

Authenticity and Individual Mindfulness Within Organisations: Problems and Perspectives

Wolfgang Hien

Abstract Permanent economic restructuring processes are becoming a growing threat to society and to the worker's own situation of life. Work-related mental health problems and illnesses are increasing alarmingly in all countries affected by economic globalization. Against this background, concepts and ideas focusing on mindfulness are coming under discussion. This article presents the current state of work and health related scientific findings, and discusses them from a critical social theoretical point of view. Against this background, concepts of mindfulness derived from the Jewish-Christian tradition are discussed. The article supports the hypothesis of an existing interdependence between individual and organisational mindfulness. This also means that without personally practiced mindfulness, organisations will not experience any significant change. Concrete actions are suggested for day-to-day operations. Furthermore, open questions, which can be addressed only in daily practise, are also formulated.

Keywords Individual authenticity • Individual mindfulness • Organizational culture • Working conditions • Mental health • Patterns of masculinity • Role and personality

1 Introduction and Outline of Problems

The post-modern working world is being shaken up by complex turbulences, including organizational and corporate changes, mergers, transfers, and closures; in other words, processes that can be subsumed under the terms "Organisational Changes" or "Restructuring processes". It is difficult for employees to receptively follow these developments or to meet these challenges in a proactive and creative

W. Hien (✉)

Research Office for Work, Health and Biography, Am Speicher XI 9, 28217 Bremen, Germany
e-mail: kontakt@wolfgang-hien.de

way. Their attitudes range from uncritical acceptance or even an anxious “over-adaption”, to an attitude of powerless fatalism and resignation. From the health science point of view both reactions are predictors for serious and protracted work-related mental health illnesses. These overall problems have led to the development of numerous concepts and ideas relating to health-promoting management, “healthy management” and “mindfulness in organisations” (see Badura/Steinke 2012 as a current example). It is remarkable, however, that this global discussion attempts to adapt the concept of mindfulness to the requirements of a flexible capitalism.

In this article, another perspective on the concept of mindfulness shall be developed. First of all, individual mindfulness, caring for oneself and others is in focus. In a further step, the possible interaction between individual and organisational mindfulness will be explored. According to the author this is only meaningful when considering the problem of economic restructuring processes critically.

According to this thesis, we should not accept the way in which the economic, social, cultural and imaginary change takes place, as a simply natural phenomenon. These changes are flexible processes and can be created by people who are prepared to engage themselves and to look at the situation from a new perspective. This perspective refers to human dignity, meaning a lived-bodily psychosomatic regard of human being, in the working and economic world.¹ Mindfulness must be practised and demonstrated actively, if necessary even in conflict with the respective organization, even if this involves risks such as loss of position and loss of status. This means that individual mindfulness is not possible without personal authenticity. The following chapter deals with a detailed analysis and a socially critical interpretation of present working conditions. Subsequently, the article will pursue the problem context indicated above. This is, however, without claiming to offer an easily implementable solution. In the author’s opinion Jewish-Christian social theory should not be underestimated in terms of accepting the concept of mindfulness. This theory will be exemplarily presented and discussed on the basis of benedictine-oriented publications as well as others, created around the monk Anselm Grün from Münsterschwarzach Abbey.

Authenticity describes an attitude of persons who realize their own personality and take this into consideration when taking actions and setting goals. Mindfulness describes an attitude of persons who recognise the boundaries between authentic interest in work and alienating overwork and use this recognition to exercise appropriate care for themselves and others. Thus, mindfulness includes an ethical point of view referring to the working environment. That means mindfulness involves taking the responsibility for persons in my working environment and furthermore for all persons affected by my activities. A special interdependence

¹ This contribution refers to terms and concepts of phenomenological research (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Waldenfels et. al). There is a differentiation between the physical “body” and the “lived body”, who is bonded in a lively way with the world. The German language uses the distinguishing words “Körper” and “Leib”. Therefore we will use the words “body” and “lived body” to express the terms in English. Awareness and mindfulness are only possible within the mode of “lived-bodily being” and “lived-corporeality”.

exists between such individual mindfulness and organisational mindfulness that focuses on “togetherness” rather than “high performance”. This absolutely corresponds with the findings of Guido Becke, who carefully reviewed concepts of organisational mindfulness, particularly the concept of Weick and Suitcliffe, which is the most discussed concept worldwide in this field. Guido Becke states that organisational mindfulness may indeed contribute to resilience in organisations, but this sometimes may affect the personal resilience and health resources of employees and managers, at the same time. According to Becke, the key challenge for organisational mindfulness is to not neglect basic individual needs and their vulnerability (Becke 2011, p. 65).

2 Working Conditions and Mental Health

Contrary to previous assumptions, work specifications, work methods, and work organisation are extremely standardized in globally organized production and service chains. In all relevant studies either a reduction of the options for activity or the reduction of personal freedoms and niches within work is noticed (Siegrist and Dragano 2012). But, particularly these rooms of communication – within the labour science it is known as “hidden situations” (Thomas 1964, 85 pp.; Volmerg et al. 1983) – are vital and essential for employees’ health. These intensive processes are often found in combination with dequalification and a lack of social support through managers and co-workers. The conflict between overworking on the one hand and lack of appreciation on the other is experienced as especially stressing. This is exceeded only by long-term job uncertainties. Our assumption is that these labor policies cause a deferred brutalization of behaviour, which in turn leads to an alarming increase of mental illnesses. These findings were gained in large epidemiological studies.

