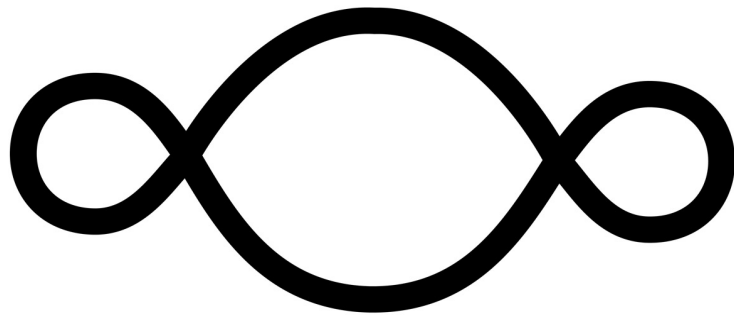


Michelangelo Pistoletto

Hominitheism and Demopraxy



This is my last manifesto.

The manifesto of a human being, at a certain point in space and time.

A being in part natural and in part artificial. Natural in so far as shaped by nature and artificial in so far as shaped by art.

An artfully made human being.

Its aim is to reconsider the foundations of sociocultural structure, to be specific religion and politics, reinterpreting them through the new dual concept of *Hominitheism* and *Demopraxy*. It is my conviction that democracy¹ cannot coexist with monotheistic dogmas. To demonstrate this I intend to follow the course traced out by art. Art gives rise to all the systems on which human society has been organized over time. It is the primary initiation. The first work of art consisted of the imprint left by a hand on the wall of a cave: the imprint of a hand is not the hand, but the representation, and thus the concept, of the physical hand. With the birth of the concept, human thought came into being.

The mark of the hand is the steppingstone between the unconscious animal and the conscious animal, between the nonhuman and the human. Since that time, every act of initiation has reconfirmed and celebrated this primordial transition. The significance of the work of that unknown artist is immeasurable for two reasons: firstly, it gave rise to the language of signs that permits the communication of thought. In fact, handprints in caves proliferated and were grouped to represent, in embryo, society. Secondly, between the reality and the virtuality of the hand, art has opened the doors of the unknown and developed the sphere of the imagination, which has grown until it has become an entirely metaphysical universe. We think of this metaphysical universe as a Spiritual Arch. Religion has taken possession of it in full, giving answers to everything with divine authority and thereby laying claim to a monopoly of the unknown. It is in the realm of the unknown that science carries out its research. But unlike religion, it offers provisional and relative answers.

Art contains the unknown in the metaphysical-spiritual arch, and includes both religion and science in it.

Religion and science exist because art gave birth to them, with that first sign in the primordial cave. Since then, art has never ceased to play a part in humanity's adventures, accompanying the organization of society at every step until it became an accomplice of those in power.

In the middle of the 20th century artists, following a process of self-analysis of art, achieved total independence. They ceased to be common hands and became individual hands. They took over the original imprint, turning it into a subjective sign. Thus artists assumed the greatest personal freedom and an equivalent responsibility in their relations with society. Personally, I have inherited this responsibility and assigned it a new function. This function consists in passing on the autonomy that the modern artist has developed with his or her own sign to every single person, so that they will be able to develop an independence of thought and assume an active responsibility for human coexistence.

In 1978, in the manifesto *Art Takes on Religion*, I declared:

"...Art takes on religion means that art openly takes over the part represented by the structures that govern thought, such as religion. Not with a view to taking their place, but in order to come up with a different system of interpretation as a substitute for them, one intended to enhance people's capacity to exercise the functions of thought independently."

¹ Demopraxy supersedes the concept of democracy. In the process of defining this term, I consider it necessary, for a greater understanding, to still use the noun democracy.

The relations between art, spirituality and politics are intertwined in the exercise of these functions.

