

Work: stories, culture, rights. Some final considerations (Gabriella Valera)

Work/dignity: the discourse on Work Culture and rights hinges on this word combination, which was discussed during the Workshops organised by the International Study and Documentation Centre for Youth Culture on the theme "Work": Histories, cultures, rights".

Dignity = dignitas, value, role, function, quality of a person in a moral space, that is to say in the field of the relationships that human beings establish in the historical world.

Dignity is a recognised value, a (legal) status and a social condition of (legal) subjectivity. Hence, the discourse on dignity (correctly and significantly) did not refer- in reports and discussions- to "human nature". It cannot be reduced to that, except to the sense that the human being is so to say a "legal animal", that is always qualified by a *status* in which value and role intertwine and become a (legal) form of recognition.

The discourses on dignity and values appeared to be interconnected, if values are regarded as relational operators between persons or between persons and things, in a linguistic game whose "work" is an essential term, because it is the set of actions which modify value-relationships.

At the heart of the debate that has developed through the contributions there was the need to verify and understand how *work is conceived as well as regulated*, also by dealing with the cultural history that codified rules and definitions.

What is considered "work"? What are the main features which distinguish it from "non-work"? What is the dividing line between "work" and "free creation"(ludus, play) ? What is the difference between the work capable of producing artefacts that may fall into the category of "technological artefacts" and the "artistic" work? What unites (even for the purpose of recognition in the context of what is "worthy" of being regarded as work) planning and imagination, that is the design, a term which however is only used in some fields of "creative" work?

And again: there is a culture of "project" in a reality that renders evaluation and outcome the key elements of governmental power? What possible comparison can there be, you might wonder, between the different cultures of work, although they are united in the global economy?

Dignity/dignitates: recognition, values and functions; rights, "debts" in the sense of a "debt" co-essential to life itself but also a necessary part of specific statutes of subjectivity (maybe also through relationships of solidarity) embedded in jobs that are "worthy" of being regarded as such and to be included into the system of relationships which are orderly but open to change and to fights for new rights and recognition.

If work dignifies the person, constituting their value and role (dignitas), just because work has the function of generating values, we need a constant cultural-historical reflection on the values, a critical transversal skill that continually revisits the relationship between aesthetic, juridical, economic, ethical values in terms of dialogue and relationship. It is an urgent need in the face of

catastrophic inequalities of the contemporary era, which reflect the extent to which politics and the economy are going downhill.

The slavery involving millions of people has to be regarded paradoxically not so much as a humanitarian catastrophe (during the debate emotionally-charged terms – whose basis is often abused and vague – were avoided) as the expression of a crisis of the entire (Western) legal culture with the disintegration of the relationship between values, dignity and work. The drama of migration (including those within individual countries or regions) was repeatedly restated in the debate as an untamable issue, which fails to be included even in the most sophisticated representation categories of today scientific literature. Without "dignity", without recognition of status, without visibility (the *form* of rights) internal and external migrants wander in an unstructured, uneven, asymmetrical space, without a project, to which economy tries in vain at different scales to give rules and governance.

In conclusion, it can be acknowledged that the task assigned by the study-days on “work” to the participants is the calling into question of the disciplinary traditions which produced a certain culture of value and values a cultural-historical comparative need which allows to acknowledge small-and large scale models of changes or norms of any kind. Despite the apparent simplicity of its wording, this is indeed a great task.