Epidemiological research tries to find out the degree to which stressed employees are at risk of becoming ill compared to the people who do not suffer from such stress. This comparison is known as “Relative Risk” (RR). It will be sufficient to quote a few examples. A research group at the University in Ghent carried out a study, in which 2,800 working people were observed for about 7 years (Clays et al. 2007). It was found, at the first scheduled examination date, that there was an increased risk of severe depression for persons suffering from high job stress, – which means that their places of work were characterized by high demands and a reduced scope of action. This risk was about 1.6 times higher for the years ahead. Ongoing job stresses increased the risk to be 3.2 times higher and with a continuing lack of social support the risk further increased 5.8 higher. In other words, long-lasting “isolated job stress” causes a 6 times higher risk of depression for originally healthy persons, compared to working people who are not suffering from job stress.

In the study, factors involving gender, family status, negative affectivity, death of a close relative, and medical history were considered, but: job stresses are a continued risk. Furthermore, it can be proved that uncertain working conditions and

fear of job losses are also major risk factors for psychological illnesses. In recent years the London psychiatrically epidemiologist Stephen Stansfeld and his international working group have systematically analysed the factors causing psychological illnesses in several detailed major studies. The analysis strictly distinguished between work related factors and private factors. The results were highly interesting (Clark et al. 2012). Well-known “job stressors” again turned out to be a high risk factor, but at the same time private experiences involving divorce, domestic violence, financial crises or private care of family members are potential risk factors. The crucial point is that both, job stress and private experiences remain independent risk factors. Even though pre-existing psychological illnesses from childhood were considered in the study, work related risk factors do not disappear (Stansfeld et al. 2008). Among experts in the epidemiological field there is no doubt that the more and more flexible and uncertain globalized working world must be made responsible for the increase in psychological illnesses. Atypical employment relationships involving fixed work terms and temporary employment are considered to be particularly stressful. These employments carry a considerably higher health risk for employees than permanent jobs.

A meta-analysis covering 162 epidemiological studies, dealing with health consequences caused by rationalization, concluded that change processes including staff reductions and work intensification especially have negative effects on employees' health (Westgaard and Winkel 2009). The Netherland Organisation for Applied Natural Sciences (TNO) has analysed the consequences of organisational restructuring processes for years. In their recent publication “Enterprise Restructuring and the Health of Employees” the TNO researcher Goedele Geuskens (2012) reports on a revealing epidemiological cohort study on this subject. In this study employees were interviewed about stress and diseases, at two specific points in time. The study succeeded in questioning more than 9,000 persons after the first survey 12 months before. The general health of those who worked in companies undergoing restructuring processes at both points of time deteriorated. The relative risk was at 1.4 and further increased to 1.7 when the restructuring processes were combined with job uncertainties. For persons over 55 years of age the relative risk increased to 2.2.

The authors note that psychological and psychosomatic disease processes are additionally affected by a lack of social support from superiors and colleagues. Thus, it can be concluded that increased social support, involving solidarity, team spirit, and togetherness may significantly improve the general health of those affected by organisational change processes.

3 Of the Fading of Psychological Terms

In his study “Das Unbehagen in der Gesellschaft” (2011) Alain Ehrenberg traces the social and ideological roots of psychological misery. And he presents a problem that should concern us: the fact that the increasingly identified symptom patterns no

longer fit into the category of psychiatry and much less into the category of psychoanalysis. Although it can be referred to as a “crisis of narcissism” (Lasch 1991), the core elements rather involve broken down illusions of success. Ehrenberg notes, that the psychopathological problems of affected persons are characterized mainly by loss: depression, withdrawal, and breakdown (Ehrenberg 2011, 439 pp.). Empirically, this view is confirmed almost daily by new scientific and media information. Particularly the media marketing of psychological misery has a voyeuristic element that serves the secret social Darwinism rather than being an inspiration for serious reflection. Science might contribute to transforming potentials of discomfort into a reflective attitude, if it would not so easily give in to the temptation of marketed medialization.

Post modern philosophy denies the possible existence of a personality or individuality in the sense of a strong, clear and unique “core personality” (see Reckwitz 2008). It states that the “subject” has always been subordinate to an outside power and could at best develop a countervailing power. Psychoanalysis also considers the “Ego” – that means the person or personality – only as a compromise resulting from the continuing conflict between external authorities, which we internalise and incorporate, as well as indefinable biological driving forces. An icon in the field of French post modern psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan, considers personality as nothing more than a deficit or a lack. The result is a fragmented individual that may easily become a victim of indoctrination, manipulation and totalitarian control. According to post modern theory individuality has always been and always will be a pure illusion. I cannot accept this view. What is happening here is that a descriptive level is reinterpreted carelessly in a normative (see also: Keupp 2010).

Personality or identity is the result of an ongoing dialectic between the lived-bodily self and the other, that means the social and lived-bodily intercorporeality with its endless social interactions. To balance the identity between inside and outside is still today the art of living.

