

LABOUR UNVEILED.
IDENTITY, TYPE OF WORK, AND (IN)DEPENDENCE IN 16TH-17TH ENGLAND AND
LOCKE'S POLITICAL THEORY

di Fabio Mengali

Abstract

My research aims to investigate the multi-layered concept of work in John Locke's philosophy, with regard to subjective freedom, political agency, and citizenship rights, so as to delineate a framework of interpretation that may foster a new reading of contemporary quandaries. Considering previous discussions on work and servitude by prominent authors of Early Modern England (More, Thomas Smith, Hobbes, Milton, Harrington, Tyrrell, Sidney), this study first focuses on the two-fold meaning of the concept of work in Locke's economic and political reflections. On one hand, his concept of work relates to the human capacity to mold nature through arts and knowledge (in Arendt's words, the production of *homo faber*); on the other hand, it encompasses the unfree and strenuous human activity apt to meet natural needs with no *poietical* aim (the reproduction of *animal laborans*). Second, by investigating Locke's stance on citizenship, this paper shows how only the "productive" kind of work (performed by landlords and artisans) grants property, independence, and full membership to the English society, whereas the other condemns subjects (i.e., waged labourers, servants, and women) to dependence on salary, subjection, and social inferiority. Finally, on the basis of this interpretation, this study aims to cast new light on the current configuration of work in Western capitalistic societies. Although nowadays work is consistent with market freedom and citizenship from a judicial point of view, material repercussions on personal autonomy cannot be underestimated. According to job-type and social status (i.e., the possession of individual resources), a worker may be dependent on their salary – and thus on their employer – to survive. The result is an increase in subjection to unfree and unpaid work as well as in the number of working hours. From this standpoint, it is hard to assert that every worker is as free and equal as another. Even in post-Fordist society and in 4.0-form work, dependence still seems to affect political agency.

Keywords: Locke, Early Modern England, Labour, Citizenship, Conceptual History

1. *Introduction. Beneath the Homogeneous Mask of Labour*

At present, many economists, politicians, and sociologists envisage labour transformations as either a daydream or a nightmare. Automation, 4.0 industry, and “gig economy” picture a future where it is assumed that wage relationships, as we have known them throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, will dissolve. Depending on the political viewpoint of the speakers, such a world is to be embraced with eagerness or feared as a threat. From the enthusiastic point of view, the substitution of human labour with intelligent machines is related to the disappearance of drudgery and alienating activities, the spread of middle or high-waged cognitive work (both to create and to control machines), and the reduction of working schedules.

A further achievement presumably delivered by automation would be an upsurge in autonomy of workers relative to their current conditions. Given the “intelligent” executions automatically set in place by machines, workers’ actual presence *in loco* and their rigid schedule (i.e., 40 hrs. a week) would no longer be needed. At the centre of this stance rests the argument for the positive impact of technological development on the whole labour market. The pessimistic point of view, conversely, is more prone to understanding the dark sides of work innovation, such as soaring unemployment due to machinal substitution, the erosion of salaries and social rights, and the weakening of workers’ power before their employer. “Gig economy” serves as an example in this regard, as information processed through algorithms, under the guise of “autonomy” and flexibility, is actually exposing employers (e.g., riders) to exploitation and safety endangerment. The normative void for contract regulations, for instance in Italy, should be a sufficient evidence proving the current situation of this work sector.

Whereas the pessimistic view has the merit of putting in the foreground concerns about technological changes in the context of capitalism, thus countering with the enthusiasm liberals greet innovations with, I argue that it fails to appreciate the inherent repercussions of such a socio-economic turn. In effect, both approaches are rooted in the misguided assumption that labour is a universal, homogeneous capacity (as in the definition of the concept of labour-

power: the quantity of time); as such, it will be affected by organizational and economic changes in the same degree, regardless of any inner differentiation. Truly, as for automation and 4.0 industry, reality is showing quite the contrary.

First, automation is not at all forecasting a “Post-Work Society” – be it regarded with horror or joy –, in that precarious, low-skilled, low-waged, and “mindless” jobs (that is, administrative and bureaucratic tasks with little social utility) have increased¹. In spite of the introduction of machines, in the US, for example, it has been proven that the recovery from the 2007 economic recession mostly centred on low-waged and low-skilled occupations, with food service being one of the main sectors.² Overall, people are not working any less.

Second, 4.0 industry risks entangling workers in the rhythm of information processing of machines, thus leaving them no margins of self-management. Moreover, employees’ work performance in 4.0 industry is becoming standardized, requiring nothing more than basic digital competences, repetitive executions, and strict manufacturing procedures³. Although there are some differences between 4.0 industry and “gig economy”, with regard to contract guarantees and welfare they share in some nuances.

Third, reproductive services and functions do not vanish with work innovation⁴. Care, mental health, personal assistance to elder people and children, cleaning, preparing food, etc., whether they are cared for by kin for free or by services for pay, undergo few if any improvement. When not considered professions (i.e., doctors, psychologists, etc.), these jobs are often underpaid or not paid at all,

¹ Cfr. D. GRAEBER, *On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs*, in «Strike! Magazine», 3 (August 2013). Available at: <https://www.strike.coop/bullshit-jobs> (Accessed 24 October, 17:51).

² Cf. A. J. MEANS, *Education for a Post-Work Future. Automation, Precarity, and Stagnation*, in «Knowledge Cultures», V, 1 (2013), pp. 21-40.

³ Cfr. A. SALENTO, *Industria 4.0 ed economia delle piattaforme. spazi di azione e spazi di decisione*, in «Rivista Giuridica del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale», *Il lavoro nelle piattaforme digitali. Nuove opportunità, nuove forme di sfruttamento, nuovi bisogni di tutela*, 2 (2017), pp. 29-40.

⁴ Cfr. S. FEDERICI, *The Reproduction of Labour Power in the Global Economy and the Unfinished Feminist Revolution* (2008), in ID., *Revolution at Point Zero. Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, PM Press, Oakland 2012, pp. 91-111.

such as most of the reproductive work women are burdened with at home (and outside).

If anything, it seems that technological development is expanding the boundaries of dependent, low-skilled, repetitive, exploited work; and work itself is turning into a daily performance pervading one's life cycle⁵. It is not the same, however, for its socio-economic counterparts: upper-class professionals, bankers, top managers and holders, engineers, high-ranked academic professors and researchers, etc., all gain abundant incomes and enjoy various degrees of independence in the workplace⁶. They obtain the power to command those below them and to choose the aim of production, to which they give satisfying contributions in terms of creativity. As a result of automation and 4.0 industry, the ideation of new algorithms and machines, coupled with sought-after managerial skills and above average knowledge, marks the difference between types of occupations. These jobs occupy the head positions of technological development within capitalistic economy, while all the others are relegated to the basement (of course, organized by inner floors too).

Considering the collapse of public welfare and purchasing power, in the absence of familiar wealth and a high-income job, often coupled with gender and racial bias, many Western citizens might happen to engage in low-value occupations. This leads to a crackdown of dependence on salary and work. Accordingly, the premises of equality and freedom of modern citizenship might be further affected. Subjective and political elements of citizenship shrink to the extent that 1) this kind of works reduces the time for action and choice because of the increase in working hours; 2) employers have

⁵ For a rendition of nowadays «performance society», cfr. F. CHICCHI, A. SIMONE, *La società della prestazione*, Ediesse, Roma 2017.

⁶ By relating these professions to a certain degree of privilege within the realm of labour, I have no intention to overlook how work ethic affects upper-class and high-income individuals in respect of, for instance, the charge of responsibility and the quantity of working hours. The imperative of production, in fact, compels them to intensify work rhythms, with the aim of expanding surplus value. The number of mental diseases and the consumption of psychiatric drugs stand as evidence. Nevertheless, the concentration of economic and social power, especially in comparison with that of employees and subordinates, cannot be neglected.

a leverage on their employees, who might keep themselves from taking certain decisions and making certain assertions for fear of losing their source of subsistence. In the face of formal equality sanctioned by Western constitutions and treatises, labour materially entails asymmetries of power.

The above considerations raise the question of the reasons why – and how much – a kind of labour is more valued than another. Far from being a universal, abstract capacity without specific connotations, labour refers to a wide spectrum of human activities within capitalistic societies, each of which acquires an ethical significance. Some of them are combined with social, economic, and personal power; some match with subalternity and dependence.

Now, what does all of this have to do with Modern English philosophy? Taking a look back at past theoretical reflections might help to disentangle some of the present stratifications of labour. Early Modern England, in fact, offers a vantage point from which the inquiry on labour can be better developed, without falling into the temptation of regarding it as a homogeneous concept. Over two centuries, English intellectuals and philosophers subvert feudal ethics, by placing work at the centre of social and political recognition, as opposed to exclusive bloodline and lordship. Although contemporary readings have not always grasped the distinction, Early Modern authors were very careful about singling out the upright foundations of work because not *any* activity or performer would comply with them. They were driven by the necessity of preserving social asymmetries and status privilege, such as formal inequality. Given the role played by working activity in his philosophy, I reckon that John Locke represents a prominent voice in the definition of the Early Modern concept(s) of labour, with all its heterogeneous underpinnings and ramifications. In what follows, I shall first present a brief overview of some English writers who are crucial to sketching out the inherent conceptual criteria whereby labour takes on different significance. By drawing upon this discussion, I shall show how these criteria are taken into consideration by Locke's philosophy to outline two concepts of labour present in his works. In my opinion, the focus on Locke (but also on some of his contemporaries) is useful because his reflections on labour meet all the criteria at the same time. As I shall argue in the conclusions, Locke

provides a philosophical touchstone which may be used as a lens to recognize unchallenged values with regard to work in present times. Some of these values, in fact, have been lasting for centuries and continue to influence relationships of power.

