



L'uomo artigiano

Richard Sennett , Adriana Bottini (Translator)

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Saper fare bene le cose per il proprio piacere: una regola di vita semplice e rigorosa che ha consentito lo sviluppo di tecniche raffinatissime e la nascita della conoscenza scientifica moderna. Fabbri, orafi, liutai univano conoscenza materiale e abilità manuale: mente e mano funzionavano rinforzandosi, l'una insegnava all'altra e viceversa. Ma non è il solo lavoro manuale a giovare della sinergia tra teoria e pratica. Perché chi sa governare se stesso e dosare autonomia e rispetto delle regole, sostiene Sennett, non solo saprà costruire un meraviglioso violino, un orologio dal meccanismo perfetto o un ponte capace di sfidare i millenni, ma sarà anche un cittadino giusto. L'uomo artigiano racconta di ingegneri romani e orafi rinascimentali, di tipografi parigini del Settecento e fabbriche della Londra industriale, un percorso storico attraverso cui Sennett ricostruisce le linee di faglia che separano tecnica ed espressione. arte e artigianato, creazione e applicazione. Il miglior esempio di "saper fare" moderno? il gruppo che ha creato Linux, gli artigiani della moderna cattedrale informatica.

L'uomo artigiano Details

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From Reader Review L'uomo artigiano for online ebook

Alex Moseley says

Sennett made interesting observations on the life and work of the craftsman, but in the end, I was deeply disappointed. Ultimately, he never really descends from his academic perch to stand at the craftsman's workbench. Rather than acknowledging the deeper significance within the life of the craftsman, Sennett seems to be using the experience of the craftsman as a means to his own end, which has nothing to do with craft or craftsmanship.

In Part III he seems to slip into the conceit that the life and work of the craftsman is impractical for contemporary life, at least from the point of view of the large institution, the "well-crafted organization." This bias toward large institutions, whether informed by his own academic career or some generational attitude, becomes the Achilles heel of his argument, for Sennett considers the craftsman only as an historical artifact with echoes in his modern world, rather than as a living, breathing human being, living with integrity in the present economy.

Cabra says

I admit, I didn't finish this one, either. But the book was well written and easy to read if you were interested in the history of the craftsman and how it has evolved to programming today.

Lauren says

Fantastic and edifying study of a topic that is literally difficult to put into word.

Lars says

This book is a prime example of what philosophical analysis of certain concepts can contribute to your everyday life. I am personally convinced that everyone should read this book at least once in their life.

Sennett carefully examines the idea of 'craftsmanship', dissects the cultural practices behind the concept, and introduces his readers to the mindset behind all skillful action. This book will take you on a journey through a plethora of historical and practical examples that guide you to a deeper understanding of meaningful action. Sennett's idea of 'Craftsmanship' is not simply a history of artisanry, it is a mindset that potentially pertains to any activity. "Craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake." This concept of craftsmanship basically entails the willingness of investing the time to repeat an action time and again while making the effort of reflecting on the countless details this action involves. The examples this book offers range from learning to play a musical instrument to working construction.

Kim Zinkowski says

A+. I need to reread this book

Stefan Szczelkun says

Richard Sennett is one of those eminent intellectuals that is humane and intriguing. His writing is discursive and sometimes verges on rambling, but will pull itself back into some kind of shape just as you are about to give up. He gets away with this because his powers of description and analysis are at times acute to the point of being sublime.

This book is an example of class as 'the elephant in the room'. 326 pages on craftsmanship and no mention of class as such! As a good establishment figure he starts by going back to the classics quoting Aristotle from his *Metaphysics*: "We consider that the architects in every profession are more estimable and know more and are wiser than the artisans, because they know the reasons of the things that are done." (from H. Tredennick, 1933). p.23. He sees the value put on the craftsman going through a series of historical stages: "drudge, slave, worthy Christian, avatar of Enlightenment, doomed relic of preindustrial past..." p.293

Denis Diderot's *Encyclopedie* (1751 - 1772) held the craftsman in high esteem p.88. We learn that this Enlightenment precursor of Wikipedia, subtitled 'a dictionary of the arts and crafts' had a radical political agenda embedded in the process of its production. This was expressed as the way in which work and skill and the use of tools and machines was depicted with a radical empathy towards the workers. The research process was incredibly hands-on with Diderot not only visiting workshops but trying his hand at acquiring manual skills.

