

Paola Mieli

La Città futura. The City of the Future.

An Introduction to This Conference.

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I want to thank Stefano Parise, Alberto Ramponi and Bianca Girardi of the Milan Public Library, and Milan's Library System and municipal government of Milan, for their hospitality and collaboration in organizing this gathering.

I thank Giovanni Bonoldi, founding director of *dipoesia*, for his enthusiastic participation in our initiative and for his help in organizing this event. Special thanks go to Angelo Villa, a psychoanalyst in Milan and an International Member of Après-Coup Psychoanalytic Association, for the lively dialogue he has maintained with us over the last few years, which inspired the very idea of this colloquium, and thanks him too for his help in conceptualizing and organizing this gathering. My whole-hearted thanks also go to Lyn Salomon, Member of Après-Coup in New York, for her valuable assistance.

Finally, let me thank all the speakers who have agreed to take part and collaborate in these two days of shared labor.

This gathering was conceived and organized by Après Coup Psychoanalytic Association, based in New York, where it was founded in 1987. Après-Coup Psychoanalytic Association is devoted to psychoanalytic formation and to the study and dissemination of Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis. In parallel with its formation program, the association has over the years maintained an interdisciplinary forum on the relationship between psychoanalysis and the social sciences. Our association welcomes as members not only psychoanalysts but also scholars and professionals from various disciplines. Permanent formation in psychoanalysis requires a constant dialogue with specialists in other areas -- humanistic, scientific, artistic, political, and so on. Over its thirty years of existence, Après-Coup has convened conferences and seminars with the participation of scholars from the Americas, Europe, Australia, and Africa. Starting in 1996, with the colloquium organized in New York under the title *Being*

Human: The Technological Extension of the Body (the proceedings of which have been published), Après-Coup has actively engaged in the study of the relationship between subject and social reality. Pursuing this line of inquiry, we gather today to debate some pressing current issues: the subjective and collective impact of the new technologies; identity today; the relationship between the city, territory and environment.

Milano, a city that is going through a re-awakening of its rich and diverse cultural traditions -- as beautifully exemplified, among other things, by the recent opening of the Library of Books (a 95.000 square meter arboretum) -- has seemed to us the ideal place to host our multifaceted and multifarious work in progress.

Our title "The City of the Future" is meant, of course, to evoke Antonio Gramsci. A little over a century ago, in February 1917, towards the end of the first world conflict, Gramsci chose *La città' futura* as the title for a publication of the Youth Federation of the Piedmontese Socialist Party. He single handedly authored and edited the text, to provide a guidance to young men and women traumatized by the war. He intended the publication to be an education in politics, in solidarity, responsibility.

Gramsci's goals were specific: a matter of giving new life to a movement, providing party organization and a spur to politics. If we are adopting the title he chose and reintroducing the splendid image of "the city of the future," it is also to let ourselves be infected by the *tone* of Gramsci's proposition, by his enthusiasm and by his ethical considerations, which continue to be relevant today. One may wonder in passing, a hundred years later (we just celebrated the one hundred anniversary of the end of World War I), to what extent we are still affected by the implication of that conflict, from the rise of hegemonic dictatorships to the breakup of colonial empires, to the reordering of local autonomies and the constitution of new territorial boundaries and new conflicts, to the vast use of new technologies for political and segregational ends, to the destabilizing of financial markets and to the new forms of global neoliberalism.

All of which invites us to pay serious attention to Gramsci's ethical appeal, to the emphasis with which he stresses the citizen's responsibility. He wrote:

"I hate indifferent people. I believe, along with Friedrich Hebbel, that 'living means taking sides.' People cannot merely exist, cannot behave as alien in the city. Anyone who is truly alive cannot help but be a citizen and must be a partisan. Indifference is inertia, it is parasitism, it is cowardice, it is not life. This is why I hate indifferent people." And he adds: "Indifference works powerfully throughout history. It works passively but work it does. It is the sense of fatality; it is what one cannot count upon; and it is what subverts programs, what overturns our best-made plans; it is the brute material that rebels against intelligence and throttles it."

Let me add, to those words, the following consideration: the citizen's indifference goes hand in hand with habit. There where surprise, curiosity, and even scandal come to an end, isn't exactly there that acceptance takes over? Thus, indifference and habit reveal their political implications: it is the modality of not thinking, of submitting, of aligning oneself, of accepting anything. This is tantamount to alienation and tacit collaboration.

The ethical question is the core issue of psychoanalysis. And psychoanalysis is a practice of singularity, of uniqueness, of the unrepeatability of the subjective condition. It is the practice of listening to the division of the subject of language, a subject inhabited by a knowledge of which s/he is unaware of - unconscious - which does not cease to manifest itself in daily life, from symptoms to dreams, to *actes manqués*, and so on. No self-reflection can exhaust the dimension of subjective reality. In the place where the subject thinks of itself as "me", the subject is never self-transparent.

The subject is by its nature the effect of the social link. The structural prematurity of the newborn makes it impossible for it to survive outside the social environment, a fact that has a radical impact on its constitution and on its subjective identifications. As Freud emphasizes, individual psychology is, in this sense, social psychology; and psychoanalysis, in directing itself toward individual singularity, cannot ignore the social bond.