2. *England, 16th-17th century: work(s), status, and (in)dependence in historical perspective*

The original significance acquired by “labour” in Locke is not accidental. Starting from the 16th century, in fact, English intellectuals’ and political writers’ efforts to define work are to be read as an attempt to categorize its new social relevance. In opposition to idle and infructuous aristocratic attitudes, some authors praise industriousness and craftsmanship as a means to expand commerce and improve national prosperity. The philosophical milieu of Early Modern England breathes the fresh air of the European Renaissance conceptions, within which *intellegere* comes along with *agere*: knowledge serves the purpose of modifying the empirical world given to mankind by God through action⁷. In this view, justifications of idleness are possible only when inactive time is invested in high studies on human and cosmic nature; otherwise, human beings ought to be set to work in order to deploy the faculties God has endowed them with. It is not at all surprising that, in this frame, a new aura winds those manual activities despised by common sense for centuries. Civic virtues and political agency, once exclusively anchored to noble bloodlines, begin to be compatible with working urban (and, in a way, rural) social groups. Workers, both in European and English political thinkers’ reflections, depart the margins of the city to enter its vital centre.

However, this did not apply to every worker. Indeed, English authors feel the urge to restate the social inferiority of waged labourers and dependents, as well as of women. For their labour is not so qualified as that of artisans, craftsmen, and independent farmers. Their place corresponds to private households, not public, urban spaces. For this reason, many 16th-17th century English writers, when dealing

⁷ Cfr. A. NEGRI, *Filosofia del lavoro. Dal Medioevo al Settecento preilluministico*, Marzorati, Milan 1980, pp. 469-79.

with the concept of work, need to outline its inherent aspects to avoid directing their political discourse to low-ranked people. By examining the works of some of them, it is possible to detect the features of their idea of upright and worthy working activity. I shall start by commenting on the theoretical elaborations on work and dependence of a selected group of thinkers. By the end of this section, some guidelines for an understanding of Locke's relation to this conceptual heritage will be drawn from the analysis of the texts.

If the main object of scrutiny is the evaluation of work in Early Modern England, there is no better mirror of that past society and conceptual history than Thomas More's *Utopia*. Although the author's enigmatic writing prevents one from inferring his explicit political intention⁸, the depiction of the island of Utopia leaves no room for doubts about the role that work might play in a community. After blaming the greed of noblemen for the poor's misery in book I⁹, the future Lord Chancellor goes on to describe the exact

⁸ Is this work conceived to warn aristocratic classes against their moral excesses, or is it a political manifesto of *ante-litteram* communism? The conundrum remains unsolved. I opt for the interpretation of scholars Ellen Meiksins-Wood and Neil Wood, as they have put it in their work about English political thought and social history. In their opinion, More criticizes wild enclosures because they engender poverty, resulting in misery preventing economic production. The island of Utopia would represent but the upside-down mirror of aristocratic habits: it is the residence of the perfect citizen-producer who does not rest in idleness like English noblemen do. More reprimands noblemen's nefarious aptitude, by showing them an image of a political dystopia to fear. Cfr. E. MEIKSINS-WOOD, N. WOOD, *A Trumpet of Sedition. Political Theory and the Rise of Capitalism, 1550-1688*, New York University Press, New York 1997, pp. 33-39.

⁹ It is worth quoting the most famous passage of the text, in which More criticizes the hideous impact of excessive enclosures. Cfr. T. MORE, *Utopia*, ed. and introduction by J. Churton Collins, Clarendon, Oxford, 1949, p. 19: "Your sheep," I replied, "that commonly are so meek and eat so little; now, as I hear, they have become so greedy and fierce that they devour men themselves. They devastate and depopulate fields, houses and towns. For in whatever parts of the land sheep yield the finest and thus the most expensive wool, there the nobility and gentry, yes, and even some abbots through otherwise holy men, are not content with the old rents that the land yielded to their predecessors. Living in idleness and luxury without doing society any good no longer satisfies them; they have to do positive evil. For they leave no land free

opposite of the English production system in book II. Utopians share in common lands, placed in the countryside, and are expected to work on them according to a rotational shift method¹⁰. No one is exempt from contributing to agriculture, except for those who are called to cultivate intellectual sciences. Beyond overcoming the steady social pyramid known in England, for which the provision of labour falls on lower classes' shoulders, More describes a way of redistributing the burden of heavy and straining work. Food and raw materials are essential for the survival of inhabitants; its production has to be considered necessary work. Yet, «till[ing] the soil, feed[ing] the animals, hew[ing] wood»¹¹ is too much of a commitment to leave time for alternative jobs, whose performance is oriented at producing conveniences for daily life.

Accordingly, while temporary farmers comply with agricultural duties, citizens living in towns can fully dedicate themselves to other professions in the field of manufacturing, commerce, and theoretical speculations. In fact, every worker must perform their activities for at least six hours a day; the rest of the day may be spent on recreation, but, More reasons, Utopians have so developed an inner sense of industriousness that they would rather read, move forward with their work duties, and attend public seminars. In any case, just as

for the plough; they enclose every acre for pasture; they destroy houses and abolish towns, keeping only the churches – and those for sheep-barns. And as if enough of your land were not already wasted on forests and game-preservers, these worthy men turn all human habitations and cultivated fields back to wilderness. Thus one greedy, insatiable glutton, a frightful plague to his native country, may enclose many thousands of acres within a single hedge. The tenants are dismissed and compelled, by trickery or brute force or constant harassment, to sell their belongings. One way or another, these wretched people – men, women, husbands, wives, orphans, widows, parents with little children and entire families (poor but numerous, since farming requires many hands) – are forced to move out».

¹⁰ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 44: «These houses [built by citizens] are inhabited by citizens who come to the country by turns to occupy them [...] Each year twenty persons from each rural household move back to the city after completing a two-year stint in the country. In their place, twenty others are sent out from town, to learn farm work from those who have already been in the country for a year, and who are better skilled in farming».

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

“syphogrants” «manage matters so that no one sits around in idleness, and to make sure that everyone works hard at his trade»¹², a social control over citizens discourages them from wasting «free time in roistering or sloth» in order to use it «in some occupation that pleases [them]»¹³.

Now, it seems that More’s point is to dispel slothfulness and misbehaviour by means of work ethic, no matter what trade, craft or job one might perform. Nevertheless, a few passages hint at the presence of hierarchical layers between occupations. For instance, the very rotational system in agriculture aims to reduce the disproportionate amounts of hours spent on toil. More regards this kind of occupation as degrading, therefore one should not bring it about from «early morning to late at night»: «such wretchedness, really worse than slavery, is the common lot of workmen everywhere except in Utopia»¹⁴. Also, domestic chores and heavy tasks are assigned to slaves, who have no free time for themselves. Women carry out food preparation for their own families, in addition to their profession or activity¹⁵. As opposed to town professions, these jobs are unfree, for they are supposed to be “naturally” done by certain social groups and entail strenuous labour.

To put it in Cosimo Quarta’s words¹⁶, in More’s eyes slaves’ and women’s chores, together with agriculture, concern the realm of necessity and unfreedom, whereas crafts and manufacture raise human subjectivity above the empirical world. That is, they express the condition of freedom under which mankind is entitled to live, if it is willing to, for two reasons. First, every individual has the right to freely choose the mastery of a craft in accordance with their own preferences. Second, craftsmanship moulds natural material to turn it into something useful for men, who therefore are able to develop their civilization beyond mere survival. Although manufacture may imply fatigue, it also creates conveniences improving human communities. It helps to escape from the grips of the body, constantly

¹² Ivi, p. 51.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Cfr. ivi, p. 58.

¹⁶ Cfr. C. QUARTA, *Tommaso Moro: una reinterpretazione dell’“Utopia”*, Dedalo, Bari 1991, p. 52.

driven to satisfy its instincts. In this frame, it is not hard to see the paramount position occupied by intellectual professions. What allows one to detach the most from the necessities of life? Ideas and thoughts. On this account, in *Utopia* there is the belief that a happy existence is that committed to intellectual discoveries¹⁷. By making intellectual activity superior to manual work, More takes his cue from the historico-philosophical hierarchy between mind and senses. After all, from his standpoint scientific knowledge stimulates the development of the arts in order to better increase industry. Ahead of all human activities directed at productivity are intellectual speculations¹⁸.

Moving from utopian literature to political essays, the intertwining of manual, strenuous work, and lack of freedom seems to lie at the core of Thomas Smith's representation of society in his *De reipublica anglorum*. The inhabitants of the kingdom are distributed between freemen (citizens) and bondmen (those deprived of full membership, even though English natives). On the one hand, noblemen, knights, gentlemen, yeomen, artisans, and labourers stand among citizens¹⁹. Up to this point, even workers benefit from the status of freemen regardless of their profession or annual rent²⁰: «day

¹⁷ Ivi, pp. 213-35.

¹⁸ Inasmuch as the professionalization of intellectual activities was taking place in Europe, it does not follow that, in More's and other writers' eyes, theoretical investigations were properly considered work (normally requiring wages, contracts, etc.). What is important to remark, in this context, is the progressive conversion of the disinterested contemplative life into a speculative life with the aim of improving national prosperity and productivity. For an in-depth discussion on the genealogy of the concept of profession, cfr. T. FAITINI, *Il lavoro come professione: una storia della professionalità tra etica e politica*, Aracne, Rome 2016.

¹⁹ Cfr. T. SMITH, *De reipublica anglorum. A Discourse of the Commonwealth of England*, ed. by L. Alston, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1906, p. 31: «we in England divide our men commonly into four sortes, gentlemen, citizens, yeomen artificers, and laborers». It is worth noticing that by gentlemen Smith intend not only landowners (copyholders) and high-ranked army officials, but also university and intellectual professions. Once more, a sign of the ethic relevance of intellectual activity, which is not categorized as “work” at the level of mechanical arts».

