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ON WORK AND CITIZENSHIP: ABOUT A BOOK BY TIZIANA FAITINI

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With the aim of presenting an overview of the history of "professional ethics" in Western societies, Tiziana Faitini ends up offering us a powerful fresco of the forms of self-realisation and social inclusion linked to the sphere of work and professional activities that have developed from ancient Rome to the present day. The study of the theme of "professionalism," which at first glance seems to indicate nothing more than the commitment to "doing one's job well," turns out, in this patient genealogical analysis, to be a treasure trove of information and suggestions on the great themes of ethical-religious vocation, political identity, social inclusion, and the realisation of the individual's innermost aspirations and desires. Beneath the tip of the iceberg of Max Weber's investigations on the Beruf and its inextricable intertwining of "vocation" and "profession," the book Shaping the Profession sheds light on a fascinating web of spiritual, philosophical, political, and juridical texts spanning over two millennia. Orations, sermons, and treatises alternate with constitutional norms, laws, and deontological codes to "shape" the human activity of daily toil or creative genius. From the common heritage of Medieval Latinity and Christianity to the different national traditions (from Italy to England, from France to Germany), the universe of "arts" and "crafts," or rather of "making art" and "practising a craft," is investigated through an analysis of the voices of protagonists and performers. *Shaping the Profession* succeeds in transforming an apparently secondary issue such as "professional ethics" into a major theme of philosophical-political inquiry and in placing us, once again, in front of the crucial philosophical questions of the meaning of work and its role in mediating the individual's belonging to society and a political community.

Among the several issues raised and inspired by the text, the question of the role of work and professional activity in the dynamics of political inclusion, exemplarily represented by the theme of citizenship, is, in my view, the most meaningful. And a *longue durée* approach proves to be extremely fruitful in this regard.

At first glance, one would be tempted to hold that the centrality of work/occupation in political dynamics mainly concerns the modern and contemporary age. We are accustomed to considering previous societies, from the Neolithic to the Industrial Revolution, as societies founded on *land occupation*—a fact providing a *radical title* for the constitution of the main social and economic structure and the dominant political subject. From this perspective, the "political" would be formed on a social basis characterised by the possession of the means of production and the means of coercion in that mixture of *dominium* and *imperium* typical of large or small military land aristocracies. On this social basis, the "political" took either the republican forms of association or the seigniorial forms of domination. Yet, in either case, the binomial "land and (military) power" is the pillar on which political power has rested for centuries and on which the dynamics of political inclusion are forged, both in terms of the ruling class and in terms of citizenship. The social experience of the "political," with its concepts, takes form on this pillar and has at its heart the experiences of occupation, conquest, and appropriation of spaces and bodies. This way of being, trained by a centuries-old practice in the Middle Ages, spills over outside Europe in the modern age in the *occupation of the lands* (and control of the seas) that marks the conquest and colonisation of non-European territories.

Alongside, and in the shadow of, this primacy of the military (and the social practices accompanying it), commercial exchange and industrial activities develop, which do not deny but presuppose material and spiritual appropriation. These activities are progressively portrayed as inheriting another logic, opposed to the logic of the "soldier," that is, the logic of the "bourgeois," aimed at replacing the peaceful, rational, and commercial exchange with war. The contrast between the two models was clearly exemplified by Herbert Spencer (1898) with the distinction between "militant societies" and "industrial societies."[1] Militant societies were those that, for reasons related to the mode of production, were organised for war as their primary purpose. They were constantly engaged in fighting for their own existence or in predatory raids on others. Success in fighting ultimately depended on internal cohesion: the greater the cohesion, the stronger the hierarchies and discipline, and the greater the lack of true freedom for individuals. The eternal quest for security also created the need for material self-sufficiency, which implied protectionism and an aggressive foreign and colonial policy. Every aspect of life in these societies was imbued by the crucial worry of struggle; goodness was equated with courage and strength, love of one's country with hatred of the enemy; and the highest duties of the individual were unquestioning and unreasoning obedience to authority and the sacrifice of one's life for the good of the community. The "industrial societies," on the other hand, were not simply those with a large number of manufacturing enterprises —a militant society could well contain a highly productive manufacturing sector dedicated to warfare— but were rather those in which human beings' aggressive instincts were sublimated into work. Here, the production of socially useful goods became the main purpose of human work, and voluntary cooperative effort replaced state coercion as the motivating force.

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[1] See Spencer (1898 [1876], pp. 568–642). On the role of labour and the professions in industrial society within Spencer's theory, see Offer (2019, p. 77).

Notwithstanding the apologetic accents on the voluntary cooperative effort that, to his eyes, replaces coercion, Spencer clearly grasps how labour is not opposed to military activity; rather, it is its "sublimation." This is why the former often retains the logic and vocabulary of the latter. Production is the new means of appropriation after the conquest; hence the need for compulsory conscription (forced labour) and reserve industrial armies. The sheer fact of *occupation*, however, does not disappear. Not in terms of spaces, because there are always new markets to conquer. Not in terms of *bodies*, because there are always new bodies from which to extract value. Not, above all, in terms of time. If in traditional society it was mainly a matter of occupying spaces, here it is also a matter of occupying time. Life-time. Human beings go from being *occupants to occupied or unoccupied*, and any compartmentalisation of time —into work-time or life-time, into *negotium* or *otium*— disappears. The fight against idleness was won, thanks also to the mobilisation of religions and moral philosophies.

