

John J. Deltuvia, Jr.  
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### **Self-Created Professionals:**

#### **Their Inapplicability in General to Modern Professionalism**

Specialized professions, such as those described in The Rule of Saint Benedict, Lenin's "What Is To Be Done?", and Machiavelli's The Prince, do not as a whole present much guidance for the definition of generalized professionalism. They provide some clues as to specific facets of professionalism, but the general thrust of such works are towards situations so specialized as to have values contrary to what modern professionals in most fields are expected to have.

The professions described in the three cited works have a uniqueness that set them apart from most professions. Most professions are activities that are contracted for in some way by the client, and are what are described today as "public accommodations" - generally open for business to all comers. The works' thrust differs from this, as follows:

- the professionals described in the Rule do not work for people, but rather for a deity; further, instead of doing general physical service to the world, as public ministers of a church do, they withdraw themselves into a special community where they keep themselves apart from the world. Finally, they regard their service to their deity as being in the service of humanity generally, but humanity cannot opt out of this service.

- the professionals described in The Prince are rulers of a state. Exercising the sovereignty of a state, acting in the name of all the people of the state, they are freed from the bonds of general morality; this is because they are presumptively invested with the moral judgment and power of all the people of the state, and can make decisions and take actions beyond what is allowable to any singular private person within the state.

- the professionals described in "What Is To Be Done?" are engaged in activities which cannot be contracted for, and which are not expected to continue - as a profession - for more than thirty or forty years. It is a profession within which the expectation of professional suicide (of the profession, not the professionals) exists. Also, as with rulers and monks, the

revolutionaries described are purportedly in the service of all, but neither the individual nor society can readily force them to stop their professional services.

Professionalism, as I see it, is generally the performance of certain works for another by the professional, in such a situation where the contractee must rely on the "professional judgment and ethics" of the contractor. To be a professional, the professional has a societal debt towards his clients similar to that assumed by children in the Confucian system of government, to serve the actual intent of the client even if the client cannot clearly state (due to the client's lack of specialized knowledge which the professional possesses) his wishes.

"Tzu-yu asked about the treatment of parents. The Master said, 'Filial sons' nowadays are people who see to it that their parents get enough to eat. But even dogs and horses are cared for to that extent. If there is no feeling of respect, wherein lies the difference?

"Tzu-hsia asked about the treatment of parents. The Master said, It is the demeanor that is difficult. Filial piety does not consist merely in young people undertaking the hard work, when anything has to be done, or serving their elders first with wine and food. It is something much more than that." (Analects, Book II, nos. 7-8)

However, professionals generally act in relation to general society; the professionals in the cited works are divorced from general society and, with their presumption of their country or the world as their not-necessarily-consenting clients, take the Confucian derivation to an extreme. In these specific cases, they assume the professional-client relationship without being specifically directed to do so, and without any controlling factor over their use of specific knowledge to 'serve' their clients. As Lenin wrote, "...this movement imposes this duty upon us, because the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become a genuine 'class struggle' until it is led by a strong organization of revolutionaries." ("What Is To Be Done", ch.4, section E) The very existence of a movement leads, in Lenin's mind, to an unexpressed and inexpressible need for a leadership to be formed to control the movement.

Because the Rule is specifically limited to the physical control of a voluntary community (leaving aside the issue of "offering of sons" from Chapter 59), this assumption of superior knowledge and service needed by the community had limited effect on physical society. However, in the cases of The Prince and "What Is To Be Done?", this assumption led to a dictatorship: purposely, in the case of The Prince; arguably accidentally, but possibly purposely, in the case of Lenin's writings.

All of this is not to say, however, that the three cited writings did not show examples of professions. Indeed, the very notion of "professional" derives from the Old French 'profes', to

have taken a religious vow (American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd Edition, p. 1446). The men living under the Rule can reasonably be said to have been the first "professionals", from which the modern notion originally derived. As with the definition of the "liberal arts", it may fairly be questioned whether the modern usage of the term "professional" is correct; and whether the more correct usage would be to use "professional" to apply to persons such as those who follow the Rule, or other higher moral, personally sensed, calling (as in the case of a ruler or a revolutionary). However, such a question would likely have no practical bearing on how the term is used; it has been redefined out of relevance to its initial realm, as happens frequently in languages that are not "dead".

What can be learned, however, from these proto-professionals of the Rule, and from the other proto-professionals like them? One thing readily evident in the Rule is the delineation of the various facets defining a professional of the monastery. The layout of these specific sections calls to mind the modern rules laid down by governments for regulation of such professions as medicine and law (see for example the State of New Jersey's Rules of Professional Conduct for the practice of law at <http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/rules/appendices/rpc.htm>). The N. J. Rules are indexed and stated, with a commentary following each one for the further edification of the professional. The Prince, being a philosophical and persuasive treatise instead of a simple rulebook, goes much deeper into commentary than either the Rule or the N. J. Rules; but the basic layout, considering what is needful for the profession being addressed, remains the same. Lenin's work is less detailed; it presumes an accepted definition for professional, with the approximate meaning of "full-time job by a trained person". It does not, however, clearly delineate the training, at least not in the cited piece. The other common thread, of course, is the specialized knowledge and the loyalty to the client. What differentiates the proto-professional from the modern professional is the consent of the client.

In summary, although the Rule of Saint Benedict can reasonably be cited as the foundational work of the definition of professionalism, its individual requirements and general thrust of behavior are inapplicable to modern professionalism. Other "proto-professionalisms", such as those in The Prince and "What Is To Be Done", while approximating the structure and layout of modern professionalism, have situational flaws that make their details inapplicable as well.