The Others- Art as Human and Social Pledge

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Editorial

Every society has to reinvent the project of spirituality for itself. In the alter-modern era, a portmanteau word as defined by Nicolas Bourriaud, one of the most active metaphors for the spiritual project is art as overcoming of the domination of the dualism.

Connections, disconnections; reality, rhetoric; discourse, practice: dualisms still dominate our discourse. When we write of connections, reality, and discourse, we often are in effect referring to disconnections, rhetoric, and practices. That is, our practices are embedded in rhetorical representations of disconnections, though, by and for objects that we desire, or that are desirous of us, to be connected to. It happens in philosophy, sociology and more often in political economy. Contrariwise, art could suggest different paradigm away from any critical debate. Contemporary art consciously sets itself the task of “presenting” this which is, in itself, not presentable. Abstract painting, for example, wants to express the formless, the absence of form, means to show that there is something that can be conceived and that one can neither see nor show. For Jean François Lyotard this is the best of contemporary art, a paradox that the Author does not mean in a spiritualistic sense, as a reference to a transcendent dimension but as a shift of meaning, which exceeds sensitivity but manifests itself only through sensations. In particular the artistic avant-gardes strive to allude to the non-presentable through visible presentations. These issues represent the frame to think about the environmental and social uncertainties of the Anthropocene, to provide an impetus to expand the idea of what is the social in our understandings.

The world is sharply changing, from the cultural, social, physical, and economic point of view; it changes the way of producing, what is produced and, consequently, where it is produced. It changes the structure, and the structure is the condition of the human, starting from the conditioning and the impasse that it lives. It changes the way we built our knowledge, and how we feel the world around us. The large factories are abandoned and the gaps left within the perimeter of the urban spaces gradually become places for the production of knowledge and services, leisure areas and residences; the number of actors involved in design is growing and, in particular, the importance of the market is increasing. Even the way art is produced changes and evolves towards a participatory and emotional use that pushes the artist to get out of the galleries to arrive in the squares, in abandoned factories, in public places, to intervene in the debate on the city and to work alongside designers.

In this changing and overheating context, artists should begin to establish relationships with actors outside the art world and to work in the global context and with institution bodies to ask the art to contribute to the enhancement of the territory, to the promotion of identity in the context of the global economy and, more recently, to look to the interpretation of the transformations in progress. As human beings we do need art, we do need to be generative to think about our common destiny. Besides, art helps as a deconstruction process, and this aesthetics could bring texts to research. It is a way of disrupting traditionally upheld beliefs about epistemology, ontology, and research. It is a form of representation that allows for the ambiguous place between presence and absence, and the permeability of boundaries of understanding.

My topic, then is the way in which a generative art conceives the relation between society and the ideas which the society is designed to identify and describe. Artistic works are an excellent laboratory for the question of deconstructing the present, to start a generative process where art, as a process, add meaning.

A generative process is a symbolic and social action, involves human being to think about their maturity, taking care over time of the society. The term generate indicates an action that, however unpredictable in its results, is characterized by being continuous over time. Precisely
for this reason, generating opens up to the full meaning of life and to its unpredictability. It is an essential concept for the society, because it leads to the development of a common sense that spurs to innovation and to a responsible idea of freedom. Furthermore, it is not limited to be a biological or rational factor but assumes a relevant cultural dimension. Generate implies knowing how to see, how to understand, it means how to discern and imagine, how to recognize what has a potential, how to understand under what conditions it can develop; and then exercise imagination and hope, with competence and attention and adds social and cultural value.

Art, in this perspective, when it is authentic, it is generative (in some way it is spiritual), unlocks the static regime of exchange and equivalence and, in doing so, increases life. As a matter of a fact we could define social generativity as a transformative action that makes people capable of managing freedom, not as individualized consumption but as a relational work. And we define a relational work as the generativity which, being social, aims to reach ever wider circles. The commitment is to search for relevant words that can describe a present that has no future. In this perspective art adds knowledge, capacity for reflection, research, to find what I can define the deception of the present, and revealing this deception, dissolving it in the extreme absurd in which it is not possible to distinguish the stillness of nothingness and that of conciliation, that sociology, as a science that makes objective what subjectively produces a disturbance, can again meet the poetics of art.

Art is necessary as a tool for reflection, a sheuristic lieu, not only as a place, and a pedagogical and formative tool. It catches a glimpse of what would otherwise inexorably escape as the possibility of being understood, that is the metaphysical destination of human beings. It offers the possibility to overcome that anguish that derives from the risk of not succeeding, of not being able to realize the common project, that of a peaceful coexistence. If we will not be educated in beauty, we will have less opportunity to understand the other, the greatest challenge of this century.