The new phenomenon we deal with, or should deal with, today from a critical point of view, is the erosion or even “corrosion” (Sennett 1998) of the lived-bodily psychosomatic self. We are often not aware of how our identity can be characterized, and we are often not aware of what we want and what we aim at, other than simply “success”.

Post modern theory, which deconstructs our idea of the unity of the individual, continuity, and coherence and only notices fragments, segments, and random constellations, in many areas tips into an unchecked glorification of this condition. The inhuman Hire-and-Fire, moving around of companies and employees, “forced” mobility and flexibility, are accepted as “normal” or even praised as progress. Kenneth Gergen, for example, a well known American psychologist, sees this development “without noticeable sorrow” (Keupp) strictly positive: “There is little need for the inner-directed, onestyle-for-all individual. Such a person is narrow, parochial, inflexible. (...) We now celebrate protean being. (...) One must keep moving, the network is vast, commitments are many, expectations are endless, opportunities abound, and time is a scarce commodity.” (Gergen 2000, p. 104).

The philosopher Byung Chul Han summed up the paradoxical situation of our time, as the dialectic between “master and servant” which finally does not lead to a society in which everyone is free, and capable of leisure. Rather, it leads to a working society where the “master” himself became a “servant”. Within this kind of society everyone is caught in his own “labour camp” where everyone is both, prisoner and prison guard, victim and offender. Hence, individuals exploit themselves (Han 2010, 45 pp.). However, I disagree with Han’s conclusion, that this exploitation is possible without domination. In my opinion, leadership is an internalised part of the “Subject”. In concurrence with Zygmunt Baumann (2009, 55 pp.), leadership has become “formless”, without losing its strength. The powerful remain hidden, and can count on the endemic lack of self-confidence of their subordinates. By contrast, that would mean, that more personal self-confidence could pave the way for more organisational mindfulness.

4 Of Work Puppets and Stencils

Already decades ago, in his pioneering study “Die gesellschaftlichen Leiden und die Leiden an der Gesellschaft” Hans Peter Dreitzel (1968) pointed out that the role itself bears two risks. Either one does not engage with the “role”, and reduces it to a “stencil”, and with it go into either inner or outer exile; or one does not take enough distance from the “role” and thereby becomes a “marionette”, and through that lose oneself. In both cases a division appears – the job role and the person fulfilling it are no longer united. The persons can then identify themselves only by doing a fantastic job. If they fail, they feel excluded and worthless. According to Voswinkel (2002) this option is called the “Exit”. Fluid identity no longer has its own “riverbed” and is formless. It melts away, seeps away, and runs out. What is left is a *fata morgana*, madness created by neoliberalism as clearly narrated in the new novel “Sickster” written by Thomas Melle (2011). If I engage myself with the “pressure to succeed”, I am at risk of becoming a “puppet” or a “marionette” of the work system. I am also at risk of going with the flow and becoming a high performance-oriented follower (Negt 2009), which means to become nothing more than a robotic character that reminds us of the “one dimensional human being” described by Marcuse (1964). After a certain time persons in such a situation begin to undermine themselves. More specifically, the lived-bodily self is at risk of “depersonalization”. Depersonalization means inner emptiness, insensitivity towards oneself and others, and total indifference. However, it is also possible that such people “function” formally or at least seem to “function”. Fluid identity does not have any bindings or responsibilities. Disease is therefore an initially unconscious expression of lived-bodily resistance against inhuman conditions.

Let us dwell for a short time on the option of an over-identification which may occur during the first 10 years of a new job. The requirements, actions and chain functions relating to the market, cause a change in my coordinate system of values. I have a certain view of my job, and perhaps even a work ethic. The profitability of

my job, however, drives me into another direction. I am forced to sell a software as an “outstanding solution” although I personally consider it to be bad or even dangerous. I have to minimize the care of a patient in need to 3.7 min although I know that I initially need 15 min for the “emotional work”. As a technician working in a nuclear power station I am responsible for a system that has to be accurately controlled, but I do not have the required time. This brings me into a personal conflict situation, a moral dissonance, and extremely oppressive stress of accountability. In Scandinavia, where this phenomenon is being empirically researched, this continual pressure is called “stress of conscience” (e.g. Juthberg et al. 2008; see also: Hien 2009, 176 ff.). This current situation is appalling, in the truest sense of the word. “I felt like the angel of death” is the title of an article that deals with the role conflicts and moral distress of medical students in an American hospital (Mueller et al. 2011).

Oskar Negt (1984) demands – as presented in his study “Arbeit und menschliche Würde” (Negt 2001) – that employees and their organizations, take responsibility for the whole production- and distribution process in the company and society in political, social, and ecological terms. The manual “Spirituell arbeiten”(Assländer/Grün 2010) provides a similar reasoning: employees, especially those in qualified professions, should avoid the mandate of continuous growth, social Darwinism, and ecological blindness, as well as simple profit-orientation, and provide an example through their own behavior. In view of the high degree of alienation and the rule of economic thinking, Gorz considers this kind of ethics of responsibility not feasible. He states that ethics of responsibility is the exact opposite of identification with one’s job or one’s own function, which is characteristic of technical bureaucrats filled with their own importance (Gorz 1989, p. 123). The question is if, beyond trusting optimism and radical scepticism, it is possible to develop a working attitude, in which moments of resistance, criticism of ideology, and an encompassing sense of responsibility are accepted.