Sennet says; "A, perhaps the, fundamental human limit: language is not an adequate "mirror tool" for the physical movements of the human body." p.95. Diderot used illustrations to depict decisive moments that could not easily be described in words. This is fundamental to the gap in knowledge and understanding between the classes - between the literary class and the rest who are embedded within oral culture. Even now with most people doing office jobs that are mediated with words, the recognition of way of knowing and communicating based in a corporeal orality persists.

"Language struggles with depicting physical action, and nowhere is this struggle more evident than in language that tells us what to do." p.179

"Our Enlightenment ancestors believed that Nature furnished humanity at large with the intelligence to do good work; they saw the human being as a capable animal; demands for greater equality depended on this conviction. Modern society tends to emphasize differences in ability; the 'skills economy' constantly seeks to separate smart from stupid people. Our Enlightenment forebears had it right, at least as it concerns craftsmanship. We share in common and in roughly equal measure the raw abilities that allow us to become good craftsmen; it is the motivation and aspiration for quality that takes people along different paths in their lives. Social conditions shape these motivations. " p.241

Possibly his optimism gets to be plain idealistic when, for instance, it is applied to the holy cow of John Ruskin who he sees as exhorting "artisans to reassert their claim on societies respect". Ignoring the context of his Romantic to rightwing agenda. Later he conflates Dewey, Ruskin and Morris who are apparently all saying that:

"Good craftsmanship implies socialism." p.288. Really he could make a better, less romantic case for saying that, but he doesn't, he can only show a weak empathy with this historical echo. A strength of the book may be that his sense of craft encompasses a wider sense of production than that of Morris.

He has much to say about 'the Intelligent Hand' p.149 The key ability is that of prehension... which consists of anticipation, contact, description, refection. (referring to Raymond Tallis) In my study Sense-Think-Act manual dexterity was a basic category. But my desire for a simple ontology may have missed some of the eye/brain/muscle loops that go to make dexterity.

"The full scenario of practice sessions that improve skills is thus: prepare, dwell in mistakes, recover form. In this narrative, fit-for-purpose is achieved rather than preconceived." p.161

"Development of an intelligent hand does show something like a linear progression. The hand needs to be sensitised at the fingertip, enabling it to reason about touch. Once this is achieved problems of coordination can be addressed. Integration of hand, wrist and forearm then teaches lessons of minimum force. Once these are learned, the hand can work with the eye to look ahead physically, to anticipate and so to sustain concentration." p.238

He recognises that the most subtle mental abilities like intuition, are part of craft ability.

"How intuitive leaps happen.... They occur in 4 stages." p.209

1. a sense that what isn't could come into being. reformating...
2. establish adjacency. bring stuff together.
3. comparison by 'dredging up tacit knowledge'. surprises appear.
4. recognition of a practical result - with aura/ wonder. brought back down to earth.

So here he implies that the intellectual might also be a 'craft' worker. If she can be freed from the historical class baggage of the literati, the intellectual might be able to return to the working class. The radical difficulties of this argument in which the hand is no longer the sensual appendage of discovery are not explored. What is then 'stuff'? and how is intuition 'brought down to earth'? He suggests some answers earlier when he talks of being 'aroused' by materials - in three ways: altering, marking and identifying them with ourselves (p.144). Also a kind of intellectual that argues from the empirical.

The idea is easier to develop if an investigative tool is involved: "Three tools, the telescope, the microscope and the scalpel - challenged the medieval view of humanities place in the world" p.195

"Closer to modern times.... the amateur's foraging curiosity seeming of less value than specialised knowledge. Yet the expert has few strong rituals to bind him or her to the larger community or indeed to colleagues." p.246

We have to remember that Sennett's prime manual craft is that of a musician. His early potential in this direction having been cruelly ended by an injury.