²⁰ I here remind that, in Early Modern England and up to the 19th century, Common Law prescribed that political rights, that is, the entitlement to elect

labourers, poore husbandmen, yea marchantes or retailers which have no free lande, copiholders, and all artificers, as Taylers, Shoemakers, Carpenters, Brickemakers, Bricklayers, Masons, &c.»²¹. In particular, Smith pinpoints yeomen as the producers who «*travaile to acquire riches*»²², thus reaching a sounder independence than many bankrupted gentlemen.

On the other hand, slaves, villeins, and indentured servants are listed within the bondmen's group. But, in addition to them, there are, here too, labourers, waged workers, servants, and apprentices. This choice suggests that, in Smith's opinion, the labour of the former may differ from yeomen's productive work on their own crop fields. I hold that the main distinction lies in the fact that daily labourers, waged workers, and apprentices lose their privilege as freemen when subscribing to a work contract²³. In fact, in doing so, they convert their free status into personal and judicial dependence on a master's will²⁴. How do they freely make decisions, if their actions

MPs and to be elected, were conceded only to those whose annual rent was above a certain money threshold (generally 40 schillings, but governments had been modifying this standard over time until the universal male franchise).

²¹ T. SMITH, *De republica anglorum*, cit., p. 46.

²² Ivi, p. 42.

²³ Following R.J. Steinfeld's research on the history of work contracts in Modern England, Maria Luisa Pesante argues that Smith's difficulty in outlining dependent labourers unequivocally (bondmen or freemen) might be read as the historical miscomprehension of voluntary servitude. In that period contemporaries remain ill-equipped when it comes to define whether contracts entail the lease of the entire body or of an amount of energy incapsulated in the service. In the first case, the labourer would be the master's servant; in the second one, he would not lose his *sui iuris* status. Cfr. M.L. PESANTE, *Come servi. Figure del lavoro salariato dal diritto naturale all'economia politica*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2013, pp. 38-40.

²⁴ The argument against subordinate workers' autonomy is not at all uncommon among political elites in Modern England. Suffice it to point out that, a century later, this objection will constitute the cornerstone of the Independents' counter-argument for the extension of the franchise during the Putney debates. For instance, when talking about the franchise, Henry Ireton states that this privilege should be endowed to «those who are like to be free men, men not given up to the will of others» (A.P. WOODHOUSE, *Puritanism and Liberty, being the Army Debates (1647-9) from the Clarke Manuscripts with Supplementary Documents*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1951, p. 78).

are bound to the command of their employer? As temporally limited as their contract might be, «during the time [of the service] it is *vera servitus*»²⁵. Apparently, the individuals liable to be caught by the web of dependence are the poor performing drudgery. Contrary to self-made yeomen or rich artisans, the «lowest and rascall sort of people»²⁶ possesses no land; as a result, they are pushed into working for others by necessity.

The theme of dependence adds a further element to our discussion on the meanings of work in Early Modern England. Labour assumes the semantic nuance related to lack of freedom with regard to the relationship with the employer, not only as for its type (above all, drudgery). All of this is very clear to Thomas Hobbes, whose works on the citizen (*De Cive*) and the State (*Leviathan*) tackle the issue of personal dependence. Generally speaking, servants undergo two dominations, one on the part of the sovereign, one on the part of masters²⁷. In *De Cive*, Hobbes names three kinds of servitude in French (*esclave*, *serf*, and *serviteur*)²⁸ according to the degree of submission, but he remarks that the motives to enter such a state are always the same. One is boosted to serve another before the defeat of a war («a man taken Prisoner in the Wars») or for material dispossession («[a man] distrusting his own forces, (to avoid Death) promises the Conqueror, or the stronger Party, *his Services*»)²⁹.

Specifically, a slave (*esclave*) suffers from a stiffer condition in that he or she does not agree to lend their work, rather they are made prisoners by means of chains – meaning, in Hobbes' perspective, their physical freedom is hindered³⁰. Servants, conversely, subscribe

²⁵ T. SMITH, *De republica anglorum*, cit., p. 137.

²⁶ Ivi, p. 42.

²⁷ Cf. T. HOBBS, *De Cive. Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society. The English Version*, ed. by H. Warrender, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1983, p. 78: «And herein llayes the difference between a free subject, and a servant, that he is FREE indeed, who serves his City onely; but a SERVANT is he who also serves his fellow subject: all other liberty is an exemption of the Lawes of the City, and proper only to those that bear Rule», p. 126

²⁸ Cfr. ivi, pp. 159-63.

²⁹ Ivi, p. 117.

³⁰ A further study on Hobbes' view of freedom finds no room in the present paper. In a nutshell, it may be profitable to remind that, for Hobbes, freedom is a physical condition, that is, the state of being free to move without

to a voluntary contract binding their will to their employer, and benefit from bodily liberty³¹. At any rate, the degree of submission does not change the fact that the master hath a *Supreme power* over both, and may say of his *Servant* no lesse than of another thing, whether animate, or inanimate, This is mine»³². Hobbes is putting in philosophical words what Smith and 16th-17th century political essayists reckon as for subordinate individuals; they are but rational means of their masters, very much alike Aristotle's description of slaves in his *Politics*³³. Masters embody servants' decision making capacity and agency, their interest being the same as that of their dependents. In *Leviathan* this assumption is better expounded through the insertion of the concept of authorization. Just as the authority obtained by the sovereign following the transfer of power put in place by the multitude, the master becomes the actor representing the voice and actions of his subordinates in the wake of the signature of the mutual agreement. But, unlike theatre, the actor does not abide by a script written by the author: he is entitled to speak and act for the author with no ties in respect of the latter's will. The actor thus gains an authority over the author willing to cede the power of self-determination:

The master of the servant, is master also of all he hath; and may exact the use thereof; that is to say, of his goods, of his labour, of his servants, and of his children, as often as he shall think fit. For he holdeth his life of his master, by the covenant of obedience; that is, of owning, and authorizing whatsoever the master shall do. And in case the master, if

impediments. On these grounds, a servant without chains or physical restraints is to be considered free, notwithstanding their dependence on a master. For a further discussion on this theme, cfr. Q. SKINNER, *Liberty before Liberalism*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2010; W. VON LEYDEN, *Hobbes and Locke. The Politics of Liberty and Obligation*, Macmillan, London 1982.

³¹ The very contrast between slavery and servitude stems from the possibility of resistance: while slaves might attack their masters and escape, as they have not signed any compact, servants must obey their masters by virtue of their voluntary agreement. Because they have subscribed to a mutual agreement, in fact, servants are left chainless and provided with bodily freedom. Cfr. T. HOBBS, *De Cive*, cit., p. 118.

³² *Ivi*, pp. 118-9.

³³ Cfr. ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, Book I, 1255b 12.

he refuses, kill him, or cast him into bonds, or otherwise punish him for his disobedience, he is himself the author of the same; and cannot accuse him of injury³⁴.

Having settled this transfer of personal power by will, it is logical that the master decides for his servant. Every action of the master, thus, is also the servant's. The underlying rationale of this argument mirrors the historical configuration of Modern England household, in which the head of the family – a husband, a father, and a master – rules over his dependent subjects (wives, children, and servants). On this account, the only one with the privilege of full autonomy and political rights is the head of the family, whose decisions concern dependents. Hobbes adds a moral justification to this common sense belief: inasmuch as dependents have given the authority to the husband/father/master, they are bound to fulfil their commitment. Far from grounding dependence upon the “great chain of beings” ordained by God, as stated above with regard to Smith, in Hobbes a free individual – as everybody is in the state of nature irrespective of gender and status – gives up their freedom by will. In addition, servitude is entrenched in the light of voluntary obedience, a philosophical device Hobbes uses to subjugate the terrifying «Many-Headed Monster» of the multitude³⁵.

Does this dependence, entailing voluntary obedience, interfere with labourers' and waged workers' life, or just with domestic servants'? The meanings of the term “servant” in 17th century England suggest an affirmative answer. By this word English meant all those who worked for another person under the condition of an

³⁴ T. HOBBS, *Leviathan*, ed. by J.C.A. Gaskin, Oxford University Press, St Ives 1998, §13, p. 135.

³⁵ It is the expression evoked by upper-class people when referring to the multitude in revolt during the English Revolution. Cfr. C. HILL, «The Many-Headed Monster», in ID., *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England*, Widenfeld and Nicholson, London 1974, p. 194. Hobbes engages in writing his essays to banish the social conflicts brought about by low gentry, yeomen, artisans, and low-ranked people against the Crown. Cfr. E. MEIKSINS-WOOD, *A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, New York 2012, pp. 243-248.

agreement establishing personal and judicial subjection³⁶. After all, as Robert J. Steinfeld has convincingly shown, up to mid-18th century the most common kind of work contract contemplates a form of servitude³⁷. Work is not yet a “free” commodity; consequently, workers are denied to leave their workplace without the master’s agreement and compelled to complete their service. One might infer that Hobbes accepts those premises by focusing on a passage in chapter 28 of *Leviathan*. In there, the author specifies the contingencies in which voluntary servitude comes about: «for hire [...], or in hope of benefits from [the] masters»³⁸. That “for hire” alludes to the wage of labourers. The only difference between them and domestic servants is to be found in the duration of the “supreme power” of the master, it being limited to a day, some weeks or months in the case of waged labourers and workers, as opposed to domestic servitude often taking years³⁹. Another suggestion can be drawn from Hobbes’ account of voluntary servitude. Historically, wages pay for services, not for the art behind the completion of a manual work. Artisans and skilled workers, in fact, do not make agreements in terms of servitude and personal subjection, since they carry out their job duties in their laboratories far away from the master’s command⁴⁰. Therefore, it is not misleading to assert that, even in Hobbes, those working under a servitude contract are likely to be poor, low-skilled, and drudgery workers.

Even British Republicanism fails to recognize political rights and autonomy to dependents. Overall, in republican political theory and utopian literature, individuals under a personal subjection are deemed not worthy to join the “virtuous people” struggling against

³⁶ Cfr. C. HILL, *Change and Continuity*, cit.; M. L. PESANTE, *Come servi*, cit.; A. MATHERON, *Anthropologie et politique au XVII^{ème} siècle (études sur Spinoza)*, Vrin, Parigi 1986.

