

Initial Essay: Defining Profession.

Profession: The Crucible of Talent.

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This essay is an attempt to define, get to the bottom of a term, — profession. On the surface it is easily found a straightforward definition of the term: An occupation or career; An occupation that requires considerable training and specialized study; The body of qualified persons in an occupation or field. (“Profession,” The American Heritage Dictionary entry).

Definition above is insufficient, as it barely scratches the meaning of what we put into calling someone a professional. The definition hints at only 3 aspects of the term, work, career, and qualification. Is a highly qualified storage worker a professional? Is violoncelist, Paganini, a professional? Yes or no, what are the differences and similarities between these individuals? Such inquiries require a deeper and clearer definition of the term, finding the hidden hedges of the word, revealing its nature.

Professional, — traces its roots from medieval guilds as a real, quantifiable title. In this essay, professional will be proven to be an abstract term that has no feasible physical representation anymore. Given that profession is a metaphorical concept, it can be only defined through other concepts and prototypes. The dictionary definition already suggested some concepts above. However, all of these concepts used to describe professions are also abstract. Arguably except for work, work has some physical hedges and can be measured. This historical and physical bubble keeps remains and ashes of potential physical representation of the concept.

Blessing of duty.

First stop in this journey happens in medieval society, particularly in urban developed areas where craftsmanship was prospering. Developments in society, economy and politics create demand for skilled labor. Particularly skilled labor, doctors for God-Chosen kings, artist's that are chosen by God to depict angels. Not just the best in terms of qualification, rather individuals who can be trusted to lay their hands on the most sacred objects. Those who were viewed as being chosen to carry their duty. This concept is fundamental to future calvinist researchers, suggesting that living acceptably to God lies not in monastic asceticism, but through fulfillment of obligations imposed on individual based on their position in the world.

Such blessed individuals would be hard to find and determine, lacking 21st-century measuring technologies, it would be an expert task to correctly identify such individuals. A single expert could still fail or give a false positive assessment, and the life of a King would be at risk. The concept of Guild emerges, the association of craftsmen of all kinds. Collegial assessments of the prospects to maximize accuracy of potential talent emerges.

However, passing through the guild was notoriously rigorous for many reasons. Guild's primary objective was to ensure quality of their own products and compete against what they considered illicit practices. Often criticized for slowing down economic growth. It is the guild's secondary objective, to pass skills in society through generations, it was more on the shoulders of the apprentice himself. The entire idea of vocationality of an apprentice emerges through his skills, which he must harness and perfect against many challenges. Including significant financial

gifts to guilds decision makers. And after all the pains, if the apprentice produced his first masterpiece, he will be “professioned”, - to be publicly recognized as a master craftsman (“profession | Etymology of profession by etymonline”).

As Guild’s have lost near to all presence, so this tangible definition loses its grounds. Professionals are no longer determined and categorically determined by a specific authority. Historical origins are left on the bottom of history, but the profession concept still has requirements for virtuosity, responsibility and vocation. Virtuosity that may be obtained through many different sources.

## The Devil's Violin.

Virtuosity is a fundamental part of being a professional, one cannot be called professional if his skills are not harnessed to the absolute limit of excellence. And even there, a professional must continue to sharpen his skills; At least because of human physiology limitations, once we stop practicing, we forget.

Niccolo Paganini, one of the greatest violins of the world, a great example of a professional with great volume of virtuosity. Also known as “The Devil’s Violinist”. It was believed that he made a pact with the Devil, in order to acquire his masterity. But his unique skills were in his biologically abnormal finger length. Allowing to reach 3 octaves at once and perform as no one could before. Some individuals can be predisposed to masterity through easier access to masterity, but not necessarily to professionalism.

Even the absolute best of the world at the time can be refused burial by the Catholic Church (Sperati and Felisati); Especially when society suspects a devil himself as the origin of masterity. This is evidence that professionals are inherently part of a societal perception. Professional title without proper guild backing is only enforced by public opinion. The public had stripped the master of his dignity and professional title. Proving those are distinct, the Catholic Church would not be able to dispute Paganini masterity, but professional titles were revoked with ease.

This raises the point of professionalism being publicly acknowledged. In continuation of the historical origin of taking an oath, this action must be respected by society. This is why professionals are in a constant race for sharpening his skills. Once a professional stops his craft, they risk losing their title. What is left is their products and tools. Later about products, as professionals make them for society.

Taking a closer look at these instruments reveal their nature, Stradivarius violin, Leica camera, professional chisels. Professional-grade tool, defined by commercial manufacturer,- is one that will work long and hard for its master. Those tools are paired with their masters, their glory is unseen to the regular person. Those tools enable professionals to create, the deep connection between them is crucial. They simply don't work in other hands, at least not to the professional extent. Strip the professional of their title or their tools and they would never be able to create their product.

Meta-product.

And so on the deepest level found the purpose of the profession, its product. Hannah Arendt in her *Human Condition* poetically puzzles the reader with this phrase. “Work and its product, the human artifact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of mortal life and the fleeting character of human time.”. What is the product of the professional, what is this artifact going beyond our mortality?

We can immediately pick up lasting quality, she implies that this is definitely a part of a professional craftsman product. And it is true, any product of professionals cannot immediately lose its purpose or value. Society has created a separate institution in support of professionals and masters, museums. Museums collect masterpieces, mostly done by professionals, in order to preserve and showcase what an individual is capable of and reshape the world according to his view generations after them. Masters that are not professionals are usually rejected, as it is not a direct duty of the museum to recognize art. These masters without professional qualities can be considered rebellious art and are usually viewed as less valuable and lasting. A sprout of skillful work growing against societal concrete. Such rebellious artists may become professionals if they devote themselves to rebellion, shredding their own works to create more chaos as an example.

Sometimes professional work lives only in a single physical moment. Because its scope is to create experience. A song performed by an amateur would be immediately forgotten, unless it stood out for reasons outside the concept of music and its valuable characteristics. Music performed by a professional is consistent in creating a lasting experience. It can invoke

emotional responses to the target audience with precision. This can extend quite far, a mass-produced fast food french fry for example. Made by a professional would be almost identical to a regular one. But different in creating lasting experience compared to standard french fry. How this french fry was made better by a professional is a mystique between professional and his tools.

Quality of products made by professional shape, or bends the world around them. To allow them to push society further, society must accommodate their progress. Even a mass-produced French fry made by a professional, may be so graciously executed, that it will raise the consumer's expectations, altering the culinary landscape.



## Conclusion

From the initial definition through career, work and qualification; we have dived quite far, removing corrosion from obsolete hedges of historical origins. Bringing to the surface more refined concepts, virtuosity, vocation, social recognition, professional tools and products. These concepts do not contradict previous definitions but rather give us more specifics to the term. To be recognized as a professional one must possess these qualities. Professionalism is not just a skill but a social perception that gives individuals a title of profession. Based on his talents, devotion to his craft and products he delivers. Paganini, with all his masterity, shows how fragile this status can be. He had failed societal norms and was considered rather a rebel and so his works were worth less among the greatest professionals. Showcasing how the title of professional can be stripped away by a strong current of societal pressure.

Lastly, this is only our starting point for further exploration. Specifically professional tools and studying the deeper role of professionals in society. At the deepest level of professionalism lies not just the master, but the world they create. Their tools are extensions of their will, their products ripple through history forming the ancient coral reef of our society. If we wish to understand society, we must understand those who build it—the professionals who define our age.

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