He even applies his ideas of craft to social organisation.

"The well-crafted organisation will focus on whole human beings in time, it will encourage mentoring, and it will demand standards framed in language that any person in the organisation might understand." p.249.

"The capacities of our bodies to shape physical things are the same capacities we draw on in social relations." p290

Is this could be taken as a blueprint for a workers control, worker management. But left hanging as it is by Sennett it can be ammunition for the libertarian management froth.

Defining craft ability

He compares the design obsession of Ludwig Wittgenstein as architect with his more pragmatic contemporary Adolf Loos... p.262

From this he deduces some guidelines:

- * "The good craftsman knows the importance of the sketch- that is, not knowing quite what you are about when you begin."
- * See that "positive value on contingency and constraint" problems can be reformulated as opportunities.
- * Recognise that there may be a 'measure of incompleteness' in the object.

* Avoid perfectionism!

* Know when to stop.

He makes the relation of craftwork being close to play. Improvising to establish consistent, tested collaboratively agreed rules...

"play is a school for learning to increase complexity." p.272

"Three basic abilities are the foundation of craftsmanship." p. 277

1. 'make a matter concrete' - focus with eye of fingertip

2. explore its qualities.

3. 'expand its sense' 'open up a problem' being always open to do things differently. Adapting from other domains of skill...

Avoiding class

He does back flips to avoid talking about class... in spite of this he says things that are useful in understanding class oppression:

"The innate abilities on which craftsmanship is based are not exceptional; they are shared in common by the large majority of human beings in roughly equal measure." p.277. "...the basic capabilities to specify, question, and open up. These are widely diffused amongst human beings rather than restricted to an elite." p.291

He provides a good summary and critique of IQ intelligence testing as completely contrary to the skills required by his very expanded concept of craft work. One of the main characters in the development of IQ testing was the leading eugenicist, Lewis Terman who developed the original model of Binet and Simon c1915 "wanted to identify the exceptionally stupid and to sterilise them". p.281. Of course IQ was successful in becoming the dominant concept of what intelligence was.

Sennett reckons the best critic of IQ is Howard Gardner, who added touch, movement, hearing and the ability to communicate with others, and to be self-reflective, to give an expanded concept of intelligence. Intelligence is seen as more embodied, more complex and diverse than the unitary figure represented by the IQ score.

"Rather than mental resource, the craftsman is more likely to be threatened by emotional mismanagement of the drive to do good work; society can collude in that mismanagement or seek to rectify it. These are the reasons why I've argued ... that motivation is a more important issue than talent in consummating craftsmanship." p. 285

Here he seems to slide away from a more radical conclusion. What about his own 'The Hidden Injuries of Class' (1993)? It is those hurts that often give rise to the emotional mismanagement of our selves. This cannot be reduced to motivation although that is central.

My conclusion:

He is a reformer rather than a revolutionary... he seems not to have the courage of his convictions - and as a governor at LSE perhaps he is now too embedded in the academic establishment to put his head above the parapet. "In a modern economy, dislocation is a permanent fact." p.268 His idea that everyone can govern themselves and so become good 'citizens' p.269 sounds a bit closer to David Cameron than anarcho syndicalism.

On the other hand: he most radical moment is his proposal that:

"Nearly everyone can become a good craftsman." p.268

"Modern society sorts people along a strict gradient of ability. The better you are at something, the fewer of you there are." "Craftsmanship doesn't fit into this framework.... the rhythm of routine in craftsmanship draws on childhood experiences of play, and almost all children can play well. The dialogue with materials in craftsmanship is unlikely to be charted by intelligence tests; again, most people are able to reason well

about their physical sensations." p.268

He appeals for the dignity of manual work even if he has to do it with classic allusions.

"The mis-shapen figure of Hephaestus is meant to suggest that material domestic civilisation will never satisfy the desire for glory; that is his defect." p292. Sennett's last word is that he is "the most dignified person we can become." p296

Postscript 9-11-12

"Looking back to their origins in the late 18th century as a summary of the key elements of a rounded education, the Three Rs referred to "reading, wroughting and arithmetic" – ie, literacy, numeracy and making things. "Writing" came in as a replacement under the Victorians as a reflection of the primacy of the written word, and there has been a continuing tendency to ghettoise the arts as either a vocational activity or a hobby."