³⁷ Cfr. R.J. STEINFELD, *The Invention of Free Labour. The Employment Relation in English and American Law and Culture. 1350-1870*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1991, pp. 9-14.

³⁸ T. HOBBS, *Leviathan*, cit., p. 431.

³⁹ Also, domestic servants are often rewarded with wages, along with food furnished by the household.

⁴⁰ As a matter of fact, ordinances like the Statute of Artificers do not address artisans, at least not in the beginning of the legislation concerning the discipline of labourers. Cfr. R.J. Steinfeld, *The Invention of Free Labour*, cit.

monarchs and lords. The appreciation of virtue – usually the golden mean as in the Aristotelian ethics – hinders writers from giving relevance to the “wild rabble”, which is placed in the vicious extreme of poverty (the opposite being opulence and luxury). Need renders the rabble an untamed beast incapable of upright and rational actions, and risks dragging social upheavals towards radical democracy, that is, absence of power, privilege, and property⁴¹. Although it is true that republicanism strives to tear down power relationships based on bloodlines and lordship, it is also evident that its idea of merit draws a line between those possessing means and time to cultivate virtue and those who have none of them. John Milton, writing on the subject in *A Defence of the People of England*, unquestionably states: «luxury and opulence on the one hand, poverty and need on the other, generally divert them [the people] from virtue and the study of statesmanship»⁴². Milton has in mind a range of virtues among which industrious work plays a main part, as he explicitly shows in the rhymes of his most renowned poem, *Paradise Lost*. By means of well-thought-out work not only do men fulfil God’s predicament,⁴³ they can aspire to elevate their condition. The division of labour

⁴¹ During the English revolution, the paramount counter-argument used to fight, and to mine its political legitimacy, the multitude levers proprietor’s horror at the scenario in which property rights dissolve. Uprisings are regarded as the preview of a future anarchic society, which, in upper-class individuals’ opinion, is no less than democracy. By terrorizing landowners with even the far possibility forecasting the loss of property, Levellers’ and Diggers’ opponents lessen demonstrations, petitions, and people-driven initiatives from below. This argument will not be lost to sight after the Great Rebellion: it will show up again in the midst of political contentions and debates upon monarchy between Tories and Whigs in the 1680s.

⁴² J. MILTON, *A Defence of the People of England*, in ID., *Political Writings*, ed. by M. Dzelainis, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991, p. 194.

⁴³ In this regard, Adam says to Eve: «other creatures all day long/Rove idle unemployed, and less need rest;/Man hath his daily work of body or mind/ Appointed, which declares his dignity,/And the regard of heaven on all his ways;/ While other animals unactive range,/And of their doings God takes no account» (J. MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by P. Pullman, Oxford University Press, New York 2005, pp. 122-123).

propounded by Eve, in fact, makes it easier to enjoy the fruits of human production in more convenient ways⁴⁴.

However, Eve's boldness, while embodying the positive attitude towards productivity and economic improvement, leads to the original sin and the Eden crisis. As Teresa Michals has argued⁴⁵, in conforming to the orthodox telling of the Bible, Milton actually mitigates the side-effects of merit. Virtue/labour does not grant social mobility and recognition to every person; these political outcomes are reliant on the identity of the subject struggling for social climbing. As much as they make efforts, women cannot expect to attain men's status by working hard and wittingly. In order not to break apart Eden (that is, the natural order), Eve should have kept herself from productive and enterprise work, thus restricting herself to household labour. «For nothing lovelier can be found/in woman, than to study household good»⁴⁶, Adam explains. This kind of work suits women the most, since it encompasses their dependence and confinement in the private space⁴⁷. In the wake of our present discussion, one should add that not only are women expected to do so, but every dependent.

Also other republicans underappreciate dependence. James Harrington, insomuch as he promotes the figure of the citizen-producer resembling the “middle rank of people”, does not call into question the illegitimacy of dependence by criticizing its conditions of

⁴⁴ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 253: Eve tells Adam: «Let us divide our labours, thou where choice/Leads thee, or where most needs, whether to wind/The woodbine round this arbour, or direct/The clasping ivy where to climb, while I/In yonder spring of roses intermixed/With myrtle, find what to redress till noon:/For while so near each other thus all day/Our task we choose, what wonder if so near/Looks intervene and smiles, or object new/Casual discourse draw on, which intermits/Our day's work brought to little, though begun/Early, and the hour of supper comes unearned».

⁴⁵ Cfr. T. MICHALS, «*Sweet gardening labour*»: *Merit and Hierarchy in Paradise Lost*, in «*Exemplaria*», VII, 2 (1995), pp. 499-514.

⁴⁶ T. MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, *cit.*, p. 254.

⁴⁷ Michals has underscored the double function of labour in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. On the one hand, it is the vehicle through which men venture out in the conquest of nature with the aim of improving productivity. On the other, just as Eve is supposed to work within the household abiding by certain duties, Milton seeks to maintain traditional hierarchies.

possibility. He envisages the presence of dependents in *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, from whose political institutions they are kept out; this is an assertion that the writer takes for granted as for its validity, «since the nature of servitude [...] is inconsistent with freedom or participation of government in a commonwealth»⁴⁸. The first division among the people separates citizens and «servants, while such»⁴⁹. It seems that Harrington, by presupposing that servitude is a temporary status («while such»), shares in the same common sense as Hobbes does. In this regard, “servant” is likely to refer to waged labourers no less than any form of personal submission. According to Pocock’s reading of Harrington’s political thinking, citizenship is tied to property and independence⁵⁰. Eventually, labourers may disrupt their work contract, thus obtaining back their subjective independence. But as long as they do not possess their own means of subsistence, they will be forced to look for an employer for their survival. Contrary to an all-encompassing redistributive policy, equality in property does not constitute a pillar of the political system. The very existence of servitude in the commonwealth conceived by Harrington accounts for his refusal to concede property to any person of the community.

⁴⁸ J. HARRINGTON, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, introduction by J.G.A. Pocock, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 75.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ Cfr. J.G.A. POCOCK, *Introduction to The Commonwealth of Oceana*, cit., pp. VII-XXIII; ID., *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1975. Actually, Pocock reasons, Harrington’s stance on the franchise would allow waged labourers to full membership, and exclude perpetual/domestic servants only. I am inclined to believe, however, that Harrington is more conservative than he appears to be at a first glance. It is certain that, in Modern England, many waged labourers accomplish personal independence by renting or purchasing a land on which they build a house. In doing so, they are actually fit for citizenship requisites. Nevertheless, Pocock overlooks the historical living conditions of labourers at the head of a household: as they must supply their family with livelihood without having a guaranteed income (i.e., constant wage, lodging, and food), they would likely sign very unfavourable contracts. All of this leads to a harsher “wage slavery” than perpetual servants. Cfr. R.J. Steinfeld, *The Invention of Free Labour*, cit., pp. 15-54.

Taking a leap forward thirty years later, Whig intellectual circles do not renounce this conceptual framework regarding dependence. Algernon Sidney simply repeats what Harrington says when tackling the topic of citizenship in his *Discourses Concerning Government*: «The difference between *civis* and *servus* is irreconcilable; and no man, whilst he is a servant, can be a member of a commonwealth; for he that is not in his own power, cannot have a part in the government of others»⁵¹. Sidney's advocacy of male franchise does not collide with the preservation of masters' domination over servants, to the point that he maintains that private households should not undergo public scrutiny. Nor should a fellow citizen speak his mind on how a peer treats his servant/dependent/labourer⁵². On these grounds, servants are reckoned as *incolae* as opposed to *cives*, in the same fashion as the Roman republic did; they benefit from certain civil rights (i.e. military protection, right to residency and circulation, etc.), but they are not equal to full members of the commonwealth. Servants and labourers linger on a halfway membership, since neither are they considered citizens, nor have they no judicial protection as slaves.

James Tyrrell, another prominent Whig activist and Locke's fond friend, comes straight to the point in respect of dependence. He perfectly takes on the judicial culture of his time to the extent that in his political essay, *Patriarcha non monarcha*, hired servants (presumably including labourers) give their consent to the master's strict

⁵¹ A. SIDNEY, *Discourses Concerning Government*, ed. by T. Thomas and G. West, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis 1996, p. 80.

⁵² Cfr. A. SIDNEY, *Discourses*, cit., p. 548: «no man is to direct me, of what quality or number they shall be, or can tell me whether I am well or ill served by them».

discipline⁵³. Servants' will, being «part of their Masters Family»⁵⁴, delegates its autonomy to that of masters. This is the common destiny of all dependents living in the household, from «Women, as being concluded by their Husbands, and being commonly unfit for civil business» to «Children in their Fathers Family being under the notion of Servants»⁵⁵. Because they fail to be subjects «at their own dispose», the commonwealth does not grant them the status of citizens and *sui iuris* individuals. Hence, citizens, that is, the heads of families and freemen, can take decisions and form the civil government without them. Only these members are the rightful people, under whose voice every government must kneel.

