

Seconding the Emergence of Technology Driven Asceticism

We are quite used to hear of the fable of the cicada singing throughout the summer while the ants set to work. From this fable we know that at last, with the approaching of the winter, the ant will have a house ready to comfort her while the cicada will be out with no shelter where to protect herself. The moral of this fable is clear: leave any poetry aside and set to work! Further on, when the cicada, freezing to death, knocks at the ant's door, the ant will not open and will tell her off saying: well, you had fun singing throughout the summer while I was working, stay out now and shall this serve you as a lesson! There is a continuation of this story however, a continuation that is never told, a following up moral which wants the very ant experiencing a sense of crisis and lack of meaning within the comfort she has created for herself. "Once the house is constructed it is time to die", we read this Turkish proverb in Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrook*.

There is probably not a novel that would represent more than Thomas Mann's novel, the current European situation of crisis. Thomas *Buddenbrooks*, one of the main characters in which the author might reflect himself, embodies to a high degree the crisis that the European is currently undertaking. The character has spent his life expanding the family business, constructing the house and at last feeling a certain, bitter disappointment. The Senator *Buddenbrooks* clearly represent the generation of European baby boomers, old and established and with a pension and social security awaiting them and yet deeply in crisis, mostly a spiritual crisis having fully realized their materialistic visions (was this in fact the drive that built Europe).

To counter balance Thomas *Buddenbrook* we have Hanno, the representer of the baby looser generation, a weak youth willing, possibly, to regain the loss of spirituality, this by turning to art eventually. Hanno can be seen here as a natural resurrection of the cicada who was left out freezing in the winter. This cicada is however seek, possibly lacking on one side inspiration in an environment turned frigid by technology, and on the other lacking a discipline which has to be possibly reinvented out of a technological evolution constantly shifting the potential cultural framework.

Now we read that Mann was greatly influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer's young writing *The World as Will and Representation*, where the function of art is clearly suggested. Rather than focusing too much on insurgence of the youth and on any clumsy Hegelian philosophy, we might turn instead to Schopenhauer and Romantic idealism in general. Here we have the individual and his artistic willing turned weak by the very social institutions, the schooling system as discernible in the growth of Hanno described at the

end of Mann's novel. The Schopenhauer's hope is thus here to reborn and regain spirituality and subjectivity (which in a way could be seen as a problem-solving solution of the actual crisis) by allowing such artistic willing to emerge among the youth, thus not repressing it as often the right brain oriented institutional education effectively thus.

We shall breed again great musical composers, we shall listen to their compositions, compositions that according to Schopenhauer, and possibly Theodor Adorno, could talk to the world, heal it and eventually put it to sleep from the frantic and self-demolishing trend that the technical progress is accelerating. It is in the very technology that this musical compositions can be devised. Intuitively young people have already done so in the past decades, however still confronting a much reluctant audience, a lazy audience who do not find the time to get sensibilized to this possible new poetic, a last hope of transcending the dogmatic stallment of the continent, avoiding a more violent war-like shift of destruction to allow new construction... a dangerous chain from which only the ascetic suspension of individuals into their artistic willing can be of a saviour.

We shall not think however of these new breed of artistically motivated youth as somewhat of passive monks ready to be driven over by the neighbouring super power. We could see them rather as active explorers, at times in sedentary recollection and at times on the move, investigating the surrounding with their digital equipment, capturing the local reality and nourishing from it, cultivating ever new meanings, keeping engaged, rather than depressing out of the redundant artificial environment. In a way, this spiritual asceticism is their garden, their spiritual baby they see growing, the missing hope. They are somewhat armed monks, escaping from the institutionalized grammar school brought forth by the Northern reformists to replace the monasteries in a very populist fashion. The destituted South should think of dismissing such institutions for precarious forms of autonomous monasteries, where no grammar is imposed but only those who aspire for spiritual elevation turn to, a precarious shelter to pursue a passion which could spread love rather than the hate that the grammars tend to spread. Here the grammar and new dogma would arise more at the personal level, rules of conduct inspiring the aspiring individuals.

In this respect and to conclude, one could unpack another small fable, that of the three pigs constructing their houses respectively of hay, wood and bricks. The wolf, in this respect, would be the crisis that comes with every paradigm shift (no matter here whether we associate the wolf to the financial elite or whatever else, these people are just representatives of an inevitable shift). The moral of this story goes again that the piggy with the most robust house has in fact survived and is able to rescue the other

piggies in his confort and security. Unfortunately, at this stage, the crisis comes from within and the piggies have to let go of such a sealing material security, this time rather focusing on building their inner soul, which this time is based really on a state of precariousness. Possibly then, the middle way, the wooden construction would be preferable.