of an individual should, in spite of this, always be portrayed identically to the identification the individual has of her/his different identities, and, hence, be recognized for that which gives meaning and value to the individual. A world that deprives an individual of this *minimum* of individual recognition is also depriving the individual of the freedom which exists in the ability to create oneself as an individual. The process of individuation is obstructed if the individual is denied recognition of her/his identity futures, which is precisely what is characteristic of an alienated social world (Renault, 2000a: 81). Renault believes that a theory of alienation developed within the frames of a theory of recognition can draw positive

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conclusions about the societal suffering and modes of injustice created by the 'sound reasoning' of the neo-liberals (2000a: 82). As a consequence, a real politics of recognition will emerge in a re-politicized public sphere.

(b) Renault speaks of a *cultural dominance* which is expressed either as colonialism or as the enforcement of the lifestyles and values of a dominant social group upon minority groups. These result in the dominated being subjected to a negative portrayal of themselves, either by way of scorn of their vocation or because their culture is derided and construed as being inferior by the majority. Furthermore, Renault points to the *fragility of identity*, a reference to a process of social condemnation denying the individual confirmation of her/his identity (2000a: 84). The central point for us is how the societal 'fragilization' of identity happens as a consequence of the constant transformation of the organization of work (2000a: 86). Here, Renault finds that the neo-liberalism has involved a restructuring of the work process in which management strategies have generated the ideal worker as a nomad ever available to the market. This ideal has taken root to such an extent that the specific expertise of the worker is overshadowed by the company's need for qualities such as mobility, initiative and flexibility. The real skills of the worker are devalued and the internal solidarity between the workers is replaced by competitive relations destructive for solidarity formations. Management strategies confine themselves to increased efficiency and productivity, while the significance of the *metier* to solidarity and the social value of work is lost. Work becomes insipid and the individual's identification with work is broken.

(c) Not only can individuals not see themselves in the work they do, they are also confronted with new surveillance techniques, too. Along with the dissolution of hierarchical structures and the emphasis on flexibility, intra-personal control measurements are established between the workers. Here, Renault follows Deleuze (1990) in his analysis of the newly formed surveillance mechanisms, whereby one individual worker watches over another. The socialization of the worker is thus followed by an increased psychological pressure initiated by horizontal surveillance resulting in a kind of constant self-surveillance (Renault, 2000a: 88). This creates an intensified psychological pressure on the individual and increases modes of suffering such as stress, bullying and depression (Renault, 2000b: 1; see also Hirigoyen, 1998). For Renault, the growing fragilization of identity leads to a fundamental transmutation of identity (Renault, 2000a: 92). By this he means that the individual, due to the growing mental pressure, is impelled to acquire an unambiguous and exclusive identity which adapts to the identities recognized by the majority of society. Paradoxically, the transmutation of identity becomes a way to repress alienation, a way for the individual to defend her/himself against fragilization. When the need of adequate recognition is not met in relation to the individual's self-identification, she/he is forced to seek recognition from existing sources of identity channels which enjoy a priori social recognition. This process can assume many different shapes. Renault himself mentions the football supporter who has a counter-reaction to the fragilization by gathering his entire identity in an unconditional relationship to his club, gaining thereby recognition as a *real* supporter (2000a: 92). The same image could be applied to the worker who instrumentally organizes his identity in order to meet the increasing demands of flexible and mobile work, and thus be recognized in the company as a *good worker*.

5. Conclusion: The emergence of new forms of social suffering

Le Goff points to the fact that the normative demands outlined in the new management strategies are so impenetrable and irresistible that any attempts not to meet them were bound to fail. For Dejours, these same strategies are built on two modes of fear, namely the fear of being dismissed, and the fear of not being profitable for the company. Renault observes that the modern organization of work leads to increasing surveillance of the worker's

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accomplishments. In Le Goff, the result of new modes of repression is that there is no escape from the normative demands to be flexible, mobile and versatile. The individual is caught in a pseudo-autonomy caused by forced self-realization projects in the course of which she/he constantly has to motivate, optimize and examine the self. According to Dejours, fear is one of the principle elements in the organization of work, which means that the individual has to protect her/himself by means of a self-defeating internalization of virility. In Renault, the individual has had to reconceptualize her/himself as an adaptable nomad sacrificing everything so as to be available for the market. The dismissal of other significant conditions for the individual happen because neo-liberalism has been elevated to a moral truth. The common denominator for all three theorists is that the individual has been subjected to new forms of domination characterized by an ideological (and illusionary) idea of self-realization through the market values of efficiency and productivity. The analyses vary according to their starting point, but they all end up with a pessimistic vision – the struggle for a redefinition of what counts as work and as a legitimate source of recognition is futile. This is because, for Le Goff, Dejours and Renault, the individual does not see her/himself as being part of a general development, where the self-realization projects of other individuals or groups are also under pressure. The individual takes sole responsibility for her/his own accomplishments in order to survive.