5 First Basic Requirement: Authenticity

Against this background, the major portion of guides and literature concerning this issue are not helpful. It plays its part, to keep hidden forces in the dark and further falls into the trap of dangerous illusions of high-performance. Thus, the monk Meinhard Dufner gives the advice to give up inner opposition to work and furthermore to merge completely with the required job role (Dufner 2004). But, this can be a dangerous path. To merge with a role means to lose the “self” and therefore not to be able to meet others with authenticity. “Sincerity”, “Uprightness”, “Truthfulness” and “Honesty describe key categories within existential philosophy and existentialism”. Sartre summarizes these categories in the category of “authenticity”. He means an attitude that considers the other to be the subject through which reach for myself a attentive and mindfully objectivity (Sartre 1943/1995, p. 124).

Searching for the “Sources of the self” the Canadian social philosopher Charles Taylor refers to German idealism, particularly to Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder considered the creation of individuality particularly important (Taylor 1992): “Herder put forward the idea that each of us has an original way of being human. Each person has his or her own human ‘measure’ in his way of putting it” (ibid., p. 28).

Defending against the outside pressure to conformity and against each instrumental attitude, the human subject is told to “listen to its inner voice” and to “be faithful to its originality”. To sum up, to develop “truth to oneself” (ibidem). According to Taylor, this is authenticity. In his critical social theory Hartmut Rosa (2009, 2012) refers back to these ideas of authenticity. He states, that it is necessary to create a lifestyle that does justice to our needs and the needs of the others. It is necessary that we live a life that corresponds with our talents, our wishes and needs, our skills, our passions and our limits (Rosa 2009, p. 39).

We have to “listen to ourselves” and realize what defines us and who we are, including all our possibilities and failings, with all of our inner and outer relations, including all the places and atmospheres which give us strength and those which rob us of our strength, and should be avoided. In contrast, the life-orientation exclusive to performance and success is limiting. It is a lifestyle which leads to a “standardized life” instead of the concept of a “good life” (Rosa 2012, 170 p.). Hartmut Rosa even speaks of “totalizing life” and just planning, evaluating and measuring this life within principles of competition (ibid., 343 pp.). The dialectics of respect and identity turn into dialectics of disregard and failure. This is an expression of secularized protestant work ethics which are still deeply rooted in capitalist cultures. This does not contribute to individuality, but considerably supports uniformity and results in the exclusion of the weak, slow, uncreative, and unattractive ones. To sum up, authenticity and mindfulness are relevant to becoming conscious of this tendency towards uniformity and to change it.

Finally, people neither want to become stencils nor do they want to be puppets. As shown in empirical examples they have a guilty conscience. A health promoting organisation cannot afford to ignore the necessities to deal with the “stress of conscience”, and therefore also to work on the underlying issues involving quality and the creation of work processes. The discussion around work ethic issues has to be carried out and endured by society, organisations and – in the final instance – by individuals. No one can do this for us – neither the clearest legal instruments nor a fair company guideline, a collective wage agreement, or an ethical work code – although all these levels could be useful. It is all about an existential basic attitude, which leads to a collapse of old patterns relating to function and role. It enables the individual to open itself to others, including the very far away, to be aware of and take over already existing responsibilities. Furthermore, the endlessness involving my own inadequacy has to be accepted. Emmanuel Levinas has characterized this attitude using the terms “Non-indifference” or “non-disregard” and has related it to lived-bodily touch and to be lived-bodily touched (see Bedorf 2011, p. 159 pp.).

6 Second Basic Requirement: Mindfulness

Thus, mindfulness becomes a mode of extreme ability to perceive the reputation of “the other”. The subject becomes a “subject in the accusative”. By taking this position, I dare to walk a tightrope between extreme openness and spiritual introspection. This request, deeply set in the tradition of Jewish care and accountability ethics corresponds with a critical theology as developed by Dorothee Sölle in her book “Mystik und Widerstand” (Sölle 1997). Assländer/Grün (2010) also bring together deep “inward-looking” and an ethic of responsibility. They recall of the Jewish commandment “to watch your thoughts ...” (ibid., 116), and encourage people to reflect on operational activities and on their own role within these processes. To spiritually immerse oneself in the job is therefore not the same as to merge with the job role. At this point, outlines of a solution appear, concerning conflicts between inwardness and activity, between the relativization of the “self” and political or organizational partisanship against organized irresponsibility. There is always the danger of building an unbridgeable wall between the inside and outside, and to become insensitive to the world’s misery. The danger is to work without resistance in the outer world while inwardly taking the radical stoic attitude “that all this has nothing to do with me personally”. The Benedictines do not always avoid this trap, but as shown by the late Michel Foucault and his change towards “self-care”, they are certainly not the only ones.