The Manifesto of *Hominitheism and Demopraxy* has emerged as a consequence of a line of research on which I embarked sixty years ago, with the substitution of the hand by the mirror, understood as the maximum extension of virtuality in the face of reality. I came to the mirror in the search for my identity. Who am I? What am I? How can I establish my identity through art? Since I come from a totally figurative artistic culture, I took my personal appearance as the image to identify. To do this I utilized the method of the self-portrait, which requires the use of the mirror. The image of myself, portrayed life-size, remained fixed in the picture, while the ground against which it was set became a mirror. Into the mirror turned into work of art entered the world, and so my self-portrait became a self-portrait of the world. Through him or herself the artist discovers the other than self. The identity of my fixed image tallies with the identity of any other person who, looking in the mirror, carries out the same process of establishment of an identity as I did. All together inside the mirror, we can verify the whole of physical existence that lies in front of the mirror. The exercises of truth that follow are part of this verification. I propose, therefore, to share them with you.

Exercises of Truth

The Mirror

What is the function of the mirror?

To reflect what is in front of it.

If no one looks at the mirror, does the mirror exist?

The answer is no, because the mirror only exists in the eyes and thoughts of the person who looks into it. The function of the mirror cannot be separated from the mental process that communicates the concept of the real.

The mirror reflects you and exists because you look at your reflection in it. Only the exercise of thought makes the mirror work. The mirror exists solely if you recognize yourself in it. The mirror is an optical aid that the brain uses to investigate and know itself.

Mystery

What is hidden in the mirror?

Are there mysteries concealed in the mirror?

The mirror has no secrets or mysteries, because it does not hide any part of reality. The mirror gives the lie to any arbitrary interpretation that we make of reality. No sign that we utilize to describe our thinking (be it a line, a point, a color, a word, an image or any other form of representation) can give a guarantee of being true, and so it can lie. The mirror presents the images of the things that it has in front of it exactly as they are. So it does not lie.

The mirror is the truth about reality.

The word truth implies, in fact, truth about something.

The mirror is the truth about things.

So the mirror is already an indication of truth.

Illusion

But isn't the mirror an illusion?

In the first place, the mirror in question is perfectly regular and does not distort.

Our perception of the mirror can, however, be clouded by the culture that has preceded and shaped us. There are cultural conditionings that distort the mirror. If we want to see ourselves clearly in it we need to strip these clouds away and learn to read it.

The mirror has always been regarded as something magical, because it captures the image of the person, rendering it intangible and impossible to grasp. This magical thinking feeds the superstition that to break a mirror is to shatter one's own identity and the certainty of one's existence.

I have publicly shattered the mirror in order to put it back together again free of superstitions.

Relativity and the Absolute

Does the absolute exist?

Yes, but it is relative.

Life viewed in the mirror appears to us to be totally encompassed in the phenomenon of relativity. The flows that lead to the formation of an image in the mirror are incalculable. Figures arrive from everywhere, approach one another, meet, intertwine and dissolve. In the mirror no form is privileged and the combination of the images takes place through the endless workings of chance, generating the phenomenon of relativity. The mirror testifies to the fact that relativity is all-embracing. The absolute, in fact, does not exist by itself, detached, distinct and distinguished from relativity, as the latter occupies the whole of time and space. The absolute, therefore, is relativity itself. This is one of the principles that derive from the truth of the mirroring work: relativity is absolute since it has no terms of comparison.

Chance and Chaos

What is the difference between chance and chaos?

Chance is the height of punctuality, never early or late, just like every instant that is reflected in the mirror. Chance, viewed in the mirror, is the principle that combines all images, bringing relativity into action. Chance does not intervene just once but always and everywhere, forming the vortex of chaos. The imponderability of the scene in the mirror represents the chaos that is not disorder, but the only order possible. The singularity of each accident is comprised in the immense vortex of chaos. Chance can be symbolized in physical terms by a ball thrown into a group of people. Many of them will begin to make it roll around, starting a game. The actions of play, in fact, are designed to steer chance toward the goal that each of them sets himself in a direct clash between opposing players: from tennis to football to the random nature of roulette in which the adversary is chance itself. The game, therefore, is an attempt to coerce chance. Just as people try to guess the number that will come out of the roulette wheel, pinning their hopes on an unlikely win, they will put their trust in chance for a miraculous cure when ill. As well as trusting in chance, we need to learn to make use of it.