From this brief historico-conceptual account of reflections on labour and dependence in Early Modern England, a specific profile can be outlined according to three intersectional axes. First, “work” displays a range of meanings with different moral valorisations. Against a backdrop of breakdown of traditional aristocratic ethics, work is not indifferently valued regardless of its quality and type (productive and poietic vs. strenuous and reproductive). Second, the ethical valorisation of a certain type of work hinges on the status of its performer. It is by far different whether a person *can* work to implement his richness and commerce without having masters above him (an independent, such as an owner) or they *must* work to outlive and to abide by social norms (a dependent, such as labourers/servants, women, and children). Last, undervalued work and

⁵³ Although masters do not have the right to starve to death their servants, kill or beat them with no just cause, masters do have an absolute power over them during the service. Cfr. J. TYRRELL, *Patriarcha non monarcha. The Patriarch unmonarch'd: Being Observations on a late treatise and divers other miscellanies, published under the name of Sir Robert Filmer Baronet. In which the falseness of those opinions that would make monarchy Jure Divino are laid open: and the true Principles of Government and Property (especially in our Kingdom) asserted. By a Lover of Truth and of his Country*, Richard Janeway, London 1681, p. 102: «[servants]submit themselves to the will and disposal of another what Diet they shall eat, and what Clothes they shall wear, what work they shall do, and what hours of rest or sleep they shall have to themselves; and that the Master may beat or correct him if he do amiss, and through wilfulness or negligence disobey his Masters commands». In sum, masters receive «the Right of governing them» (ivi, p. 106).

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ Ivi, pp. 83-4.

personal dependence contribute to the political subjugation of many social groups, thus excluding them from the paradigm of citizenship. The features of this profile of labour will serve as general guidelines to studying Locke's discussion on work and citizenship.

3. *The ploughman's sweat does not equal the artisan's art and the landlord's industry. The two meanings of labour in Locke*

Chapter 5 of the *Second Treatise* has unmistakably cast new light on the understanding of labour from a politico-philosophical perspective. Locke has for sure tied up labour and property, thus deconstructing the feudal belief that (especially land) ownership derives from military occupation. Yet, he has done more than that. In his entire philosophical thinking, he acknowledges the intrinsic value that labour transfers into worked objects. "It is *labour* indeed that *puts the difference of value* on every thing"⁵⁶, Locke asserts when comparing an acre of improved land with a tantamount large lot left in common and uncultivated. Many critics have pushed forward misleading interpretations of such a passage and of the entire chapter, maintaining that Locke is the first writer who introduces the concept of labour-power. In this view, Locke would conceive of work as an abstract capacity, understood in terms of time and skill, sold in the market in exchange for money. Such an idea is upheld by both Marxist and Liberal/Democratic readings, although with opposite aims⁵⁷. At any rate, owing to the need to use Locke as a tool to

⁵⁶ J. LOCKE, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. by C.B. Macpherson, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis 1980, §40, p. 25.

⁵⁷ I have no intention to disregard crucial contributions given by such scholars as C.B. Macpherson, Mario Tronti, Carole Pateman, Luigi Pareyson, Norberto Bobbio, Wilmore Kendall, David Wootton, Richard Ashcraft, James Tully, Judith Richards, Lotte Mulligan, John Graham, to quote but some. Marxists (Macpherson, Tronti, Pateman, Pareyson) offer an essential insight into the waged worker's place in Locke's works, as well as a thorough critique remarking class distinction within the universal concept of man in his thought. Supporters of the Liberal/Democratic Locke (Bobbio, Kendall, Wootton, Ashcraft, Tully, Richards, Mulligan, Graham) wisely reconstruct the political surrounding of Locke's writing of the *Second Treatise* as for resistance, natural properties, and natural law. What I shall contend, however, is the common assumption for which labour is a commodity/capacity at the worker's disposal.

answer questions that the present posits⁵⁸, both Marxists and Liberals misunderstand the conceptual premises within which Locke deploys his philosophy. It is my contention that, in Locke, there is no universal concept of labour. Rather, his philosophy conceals at least two meanings of labour, like the ones emerged in the previous, brief study of some Early Modern authors. Actually, on the grounds of this conceptual distinction, Locke's stance on work is consistent

On the one hand, Marxists hold that servants correspond to the dispossessed people under the command of idle capitalists, proprietors of the means of production. Servants (much likely any inhabitant with no property) sell their labour-power during a certain time period, while proprietors exploit their labour. In this sense, servants' labour would be productive per se and paid for the time of its particular performance. Also, while servants are not contemplated by the franchise, proprietors are full members of the commonwealth. On the other hand, the Liberal line of interpretation defines labourers as *sui iuris* subjects in that they are proprietors of their labour-power. The capacity to work, lent and not sold to another person, engenders the ownership of an external object, thus allowing them to be recognized as full citizens equipped with the three natural properties. For this reason, every inhabitant is potentially a citizen, and he has the right to participate in elections and to set off resistance against tyranny. Cfr. R. ASHCRAFT, *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1986; ID., *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, Unwin Ltd, London 1987; N. BOBBIO, *Da Hobbes a Marx. Saggi di storia della filosofia*, Morano, Napoli 1965; ID., *Locke e il diritto naturale*, Giappichelli, Torino 2017; W. KENDALL, *Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule*, University of Illinois Press, Champaign 1960; C.B. MACPHERSON, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism. Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford University Press, New York 1962; L. PAREYSON, *Introduction to J. LOCKE, Due trattati sul governo*, UTET, Torino 2010; C. PATEMAN, *Sublimation and Reification: Locke, Wolin and the Liberal Democrat Conception of the Political*, in «Politics and Society», 5 (1975), pp. 441-67; J. RICHARDS, L. MULLIGAN, J. GRAHAM, "Property" and "People": *Political Usages of Locke and some Contemporaries*, in «Journal of the History of Ideas», XLII, 1 (January-March 1981), pp. 29-51; J. TULLY, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993; ID., *A Discourse on Property. John Locke and His Adversaries*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006; *Stato e rivoluzione in Inghilterra. Teoria e pratica della prima Rivoluzione inglese*, a cura di M. Tronti, Il Saggiatore, Milano 1977; D. WOOTTON, *Introduction to J. LOCKE, Political Writings*, Mentor, New York 1993.

⁵⁸ Cfr. V. MÉNDEZ-BAIGES, *Apelando a los cielos: el Segundo tratado en la historia del pensamiento político moderno*, in J. LOCKE, *Segundo tratado sobre el gobierno civil: un ensayo acerca del verdadero origen, alcance y fin del gobierno civil*, trans. and introduction by C. Mellizo, Tecnos, Madrid 2010.

with the three axes of the historical profile of labour emerged in the study of the above-mentioned thinkers. In what follows, I shall not engage in a point-by-point critique of the various interpretations of the theme of work/labour in Locke. Rather, I will present my analytical dissection of the occurrences of the meanings of labour in the author's works in their different semantic and political underpinnings. I believe that such a viewpoint avoids looking back at past epochs and thoughts as a way to find solutions of present quandaries regarding work. Conversely, it helps to give a new emphasis on nowadays contradictions and aporias, by tracing back to their origins and historical development. Provided that the temporal distance cannot be erased, this approach seeks to disclose the possible persistence of certain meanings in our time, as well as other perspectives which may take into account less patent facets of the philosophical inquiry on labour.

The fact that Locke does not refer to labour in an abstract way does not result in him not presenting any general connotation of it. In a letter sent to Dr. Grenville in 1677, the philosopher states that recreation is «the doing of some easy or at least delightful thing to restore with the mind or body tired with labour, to its former strength and vigor and thereby fit it for new labour»⁵⁹. In this sentence “labour” is marked out, by a contrast with recreation, as an activity consuming physical and mental energy. The definition clearly goes beyond aristocratic idea on idleness to the extent that inactivity is not at all praised per se, but it is reckoned as necessary for future availability to work. If Locke categorizes any consumption of energy as work, does it follow that in his opinion all human activities are equal in value and importance? His account of the ancestral origins of private property would answer positively to this question.

In the state of nature introduced in the *Second Treatise*, the main method to seize an object from nature, thus rendering it one's own property, is “vulgar labour”⁶⁰. The many examples given by Locke

⁵⁹ J. LOCKE in J. TULLY, *A Discourse*, p. 109.

⁶⁰ I owe the adoption of lemmas such as “vulgar labour” and “improved labour” to Campbell Jones. Cfr. C. JONES, *The Meanings of Work in John Locke*, in *History of economic rationalities: Economic reasoning as knowledge and practice authority*, ed. by J. Bek-Thomsen, C. Christiansen, S. Jacobsen, M. Thorup, Springer, Cham 2017, pp. 51-62.

to legitimate his theory of property almost always show labour as elementary actions; picking up acorns, gathering apples, digging up ores⁶¹ correspond to the inevitable fatigue of survival. It is unmistakable that the depiction of labour, at this stage of the state of nature⁶², is influenced by Locke's imagery of aboriginal populations outside of Europe and past European epochs. At this point of the discussion, vulgar labour succeeds in appropriating a portion of nature (i.e., land, soil, fruits or animals given in common by God) as a result of the transfer of the self into an external object, thus meeting the general logical fundamentals of labour⁶³.

Yet, there is a passage in which Locke discerns at least two kinds of "vulgar" performance: «the *labour* of his body, and the *work* of his hands»⁶⁴. As Hannah Arendt has pointed out⁶⁵, the assertion contains an acute differentiation within manual occupations. On the one hand, *labour* means straining bodily movement; on the other, *work* implies human workmanship, creativity, and knowledge, as well as the object produced by the worker's skilled hands⁶⁶. Apparently, in

⁶¹ Cfr. J. LOCKE, *Second Treatise*, cit., §28, p. 19: «He that is nourished by the acorns he picked up under an oak, or the apples he gathered from the trees in the wood».

⁶² The first stage of the state of nature represents the typical situation at the outset of civilization, be it ancient Europe or American population before colonization in the Modern era. In the aftermath of the introduction of money and contracts (cfr. *Second Treatise*, cit., §87, p. 46), the state of nature develops into natural society, thus giving rise to improved labour and growth of population. This second stage is not to be confused with the State, since, social contract having not taken place yet, judicial power and executive powers are absent. For an interpretation of the stages of the state of nature in Locke, cfr. C. PATEMAN, *Sublimation and Reification*, cit.

⁶³ Cfr. P. PASQUALUCCI, *Absolutizzazione dell'idea di lavoro e negazione della natura in John Locke*, in *La società criticata. Revisioni tra due culture*, a cura di E. Opocher, Morano, Napoli 1974, pp. 255-301.