According to Assländer/Grün (2010, 116 p.) mindfulness means nothing less than becoming aware of what I do, that I am wide awake and fully aware of my actions. That is, I don’t lose myself anywhere, and certainly not while doing my job, but rather, I enter a state of self reflection, pausing, and remove all given routines, schemes, symbols, and terms, to develop a specific alertness without prejudice, an awareness of things and people around me, and a sensitivity that allows me to be touched. When I am completely submerged in my soul, I cannot feel anything else and I cannot be touched. Therefore, I have to be “open”, which is also vulnerable. Such an interpretation of mindfulness goes hand in hand with a lived-bodily consciousness, a togetherness that accepts and respects the differences and otherness of my “self” and the “other”. Such an interpretation of mindfulness means to see things as they are which does not at all imply absolute acceptance (Keser-Grossmann 2009, 11). This critical remark to the Buddhist tradition should be allowed here. Naturally, there is no room for a hectic spirit of contradiction. In a certain way, it is good to perceive reality in its entirety without rashly closing one’s eyes and ears. Naturally, mindfulness requires the honest attempt to first understand what we perceive, as far as possible. But, visualized reality is always made by people and is therefore always an alterable reality.

The physicist and movement teacher Mosche Feldenkrais has indicated decades ago that “speed” leads to seeming successes, and not to a success, what we can understand as an improvement in human being (Feldenkrais 1987). He urges caution and slowness. Only then will we have the opportunity to discover our unimagined possibilities. Neuroscience confirms this view (Hüther 2005). Against

the armor plating and physical beauty presentations, which often correspond to the neoliberal image of man, Hüther recommends an attitude of softening, of consideration, of touching and of self-touch-letting, i.e. also: the bodily sensibility.

Mindfulness is an attitude that realizes the boundaries between authentic interest in work and alienating overwork, which allows empathy and sensitivity and uses this recognition to exercise appropriate care for themselves and others. Hence, a concept of mindfulness that declares the postulate of high performance to be the “non plus ultra” becomes doubtful. In my opinion it has to be considered with extreme caution when management consultants such as Kenneth Gergen (see Keupp 2010), Karl Weick or Kathleen M. Sutcliffe (see Becke 2011) or the doyen of health science, Bernhard Badura (Badura/Seinke 2012) emphasize “mindfulness”. The same as any other concept, mindfulness can degenerate to an ideology.

7 Turning Away from Patterns of Masculinity

On reflection, the “brave new working world” reveals an extremely contradictory picture that is almost paradoxical: the intensification and extensification of work on the one hand and exclusion on the other hand. But, on closer inspection a contradiction is “decoded”: overwork, the removal of boundaries, the 24 h readiness of high performers, and the solidification of a “superfluous” social segment are mutually dependent.

Ideally, one can hazard the following thesis: post-modern capitalism is selective. This capitalism needs people with character structures such as toughness, forcefulness, recklessness, and carelessness. Gender studies found out that this corresponds with a social pattern of masculinity. This pattern is not biologically evolved, but shaped by the gravitational force of millennium-old cultural traditions (Connell 2005).

Although there is a welcome softening trend of the borders of the post modern working world there are still extremely tough personalities in the centre, who are prepared to be absolutely involved in the current corporate goal. According to recent studies (Ziegler/Graml 2011), there is little room for children, family and “untargeted” emotional relationships.

To the contrary, a woman interviewed within the study of Held et al. (2011, p. 309) said, that her husband was not approachable since he had thrown himself into work – and since their first child was born he had begun to work even more. The ideology of the main breadwinner, heroism, escape from family through flight into work, workaholism are all phenomena that create a certain pattern. In my opinion some researchers on gender topics rightly consider this pattern to be extremely homologous to neoliberal orientations (Cohen/Brodie 2007; Ikeda 2007).

Satoshi Ikeda considers this as a “new form of masculinity” and a “regime of market masculinity”, that can be interpreted as an explicit counter-movement to the feminist movement. According to Ikeda, it is a “counter-revolution of capitalism

against those who caused the erosion of profit, such as unionized workers or women who demand equal wages and opportunities.” (Ikeda 2007, p. 127).

The neo-liberally structured new patterns of masculinity do not stop at women. When the vice president of the European Commission, Viviane Reding, calls for increasing the number of women working in leading positions, explains this demand with an operating profit that is 56 % higher in Companies with gender balance (Süddeutsche Zeitung vom 30. 6. 2012, p. V1/10), it is quite obvious that it does not refer to more mindfulness, but refers to more functional emotionality instead. At the same time, non-functional emotionality, that is mindfulness in the sense of a more careful, considerate and responsible way to treat oneself and the others is kept away from the centers of capital. Mindfulness has a female connotation. This might be criticised as a (negative) external ascription. But it is also possible to gain a positive perspective. Carol Gilligan (1982) uses the term “the different voice” for describing female care and female moral, which may be the thorn in the side of the male dominated working world and may, in some cases, even lead to a collapse of these patterns. We face enormous social changes and alternatives. Do we want a transnational, male dominated neo-liberal capitalism with no room for mindfulness, which is embedded in a network of a feminised precariat that takes the responsibility for children, the elderly and the sick? Or do we want to turn away from the pattern of masculinity in the working world involving a radical reduction in working hours and shared care work among men and women? The term “feminised” does not only refer to women. If the option of having a “hard neo-liberal core” prevails, there will be a high number of men moving to feminised sectors, and there will be a cultural split between “male men” and “female men” (Isaksen 2007).