Life and Death

Does the mirror give us any indication about the question of life and death?

The mirror tells the truth about life and death. Every image that appears immediately disappears. It takes the place of the previous image and then yields it to the next. Thus every image that is born simultaneously dies. The incessant dynamics of birth and death are concentrated in every moment of our existence and extend before and after that existence. The mirror always reflects the present, in which birth and death are inseparable, but at the same time it reflects the continuity

of our presence beyond the moment. As if it were a movie shot in real time, we see ourselves moving and existing, for the time of what we call life.

The Possible

Is anything impossible?

Impossibility is relative to the possible.

Everything that exists comes from the possible and in turn creates possibility. The possible ends when it becomes manifest reality.

The mirror contains all that is possible.

The image that presents itself in the mirror today was not there in the past, but was possible. The one that will be seen in the mirror in the future is not there yet, but is possible. My presence in the mirror today was already possible when I did not yet exist. In the same way someone who will be born in the future is already within the possibility of the mirror: he or she just has to come into the world. All the past and all the future are a possible present in the mirror.

The Mirror in Front of Us and Behind Us

The mirror opens up the expanse of the space before us in a continuous present, and at the same time, reflects us along with everything that is behind us. Thus we are also inclined to reflect the memory that is following us. And if we turn our back to the mirror, keeping in mind the awareness we have acquired through it, we know where we are going. In front of us lies the Third Paradise.

The Third Paradise

The word paradise comes from the Eastern Iranian word *pairidaêza* and means a garden protected by the construction of circular walls, something that was done in arid and desert zones to screen it from the wind and maintain the level of humidity needed for the growth of plants. And to make fruitful a barren soil. Thus the concept of paradise was born out of artifice and was then utilized by Christians and Muslims for its ability to evoke a state of wellbeing stretching beyond life itself. Why was the garden-paradise chosen as a metaphor? This metaphor was chosen because it appeared the best suited to representing life as a miracle. A work conceived by the human being, the garden, elevated to the status of a divine miracle. For the Jewish religion, paradise coincides with the Garden of Eden. The term Eden can be traced back to the Hebrew word *edhen*, delightful place, place of pleasure or enjoyment. But also a well-watered plain, or the Fertile Crescent. Subsequently Christianity adopted the concept of Eden, which became paradise on earth. This is the First Paradise, in which human beings considered to lack the capacity for independent thought lived in a paradisiacal state in so far as they were unaffected by the suffering that comes from wanting to understand and having to choose. As they were not the creators of that Garden of Eden, it was attributed to an omnipotent God. The metaphor of the bite of the apple represents the first moment of independence of the human being, and marks the beginning of the Second Paradise. Now it was up to humans to construct the world, this artificial world that over the course of time has been more and more completely formed. To the point of risking catastrophe. This risk has existed ever since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the First Paradise and finds expression in the religious sense of sin. Humankind

becomes a single subject, constructing metaphysics with the aim of arriving at the physical, taking possession of the rules of the universe.

The Second Paradise is the journey from the bite of the apple to the scientific and technological conquests of our day.

Art has the responsibility of having started the Spiritual Arch that unites metaphysical and physical, shared in time with religion, science and politics. As for science, today the main protagonist of the artificial world, it has achieved extraordinary things for the common good, but at the same time it is doing harm to nature, on this planet where human beings have their home. Art, today, is asking science to apply itself to the creation of a new balance between artifice and nature. The apple with a bite taken out of it, logo of the famous technology company, has turned a symbol of nature into a symbol of pure artifice. Science itself, in this passage that requires a genuine metamorphosis of human society, will necessarily have to work to mend the relationship between artifice and nature. *The Apple Made Whole Again*, an image I created in 2007, represents this repair. If that is how things stand, the whole of humanity today is faced by the urgent need to come up with a new paradise. With the expression Third Paradise we are indicating a possible course for the entire human race: a new world. Aware of the symbolic function of art, I decided to propose a symbol that could be used to represent this course. It is based on the mathematical symbol for infinity, composed of an unbroken line that intersects itself to form two circles. In the symbol of the Third Paradise, the line crosses itself twice, shaping three consecutive circles. The two outer circles represent all the opposites, including nature and artifice where they have come into conflict. The central circle is the place where it is up to us to join them, so that they can impregnate the womb of a new society.