⁶⁴ J. LOCKE, *Second Treatise*, cit., §27, p. 19.

⁶⁵ Cfr. H. ARENDT, *Vita activa. La condizione umana*, a cura di A. Dal Lago, Bompiani, Milano 2014, p. 93.

⁶⁶ In English, in fact, "work" refers to both human activity and the final product. "Labour", by contrast, stresses the physical effort due to manual executions. It is curious that in many neo-Latin languages the definition of working activities uses words belonging to the semantic field of sorrow, fatigue, and endeavour ("lavoro" in Italian, "trabajo" in Spanish, and "travail" in

the state of nature human beings make significant artificial items (i.e., tools, cottages and houses, infrastructures, etc.). Creation gains here a stricter sense than the transfer of labour involved by picking up acorns and digging ores. It does not simply extract a portion of nature; creation modifies nature by turning it into something convenient for mankind. Whereas for Arendt Locke neglects this conceptual distinction afterwards, I argue that it is preserved throughout his texts (not necessarily by using the two exact words), in particular in his philosophical and political account of civil societies. Most important, a value difference characterizes a disparity between the two concepts in ethical and political terms.

Of course, exhausting and simple manual executions (*labour*) do not disappear after the creation of natural community and, later, the constitution of the State; they just acquire a new configuration in the context of a mature market society. Some passages of the *Second Treatise* hint at town occupations which do not take a “vulgar” form. A contrast between Native Americans’ bare lands held in common and worked private properties in England in section 47 underscores the disproportion of richness. Placed within a long chain of production, occupations in a full “civilized” country⁶⁷ achieve the refinement of

French); these last lemmas highlight the most the aspect of pain comprised in one of the meanings of work/labour.

⁶⁷ I would rather put such words as “civilized”, “uncivilized”, “underdeveloped”, etc., in inverted commas to stress that I only report Locke’s expressions and thinking, which I do not share. For the author of the *Second Treatise*, “civilization” concerns but the Old World populations; all the other non-European societies must follow European trajectories and foundations of politics – meaning that they have to be colonized – if they are willing to be recognized as “civilized”. This colonial rationale informs also Locke’s opinion on slavery, which is patent in the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*. In this legal text, Locke lists slaves, whose ethnicity is often African, among masters’ possessions: «every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves, of what opinion or religion soever» (J. LOCKE, *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, in ID., *The Works of John Locke*, Vol. 10, cit., p. 196). Slavery continues to make part of Locke’s imaginary also in the *Second Treatise*, where among possible relationships of power he includes that between a master and a slave, which is deeply different from the master-servant one (cfr. §§2, 17; *Second Treatise*, cit., §86, p. 46: «Let us therefore consider a master of a family with all these subordinate relations of wife, children, servants, and slaves, united under the domestic rule of a family [...] for excepting the slave (and

objects and an increase in the quantity of material resources. Whenever one eats a piece of bread, or uses straw to feed animals and construct buildings, they need to be reminded that beneath that product rests «the plough-man’s pains, the reaper’s and thresher’s toil, and the baker’s sweat»⁶⁸, along with

the labour of those who broke the oxen, who digged and wrought the iron and stones, who felled and framed the timber employed about the plough, mill, oven, or any other utensils, which are a vast number, requisite to this corn, from its being feed to be sown to its being made bread, must all be *charged on* the account of labour, and received as an effect of that: nature and the earth furnished only the almost worthless materials, as in themselves⁶⁹.

What changes from the “vulgar labour” of the first state of nature? As compared with “underdeveloped” societies, at this stage of civilization «the labour of the body» of toil jobs goes beyond the mere gathering of apples, supplying elaborate and detailed goods. Furthermore, Locke takes it for granted that the objects and lands on which employed men dissipate their energy do not become their own afterwards. Day labourers, poor farmers, porters, and cobblers – all sorts of drudgery and unskilled occupations – own nothing. If at all, they are proprietors of their bodies, maybe of a house, and entitled to certain civic rights⁷⁰. However, certainly, they are not proprietors of the product of their labour, since it belongs to their master. It is important to remind that, under the State constitution, properties were already distributed on the basis of inheritance. In the aftermath of first appropriations thanks to “vulgar labour”, ancestors secured their properties, by promulgating constitutions, in

the family is as much a family, and his power as paterfamilias as great, whether there be any slaves in his family or no) he has no legislative power of life and death over any of them, and none too but what a mistress of a family may have as well as he»). This is consistent with the investments that Locke made in such businesses as the Royal Africa Company, responsible for the slave trade.

⁶⁸ J. LOCKE, *Second Treatise*, cit., §47, p. 27.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁰ As in the natural properties whom God has given to every human being: life, liberty, and estates.

order to pass them on to their future offspring⁷¹. Thus, the ploughman cannot take over the wheat seeded, grown and harvested in the landlord's field.

I reckon that, together with a constitutional argumentation, the reasons for the failure of the appropriation in a recognized State dwell in an ethical evaluation of *labour* (i.e., drudgery occupations) as compared to work (i.e., poetic, artisanal, managerial occupations). What I suggest, therefore, is that in Locke's eyes the ploughman, the reaper, the thresher, etc., are not properly *productive* workers, meaning that they create no surplus value *by their own*; and the absence of proper creation gives rise to no ownership. Moving up and down a shovel surely deplete one's strength, and it is essential for the growth of the seeds in a field. Nevertheless, a closer regard to this execution would reveal that it only aims to extract means of support fundamental for the reproduction of life. In this sense, labour is consistent with natural cycles. In the attempt to nurture the already tired body, labour uses up physiological energy, by making huge efforts. Accordingly, the livelihood obtained by labour reproduces what has just been consumed (and sometimes not even the entire quantity of energy), it does not issue any productive surplus to a community. Pure fatigue, although it draws out something from nature, does not improve standards of human life. The lack of creation in a stricter sense is clear-cut: labour per se does not increase the number of natural products. This assertion raises the question of how a well-off country as England manages to boost market exchanges and enrich its finances, without drawing upon labour to improve its production. Of course, it does resort to drudgery to do so, but the real implementation relies on the contribution given by «art, thought, and knowledge». These elements conduce to the proper production of surplus goods in respect of the «unfit materials» provided by nature. Under these conditions human beings can live well and happily, not

⁷¹ J. LOCKE, *Second Treatise*, cit., §45, p. 29: «the several *communities* settled the bounds of their distinct territories, and by laws within themselves regulated the properties of the private men of their society, and so, by *compact* and agreement, *settled the property* which labour and industry began»; and §50, p. 30: «in governments, the laws regulate the right of property, and the possession of land is determined by positive constitutions».

only outlive. Once again, Locke dwells on a comparison between England and “uncivilized” aboriginal societies to make his point:

An acre of land, that bears here twenty bushels of wheat, and another in *America*, which, with the same husbandry, would do the like, are, without doubt, of the same natural intrinsic value: but yet the benefit mankind receives from the one in a year, is worth 51. and from the other possibly not worth a penny, if all the profit an *Indian* received from it were to be valued, and sold here; at least, I may truly say, not one thousandth⁷².

Locke does not accidentally open the same section as the above-mentioned one, displaying the chain of production in a prosperous nation, with a reference to Amerind populations. If it is true that he talks at length about labour as a device instrumental to prosperity, he then adds that «industry» furnishes all the «catalogue of things» useful for a developed community. Industry, knowledge, and art favour economic expansion. Labour, by contrast, may be inefficient without a shrewd guidance. It is the case of Amerinds and other “uncivilized” societies, indeed: they are not deemed to refuse any laborious effort, on the contrary they present themselves as quite hard-working. In the face of it, they do not live up to the conveniences of a wealthy existence:

If we consider ourselves in the condition we are in an estate of *necessities* whereof call for a constant supply of meat, drink, clothing, and defence from the weather, and very often physic; and our *conveniences demand yet a great deal more*. To provide these things nature furnish[es] us only with the materials for the most part rough and unfitted to our uses; it requires *labour, art, and thought* to suit them to our occasions, and if the knowledge of men had not found out ways to shorten the labour and improve several things which seem not at first sight to be of any use to us we should spend all our time to make a scanty provision for a poor and miserable life, a sufficient instance whereof we have in the inhabitants of that large and fertile part of the world the West Indies, who lived a poor uncomfortable laborious life [and] with all their industry [were] scarce able to subsist and that perhaps only for want of knowing the use of that stone out of which the inhabitants of the old world had the

⁷² Ivi, §43, p. 26.

skill to draw iron and thereof make themselves utensils necessary for the carrying on and improvement of all other arts, no one of which can subsist well, if at all, without that one metal. Here then is a large field for knowledge proper for the use and advantage of men in this world, viz., to find out the *new inventions of dispatch to shorten or ease our labours*, or applying sagaciously together several agents and patients to produce new and beneficial productions whereby our stock of riches (i.e. things useful for the *conveniences* of our life) may be increased or better preserved⁷³.

From this perspective, the real “creator” of new goods – and, thus, the legitimate owner according to Locke’s theory of appropriation – is the bringer of technologies and the contriver of strategies of commerce apt to foster surplus production⁷⁴. Before identifying a possible historical subject suitable for this profile, it is profitable to offer an insight into the evaluation of *work* implied in this reasoning.

The improvement⁷⁵ of lands and the growth of national and individual income suits the concept of work. *Work*, contrary to *labour*, shapes nature in accordance with a model determined by the maker. Poietic creation, in this frame, follows the maker’s autonomous aim,

⁷³ J. LOCKE, *Understanding*, in ID., *Political Essays*, ed. by M. Goldie, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, pp. 260-1 (italics mine).