Both these aspects —the "sublimation" of aggressive instincts into work and the shift from the occupation of space to the occupation of time— deserve further investigation. Certainly, the modern "political" bears the hallmarks of this process. Think of the conclusion of Chapter XIII of *Leviathan*, where Hobbes gives the reasons for exiting the state of nature:

> The passions that incline men to peace are: fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace upon which men may be drawn to agreement. (Hobbes, 1965, P. I, c. XIII)

Here, the means to achieve prosperity is *industry,* not conquest, and the hope is that a political system is affirmed, which might ensure for this industry to be that this industry is adequately recognised, appreciated, and remunerated. The transition to "industrial society" is underway and will take a step forward in Locke and his labour/property theory.

The age of the bourgeoisie culminating in the age of the Revolutions is undoubtedly the age of industry and industriousness with respect to the traditional myth of military valour; it is within this framework that the valorisation of work and profession as a factor of social and political inclusion takes place. But we should not forget that in between the feudal society based on the land/military power, and the modern society of individuals, there is the long historical experience of the estate societies, with their articulations of corporations and estates, organically based on a plurality of activities and crafts, in which work and profession play a fundamental function in social and political inclusion. The overbearing presence of the theme of labour within the constitutionalisation process of the modern state has to do with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the industrial proletariat, but it also feeds on, and coexists with, the lasting experience of the estate society and its trespassing into the corporative state of the twentieth century. In following this constitutional path, we do not only see the inclusion of the right to work in the French Constitution of 1793,[2] and subsequently in the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,[3] but we also trace the thread going from Hegel to the fascist corporative state. And, from a social point of view, the building of the modern state is not only the result of landed aristocracies, commercial bourgeoisies, and military classes, but also of professional groups. In this regard, one may recall the fundamental role played by jurists in medieval and modern times: a typical example of the intertwining of knowledge, profession, and social and political roles.

Great novelties go hand in hand with underlying continuities, as *Shaping the Profession* shows. And these continuities also concern the persistence of language, metaphors, and military practices. Consider, for example, the exaltation of work and industriousness with activist overtones echoing the traditional epic of combat and struggle. Speaking of a victory of the "bourgeois" over the "soldier" —as Schmitt does in a 1934 essay (Schmitt, 2011)— it is only possible if one has in mind the rhetoric of the petty bourgeois, the parasitic merchant or financier, wanting peace at all costs in order to be able to do their business; certainly not if one recalls the rhetoric of the producer, conceived as the modern "fighter" par excellence.

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[2] *Constitution of the French Republic* (1793), Art. 21: "Public relief is a sacred debt. Society owes the subsistence of unfortunate citizens, either by providing work for them or by assuring the means of existence to those not in a position to work."

[3] *Constitution of the USSR* (1936), Art. 12: "Work in the USSR is the obligation and honour commitment of every citizen fit for work, according to the principle: 'He who does not work, does not eat'. In the USSR, the principle of socialism is implemented: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work'."

Not only is work a "struggle" with nature and the production of value, but workforces are also at war with each other in a class struggle that retains —from the revolutions of 1848 to the Russian Revolution and beyond— all of a military and militant character, with its rationality and mythology. Underneath the liberal "peaceful" narrative —according to which the industrial age would replace war and violence with trade and negotiation, and the society of military authoritarianism would be replaced by the society of the free expression of labour powers— the military dimension persists. In the processes of progressive and stratified politicisation of society, it spreads into all social groups. Every individual is involved, on an existential and social level, in this struggle.

It is not by chance that the twentieth century radicalises and exacerbates both this militarisation of labour and this remilitarisation of politics. New political leaders like to wear the military uniform. In Schmitt's reading, this attests to the soldier's revenge on the bourgeois. The process, however, remains highly ambivalent, to say the least. Work has become the means of inclusion. As militarily organised as it might be, its emancipatory myth cannot be eliminated. But *der Arbeiter* and *der Soldat* walk hand in hand, one the mirror of the other, and concentration camps are labour camps. *Arbeit macht frei.* Work is conquest *and* liberation. Not for Schmitt, to tell the truth, whose distance from the workist myth is clear:

> Much can be held against me. They can insult me by calling me a crown jurist. But I have never fallen into the trap of the workist myth. I have not written any book entitled *Der Arbeiter*, neither have I mistaken an employee only greedy for a pension and public benefits as an 'imperial type.' (Schmitt, 1991, 1.3.1951)

Today, we see, perhaps, the beginning of a post-work era. Attempts to go beyond the work-centered apparatus of social and political inclusion are multiplying. The work-citizenship binomial has revealed, alongside its formidable potential of liberation, also discriminatory traits—against women, young people, the elderly, and foreigners. Overcoming the simplistic binomial worker-citizen or citizen-worker, we are pushed back to the dialectic between *Bürger* and *Citoyen*. It is still too early to tell if the attempts to dis-articulate or re-articulate the relationship between work and citizenship will succeed in being more inclusive. For sure, the issue of occupation has not disappeared from the horizon. International conflicts are still, and increasingly, expressed through *occupations of spaces*. Real and virtual spaces. And the systematic *occupation of life-time* does not seem to decrease. Mapping the genealogy of the concepts of work and profession, and the history of their relations to social and political citizenship, provides a sound basis for addressing the present transformations.

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