



„Überwindung der Diktaturen – Dichter, Künstler und Schriftsteller in der Begegnung.“

***Work Description Bucharest
Michele Zagia (1946)***

Description of the Video: An Unforeseen Outcome

The video commences with the image of an eye, in the cornea of which a spiral is reflected; the spiral represents the old game of “Snakes and Ladders” and, at the same time, Europe. While the eye symbolises the human pretension of a direct and exhaustive knowledge of reality, the spiral reflected by the cornea alludes, instead, both to the mirror, i.e. to the inevitably mediate and relative nature of knowledge, and to the human condition, perpetually exposed to contingency, risk and the unforeseen (the game of Snakes and Ladders).

After the initial screening, Europe (in the shape of “Snakes and Ladders”) stands out on a black background. Well then, with this image, I am expressing my philosophical idea as regards the relationship between “necessity” and “contingency”, which, in brief, may be summarized as follows: people never deal with “things”, but always and only with “meanings” or, rather, always and only with the necessary event of contingent meanings.

The radical contingency of the meanings in my opinion makes it evident that every truth and every totalitarianism are just the expression of a wish for negative power (the Ancient Greeks would call it hybris).

In the video, Europe – just as in “Snakes and Ladders”, is divided into boxes; in these, the differences are represented, i.e. the different languages, the different cultures, the different religions, and the different ideologies that have developed in our continent down through the centuries.

The main thesis of my work is that the process of integration at present going on among the Europeans (which is inscribed, in turn, within the general process of globalisation), involves not only benefits, but also the danger that the combination of differences (culture, languages, hierarchy of values etc.) will be rapidly wiped out. If this happens, there is the actual risk of some form of totalitarianism and, hence, also of some form of dictatorship.

The tendency to wipe out the differences is fuelled, not only by the market, but also by the unlimited power of technology, and by the unprecedented acceleration of the speed of the processes of transformation that this implies.

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The rotation of the spiral refers to the unprecedented consequences of the speed of the technological revolution. The rotation represents time.

Well, the faster the spiral turns, the more difficult it will be for the Europeans to adapt their forms of life to the speed of change.

In the centre of the spiral, I have drawn a small wheel that controls the direction (forward = future; backward = past) and the speed of rotation; certain situations, rather than others, happen, depending on how the wheel is manoeuvred; for example, it may happen that the thought of some philosophers contributes to preparing the cultural ground which is suitable for the development of totalitarianism, or, it may happen that the uncontrolled speed of change and the so-called “End of History” cancels the individual or collective memory of what – for the best and for the worst – the Europeans have been.

I am not sure that I know who has the power to affect the wheel: from time to time this power has been granted to Need, to the people’s Free Will or to Chance.

On the basis of what I have written above concerning the relationship between need/necessity and contingency, I would venture to give the following answer: since we do not possess the Event, but only the interpretation of the meanings that happen, it is our duty to be aware that they are changeable and, thus, we should not expect to enforce as absolute a particular interpretation of them. Of course, this applies, first of all, to myself because, within the depths of the grotesque of the characters and situations that I love to portray, I exhibit a considerable amount of pessimistic nihilism. Thus, the “optimistic” question which ends the video: “But, is History really over?”, is addressed to myself as well.

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