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THE CITY OF THE FUTURE: TREATMENT AND TERRITORIAL RELATION

Over the past few years I have worked with committed organizations in our territory on the theme of social inclusion. The goal of these projects is social and labor inclusion of segments of the population who are weak and at risk of marginalization within the active sector of society. This "underground" population, composed mostly of immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and people coming out of the correctional system has been undergoing a remarkable rise in recent years. By initiating integrated careers guided by networking efforts among professionals from various sectors (labor mediators, cultural mediators, educators, psychologists, social workers), we seek to avoid the risk of marginalizing, or worse, "ghettoizing," these people, a risk directly connected to creating a subculture which inevitably finds itself acting against the "winds" of the state, thus elevating the risk of deviant behaviors.

In practical action, such activity has gone in the direction of sensitizing our territory (in its institutions and its labor entities) on the theme of integration, in an attempt to reduce the prejudices based on closedness and perpetrating of a xenophobic, protectionistic culture. Through the use of European Social Funds we have been able to initiate various work careers, some of which have ended in hiring of people we have taken up.

The mission, the goals, and the intentions of this project were praiseworthy; I can attest to this, having taken an active part in its planning phase and identifying resources we could deploy. Nevertheless, in the course of this two-year period I have become aware of the existence of "incompatibility" between the premises and factual reality. From a "numerical" point of view, the goals have amply been respected (the number of hirings, the number of careers with positive outcomes),

yet to this day what sticks with me is the impression of a gap, of something that's failed. I think what's been missing has been precisely the relational element.

The time devoted to the project, limited if we bear in mind the importance of its goals, has made it such that interventions had to move at a frenetic pace, with little chance to linger over the individual affairs of the people one has provided treatment for. The focus has stayed firmly on goals, on the concrete facts to produce in terms of job employment and careers launched, without any chance of "individualizing" them and thus adapting them to the requirements of the individual person and so producing lasting effects. The workers themselves have felt a climate of fragmentation, in which everyone has had his or her gaze firmly fixed on their own tasks and their own role, as they've proceeded toward ultimate objectives. Yet this 'finishing line' can be said to be reached only if it can become a new starting point; through treatment, through relation, through integration for the single person and society. In overestimating the concrete, immediate goal, you risk entering into the logic of a bus that drops you off at your stop, then quickly starts up again unconcerned about your final destination. Excessive attention to practical results has removed attentiveness to the therapeutic or caring relation. How can we explain this distance between the encouraging premises of a social integration, the path through development of a multiethnic, mulcultural society in which we are in fact already living, and these partial results which largely leave things as they are?

We are living in an era of frenetic paces, under the aegis of a culture of "everything right away." The social and relational transformations, directly connected to, among other things, new technologies and forms of communication, have led to a "hegemony of performance." The needle on the scale is pointed progressively toward the results, rather than toward the process, toward the "numbers" rather than the individual in all his or her uniqueness.

Given these premises, the relationship, the terrain for encounters and at times the clashes between various individuals, seems not only to be no longer in the forefront but often turns out to be downright awkward, considered an element that risks jamming the smooth workings of performance. It's best that everyone proceed in lockstep, and as for stragglers – well, what can you do?

Clearly this aspect of our times, in which relationship would seem to be an impediment, squares poorly with the notion of integration. Yet integration has a significant outcome: it is a dialogue among various elements that influence and transform one another, that come to new understandings of one another. Thus we will have a trasformation into something new, which will be something different and something more than the sum of the single constituent parts.

A French ethnopsychoanalyst, Marie Rose Moro, an expert in the theme of migration and integration, speaks of *métissage* [hybridization or interbreeding], referring precisely to the "reciprocal mix" among people within an encounter in a shifting social context. In her words: "Migrations (also) alter their host societies, determining deep processes of *métissage which transform the collective identity, in a vital, open respite." "… We term this process 'acculturation' for those who have migrated and 'transformation' for those who take them in, although it is a matter of one and the same process, only reversed in a mirror image – together constituting the* métissage *of groups, of individuals, of thoughts."*

The question is, to what extent are we willing to "let ourselves change" from the encounter with the other? And if we aren't willing to change, can we really speak of an encounter of relation and of care giving?

The impression is that today there is a very fragile core at the social level that concerns identity: we fear being fragmented, uprooting ourselves from our origins. I think one can thus explain the return to forms of extremism of thought, of

homogenization, and the recourse to visions of a stereotypical reality. Often this is a matter of rigid forms of defense: one prefers to see things in black and white rather than risk losing oneself. For this reason, even in the framework of projects geared toward integration, there remains an excessive attention to numbers, red tap and outcomes; as such these projects are geared toward everything that makes a relationship anonymous, encumbering it, emptying it of any elements of diversity (or originality). The results, so conceived, doesn't really produce a transformation: who is conducting treatment and who is being "put through" treatment remains quite distinct; they can blend about as much as water and oil. But is it really possible to provide help without "mixing oneself up in," "contaminating oneself in," a relationship?

The world has changed, its borders are shifting, the chance to travel and live in countries other than the one you were born in is ever more within reach and frequent. We already live in a multiethnic, multicultural time; it is our present. The issue is to grasp the deep origins of our resistances and our defenses, in order to align ourselves with the winds of change and thus be able to understand and reunderstand ourselves as well.

And it is here that psychoanalysis can play a decisive role, despite a certain tendency to label it as an obsolete or 'niche' pratice. I am not speaking so much, or not exclusively, of clinical psychoanalysis, but of the "psychoanalytical telescope," a perspective through which to gaze at the individual and society in the fate of their encounter. A "parking area," a "place to take a breather" in a social context that grants no pauses as it struts at a clip that allows, truly allows, for no looking around.

A "prospect for the new millennium," to quote Calvino in his "American lessons," might well consist in a practice of alleviation. I'm clearly not referring to the frivolous sense of "lightening up," but rather to a process whereby "we take the weight off" concepts, words, thoughts, which otherwise risk becoming

preconceptions – prejudices –, slogans, saturated with persecutory stereotyping, a cradle for hatred and paranoia. The notion is one of a momentary return to something more primordial and essential. Heavy recourse to bureaucracy, the stifling stress laid on results, the myth of the performative subject, in my view, defensive manifestations that spell angst at contact with the other, with the foreign, with diversity. With the future, which reminds us that we all have to die some day. It's necessary to relieve ourselves of those weights, to lower our defenses, in order to be able to rediscover something shared in everyone's diversity, and thus recognize onself in the other and in the Outsider, who is also, always, in ourselves.

The idea of the other is not of someone with whom to achieve a mutually constructive and edifying encounter; rather, the alien became an "invader," someone who shows up specifically intending to rob us of something. We are oppressed by an air of mistrust that makes it hard to look "past" the numbers and data, "beyond" what's right under our noses. We have to relieve the field of encounter of the weight of our suspicions if we are to turn our gaze toward the City of the future, where treatment and relationship can come to unite us in the planning of interventions that can produce a truly transformative change through encounter, both with the other and with ourselves.

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