

**Francesco Dandolo, *Luigi Einaudi e l'associazionismo economico nell'Italia liberale*, Bancaria Editrice, Rome, 2019, pp. 256.**

Francesco Dandolo's new work, part of a broader research project promoted by the Luigi Einaudi Institute and ABIServizi-Bancaria Editrice, analyses the themes of Luigi Einaudi's thought, concentrating, in this volume, on the dense network of organizations and intermediate bodies that in a "healthy society" are interposed between the individual and the State (p. 8). Specifically, Dandolo examines Einaudi's ideas with regard to the "leagues" of workers and entrepreneurs, forerunners of today's trade unions and business associations. According to Einaudi, such "leagues" had to be "voluntary and non-compulsory associations" able to negotiate agreements "without State mediation of any kind" (p. 8). Einaudi therefore identified these actors as providing an essential linkage between the citizen and the State and made them the subject of deep-going inquiry in his early years of activity as an economist (1899-1919). The volume, in addition to Dandolo's study of Einaudi's theories, presents an essay on the historical context by Filippo Sbrana and Valerio Torreggiani that investigates the evolution of movements of association from Italian unification to beginning of the 1920s and offers a "review of historical studies of entrepreneurial associations, with special attention to the relationship between historiography and archival sources" (p. 9). This historical literature was truly vast: the bibliography comprises more than two hundred works and constitutes the "significant part of the work" (p. 115n). Underlining the importance of this historiographical survey conducted Sbrana and Torreggiani, the final bibliography is divided into four main areas: agriculture, industry, credit

and general studies. The methodology used in the structure of the essay is equally important: it constitutes a comprehensive, systematic and synthetic reading of themes, including the phenomenon of entrepreneurial associations, generally treated separately in the literature, with rare exceptions (in particular Luigi De Rosa).

The book under review is divided into two distinct but logically interconnected parts, offering the reader both a detailed treatment of the thinking of the “young Einaudi” and a study of the theme of economic associations that frames Einaudi’s thinking in the wider context “in which his position was born and matured” (p. 9). Dandolo’s work breaks new ground in four thematic areas: the young Einaudi’s thinking on economic associations in Italy and on conflicts between workers and entrepreneurs; the origins of industrial associations, characterized not only by opposition to organized labor but also, and above all, by the effort of the industrialists to be recognized as a ruling class in the decades following Italy’s unification, in a country where agriculture was still considered paramount for the development of the country; the origins of agricultural associations; and the origins of credit associations.

In the first essay, Dandolo highlights Einaudi’s early attraction to British and American economic writings, giving ample space to the voices of the protagonists of the economic debate of the day. The theories that Einaudi developed are presented in his own words in writings that appeared in newspapers, periodicals and scholarly journals. Einaudi’s point of view on the duties of an economist is clear: the economist must immerse himself in reality and analyse “in depth the social dynamics that are developing” (p. 14). To this function, Dandolo adds two others, extrapolated from Einaudi’s own thought: the economist must critique reality and teach the public. Starting from Einaudi’s definition of the profession of economist, Dandolo develops his study focusing on the parallel evolution of Einaudi’s ideas and of Italy’s productive structure. In the economic context of liberal Italy, Einaudi considered the birth and the development of entrepreneurial

and worker associations, which had to be accorded equal “dignity and importance in the process of easing social tensions which, not infrequently, lead to demands and strikes” (p. 14). Dandolo casts light on Einaudi’s position regarding the working class, for which he expressed great sympathy – not out of a sense of philanthropy, but from a solidly liberal perspective that saw the elevation of the whole of society as depending on the protection of profit as an engine of development. Einaudi was often more interested in the moral, cultural and social uplifting of workers than in their technical and economic advancement. For Einaudi, society had to advance civilly and economically as a whole, embracing all its components in its progress. The effects of an economic context in which “employers and workers are linked by a commonality of destinies”, according to Einaudi, can “lead the country on the path of progress and social peace” (p. 14). However, everything depends on the willingness of both social partners, all economic sectors and the government itself to work for the implementation of “liberal policies and trade treaties”, rejecting “high customs duties, which, instead, reward the interests of those who are used to producing in the shadow of protectionism” (p. 14). Dandolo displays a special interest in civic and social issues, and he identifies a series of fixed points in the ideas of the “young Einaudi” about economic associations. First, the achievement of social peace is an effect of the formation of associations representing the interests of industrialists and workers. Second, it is vitally important to recognize “full freedom in the normal dialectic between the collective representatives of workers and entrepreneurs” (p. 10). Third, work is a means of human elevation. Fourth, the State must play “a detached but not indifferent role in social dynamics”, acting as a “regulator” and not as a “dynamic factor of production” (p. 10).

In the second essay, Sbrana and Torreggiani examine the birth, nature and motivations of entrepreneurial associations in liberal Italy in agriculture, industry and the banking system. Their intent is to explain entrepreneurs’ growing belief, widespread among other professional

groups, “that their interests must be represented and protected in a cohesive and unitary manner” (p. 13). Their reconstruction of the long and complex process of the formation of trade associations in the three pivotal sectors for the economy of liberal Italy, illustrated with abundant examples, enable the reader to have a clear idea of how Einaudi understood the reality in which he was immersed, driven by the “civil passion” with which he analysed the forces of production in dynamic action in society (p. 23).

**Matteo Nardozi**

*Sapienza University of Rome*