In this context outlines of a concept of mindfulness become visible, which go far beyond the operational sphere and considers the categories of work and life as a whole. Mindfulness in organizations means to fundamentally restructure the working processes in such a way that the variety of social, emotional, and spiritual spaces that are not related to the companies’ success are considered appropriately. This involves care for oneself and others, empathy and support, bodily closeness, assumption of responsibility, pausing and mindful awareness of everything that stands for being human, human misery and human development. Recently there are increasing appeals to “family solidarity” that are extremely ambiguous and show the structures which solidify the paradoxical and inhuman segmentation and splitting in our society. Social services are reduced to the extent where they no longer exist. And the ones who are now supposed to fill in these services are families, that is women, mainly women and the men who have been excluded from the system of neo-liberal high performance or who never had the chance to be a member of this system. These splits counteract mindfulness on all levels.

8 Steps Towards the Mindful Organization

Natalie Lotzmann, the managing company physician of SAP advises the employees to act more mindfully (Mannheimer Morgen, 12th May 2012). For example, at SAP and elsewhere, hand-outs from Jessika Wilker (1998) are distributed, that provide guidance on how to integrate breathing exercises into daily work life, despite an excessive workload and deadlines that cannot be met. This would be quite acceptable, if the life-threatening pressure on employees did not remain sacrosanct. If the term “mindfulness” should still have a meaning, it must be concordant with an attitude that critically questions the hunt for recognition and success. It is possible to create another interpretation of recognition, so that recognition is not necessarily based on success. This different interpretation is based on an unquestionable anthropological principle: What we need for being human, like the very daily bread, is to be respected and accepted by others – including all our failures, our character with all of our strengths and weaknesses, our needs, our desires, but also our helplessness. This acceptance should not have a possessive character. At the same time this demand is a demand on ourselves to generously accept faults – that means our own faults and those of the others. What we need is not the optimization of our ability to work or a lifelong learning under pressure, but rather the ability to develop sensors for our bodily, emotional and mental togetherness. “To set a warm stream against the cold stream” (Negt) could become a motto for organisational mindfulness. This would include initial guidelines such as “to take life and work at a slower pace”, “to set limits and to accept limits”, “to not always increase work, but work less”, “to reflect back on the importance of mutual assistance”, and “to reflect on the meaning of solidarity”. It is essential that the value of being human is not measured by economic criteria. The value of humanity is in being human! Alarming symptoms of the neo-liberal colonization of our brains, are creeping statements about “high performer”, “top performer”, “low performer” and similar terms. From the view of a social theory oriented towards human dignity it is necessary to counteract such statements.

Employees are imbued with dissolution of boundaries and other-direction ex-orbitance and they often cannot distinguish whether the pressure is an external or internal one. But what can be done? Of course, there are appropriate tools for the promotion of health. For example, there are health circles in which these problems can be discussed openly. But, these tools can only be successful if there is generally an openness towards change. And changes – pausing, reflection, changing one’s way – are urgently needed on three levels: the individual, the organizational, and the social. Each individual has to re-learn mindfulness, towards oneself and others. No excessive demands on oneself and others! Getting away from over-identification, perfectionism and obsessive ambition! Establishing areas of life outside of work that allow the generation of strength and confidence! Companies, administrations, and organizations must understand that in the end, it is counter-productive to look upon each employee as through an excessively economic lens. Many potentials are only developed within social networks in which the quick ones

who make many mistakes and the slow ones who correct those mistakes support each other. These are exactly those networks where learning effects are enabled. These potentials are destroyed by merciless pressure, before they can be developed and established. This pressure does not only destroy potential, but our souls as well. Victims of this situation are doubly punished, as psychological illnesses are still a socially tabooed issue. Therefore, many employees concerned try to conceal their illness as long as possible. However, this is a fatal decision. Instead of resisting the inhuman pressure and adopting an upright attitude, many affected employees bow to the pressure for too long, and try to delude themselves and others. Annually, more than 6,000 Germans of working age die from suicide. 80 % of them are the result of depression. Considering the findings regarding the role of the work related health problems, it is about time to stop the dominating principle of acceleration in the pace of life and work. It is about time to re-learn mindfulness towards oneself and others: respect for human diversity, a human level that is suitable for everyone and – also and especially in regard to the working world – solidarity without which it is not possible to live a human life in the long run.

