

The Obsolescence of Labour?

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Abstract

The coordinates of contemporary labour are in continuous and rapid transformation, starting from its places and times. On the one hand, precariousness and flexibility are watchwords in today labour policies. On the one hand, the encroachment of working time into living time, as well as the accelerated platformisation and automation of workplaces, leads us to reflect on the issue of the human dignity and freedom. In a completely prophetic vein, the philosopher of technique Günther Anders questioned whether the obsolescence of the human being does not also concern the obsolescence of labour. In fact, he had already foreseen how contemporary workers are unfree not only because they are excluded from the ownership of “their” means of production or products, but because they do not overlook the whole of the production context in which they are integrated; nor do they know the end product and its meaning - these remain “transcendent”. Consequently, new forms of alienation have therefore increasingly highlighted the malaise that pervades workplaces. This gives rise to new pathological forms of labour and related pathologies: from technostress to workaholism and so on. Following the investigation in this direction (last addressed by the philosopher Rahel Jaeggi), it is essential to proceed to illuminate these contemporary perspectives and dig deep into the relationships between the individuals and the labour dimension in which they are placed today. Hence, how far has the obsolescence of labour gone and how structural has it become?

Keywords: philosophy of labour, malaise, alienation, workplace