C.Frayling 8 Nov 2012 letter in London Evening Standard

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NB I read a Penguin version of 'The Craftsman' that was given away free with the Times newspaper c the end of 2009.

Janie says

So happy to find a book that articulates the layered significance of the craftsman throughout history, and the many ways an individual crafts work in his daily life. Intelligently written and more far-reaching than I'd imagined, encompassing economics, cultural history, and corporate politics into its search for what it means to be a craftsman in contemporary society. Sennet is sociologist, and it shows. His writing doesn't always flow like it might if he were more a writer who simply did research on his subject, it is worth the effort to get through the sometimes choppy writing.

Nelson Zagalo says

This is a masterpiece work on the philosophy of craft education. Sennett goes beyond current knowledge on creativity, art, play, education value and tacit knowledge. This book is a manifesto, full of knowledge, pragmatic knowledge here theorised for the first time.

You can find a longer review on my blog (in portuguese): <https://virtual-illusion.blogspot.pt/...>

Trevor says

I wasn't going to review this book – not because it isn't very interesting and well worth reading, but in some

ways it like a really smart version of Drive by Dan Pink. That is, humans like autonomy and developing mastery and yet most of modern work denies people access to exactly that. The other bits that are included here and aren't in Pink's version have to do with why (that is, Marx and the alienation of labour being the key to understanding capitalism) and the problems of teaching things to apprentices when much knowledge is tacit and therefore hard for us to even know that we know – and if we struggle to know we know it, how do we teach it? To which the answer is – by the way – teach it and you'll soon see which parts of your knowledge are tacit.

There is a good little video on Dan Pink's Drive you can watch here. It has cartoons - how could it be better? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAP...>

Anyway, then at the end of the book he talks about American Pragmatism (Instrumentalism as the leftish American tradition of Dewey and James). And I've always had an uneasy relationship with this school of thought. Don't get me wrong – Dewey says some really interesting things about education and he demands to be read and he provides one of the best defences for education being about more than the acquisition of 'skills' that I think it is probably possible to give. Still, there is something there is that doesn't love pragmatism and reading this book I spent a lot of time worrying about what that was.

If you haven't guessed yet, this isn't going to be much of a review of this book – but rather my thinking through issues this book has raised for me. I really recommend you read this – the stuff about architecture is worth the price of the book alone – but there are larger fish and they all need frying.

Marx says that the major contradiction of our age is between the social nature of production and the private means of accumulation. Marx didn't spend an awful lot of time talking about what work would look like in his ideal society – there is a vague thing were he talks about fishing in the morning and writing philosophy in the evening, but as a system for organising production it doesn't sound nearly as complete as his criticism of capitalism was. In this book Sennett says Marx was fond of the craftsman's workshops – people learning to do and losing themselves in the doing. As I said before, capitalism is opposed to this as capitalism is obsessed with time and consistency of output – craftsmen (I want to use a gender neutral term here and it is annoying me more than I can tell you that I'm not – but it is the word the author uses and I'm going to stick with it for that reason) craftsmen on the other hand produce things that take into account the material form of the material they are made from. As the creators of products they are not after 'perfection' in the sense of an unblemished ideal, but rather they want to leave something of themselves (and of the imperfections of the material itself) still in the finished product.

So, capitalism closes down contingency, craftsmanship opens it up.

Sennett's focus here, in seeing the craftsman as a kind of solution to the problems of today, is interesting in much the same way that Maslow's hierarchy of needs is interesting. That is, it starts with the social (craftsmen can only be craftsmen in the sense that they are responding to social needs – something Sennett makes clear when he says that even Stradivari's apprentices felt forced to leave his workshop because of 'cutbacks' due to not enough sales of violins). A craftsman responds to social needs, it is just that they do this in a highly individual way – self-actualising, Maslow would say. Maslow's hierarch runs from the social, you need to have clothing, food, sex and so on before you can hope to have the higher human capabilities – and these higher capabilities are all deeply individual – self-actualisation doesn't include the word 'self' for no reason. And here in lies my problem, for me at least.

