



Regina José Galindo, *La oveja negra*, 2014 - Performance at RAVE residency

ANTICIPATIONISM AND ANTHROPOCENE

Leonardo Caffo

“The great philosophy, unlike the great work of art, can only be understood centuries later” - Martin Heidegger

Anticipationism and philosophy

Let's start with a quasi-definition. The anticipationism is the future oriented philosophical attitude, according to which we are allowed to try a concrete, conceptual and practical anticipation of some pieces of future. The selection criteria are mostly ethical, political and economic. Grounded between Marxist political philosophy and common reformism (1), anticipationism operates within the symbolic sphere: showing, here and now, that it is possible to already test or live some potentialities of the future. I defended the idea that anticipationism is the essential approach of the intersection between art and philosophy (2) because philosophy itself can turn many of its arguments in artistic practices (but also in architecture and design). In the Western philosophical world it is currently more and more complex to solve the dichotomy between analytic and continental philosophy; the former, originally Angloamerican, should find its solutions in logic, while the later, of European origin, has on the other hand



an approach based on history and criticism. Philosophy is a very particular discipline, whose statute is continually discussed by the meta-philosophy, but in my opinion it is essentially characterized as a life practice, because of its crossdisciplinary structure; its closes concept is the trusteeship: the ability to take the others and reorganize them in a proper meta-object. Philosophy, as a matter of fact, according to the well-known Aristotelian thesis, is the essence that the whole is superior to the sum of the parts: it organizes all the pieces and, like in a museum, where the interior (which are its objects) finds its own order if arranged with the criterion of care. Anticipation means taking care of non-existent yet potential objects and making them visible within a specific context; this brief consideration on philosophy also leads to different approaches on its application: museums, fine arts academies, various kind of publications, performances and realizations of spaces. My theory, which I am going to expose in this text applying the anticipation to anthropocene, is that philosophy is a continuous movement.

Anticipating within a context

The most complex question concerns the criterion which anticipation would use for selecting the elements of a potential future and bringing them to realization. Let us consider anthropocene (3) as our current geological era; I believe that anticipationism is also a connection method between philosophy, art and scientific thought: a sort of alliance, or something allowing different disciplines to converge under the same sectoral objective. The anthropocene is often confused with a quality of being, such as anthropocentrism, while instead, if what geology tells us is true, we rather

face a “quantity”: it is an alternance of geological ages, of which the anthropocene is the current one and there is no better or worse. Obviously the anthropocene, is intimately connected to our role on this planet and to the structural modification of soils, environments and ecosystems; this does not make though the anthropocene a quality, but rather the context in which all being on Earth are currently living. The connection between quality and quantity can occur by taking anthropocentrism, in fact, and exploring it as a founding concept

for the anthropocene but, perhaps, also for its potential conclusion: if the environment starts perceiving us as a virus, sooner or later, it will get rid of us. We got a long list of factors making the anthropocene worrying, but also – paradoxically - interesting: global warming, overheating, pollution, intensive animal farming, etc. Here is the philosophical step backwards and, as we will see, the one forward within the art: making possible a set of practices that led the planet to the anthropocentrism, according to which Homo Sapiens has an author-



Luca De Leva with the eyeglasses for the performance - Scambio di Vista_



ized superiority over the rest of the earth. The several anthropocentrism deconstruction possibilities (4) originate the same feeling: what to do, once we realize that the ecological scenario, the only truly metaphysical scenario, risks to collapse?

The problems generating anticipation

The anticipation, of course, is a contingency; it is generated by that 'im-passe' we first mentioned happening when, in a complex globalized economy no individual choices nor local reforms can solve the problem that anthropocene humanity should face. Philosophy, more than art, can take care of the symbolic dimension by producing scenarios that, eventually, others will have to bring to completion. I have argued that the concerns about the potential extinction of Homo Sapiens are irrelevant because in fact the extinction is already underway (5) and we are facing a sympatric speciation: two populations evolve separately while living in the same territory. It is a type of evolution occurring silently and imperceptibly due to ecological isolation; as we know, humans belong to the genre Homo, whose Sapiens constitutes the last evolutionary form. Chronologically we have: Homo habilis, Homo georgicus, Homo erectus, Homo antecessor, Homo heidelbergensis, Homo neanderthalensis, Homo floresiensis and Homo sapiens (appeared about 200,000 years ago). It is therefore not surprising if I consider anthropocene as proof that, after two hundred thousand years, Sapiens has had its day, while mine is a purely philosophical and non-biological discourse. Moving forward, I proposed to name a new species of Homo, potentially present already among us: Post-human Con-