⁷⁴ James Tully has convincingly shown that Locke’s justification of America’s colonial invasion is grounded upon this assumption. Because Amerinds work on their lands without any planification and in the absence of commerce, the occurrence of surplus products is heavily hampered. As a result, English invaders can rightfully take over Amerinds’ territories upon the justification of the avoidance of waste. Leaving lands uncultivated and not properly “improved” breaks the godly duty forbidding the misuse of natural resources. By means of the “improved labour”, in fact, human beings can realize the full potential that God has put in nature. Cfr. J. TULLY, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*, cit., pp. 137-78.

⁷⁵ The theory of improvement is very significant in the 17th century. It supports the cultural mindset of a new class of landowners who, in England, Netherlands, and France, do not live off rents and livelihood provided by other people’s labour, but commit to increasing the output of their properties, by resorting to markets, technologies, and occupation of colonial territories. Cfr. E. MEIKSINS-WOOD, *Property and Liberty*, cit., p. 274: «in its original sense (derived from the Anglo-French *emprouwer*) means to “turn to profit” or to “manage for profit”; and this is clearly the sense in which Locke and his contemporaries used it».

designated by a free choice as opposed to a motive calling for the satisfaction of a need. Because he does not respond to nature – rather he moulds it –, the maker raises his ontological position, thus imitating God's powers over the created world. Following James Tully's rendition of the labour-property nexus⁷⁶, the making process bestows property in the created object to the artful worker. Just as God is the owner of His workmanship, that is, human life⁷⁷, so is the worker proprietor of what he produces. Obviously, in order to be such a producer, one needs to possess mastery of an art or a trade. Creating means making something come into being; it requires a good deal of knowledge. All of this qualifies *work* as a dignified activity introducing new object and giving new life to the “normal” natural cycle. In Locke, although “labour” and “work” are interchangeable linguistically, lemmas such as “workmanship”, “craftsmanship”, “industry”, and “improvement” sprinkle his texts when dealing with creative working activities. The former two recall crafting and artisanal abilities, while the latter two are deployed for the understanding of managerial and entrepreneurial commitment. The product of the former two is significantly an artefact, that of the latter two is an idea, organizational methods of other people's labour, intensification of production, discovery of market opportunities⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ Cfr. J. TULLY, *A Discourse*, cit., p. 117.

⁷⁷ Cfr. J. LOCKE, *Second Treatise*, cit., §6, p. 9: «for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker; all the servants of one sovereign master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business; they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's pleasure».

⁷⁸ It is worth referring, once again, to Meiksins-Wood's rendition of the theory of improvement. She persuasively argues that, in Locke's opinion, landlords ought to be true producers by dedicating themselves to the task of improvement. In this sense, producers would be entrepreneurial owners, as well as, to a small degree, artisans. Cfr. E. MEIKSINS-WOOD, *Liberty and Property*, cit., p. 275: «Locke in his economic works is critical of those landed aristocrats who passively collect rents without improving their land, and he is equally critical of merchants who simply act as middlemen, buying cheap in one market and selling at a higher price in another, or hoarding goods to raise their price, or concerning a market to increase the profits of sale. Both types of proprietor are, in his view, parasitic. They are anything but “producers”. [...] He certainly praises industrious artisans and tradesmen, but his ideal seems to be the great

All of them share in the aspect of knowledge, even if it is differently distributed between them, since, obviously, craftsmanship needs manual expertise, not only the theoretical knowledge of the specific art.

In this regard, the “improved labour” resulting in a convenient life would have never been possible had the «work of the hands» and of the mind not featured the organization of labour, updated manufacturing and agricultural techniques⁷⁹, unravelled unseen market spaces, as well as useful objects to be exported and imported in commerce. First, tradesmen stimulate surplus production in agriculture and manufacturing with the aim of selling commodities and facilitate profit; landowners and masters thrust discipline and division of labour on drudgery labourers to implement efficiency and work harder⁸⁰. Workers may also enjoy the fruits of the “improved labour”, if their salary can afford the purchase of goods. Afterall, «for *want of improving it by labour* [...] a king of a large and fruitful territory there, feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-labourer in *England*»⁸¹. Second, Locke does not conceal that the «right employment of lands» – not just “any employment” – is the «great art of government»⁸² oriented at increasing agricultural fruits.

On these precise grounds, I uphold the idea restating the persistence of the *labour/work* distinction in Locke. On the one hand, the

improving landlord, whom he regards as the ultimate source of wealth in the community».

⁷⁹ Locke’s awareness of how division of labour and technological innovations affect production is well displayed in his report about the Irish Linen manufacture, where he feels the urgency to modernize this sector by introducing the double wheel arch. Likewise, he propounds the institution of working schools to enlarge the number of workers of this sort. Cf. J. LOCKE, *Encouragement of the Irish Linen Manufacture*, in H.B. FOX BOURNE, *The Life of John Locke*, Vol. 2, Harper and Brothers, New York 1876, pp. 363-372.

⁸⁰ Locke expounds the intertwining of labour, production, and trade in his note *Trade* (1674), in ID., *Political Essays*, cit., p. 222: «trade is twofold. (1) Domestic manufacture, whereby is to be understood all labour employed by your people in preparing commodities for the consumption, either of your own people (where it will exclude foreign importation) or of foreigners. (2) Carriage, i.e. navigation and merchandise».

⁸¹ J. LOCKE, *Second Treatise*, cit., §41, p. 26.

⁸² Ivi, §42, p. 26.

Whig author's account of drudgery evokes, in Arendt's words, the *animal laborans*, that is, the individual who is supposed to take care of reproductive functions, incapable of freedom and constrained by necessity. On the other, the craftsman and the improver of production accurately suit the emerging conception of *homo faber*. Such a match is not at all rushed. In offering a concept of *work* deprived of fatigue and necessity, Locke's image of the industrious man – whether he be an artisan or an “improving” landlord – resembles the maker/creator bending the forces of nature and putting in place his free agency⁸³.

On an ethical level, the conclusion to be drawn with ease from this reflection concerns a hierarchy of value. For all the reasons mentioned above, *work* matters more than *labour*, the former being the ultimate source of richness, prosperity, and betterment of associated life, no less than the activity much needed to render the latter efficient. Locke confirms the cultural prejudice with regard to straining occupations akin to that of More, Smith, and Harrington, among others. On a political level, just as the profile roughly sketched out in the previous section, it should be emphasized how the performer's status (namely, class belonging) affect the evaluation of *labour* and *work*.

Ploughmen, reapers, threshers, porters, cobblers, low mechanics, all characterize low-ranked people's jobs in 17th century England. Often prompted by the desire to meet basic needs, they accept drudgery to hold onto a material support, that is, temporary lodging and a salary⁸⁴. Economic hardship of workmen, in effect, clarifies why *labour* per se falls short of surplus production. How could a labourer be tasked with improvement and craftsmanship, if he feels an urge to eat and shelter? So pressured by necessity are labourers, that they are left with no time and intellectual mastery to face any kind of change. Locke's most straightforward awareness on this point is to be found in his economic and “secondary” texts, where a reader can infer what his «social imagination» looks like, to put it in John

⁸³ Cfr. E.J. HUNDERT, *The Making of Homo Faber: John Locke between Ideology and History*, in «Journal of the History of Ideas», XXXIII, 1 (January-February 1972), pp. 3-22.

⁸⁴ Cf. C. HILL, *Pottage for Freeborn Englishman: Attitudes to Wage Labour*, in ID., *Change and Continuity*, cit.

Dunn's words⁸⁵. In *The Conduct of the Understanding*, Locke describes the «ordinary drudgery of a day labourer»⁸⁶ endured by poor farmers in a country village and by «low mechanics» and «porters and cobblers»⁸⁷ in towns. In his depiction, they bend over working tools all day long and so hard that they have no «time and opportunity to raise their thoughts above that»⁸⁸. Only poor people spend their days on toiling a crop field in order to survive, trapped as they are in the grip of necessity. The consumption of their labour extracts something from nature in accordance with its cycles, without generating new goods.

Work consisting in manual artefacts and improvement, instead, constitutes the calling of «the sober and working artisan»⁸⁹ and the «man of business»⁹⁰. In the light of the discussion presented above, it is not surprising that artisans – that is, the anthropological figures of *homo faber* – are listed among the subjects who work. As for the Modern businessman, his identity is suggested by the social class whom Locke regards as the public of his text *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, meant for the education of his friend Mr. Clark's son. Locke pushes forward prescriptions disciplining a young gentleman's habits, with commitment to work, single-mindedness as to the pursuance of a just objective, and respect of duty composing the touchstone of education. In this way, Locke reasons in another essay of his, an adult gentleman will be a «useful member of the commonwealth»⁹¹ who avoids moral debauchery. In a nutshell, Locke is praising those “improving gentlemen”, meaning landlords and owners,

⁸⁵ Cf. J. DUNN, *Individuality and Clientage in the Formation of Locke's Social Imagination*, in ID., *Rethinking Modern Political Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985, pp. 13-33.

⁸⁶ J. LOCKE, *The Conduct of the Understanding*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1881, p. 21.

⁸⁷ Ivi, p. 10.

⁸⁸ ID., *Some Considerations of the Consequence of Lowering the Interest and Raising the Value of Money. In a Letter sent to a Member of Parliament in the year 1691*, in ID., *The Works of John Locke*, Vol. 5, Scientia Verlag, Aalen 1963, p. 71.

⁸⁹ ID., *On Labour*, in ID., *Political Writings*, ed. by D. Wootton, cit., p. 441.

⁹⁰ ID., *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in *The Works of John Locke*, Vol. 9, Scientia Verlag, Aalen 1963, §94, p. 85.

⁹¹ ID. *On Labour*, cit., p. 441.

whose attention deflects from idleness, thus dedicating to production and commerce⁹².