9 The Postulate of Enlightenment, Open Questions

The economic world is going through a double metamorphosis. It seems that working people internalize the conflict between capital and work and that they think this conflict has become their own personal matter. But, this system is not that closed. The main question is: is it possible to turn back? I follow Heiner Keupp (2010), saying that if our activities still aim to foster emancipation and enlightenment, then a question is quite close at hand: How can we and in which way do we want to liberate ourselves from the fetters of neo-liberal ideology? Can we open up to new paths toward a self-determined, resistant and creative way of work and life? Co-determination is not effective enough. What we need is a new, authentic, reflective relationship to the world, a new “Self-World-Relationship”. This is the term used by Hartmut Rosa for describing the perspective that could break up acceleration dynamics and experiences of alienation. What we need is a new, authentic, reflective relationship toward the world, work, and ourselves. Additionally it is also a matter of examining capitalism’s promise of happiness, piece by piece, especially regarding the parts that affect us, and then to reassemble the parts in a human way. Therefore, we need social recognition as independent individuals with all our insufficiencies. We also need to discover ourselves, and to recognize ourselves and our own inner dimensions, and our biographical authenticity, which allows us a non-alienated response to the world. Deconstruction and reconstruction seem to be the right terms in this context. In his draft on an ethical system the Munich social philosopher and social scientist Walter L. Bühl deals with the interdependence of individual and organisational ethics (Bühl 1998). According to Bühl an ethical system is always based on individual, personal and existential decisions. Here, he follows definitely Levinas approach. Conversely, however,

Bühl sees limitations to ethical behaviour, related to not finding organizational designs and processes that allow a realistic assumption of responsibility and a moral fundamental relationship to people (ibid., 71). According to Bühl, neither the abstract and universalistic principles, nor the liberal and utilitarian ones create space for this purpose. The ethics of virtue located in communitarianism are also of little help as they are mostly related to discourses that are limited to communitarian and organisational issues. These ethics often exclude the foreign, the incomprehensive, the non standard, the weak, meaning the other side of being or not being – which can no longer or not yet express itself. Therefore, an ethic of responsibility based on authenticity and mindfulness is required, which begins and ends with the individual – in all its open-endedness and eternity.

In his major Bochum lecture on the phenomenology of the lived-corporeality, Bernd Waldenfels ends with Levinas' category of the face (Waldenfels 2000, 391 p.). According to this approach, non-indifference is not illustrated by looking at the other in a scrupulous, appraising, and surveying way. Quite the contrary: another kind of mindfulness is required, that is mindfulness following the commandment: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image!" Levinas regards this attitude as the "non-phenomenology of the face". Waldenfels concludes that at this point attention is turning to mindfulness and respect (ibid.). Although the theoretical circle is closing here, the practical questions of everyday operations have still not been answered, such as: How do I situate my behavior, specifically in view of emerging innovations and changes, but also impositions and thoughtlessness? Or the question: How do I concretely set up my initiative, my commitment, and my micro-policy on the content and relational levels? Finally also the question: How do I escape intrigues and tactical agreements that – even though they could be justified for utilitarian reasons – drive weaker, less creative and less attractive individuals into exile? A broad discussion on these issues is required, not only in theory, but also among organisational "practitioners". Exactly, they cannot avoid behaving, appropriately in everyday-life, relating to the above questions.

References

- Bauman Z (2009) *Gemeinschaften. Auf der Suche nach Sicherheiten in einer bedrohten Welt.* Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M
- Becke G (2011) *Organisationale Achtsamkeit als Gestaltungskonzept für adaptive Vertrauenskulturen.* In: Becke G (ed) *Organisationale Achtsamkeit in betrieblichen Veränderungsprozessen – Zentrale Voraussetzung für innovationsfähige Vertrauenskulturen*, vol 175, Artec-paper. Eigendruck, Bremen, pp 13–118
- Bedorf T (2011) *Andere. Eine Einführung in die Sozialphilosophie.* Bielefeld, Transcript
- Badura B, Steinke M (2012) *Die erschöpfte Arbeitswelt. Durch eine Kultur der Achtsamkeit zu mehr Energie, Kreativität, Wohlbefinden und Erfolg.* Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh
- Bühl WL (1998) *Verantwortung für soziale Systeme.* Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart
- Clark C et al (2012) *The contribution of work and non-work stressors to common mental disorders in the 2007 adult psychiatric morbidity survey.* *Psychol Med* Band 42:829–842