There is a part of me that believes that there is not a time when I feel I can truly be 'myself' outside of the social. The point of life is not to climb to the top of a pyramid of self-actualisation – climb to the top of the mountain like that painting that is on every other of Nietzsche's books, the one with the 19th century gentleman with his back to us looking out from the peak of the mountain he has just climbed. The point of life isn't nearly so lonely. It seems the hardest thing for us to accept is that we are essentially social animals

and therefore we can only reach our highest realisation within a community, and within a learning community not least.

Now, I say that, but as someone who is rather introverted (even if I don't find that term terribly useful) and somewhat shy in real life, don't think for a minute I don't see the paradox here. Someone who spends quite so much time with books as I do doesn't do so out of an excess of gregariousness. But my debt to society – to community – is large in all senses and it is a debt I never understate or underestimate. My life is made possible in all ways by society – and not just in being clothed and fed (two things I couldn't do alone, and neither could any of us), but in all senses. I never self-actualise – I always actualise in relation to others, either with their help or in my own struggle against their views. Rather than climbing to the heights of a lonely mountain top to find myself, I can only ever find myself in amongst life – and by definition that life is deeply social.

The problem is I've no idea what to make of all this in terms of the themes of this book. This book is basically arguing that the answer to many of the problems of the world is a return to craftsmanship - and a form of craftsmanship that appears highly 'individualistic' to me. And look, I really do get it – this idea also matches so many other things I believe – the idea of being lost in the flow of an activity, of repetition as a pathway to fully understanding, of learning something by heart for the pleasure of having something you love in your heart, of being present in the moment, and this, and so much more. Does any or all of this require a recognition of the 'I' being dependent on the 'thou'? I'm not sure it does - and that bothers me.

One thing is certain. Capitalism, by its very nature, homogenises humanity while at the same time stressing the individual as the only reality (remember Thatcher saying there is no such thing as society?). But, as Bauman says, the individual under capitalism is 'de jure' rather than 'de facto' – that is, a legal right to be an individual undermined by the facts on the ground of people's actual lives. The individual under capitalism is certainly not the worker - that is, those who have zero control over how they work or what they work on. They are cogs in a machine, not individuals.

But then, how do you retain the social nature of work but not the notion of the worker being an impersonal 'cog in a machine'? I can't pretend to know the answer to these questions, by the way. There is a discussion here about people working together to make Wikipedia and Linux - and perhaps there is that - but I'm not sure this is quite the same thing as the system of apprenticeship Sennett seems to be endorsing. I did warn you this wouldn't be so much a review as a thinking through of things. These are things that are increasingly annoying me. Questions that have gotten under my skin – but unfortunately they are not questions I have ready answers for. Sorry about that.

Jeff Van Campen says

I found it impossible to read this book and not think about my own work as a product manager. As I read Sennett's descriptions of goldsmiths, glassblowers and Linux programmers, I examined the way I work. I asked myself how my work is similar to theirs. I questioned the way I work. I looked in the work of others for ways to improve my own.

Each chapter discusses a different aspect craftsmen and craftsmanship. Sennet draws on philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, science and history to examine each of the aspects. Each chapter asks a key question and sets out to find the answer. Sennet describes himself as a "philosophically-minded writer." While the writing is certainly philosophically driven, Sennet has a keen sense of narrative. In seeking out an answer he delves deep and moves across disciplines with grace, but also illustrates each of his points with a

story from the history of a number of different crafts.

This book left me with a number threads that I want to follow further on my own. Although Sennet drew his own conclusions about the nature of craftsmanship, he's left his readers with a number of useful tools to start examining and improving their own craft.

Whitney says

interesting exploration of craft (including related to architecture) but SERIOUSLY flawed. Remarkably poor editing - typos, misspellings, you name it. No bibliography and poor footnotes. Isn't there an irony in a book about craft being so poorly crafted.