Not only is it worth scrutinizing the impact of status on the type of working activity in Locke, the other way round should be considered too: how *labour* and *work* change performers' social position. As stated earlier, *labour* is consistent with dependence on a salary, thus leading to a personal dependence on another individual, namely a master. The asymmetry occurs because of the disproportion of possessions. The person who does not possess any means of subsistence endures the relationship of power. Locke draws upon the "master-servant" vocabulary to describe this interaction: «a freeman makes himself a servant to another, by selling him, for a certain time, the service he undertakes to do, in exchange for wages he is to receive»⁹³. In addition, from the standpoint of production, if drudgery occupations are aimless when not guided, then labourers of this sort ought to be guided by someone whose improvement and craft point at the general objective⁹⁴. Subjection naturally arises because of

⁹² For an inquiry on Locke's main social reference in terms of class, cfr. E. MEIKSINS-WOOD, *Liberty and Property*, cit., p. 275; J. MARSHALL, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, pp. 264-267; 282: «At this point the suggested intention to appeal significantly to the concerns of the gentry, yeomanry and merchants in Locke's construction of his entire set of arguments is hopefully more persuasive than the suggestion that artisans and tradesman were the central elements of his intended audience; among artisans and tradesmen master craftsmen also seem a more likely audience than "tinkers". The Whiggish gentry were the most obvious desirable audience for arguments that were constructed to be issued at the moment of resistance in 1682 or 1683 in terms of the aid that they could give to further and support any resistance already commenced, in terms of the opposition to resistance that they could raise, and in terms of the probable desire on Locke's part to re-establish government along the lines of the "ancient constitution"».

⁹³ J. LOCKE, *Second Treatise*, cit., §85, p. 45.

⁹⁴ Not accidentally, labourers, women, and children are often depicted by Modern political writers as reasonless people. Their lack of rationality legitimates the subjugation imposed by the head of the family. In the absence of a domination of this kind, they assert, dependents would break loose and act in the name of pure instincts, just as a body with no mind would do. The representation of dependents, therefore, cluster economic purposes and relationships of power. Cfr. L. FORTUNATI, *La ridefinizione della donna* and S. FEDERICI,

labourers' lack of autonomy, while socio-political domination follows the masters' knowledge and overall consciousness of the whole process of production⁹⁵.

For what concerns citizenship, there is no sound reason to believe that Locke, unlike his Whig fellows Sidney and Tyrrell, agrees with a male franchise irrespective of status/class belonging. Locke, at least in his *Treatises*, never tackles the topic explicitly. Thus, any analytical answer to this conundrum must move in the realm of interpretations. Even if critics are not unanimous on this point, I lean towards research reckoning that Locke stands against radical democracy and, therefore, universal franchise. Considering my rendition of Locke's view of dependence and *labour*, the argument for the exclusion of labourers and servants from political rights seems more persuasive⁹⁶. At the very least, it is more compatible with the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, which Locke arguably composes under

L. FORTUNATI, *I senza-ragione: formazione della forza-lavoro e infantilizzazione del bambino*, in S. FEDERICI, L. FORTUNATI, *Il grande Calibano: storia del corpo sociale ribelle nella prima fase del capitale*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 1984, pp. 211-246; pp. 247-277.

⁹⁵ In Arendt's view, work is not so much about the final product as it is about grasping the whole making proceeding. The knowledge of the process, in fact, offers the "bigger picture" to the worker which is essential to implement the stock of goods.

⁹⁶ In this paper, there is no room for a further inquiry on Locke's stance on citizenship, in particular with regard to his philosophical essays. In sum, some scholars such as Kendall, Ashcraft, Tully, Domènech are inclined to assert that Locke favours a male franchise, whereas Dunn leaves the question unanswered. Other scholars such as Macpherson, Marshall, Meiksins-Wood, and Becker ascribe Locke's thinking to the overall intellectual frame of 17th century England, by which they infer that he excludes the poor and labourers (more or less the same subjects at the time) from citizenship rights. In particular, Becker's brilliant article underlines the many textual references to citizens (*freemen*) and to free subjects (*free men*) comprised in the *Second Treatise*, thus shedding light on Locke's distinction between people with political rights and people with judicial protections. See R. Becker, *The Ideological Commitment of John Locke: freemen and servants in the Two Treatises of Government*, in «History of Political Thought», 4 (1992), pp. 631-656. I dwell on the topic in my forthcoming article, *Neither Citizens nor Slaves: The Aporetic Condition of Modern Citizenship*, in «Yearbook of the Helsinki Centre for Intellectual History», 1/2020.

the direction of his patron Lord Shaftesbury⁹⁷. In order to «avoid erecting a numerous democracy»⁹⁸, «there shall be a parliament, consisting of the proprietors, or their deputies, the landgraves and cassiques, and one freeholder out of every precinct, to be chosen by the freeholders of the said precinct respectively»⁹⁹, the author writes. The right to vote is granted to those holding more than 500 acres of property in the case of Parliament and more than 50 acres in the case of precincts¹⁰⁰. In my opinion, Locke's support for the disruption of the 40 schillings franchise in England would appear quite bewildering, bearing in mind what is asserted in this document – and what is stated by the judicial culture of his time.

In the face of universal abstractions, Locke's philosophy of work invites us to detect various concepts in order to unfold the many meanings of work from an ethical and political point of view. Like many of his contemporaries and previous writers, by disregarding a type of performance (*labour*), he aims at marginalizing a political subject, that is, dependents. Vice versa, for the reason that a manual execution is carried out by dependants, he cannot help but downgrade the ethical judgement of *labour*. At the same time, this operation being a zero-sum one, he acclaims *work* and its performers, that is, artisans and “improving landlords/gentlemen”. Traditional citizenship is thus thrown in disarray. Those who *work* are entitled to full membership: “idle” lords must renounce their exclusionary political relevance, whereas “simple” labourers must remain at the margins of society.

4. *Conclusions. A Lesson to follow the «Line of Valorisation»*

Along with economic standards of productivity, an ethical evaluation determines the hierarchy of working activities according to

⁹⁷ For a study of the authorship and content of the document, cfr. D. ARMITRAGE, *John Locke, Carolina, and the “Two Treatises of Government”*, in «Political Theory», XXXIV, 5 (October 2004) pp. 602-627. Although it is very much likely that Locke wrote the *Constitutions*, there is no clear-cut evidence in this regard.

⁹⁸ J. LOCKE, *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, cit., p. 175.

⁹⁹ Ivi, art. LXXI, p. 190.

¹⁰⁰ Cfr. *ibidem*, art. LXXII.

specific principles. For instance, the status of a person, being them a poor, a woman, or a child, predetermines the narrow range of possibilities in terms of drudgery. Furthermore, the subordination inherent to drudgery or reproductive work worsens a person's social rank, by making them dependent. In this light, what is recognized as worthier, because it entails independence and freedom from nature, contributes the most to the overall output. The most lucrative productive function gives further value to work. In the wake of a conceptual terrain set in motion by thinkers over two centuries, in Locke the bound between ethics and economy – or, in other words, worth and value – is to be found in his *labour/work* distinction on the basis of the mentioned principles. Locke allows us to follow the «line of valorisation», as Federica Giardini puts it¹⁰¹, meaning the exact point in which boundaries between what is worthy and what is not is established. Starting with the production/reproduction distinction, but also with the dependence/independence bias, over time the conceptualisation of the upright concept of labour has entailed the denigration of the unworthy one.

The study of Early Modern England teaches how to approach research on labour from a conceptual perspective in present times. By deploying the identity of performers, the type of labour, and its effects on a person's social position as analytical prisms, the appreciation of labour transformations may avoid propounding general statements and assertions. The scrutiny of such a process ought to take into account its particular and actual effects, if we are to tackle certain problems and try finding a solution. In our time, technological innovation and economic measures certainly redefine labour, but they seem to retrace the same lines of devaluation as in the past. Drudgery, dependent, low-skilled, and reproductive labour remain occupations aligned with low, if any, incomes and little social recognition. Not surprisingly, the number of these jobs, rather than disappearing because of automation and 4.0 industry, is rising. After all, setting people to work has long been a strategy of marginalization and discipling through personal, political, and economic

¹⁰¹ F. GIARDINI, *Value and Valorization. Questions for a Feminist Political Economy*, in «*Bodymetrics. La misura dei corpi*», 2 (2018): *Misure/Valore/Eccedenza*, pp. 31-38.

dependence. Waiters, riders of delivery services, employees of fast-foods, cleaning companies workers, to quote but some, often struggle against back-breaking toil, fatiguing schedules, repetitive executions in return for scanty wages. The acceptance of similar work conditions stems from the personal state of economic hardship and lack of material support, by which the need of a salary, earned from any kind of work, becomes unavoidable. As a matter of fact, these jobs are devalued because they pertain to reproduction, that is, they are strenuous executions necessary – in a capitalistic view – for the regeneration of life but not for economic production (or, at least, capitalism astutely conceals their relevance for the production of value). Family housework stands as a straightforward evidence, since, also owing to gender bias, it is not even labelled as proper work. Coupled with low and middle-income office or manual work, reproductive occupations come along with dependence, with all its possible repercussions: mobbing, harassment, blackmail. It is all the more important to understand dependence as a relationship of power, not only within working time (i.e., increase in production and execution of inappropriate work), but also as for its influences on the entire existence (i.e., how it reduces time for political and personal activities, or how one decides to take or not to take action according to their work conditions). This is not true for all people, of course. The poor and lower-class individuals, the young generations, immigrants and non-white people, women and minorities are more likely to be affected by a devaluation of their labour, as well as social hierarchy. Conversely, elites, by holding the majority of high-skilled and independent occupations, preserve their political and economic power over the rest of society.

From a political standpoint, the hiatus between different kinds of labour conduces to a material disproportion as for privileges, chances to make decisions over one's own life, subjective and collective agency in the political sphere. Although the existence of the rule of law and contemporary citizenship rights gives shape to formal equality among citizens, inequality in value and social positions engenders material and symbolic injustices. As long as ethico-economical devaluation of certain occupations and subjective identities will not be overcome in capitalistic societies, actual freedom and equality will be

nothing more than a dream; one which is not at all contemplated by so-called neutral labour innovations and change.