- Clays E et al (2007) Job stress and depression symptoms in middleaged workers – prospective results from the Belstress study. *Scand J Work Environ Health* Band 33:252–259
- Cohen MG, Brodie J (H) (eds) (2007) *Remapping gender in the new global order*. Routledge, London/New York
- Connell RW (2005) *Masculinities*, 2nd edn. University of California Press, Berkley
- Dreitzel H-P (1968) *Die gesellschaftlichen Leiden und das Leiden an der Gesellschaft. Vorstudien zu einer Pathologie des Rollenverhaltens*. Ferdinand Enke, Stuttgart
- Dufner M (2004) *Rollenwechsel, Müsterschwarzacher Kleinschriften. Vier Türme, Müsterschwarzach*
- Ehrenberg A (2011) *Das Unbehagen in der Gesellschaft*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M
- Feldenkrais M (1987) *Die Entdeckung des Selbstverständlichen*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M
- Assländer F, Grün A (2010) *Spirituell arbeiten. Dem Beruf neuen Sinn geben*. Vier-Türme-Verlag, Müsterschwarzach
- Gergen KJ (2000) The self: death by technology. In: Fee D (ed) *Pathology and the postmodern. Mental illness as discourse and experience*. Sage, London, pp 100–115
- Geuskens G et al (2012) Enterprise restructuring and the health of employees: a cohort study. *J Occup Environ Med* Band 54:4–9
- Gilligan C (1982) *In a different voice*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge
- Gorz A (1989) *Kritik der ökonomischen Vernunft. Sinnfragen am Ende der Arbeitsgesellschaft*. Rotbuch, Berlin
- Han B-C (2010) *Müdigkeitsgesellschaft*. Matthes und Seitz, Berlin
- Held J et al (2011) *Was bewegt junge Menschen. Lebensführung und solidarisches Handeln junger Beschäftigter im Dienstleistungsbereich*. Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden
- Hien W (2009) *Pflegen bis 67? Die gesundheitliche Situation älterer Pflegekräfte*. Mabuse, Frankfurt a.M
- Hüther G (2005) *Bedienungsanleitung für ein menschliches Gehirn*. Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen
- Ikeda S (2007) Masculinity an masculinism under globalization: reflections on the Canadian case. In: Cohen MG, Brodie J (H) (eds) *Remapping gender in the new global order*. Routledge, London/New York, pp 111–130
- Juthberg C et al (2008) Stress of conscience and perceptions of conscience in relation to burnout among care-providers in older people. *J Clin Nurs* 17:1897–1906, Bd
- Kesper-Grossman U (2009) *Verlassen Sie den Fluss der Zeit*. In: Kabat-Zinn J, Kesper-Grossman U (eds) *Die heilende Kraft der Achtsamkeit*. Arbor, Freiamt
- Keupp H (2010) *Vom Ringen um Identität in der spätmodernen Gesellschaft*. Vortrag bei den 60. Lindauer Psychotherapietagen (Onlineversion)
- Lasch C (1991) *The culture of narcissism*. Norton, New York/London
- Isaksen LW (2007) Gender, care work an globalization: local problems and transnational solutions in the Norwegian welfare state. In: Cohen MG, Brodie J (H) (eds) *Remapping gender in the new global order*. Routledge, London/New York, pp 44–58
- Marcuse H (1964) *The one-dimensional man*. Beacon, Boston
- Melle T (2011) *Sickster*. Rowohlt, Roman
- Mueller PS et al. (2011) “I felt like the angel of death”: role conflicts and moral distress among allied professionals. *J Interv Card Electr* (Onlineversion)
- Negt O (1984) *Lebendige Arbeit, enteignete Zeit. Politische und kulturelle Dimensionen des Kampfes um die Arbeitszeit*. Campus, Frankfurt a.M
- Negt O (2001) *Arbeit und menschliche Würde*. Steidl, Göttingen
- Negt O (2009) *Politische Bildung und Demokratie, Vortrag zum 50-jährigen Bestehen des Bildungshauses Jägermayrhof. Arbeiterkammer Oberösterreich, Linz, pp 52–67*
- Reckwitz A (2008) *Subjekt (Reihe Einsichten)*. Transcript, Bielefeld
- Rosa H (2009) *Kritik der Zeitverhältnisse. Beschleunigung und Entfremdung als Schlüsselbegriffe der Sozialkritik*. In: Jaeggi R, Wesche (Hg.) T (eds) *Was ist Kritik?* Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M, pp 23–54

- Rosa H (2012) Weltbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Beschleunigung. Umriss einer neuen Gesellschaftskritik. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M
- Sartre J-P (1943/1995) Das Sein und das Nichts. Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg
- Sennett R (1998) The corrosion of character. Norton, New York/London
- Siegrist J, Dragano N (2012) Arbeitsbedingte Gesundheitsgefahren bei älteren Beschäftigten im Spannungsfeld zwischen Markt und Staat: Eine internationale Studie, Forschungsbericht für die Hans-Böckler-Stiftung. Eigendruck, Düsseldorf
- Sölle D (1997) Mystik und Widerstand – “Du stilles Geschrei”. Piper, München
- Stansfeld S et al (2008) Psychosocial work characteristics and anxiety and depressive disorders in midlife: the effects of prior psychological distress. *Occup Environ Med* Band 65:634–642
- Taylor C (1992) The ethics of authenticity. Harvard University Press, Cambridge
- Thomas K (1964) Die betriebliche Situation der Arbeiter. Enke, Stuttgart
- Volmerg B, Senghaas-Knobloch E, Leithäuser T (1983) Erlebnisperspektiven und Humanisierungsbarrieren im Betrieb. Eigendruck, Universität Bremen
- Voswinkel S (2002) Bewunderung ohne Würdigung? Paradoxien der Anerkennung doppelt subjektiver Arbeit. In: Honneth (Hg.) A (ed) Befreiung aus der Mündigkeit. Paradoxien des gegenwärtigen Kapitalismus. Campus, Frankfurt a.M, pp 65–92
- Waldenfels B (2000) Das leibliche Selbst. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M
- Westgaard EH, Winkel J (2009) Occupational musculoskeletal and mental health: Significance of rationalization and opportunities to create sustainable production systems – A systematic review. *Appl Ergon* Band 42:261–296
- Wilker J (1998) Das Einmaleins der Achtsamkeit. Herder, Freiburg
- Ziegler Y, Graml R (2011) Die Illusion von der Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Karriere. In: GPI – Gleichstellung in der Praxis 2/2011, pp. 15–21