

## **Work and theft - criminological views on "good" and "bad" acquisition of material goods**

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Work is the principal means by which an individual (a seller of labour) makes a living. However, this basic way of maintaining oneself has become in post-modern societies increasingly threatened and unreliable, since Post-Ford capitalism tends systematically to reduce the extent of profitable work, which, on the one hand, increases pressures on the efficiency of those who are employed and, on the other, creates structural unemployment and masses of people who are excluded, unnecessary and superfluous. It is very questionable, though, which and what jobs can be considered good (in economic, moral and legal terms) and which bad, since the estimation of work is relative, a category which has always been sociologically and historically determined.

There is no doubt that in contemporary, developed societies there is a large quantity of well paid jobs, the social usefulness of which is insignificant, null or even "negative" (in this case it is a question of directly or indirectly harmful economic activities). At the same time, many incontestably socially useful (even indispensable or absolutely necessary) jobs are extremely poorly paid and enjoy a low level of prestige. On the other hand, if we abstract the most evident (or traditional) forms, which are as a rule connected with members of lower social strata, it has always been very problematic what (i.e. what forms of making profit or acquiring material gain) should be considered theft, i.e. the appropriation of something which does not belong you. This question is particularly sensitive in the context of capitalism, i.e. a system which is based on the "original sin" of outstanding dimensions ("primary accumulation" as theft which has created a specific capitalist class structure) and institutionalised theft (appropriation of extra value which is mainly channelled into the pockets of increasingly rich world, national and local magnates). When there is a question of typically (post)modern forms of theft, attention should be also focused on the acceptable/illegitimate appropriation of nonmaterial goods, such as the time, energy and health of individual people.

**Keywords:** labour, capitalism, honest work, institutionalised theft, illegal acquisition of property

**UDC: 343.7 + 330.342.14**