Patrick says

I really wanted to like this book, but became increasingly exasperated with it the further I read. I did finish it, but only so that my criticism would be complete.

Anyone with much knowledge of the sciences will be irritated by Sennett's tenuous grasp of basic scientific principles. Any engineer will be exasperated with his conflicting positions between the craft of creating and perfecting machinery, the design and use of tools as part of craft, and the romantic distaste for replacing handwork with a tool that produces more precise and regular results. The idea that machines are in some way antithetical to craft is absurd. Machines mostly replace workers doing dull, repetitive, and often dangerous work. This may be a source of short-term upset among workers - especially those disinclined to learn new skills. However it is often the "craftsman" striving for practical excellence (a.k.a. engineering) who usually conceives of better tools. When new, these tools are a threat to established patterns of labor. A decade to a generation later, these same tools redefine craft and skilled labor.

Moreover, any craftsperson will be dismayed with Sennett's disregard for actual craft, in the course of his analysis of the social and political structures of "craftsmen." The author seems to little understand the joy of crafts that are truly physical (woodworking, pottery, blacksmithing, plumbing). His closest experience is writing, but a mental craft is far different from a physical one. Coders may share philosophy, social structure, etc., with handworkers, but they differ in fundamental and significant ways. Coding does not teach you about how the physical world works. Woodworking does. I speak from experience as a woodworker, blacksmith, and coder.

What craftspeople in code and wood share is an attitude that values work well done, that values *producing* rather than only *consuming*, and that values *process* over (or at least in equal measure to) *result*. I do not sense that Sennett really grasps the importance of this.

Working with your hands teaches you to think in 3-space, to see a result in your mind, and to plan a way to that goal. There is less romance than practical good here. Every child should be taught some physical craft, and perhaps some mental craft as well, to realize the benefits from each activity. Sennett apparently missed this.

Sennett claims as his central theses:

The political: "good craftsmanship implies socialism," despite the fact that almost none of his examples or arguments lead us to this conclusion. It is just his personal conviction/faith.

And the sociological: "...the craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others." The inverse could be argued just as easily (and perhaps more convincingly). OTOH, many craftsmen (e.g., famously, surgeons, and many coders) are social maladepts. Another "thesis" that Sennett can at best claim to have *explored*, but not to have coherently argued or even supported.

Unless you find these ideas particularly compelling, and enjoy extended non-sequiturs and sociopolitical meandering, do not bother with this book.

Pablo says

El como y el por qué de la artesanía. Lo que ha significado la artesanía y el artesano a través de la historia. La relación de la artesanía con el entorno y las personas. En definitiva, un interesante tratado de cómo ver la vida y como relacionarse con todo lo que tenemos a nuestro alrededor con la visión de un artesano.

Jeffrey says

First of all, it is exceedingly unfair to write a short, impressionistic review for a book that is meant to be the first of a three volume critique and analysis on material culture intended by Richard Sennett.

But being one of the rare books out there--and I can remember only Donald Schon's 'The Reflective Practitioner' as the last word out there outlining an epistemology of practice--Sennett's new book still warrants a few exciting words despite the caveat as stated. And like Schon's 'The Reflective Practitioner' with a lasting appeal precisely because it straddles multiple domains of practice such as design, management and education to name three, Sennett's work should also share this boon of longevity if synthetic works of such records are any form of indication.

Truly, Sennett's total project is an ambitious one; and 'The Craftsman' here represents a powerful but nevertheless, a perplexing beginning to his critique of material culture. Why? While Sennett's powerful introductory delineation of a specific type of humanity in practice (i.e. the craftsman) is as comprehensive as it gets, but it may also strike many readers as a diffused analysis: an account that straddles one too many lessons to get the point across; an account that constantly runs the risk of losing its focus.

