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Frank Austermann, Germany - *Do acceleration and boundless work lead to an accelerated and boundless coaching?*

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Coaching support executives in their working lives (cf., for instance, publications by the German associations DGSv, DBVC, DGfP), also and especially against the background of sweeping social trends such as acceleration (Rosa 2005) and boundless work (Kratzer 2003). Often, these efficient and effective forms of support and their professionalization are the subject of academic research (e.g. Rauen, 2005) and, above all, the subject of presentations by coaches themselves (websites).

By contrast, much less research has been done on the effects of acceleration and the delimitation of work on coaches themselves. How do they address and eventually cope with these phenomena, what stance do they take towards these changes? Are coaches themselves affected and influenced, or even fascinated, by these trends in their coaching processes? Does acceleration lead to accelerated coaching, do blurred boundaries of work lead to delimited coaching?

These issues can be discussed adequately only if relevant social developments themselves are analysed in greater depth (Heltzel/Weigand 2012). This is why it is necessary to look into and describe acceleration in social-theoretic and sociological terms more thoroughly.

Regarding coaching, the actual response to acceleration and boundless work is crucial. Opinions tend to differ sharply on this issue. Specific coaching concepts boast of their target orientation and of the efficiency gains it allows. Other approaches to coaching emphasize the space for reflection, the time for slowing down and a critical assessment of third parties' expectations and of self-expectations in the working environment (Gröning 2013).

Some coaches even reinforce the tendencies towards acceleration and blurred boundaries between work and leisure; others encourage their clients to reflect critically on these changes. On the one hand, the focus is on optimizing the coachee's performance (Schreyögg 2004), i.e. on "fit" executives (Schreyögg 2005). On the other hand, reflection in the coaching process is intended to achieve critical education and autonomy (Gröning 2013).

The question of how coaching should be assessed, and what good coaching (cf. H. Möller 2003) actually is, can be answered only by reconstructing the underlying ethics (Gröning 2011). In this context it is helpful to consider and to discuss Foucault's philosophy and especially his conception of a practice of freedom. What is meant by the terms "the care for oneself", "the courage for the truth" and "criticism"?

Coaching offer the chance to reflect on and critically call into question acceleration and boundless work, but they may also serve as a tool enabling coachees to simply adapt to changes taken for granted. Thus, in conclusion, the question asked in the first place may be turned on its head: what kind of coaching leads or at least contributes to acceleration and boundless work and what kind of coaching critically calls into question acceleration and boundless work?