But the path of psychoanalysis is different from that of other practices, whether they go by the name of psychology, psychotherapy, psychiatry, or something else. Unfortunately, in Italy psychoanalysis officially "does not exist"; it has been obliterated by the Ossicini Law –

which subsumes it under the category of psychotherapy. This is one of the crimes of Italian culture, of which, unfortunately, many of our colleagues have been accomplices. Indifference, complacency, routine, lack of reflection, opportunism – and hence, tacit collaboration. When the need to regulate a practice results in its marginalization, the culture pays a heavy price. Let us not dismiss the consequences of terminology; terminology has its weight, indeed an *enormous* weight. Language is ethical, and the word has subjective, practical and political implications – all the more when we live in an era in which the media and the political apparatus foster a delirious use of language, untethered to any references to true facts and oblivious of the commonly agreed upon value of the words deployed in a message. Saying *n'importe quoi*, anything you please, pays off in manipulation and populism. In opposition to it, it is ever more necessary to defend the precision of language.

I heartily salute all our colleagues who have had the courage to support the autonomy and specificity of psychoanalysis in Italy – which this gathering naturally aims to reaffirm. I take this opportunity to pay homage to a very dear friend, an extraordinary psychoanalyst and theoretician from Milan, Sergio Contardi, who for years fought to give specificity and support to the difference between psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Sadly, last year, Sergio passed away all too soon. With great respect and affection, we dedicate these days of investigation to the memory of Sergio Contardi.

Analytic treatment implies a confrontation with subjective division, with the truth of unconscious desire; it implies a modification of the libidinal economy -- which involves resolving symptoms and inhibitions. Every clinical case is unique, an exception that can't be reduced to normative or prescriptive diagnostic categories. It is no accident that Freud urges the analyst to approach each new case as if it were the first. Psychoanalysis replaces the categories of general and particular with those of structure and singularity.

The analytic act engenders an ethical transformation, toward an encounter with difference, with the relative, with the not-all, toward the expression of one's own singularity and one's own style. In deconstructing the mystifying and alienating function of individual and

group identifications, in dissipating their violence, psychoanalysis restores to the individual the subjective responsibility for his and her own choices and own actions; it allows for the assumption of the causes of which one is the effect. The assumption, then, of one's own subjective responsibility, including that of the social reality of which one is a part. In this sense, the practice of singularity can contribute to the practice of social democracy, and its necessary retuning.

Regarding democracy, it is necessary to distinguish between its political and social manifestation; it is necessary to determine where and how political democracy obstructs social democracy, turning the recourse to majority rights into a form of absolutism, a way to stifle multiplicity, difference, minority. It is necessary to determine when it turns recourse to those rights into a way to manipulate the constitution for personal use or multiplying biopolitical control. Like any social practice, democracy is an unstable formation: it requires a constant retuning to confront the contradictions it implicitly contains and implicitly produces.

In 1967 Lacan positioned on the horizon of psychoanalysis in extension - that is to say, in the social link - three perspectival vanishing points: a symbolic one, pertaining to the Oedipal myth; an imaginary one, related to the institution; and a real one, that of the concentration camps. Each of these paths traced the direction for a reflection on the responsibility of the analyst and his indispensable ethical commitment, be it an unmasking of the way in which the Oedipal ideology partakes in biopolitical logic, be it a deconstruction of the imaginary identifications that reinforce the institution's totalitarian structure, and be it a confrontation with the pervasive real of our social reality that strengthens segregation -- a consequence, in Lacan's view, of the manipulations of social groupings by science and the universalization it ushers in. Clearly, this puts into question the analyst's role in the social link, and the relation between analytic discourse and other discourses, and all the more in a system in which the so-called mental health itself takes part in the machinery of segregation.

With the declaration of the rights of man and the inclusion of the right to life in the juridical order -- with the passage "from vassal to citizen" -- the biopolitical calling of the modern state paves the way to the existence of segregative territories, places where the common rights of citizens are suspended, based on a notion of juridical exception. The

concentration camps were only the most radical example of this. Yet there were also other kinds of camps. Ellis Island, for instance, the camp for immigrants to the United States, where a great many Italians, among others, were inmates. Carl Schmitt maintains that the state of exception is the very condition of the existential and contingent order of constitutional sovereignty, since the state must defend itself from the dangers that threaten it. An idea that finds support and consensus today. But the camp defines the space created "when the state of exception becomes the rule," as Agamben puts it. There is no shortage of camps today, camps of refugees and asylum-seekers, where the gap between birthplace and nation is revealed in all its radicalness. Isn't it precisely around the notion of segregation that we see democracy collapse into totalitarianism? For the past months I have been following the fate of children violently separated from their "clandestine" parents by the Trump administration at the Mexican border: children just a few months old, or some a few years old, segregated in refugee camps, without any markers allowing them to be identified and thus return someday to their jailed parents.

How, then, to conceive of a "City of the Future", a place where citizens assume the responsibility of their desire, reckoning with their inscription in the social link? Practicing respect to difference, welcoming what is *other*, in a productive critique of the biopolitical systems that estrange and exploit them, while, at the same time, they are an intrinsic part of it and even its co-creator?

How are we to live together respecting the needs of the present and future generations?

This colloquium would like to be a step along the path of this ongoing reflection.