The individual stands alone, confronted with the normative demands without any inter-subjective experiences which can contribute to the struggle against the asymmetrical conditions of recognition. In fact, the individual can only see her/himself in an instrumental relation to other competing subjects, by means of which the precondition for a collective will formation is additionally eroded. Furthermore, it is this lack of shared experience that really accounts for some of the psychological consequences of the post-Taylorist organization of work. Because, if the individual stands alone with normative demands and lacking any real possibilities to gain intersubjective experience, her/his practical relation to the self becomes threatened. As we know from Honneth, it is the three practical relations to the self (self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem) which allow individuals, on an elementary level, to see themselves as being fully individuated. It is not difficult to see that self-esteem is threatened under conditions which neither demand intersubjective experiences creating a common value-horizon, nor dictate explicit guiding lines for what can and cannot be recognized as accomplishments. Here two explanations appear for the psycho-social consequences detailed by Le Goff, Dejours and Renault. First, the individual is denied access to collective struggles for recognition, and, thus, she/he is hindered in perceiving the opportunity of having her/his accomplishments recognized. Second, what can be recognized is changing so rapidly that the individual cannot keep pace, or, as Dejours puts it, the individual seeks constant recognition, but the conditions of recognition are changing faster than the individual can utilize them such that she/he is thus caught in an 'almost there' hunt for recognition. Both explanations lead, in our opinion, to the same result: an exhaustion of the self.

Our hypothesis is now that the first explanation, where the individual is prevented from entering intersubjective, experience-based work communities, involves a weakening of the self-esteem of the individual, since she/he must confront normative demands alone. Thus a U-turn occurs, away from reciprocal intersubjective relations and inwards towards the individual's own self. This introspective movement, where the individual makes her/himself an object of management strategies and the demands of enhanced responsibility, is the first step towards an explanation of why all diagnoses speak of a fragilization of the identity, stress, fatigue or depression. To this extent, the introspective movement, where the individual tries to find inner resources in order to 'conquer' recognition, is the first sign of depression. The symptoms of depression (passivity, exhaustion, fatigue), are intensified by an exaggerated introspective search for the individual's own defects and flaws. An exhaustion of the self

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occurs as it is drained by its inner normative 'tribunal'. In the second explanation, the accomplishments of work are changing so rapidly that the individual becomes disorientated in terms of what can and cannot be recognized. These changes compel the individual to (re)familiarize itself endlessly with potential possibilities of recognition. She/he can no longer limit her/himself to a limited range of opportunities, but has to keep all options open. Furthermore, the individual has to be able to redeem former accomplishments to gain recognition. Here we see another reason why the post-Taylorist individual suffers – the individual is managing her/himself to exhaustion.

The above discussion helps us to consider the three hypotheses generated by Honneth's work. He proposes, one may recall, that a normative confusion of the accomplishments that can and cannot be recognised would lead to increasing of struggles of recognition over what can be considered as work. For Le Goff, Dejours and Renault, by contrast, post-Taylorist management strategies obstruct the conditions which pave the way for struggles for recognition, and repress those hidden violations which could set new boundaries to the recognition value of accomplishments. Honneth suggests that an expansion of the concept of work could occur, so that more diverse notions of accomplishments could come into being. However, as Le Goff, Dejours and Renault show, this pluralistic hope is an illusion under neo-liberalism, which imposes a new hegemonic value system regarding what can, and cannot, become a source of recognition. This leads us to Honneth's third hypothesis, namely that we would see an increase of forms of mental suffering, which could be related to the new organization of work. Here it seems, as we illustrated above, Honneth and our two corresponding explanations are in accord. The post-Taylorist, neo-liberal world of work is constructed on the intensified suffering of contemporary individuals.

Notes

1. Honneth disagrees, however, with this categorization of his work. He does not see his work as a continuation of the traditional programme as formulated by Horkheimer, but prefers a broader notion of Critical Theory. For a more elaborate discussion on the second and third generations, see Osborne and Finke (1993) and Critchley (1998).
2. A number of German sociologists have recently sought to develop his perspective by delineating more clearly the relationship between work and recognition (e.g. Holtgrewe et al., 2000; Honneth, 2002). Despite the editing of the recent anthology: *Befreiung aus der Mündigkeit. Paradoxien des gegenwärtigen Kapitalismus*, where several essays deal with the relation between recognition and work, Honneth has not clarified his view on contemporary work. In his recent discussion with Nancy Fraser (2003) the concept of work is defined in terms of the accomplishment principle. This discussion does, however, lack a notable debate on what is to be understood by the internal relationship between recognition and contemporary organization of work.
3. For Honneth's work on philosophical anthropology, see Honneth and Joas (1980). For a discussion on the influence of philosophical anthropology in Honneth's work, see Heidegren's and Honneth's discussions (2002).
4. For more elaboration on Honneth's view on Marx, see Honneth (1995).
5. All translation by the authors.
6. Perret and Roustang (1993: 138–9) make a similar point when they state that the post-industrial organization of work has not come up with adequate structures of recognition that can meet the recognition expectations of the workers, which is why the lack of recognition of the value of work has become a social and cultural problem.

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