

EcoDomics: Building An Ecological Aesthetics of the Commons

The legacy and irony of “disenchantment:” the sensuous and the just alienated from the world and the word, from place, labor, culture and life– A “modern” road taken millennia ago when enough surplus and hierarchy allowed the coming into being of the “philosopher and his poor,” (J. Rancière,) with its suspicion of the image and the conflict of town and hinterland, which, time and again, destroyed the land and scattered voracious empires to the oblivion of the sands. Later, the appearance of early Capitalism –on the iconoclastic heels of the Protestant Reformation, Italian banking, colonial plunder and genocide, the scientific revolution, and the feedback loop that was the enclosure movement and early industrialization– led to a monumental acceleration of this trend. A late capitalist globalization, facilitated by the information revolution, market fundamentalism and monopoly, a narcissistic spectacular consumerism, and the collapse of a sclerotic and corrupt communist option, fancied it had been able to stop history. But the financial meltdown of 2008 with its deep ensuing global recession, political and social instability, together with the indisputable scientific evidence of environmental degradation, are forcing the world community to confront the sustainability of this model. My proposal –**EcoDomics**– somewhat autobiographical, tries to reflect on ways out of this conundrum through three deeply inter-related dynamics– Aesthetics, Ecology, and the Commons, to suggest an ethical approach and a particular practice of world and sense-making that attempts to weave the following three back together **1 – Aisthesis**: the network of physical perceptions, the sensuous “gasp,” of the early *physikoi*, later denied access to “truth,” (J.M. Bernstein’s “**aesthetic alienation.**”) In the 1700s, *aisthesis* reappears, as “a force for making our sensory reactions more acute,” (R. Barilli) but the new “aesthetic regime,” (Rancière,) reinforces a new reified separation, facilitating the irruption of the fetishism of the commodity in the realm of aesthetics and society, what F. Haug calls “**commodity aesthetics.**” **2 – Oikos**: hearth, home, household, at the root of *oikonomia*, *oikoumene*, *oiokologia*, and *oikodomia* (building, making,) connects crucial aspects of the contemporary geography of capitalism (D. Harvey/M. Castells): the economy, globalization, the environment, and technology, into one common *rhizome*. **3 – Koinos**: pertaining to the common(s), “to have a share in a thing,” community, communion, joint participation, spirit of sharing, giving and intimacy, generosity. Aristotle’s *aisthesis koine*, the perception of the “common sensibles” that which cannot be apprehended by a single sense, is my inspiration for the “**aesthetics of the commons,**” coming to our senses through the gift, the “multitude,” IT and “remix.” (Mauss, Hardt, Negri, Coyne, Lessig.)

The persistent defleshing, privatization, and instrumentalization of these realms has created a positive feedback loop that needs to be resisted. My proposal returns to certain original connotations/combinations/practices in the above areas, and engages with renewed urgency on a critical reflection on the social and ecological commons, the network society, embodied meaning, green technology, art, social media and information alternatives, to suggest some potential synergies of what I call an “ecoDomic” practice.

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