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WHAT WE TALK ABOUT, WHEN WE TALK ABOUT WORK

English Summary

Work is a key activity in human life. From some of the earliest traditions we know that work has defined the human being, and borne testimony to the individual human beings social and societal status, his character and capacity, his enterprise and his creativity. Work has a defining influence on the formation of the individual persons identity and understanding of, 'who he is'. Through work, man shapes, cultivates, create, develop and alter his world and the society, safeguard the preservation of life and shape it, and bring about safety and security for himself and his fellow human beings. Through work, man enter into a social community with others, in which he achieve and experience of being useful, important and indispensable. Work is a source of joy and deep satisfaction, personal and professional development, and a possibility to unfold the individual human beings own potential.

However, work is also an activity that submits man to community, limits his freedom and reduces his possibilities to act. It is an activity that one cannot refuse to conduct, without serious social, economic and psychological consequences. Since the transition from the agricultural to the industrial society, and later on to the knowledge society, work is an activity where the result and the product of the effort of the many, is owned by the few. Work has become an activity that the many perform for the few, so that most people today are wage earners. Hence, work is also something that one can loose, and an activity that is not solely defined and determined by the individual person. It is an occupation that is regulated by an agreement, to which certain expectations and demands are attached. Work is therefore also a risky undertaking, if one or both parties does not feel that his expectations and demands are answered and met, and the contract eventually have to be lifted. Furthermore it is an activity where the workingman exposes himself to the risk of being worn-out, both physically and mentally, expelled from the social community and stigmatized, or loosing the foundation for the maintenance of his life.

Regardless of what work is to man, it is only what it is by virtue of the way, man speaks of and give meaning to, work. The meaning of work is the result of the way man speaks about it. It is the result of the norms that man holds in regard to work as an object and an activity, the expectations, attitudes and

actions that is the result of those norms, and what man as a consequence says about it. The various meanings ascribed to work, of which I have mentioned a few in the text above, shapes the relations of meaning that eventually give work its social meaning, define the relation between man and work, and arrange the conduct, attitudes and discourses of the workingman, and subsequently his understanding of himself and work.

It is precisely the late-modern human beings verbalization of the relation between man and work, and the arrangement of the late-modern human beings attitudes, actions and way of talking about work caused by the formation of discourses, which is the object of analysis in this dissertation. I begin the dissertation by describing, how work has come to take up an increasingly part of the late-modern human beings life, and the strong emotions that is attributed to the relation to work. On the one hand we seem to love our job and feel a deep sense of satisfaction from the way, work stimulates our desire and urge to develop, both professionally, personally and socially, and unfold our potential in an ever changing and alternating worklife. On the other hand, an increasing number of people in the workforce have difficulties uniting a hectic and demanding worklife, and its constant demand for development of competencies, flexibility and commitment, with a family- and leisure-life that is coherent and in balance. Stress has become the second largest problem on the European labor market, and every day 35.000 Danish workers report themselves sick due to stress. That establishes a relation between man and work, which is fundamentally paradoxical: It is a source of pleasure and deep personal and professional satisfaction; *and* at the same time, the very same source is causing an increasing number of people to become sick, due to the late-modern worklife.

In the dissertation I describe the mechanisms that allows the late-modern workingman to experience both pleasure and deterioration from the late-modern worklife, and allow him to both talk about work as a positive stimulus and as mentally deteriorating. But simultaneously makes it difficult to prevent or remedy the things that makes man sick, or discuss measures that can be taken to relieve the problem. In my dissertation I establish a discourse-archaeological approach, based on the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault between the period from 1966 - 1984, in the analysis of dissertations data material, consisting of approximately 800 articles from the week-letters A4 and Monday Morning. This implies a descriptive approach to the analysis of the archive, followed by an analysis of the arranging effect of the discourses, on the human beings norms, attitudes, actions and way of talking about the late-modern worklife.

In the 1st part of the dissertation I describe three -ism's - determinism, voluntarism and scientism - that marks the understanding of the relation between man and work, from the beginning of the 17th century and on to the time around World War Two. I show that the relation is constituted both by an external, religious calling that determines it, and that it at the same time is a voluntary activity that is necessary in order to survive, and create a safe and comfortable life. But that it is also a relation that it is gradually possible to determine, explain, predict and hence manipulate with reference to regulate, control and manage a society, which is ever more becoming a work-society. In chapter 3 I describe the events in the labor-market that takes place around the time of World War Two, and which causes the transformations of the worklife-discourses and ultimately changes the relation between man and work and the constitution of the late-modern workingman. In chapter 4 and 5 I present the dissertations theoretical frame, and the analytical-strategic approach to the handling of the dissertations data-material.

In the 2nd part of the dissertation I describe and analyze the formation of three discourses - the globalization-discourse, the development-discourse and the health-discourse - from the period between 2002 - 2010, each discourse in its own chapter (chapter 6 - 8). I split the overall period in three partial periods, each with a length of three years, in order to demonstrate how the discourses develop over time. Apart from analyzing the Week-Letter A4 and the Week-Letter Monday Morning, I analyze a number of articles written by five leading opinion-makers, and articles published in the national, printed medias. In chapter 9 I perform a comparative analysis of the discourses and show, how the reciprocal relation between them is displaced and transformed. I describe the frame-conditions of the organizational communication that the discourses establish, and the terms of communication they hereby set between employers and employees. After that I turn to look at some of the temporary theoretical constructions regarding the relation between man and work, developed by Danish as well as foreign scientists, with the purpose of qualifying the analysis of the dissertation, as well as the conclusions drawn, and to put them into perspective.

The dissertation ends with chapter 10, in which I make a brief summary of the research I have performed and the conclusions I have brought out, as well as the contribution it offers to the contemporary and further efforts to enhance the worklife for the people in the Danish labor-market.