Paloma Varga Weisz, Bumpman, 2016

temporary Homo, as a population niche able to resist climate change, overcrowding or lack of resources, because it is already currently living according to food, housing and political needs, profoundly different from the main ones characterizing both quality (anthropocentrism) and quantity (anthropocene). The anticipation practice, constantly put in place by this different – while aesthetically indistinguishable from Homo Sapiens - species, is what allows us to trace both the problems and the solutions to the current environmental challenges.

Contemporary posthuman and art

Let's face a pivotal point. Contemporary posthuman describes a species taking the place of Homo sapiens managing to live on the planet without questioning the habitat but taking advantage of the cultural and technological evolution that paradoxically led the very Homo sapiens to its own possible future extinction. From radical food reformism to the abandonment of cities, there are practices which allow an identification of the new species such as the inclination



Campo Adentro

to live in micro-communities, the life in the woods, vegetable diets, or all that system of behaviours and habits that if adopted en masse would eradicate the problems from their roots. The point is that the answer to this dilemma could be closer than we think. Contemporary philosophical posthuman looks for allies. How can we unfold straight away the diversity of the new species born on the ruins of Homo sapiens? Despite its dense argumentation, philosophy doesn't seem to be enough helpful. I propose to consider the alliance between philosophy, architecture and art as the basis of this "anticipation theory". As any other form of life, a new one requires a new environment or, more technically, a structure in which life can develop. Even if Homo sapiens' habitat cracks and its new form is suitable for the contemporary Posthuman, we still have to deal with a contingent problem; where could contemporary Posthumans

live their lives? If the economy and politics persist to not care about ecology, anticipation seems to be a solid option. Looking for independently developed allies, my theory speculates a filling of spaces abandoned by the consumption excess and the waste of resources of Homo sapiens. It's useful to look at Gilles Clément's Third Landscape concept; according to him, all the areas abandoned by men, the parks and nature reserves, the largely uninhabited areas of the planet, and also the smallest and most widespread semi-invisible spaces as disused industrial areas, are fundamental resources for the conservation of biological diversity.

These are different areas in terms of configuration, dimension and status, sharing only the absence of any human activity. If taken together, they play a crucial role in the development of the new species. The impact of Homo sapiens contracts when the

possibilities of contemporary Posthumans develop: the appropriation of these empty areas, left or neglected by capitalism, is the first step of the making of the new habitat in which the speciation will find its place. The symbolic purpose of showing now the way we will live in the future, according to which many other phenomena of human ethics such as civil disobedience or vegetarianism will decline, is fundamental. In 2005 Fernando García-Dory, within a not too different theoretical framework from that of Clément, inaugurated the internal creation of the Commission on Rural Arts of a Rural Platform. This is a contemporary art project within the act of recovering rural areas discarded in favour of urbanization, thanks to which government commissions allow the construction of art residences or micro-communities with a clear artistic purpose. In 2010 the project took shape under the name Inland - Campo Adentro

focusing on art, agriculture and the countryside.

García-Dory wants to examine the role of territories, geopolitics and culture in relation to the contemporary connection between city and countryside. Thanks to such a contemporary artistic practice, we are driven to rediscover the question of organized utopia and study the way we interact with the biosphere. It can happen that in an abandoned area ways of living profoundly alternative to those of Homo sapiens may be developed: some low impact and intimately linked to nature humans may organize themselves through artistic practices that are actually political gestures of deep biological breakdown. Under this light, to anticipate means to produce right now areas in which we can develop the life form as if speciation has definitely taken

place: a task that, according to science and philosophy, cannot but belong to the artistic sphere. I believe art and architecture in conjunction are the best competitors to give a practical and actual substance to philosophical theories, especially if they imply a radical change in the ways of thinking about the subjects involved in these same theories. Even in its most basic and diluted connotations, the posthuman has long profited from artistic work - for example, Bruce Nauman, Pierre Huyghe or Lara Favaretto with her "out of place" grafts in landfill sites. The reason is almost trivial; if we investigate the future or present concept of humankind, we reflect better working with artistic images rather than philosophical concepts. Anticipating also the transformation of the habitat in which the contemporary Posthuman lives after the planet has been annihilated by the