For example, Sennett begins heroically through the narrative of meeting Arendt (which I thought is Sennett's ultimate strength as a writer, thinker and philosopher of the concrete) which then tacitly promises to continue from the premise in Arendt's Human Condition on the dangers of design and technology. But the book then took a turn into an account of skill development, which only serve to further constrained the narrative into a more developed account on the various aspects and contentions of skills. But in the last chapter Sennett returns to his initial premise on the ethics of design via craftsmanship, thus showing that the ride between introduction and conclusion has been a less than focused one. But to the extent that this entire book can be seen as the grand introduction to an upcoming epic of critical commentary, then this criticism founded more

on coherent argumentation and less on a journey of musing should also realistically be a less trenchant one.

I found the book to be as uplifting as it was in parts, frustrating. On one end, the uplifting portions speak to absolve all who engage in some form of practical craftsmanship from the Arendtian charge of being engaged in mindless labor. On the other end, they inspire nearly all human activities and actions charged with the same Arendtian powers of natality to take on the virtues of craftsmanship. It is as if Sennett is interested to level the great disparity set between the mind and the hands instituted by the long line of thinkers from Plato to Arendt in the midst of the great nihilism of Tradesmanship today. If there is any covert political message that can rescue the current crisis of 'getting by' or 'value relativism', then Sennett here may possess the promise of a good chance.

But the frustrating segments are quite something else. Fundamentally, the frustrating bit is Sennett's reluctance to outline and provide the premise where the intrinsic, non-teleological and practical virtues but also merits of craftsmanship are found to be relevant. A reader who is familiar with Sennett's previous work may have some clues to this reluctant and tacit premise--a society weaned on mindless commercialism, mindless pace and crass improvisations to the ultimate detriment of the society as a whole--that the values argued in this book seem relatively powerful and appropriate today. Thus if this was a piece of political philosophy masquerading as an epistemological account of craftsmanship in practice--which I read as it is--then it is also an unwilling one.

Another frustrating bit comes from the uneven juxtaposition of Sennett's substantiations on his claims. Overall, Sennett furnished excellent examples to make his claims both clear and strong. But there are lesser notes in his symphony as well. For example, Sennett decisively claimed that it is easier to retrain a plumber than a salesman to become a computer programmer given the plumber's material focus and craft habits. While it is less clear that Sennett is exhorting a society where plumbers are given the same consideration as philosophers, it is however quite clear that Sennett believes that the ideal type salesman are certainly less than a plumber as far as retraining as re-skilling goes. As a reader who has a fair share of experience with plumbers and salesmen (and saleswomen) in a society that values philosophy over plumbing but which also worships commercialism, I find this claim somewhat specious.

In the end, it is Sennett's quilting that earned the extra *star* in this book review. Sennett's comprehensive synthetic quilting of bits from computer programming, to violin making, to architectural practice stitched with snippets of his own insightful social commentary of how bad planning practices make unlivable cities, and the devaluation of human beings in new capitalism all make this book a rewarding tract for unbridled musings across historical time and intellectual space.

For readers who want to know more about the theme of craftsmanship--a certainly underappreciated theme neglected by those who think and ironically despised by those who do--then this book is a real gem. But for a reader who seeks a deliberate piece of political philosophy improvised as an epistemological account of practice in a leveled world of commercialism, then this book, at least for now, still falls short of this wish.

Norma says

Aunque se trata de un autor al que me siento muy cercana, y valoro mucho su concepción de la subjetividad ligada, es más, siendo enteramente corporal, creo que la defensa del trabajo por el trabajo mismo es muy complicada.

Que Sennett detecta muy bien la crisis del individuo moderno es innegable y me parece, parte fundamental de sus aportaciones, que si bien no marcan la ruta del cambio (como los que se llaman a sí mismos marxistas, pero son malos marxistas) muestran con claridad las contradicciones que engendra la forma de organización

social que nos domina.

Es muy valioso en este libro el modo en que conecta directamente al trabajo con la ciudadanía, pero no supera el punto más importante de nuestro mundo: organizado sobre la búsqueda del plusvalor, el trabajo social tiene un significado enteramente distinto del trabajo artesanal (que no medieval, artesanal de la transición del medioevo a la afirmación de sí del hombre del renacimiento). Ahí no repara, porque aunque haga una crítica directa y atinada de su maestra Hanna Arendt, como ella muestra un rechazo al marxismo total.

