

Nous poietikos as general intellect in the production of commons

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My presentation has its very basis in the classical triad of *theorie/praxis/poiesis* (i.e. *schole/polis/oikos*) and in the three forms of reason (*nous theoretikos /praktikos/poietikos*). In modern times, via enlightenment and capitalism, we have lost the common basis of the triad of head, heart, and hands, i.e. the core idea of craftwork (Volanen, 2006; Sennett, 2008). The result is that episteme, ethics, and aesthetics do not have any common core any more. As a mere labourer, we do not have the horizon of the production of commons. The main opportunity provided to form social bonds is to make choices on the terms of the market – and to labour for money to pay for those choices.

The etymology of the concept ‘commons’ hints at the resources provided by nature being limited: we must deal with an undersupply of water (commu-) or food (commo-). So there is the negative myth (Rousseau) of the birth of community. With Peter Linebaugh’s (2008) idea of “commoning” – that we are discussing not only questions connected with dealing in natural or social resources but also the production of commons/community – we do not yet open up a positive horizon. We can find it in the manifesto of 1848: “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” Here we have a positive criterion for the communities producing commons.

How, then, do the commons we are producing all the time – we open the zone of development and hope for our children or fellow-citizens to form the same horizons as ourselves, i.e. we produce common values via our living work – turn out to be bare community, bare values mediated via money?

Commons and communities are in a mutual, constitutional relationship. The market (-place) is also a social construct and has its own social history. In the traditional sense, the coordination of production happened via the feedback system of prices. For a long time and in many cases, the enclosing and transaction costs per product were lower than starting one’s own production. But, when knowledge forms a central part of the core of production, everything changes. The system of prices collapses.

The production of knowledge and artifacts is and has always been two sides of the very same process: there is no knowledge without a carrier and there are no artifacts without know-how. And, of course, in the same sense, there is no immaterial work, just as there is no pure material work. When technology opens up the possibility of reorganising labour as “*poeta faber*”, to reunite *theorie/praxis/poiesis*, the production of knowledge necessarily has – in this wholeness – the role of conceptualising common values. No machine, not even a computer, produces common values; they only realize those values (*theorie/praksis*) conceptualised and constituted earlier. The traditional *nous poietikos*, producing reason, now has a new quality of “general intellect” and there is no need for exchange but for contributions to production (Siefkes 2008).