ecological crisis produced by Homo sapiens, the discussion thus looks more real. Understood as a contemporary Posthuman graft in all those places abandoned by Homo sapiens in which nature and biodiversity are returning their place, the Third Landscape is the theoretical inverse of Carl Schmitt's "Great Space" (Großraum), the ultimate aim of a humanism led to the extreme through the desire by the "New Order" (Neue Ordnung). Local anthropocentrism, especially in relation to geocentrism, produces expansion at the expense of neighbours we discover to be not "that close" because "subhuman" (Untermenschen). On the other hand, because of its way to evaluate the coexistence with biodiversity, the Posthuman forms necessary islands of survival on a planet that collapses against its will. The disappearance of Homo sapiens, of course, is a defeat for everyone.



Ed Atkins "Recent Ouija" at The Stedelijk Museum



MAXXI Lara Favaretto GoodLuck - images taken from the exhibition dedicated to the missing heroes

Speciation takes place because Homo sapiens has surpassed the limits imposed by the environment, the reality has resisted, and the feedback has been a new commencement that now art tries to describe and host.

Viewed in relation to space and its control, the consequences of anthropocentrism are always treacherous and violent: for this reason, it is better to measure immediately, by the act of anticipating, the strategies employed by a given form of life to relate itself to the environment. The reason why the Third Landscape is a theoretical perspective for contemporary Posthuman is simple. The nature that recovers space, the life that emerges from below and that must be considered, the coexistence with biodiversity... if contemporary Posthuman desires to live a long life it must translate the theoretical assumptions of its spe-

ciation into a good practice of life. Architecture intertwined with trees and plants that integrates and shelters instead of destroying and isolating is the viewpoint that opens the theory we are using as a guide to our long journey. We must anticipate to prevent and understand, today that Martin Heidegger's prophecy that "the last man rages for Europe" (6) (let's consider the conflicts between the Middle East and the contemporary West) seems to come about through conflicts that have more and more the character of a "final solution".

The Alliance

It must be stressed that there should be a total harmony between science, art, and philosophy within this framework. The selection criterion of anticipation can not be arbitrary: it is a philosophical theory that uses

scientific evidence to shape certain artistic practices in a triangulation where every single vertex is essential. The Anthropocene issue is emblematic when we highlight its causes and the potential of certain changes of direction for its slowdown; the objection is obvious, I guess: anticipating is not useful at all. Clearly, compared to any normative ethics, anticipation appears to be a "simple" symbolic approach that is not effective at all, but my counter-objection is different: utilitarianisms or egalitarianisms are just theoretically effective, i.e. on paper, not practically.

There is no way global damage could be diminished by utilitarian speculations and, moreover, most of these approaches condemn to individual immobility because of the threshold effect: without a fifty percent plus one shifting the axis of effectiveness with respect to the modification of

a certain practice even in this case, for a single individual the gesture of change remains symbolic. Therefore it is true, anticipation is good for nothing, but the correct sentence is that anticipation is also good for nothing; it is just that we tend to turn this observation into a resource, a limit to be exploited for our benefit.

Art is expected to be good for nothing and yet, if we think of the political achievements that stemmed from and through art, the list could be endless; operating in the symbolic, through performance or objects production, could lead to the unveiling of a whole series of images risking to remain a theory or to be condemned to a hypothetical future that could never come true because – paradoxically- nobody strove to undertake the endeavor. Therefore, in order to consider an anticipation practice, first of all we need data, evidences aimed at telling the present problem we would like to bring to short circuit through anticipation; then, philosophy, which acts as a glue by organizing data and conceptualizing them towards the world of production and artistic creation, where the “after” vision which is recalled takes its shape.

Anticipating means treating women the same way men when are treated, in times when they were considered to be inferior -in the here and now and without being sure that a real progress could ever have happened- and perhaps organising a work that would reveal the follies of the present, hoping for a certain kind of future. This, obviously, is just an example; anticipation in the Anthropocene could mean starting to live by ceasing to feed the meat industry responsible of the Co2 emission, rather than organizing one’s own lives, starting to return to nature,

considering the idea of the city as the only possible living space less and less necessary. Here is where art, with the arrogance that characterizes it, can provide structure to a philosophy that is risks to remain hanging in the clouds of a theory for its own sake.

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