A todos, no sólo filósofos, les puede ser muy provechosa esta lectura, motiva a observar nuestra propia composición física. Es un hermoso libro, de eso no hay duda.

Peter Green says

fundamental and profound issues addressed in an overly wordy and contorted way

Brent Wilson says

This book is packed with interesting and provocative ideas for me as an instructional designer. Its focus is on the manual crafts, but I'm thinking about the issue of craft more generally and how it competes with general processes and technologies that threaten to overwhelm education. Is education something to be mass-designed and delivered via automatic tools and program - or a craft to be custom-designed and delivered by a pro? The answer is in between somewhere, and I'm exploring how both technology and craft and co-exist productively.

Sennett gives a Marxian interpretation to craft and its history - which again is valuable to me, since I am new to cultural studies, but can see its value to my interests. His writing style can be dense and challenging, but every word is there for a reason - it's part of his "craft" mentality!

This is the book I have and digested, but need to talk over with other people to get the full value.

Jonathan Norton says

The sort of book in which John Milton is referred to as "the poet John Milton".

Weaverannie says

Bij het lezen van veel boeken heb je het gevoel, dat je bepaalde zinnen moet opschrijven in een citatenboekje. Je bent het hartgrondig eens of oneens met het geschrevene, maar in elk geval wil je het onthouden.

Bij dit boek kan je aan de gang blijven. En in de meeste gevallen was ik het eens met de schrijver.

Hij breekt een lans voor de vakman, die in de moderne tijd steeds minder gewaardeerd wordt. Vaak kijken mensen zelfs neer op handwerk. Sennett geeft aan, wat nodig is voor goed vakmanschap. Daarvoor gaat hij terug in de geschiedenis, te beginnen met de oude Grieken en Romeinen, tot aan de huidige tijd. Het aantal namen en voorbeelden duizelen de lezer soms, maar toch gaf het geheel een goed inzicht in deze

geschiedenis.

Wat me aansprak was de genoemde noodzaak iets goed te leren. Handwerk doe je niet zo maar 'even'.

Vaardigheden moeten geleerd en langzaam ingeslepen worden. Hoe groter die vaardigheden worden, hoe beter het afgeleverde werk wordt. Tegenwoordig denkt men, dat alles snel moet gaan en kennis kan ook tot ons komen via de computer. Een misvatting.

Het voert te ver om alles uit dit boek te vermelden, maar ik vond het lezen ervan heel inspirerend.

Esteban says

Un historiador mencionaba que hasta la aparición de *The Principles of Scientific Management* de Taylor nadie había considerado al trabajo en sí mismo como algo digno de estudio. Una provocación, sí, pero no tan gratuita. Casi todas las aproximaciones políticas y sociológicas del trabajo en realidad estudian la forma en que se lo organiza institucionalmente, no al gesto técnico en sí. *El artesano* de Sennett viene a demostrar que uno puede excluir esas consideraciones y seguir manteniéndose a una distancia máxima de cualquier aspecto físico del trabajo. Su intención es reunir bajo una misma figura arquetípica tareas tan distintas como las de un carpintero, una madre, un programador y un arquitecto. Las oposiciones que pueden producir alguna incomodidad, como la de *animal laborans – homo faber*, de su maestra Hannah Arendt, son minimizadas y encubiertas. La diferencia entre trabajo físico y trabajo intelectual prácticamente no le merece ningún comentario. Cuando Sennett acude a casos históricos, generalmente apela a experiencias de trabajadores que, además de estar en los déciles superiores, operan líneas de producción, quedando por fuera de cualquier definición admisible de artesanado. No es casualidad que el taylorismo ni siquiera sea mencionado. El objetivo de este ensayo es borrar distinciones y tranquilizar al lector. Hacia el final Sennett reivindica un socialismo cuyo carácter político radicaría *de alguna forma* en una ética de trabajo comprometida con la calidad. Para entonces cualquier vestigio de lógica o de contrastación empírica ya había quedado sepultado vivo algunos cientos de páginas atrás.