The Third Paradise, by putting the age of knowledge to good use, ushers us into the age of responsibility.

The Path

During a performance in 1976, I wrote on a wall “Does God exist? Yes, here I am!” This declaration may be surprising, but in reality it is the essence of my reflections, consistent with the practice of my art.

Below I recount the steps that led to my making this statement.

The child, from the moment of its birth, is protected by its mother or whoever is taking care of it. This is the First Paradise. Growing up, it gradually attains independence and develops the capacity to create. At the same time, it loses the protection of its mother. Seeking protection elsewhere, it creates an artificial one. This is the Second Paradise. Humanity goes through a process identical to that of the child. In search of this protection, it creates God. Thus God is an artificial creation. Just as society moves hand in hand with the life of a person, a person goes along with the trend in society. Society now feels itself more and more protected by the progress of science and less and less reliant on divine protection. Children, after passing through a phase of religious adolescence, become technological adults. Now, as an artist, I feel that it is up to art to help those adults along in their maturity, when they will have to assume total responsibility for their own protection, as persons and as members of society. Thus the time of protection on the part of God and science is over. Each of us, to the question “Does God exist?” will be able to respond “Yes, here I am.”

This means that each of us is God, and so there is no longer just one God, as he is in everyone. The concept of monotheism is replaced by that of Hominitheism.

Change

I think that a real change in society can only take place through an outgrowing of the protection of God, or of science, in order to embark on a course of independence and individual and collective responsibility. If I still draw on the concept of theism, it is because it is rooted in human culture, part of our DNA. I don't believe it is possible to bring about this change by severing all relations with our lengthy past. In order for this transformation to take place, the transition will have to be gradual. And as a consequence, this DNA will also need to be modified.

Theisms

Looking back at the past, we can see the essential part religions have played in the great processes of anthropological formation and transformation of the whole world. Religions are true grammars of conduct, establishing practical rules, social rituals and customs, whether of small communities or large populations.

The religions that have conquered the greatest space in the history of the last few millennia can be classified into several major *isms*.

Pantheism. Literally “God is Everything” and “Everything is God”: a religious or philosophical doctrine that identifies God with the world.

Pantheism recognizes an all-embracing divine principle in the multiple forms of existence.

Polytheism. A religious system characterized by the worship of many gods, each of which exercises power independently of the others.

Polytheism was conceived as a way of toning down the social and religious tensions that emerged as a result of the fusion of different communities and getting them to coexist in a single domain by placing them under the protection of different gods. This served to avert social conflict and promote a single political and religious project centered on the person of a pharaoh or an emperor.

Monotheism. A religious system that admits the existence of only one god.

Monotheism was generated as a reaction to polytheism on the part of peoples enslaved and tyrannized by dominant powers. The religion of the one God became a hope of liberation for the weak and oppressed in every land. A single thought, a single desire, a single faith for all those who cry out for justice, who are seeking salvation, dignity, understanding, impartiality and respect.

Atheism. Denial of the existence of any god.

Atheism stands in opposition to monotheism and any other form of religious belief. This position has become ever more precisely defined over the course of the centuries, and began to find open expression with the development of science. Atheism rejects any abstract entity and any transcendence precisely because it makes the verifiability of any phenomenon its guiding principle.

Hominitheism

Hominitheism combines the ancestral principle of pantheism with the modern atheistic vision. There is, however, a basic difference with respect to both, which needs to be made clear.

Pantheism brings the existence of each thing back to god and the existence of god into each thing. All this irrespective of human thought. Hominitheism neither

denies nor asserts the existence of god, either as a distinct, unique and supreme creative entity or as an entity integrated into every element of the universe, but is founded on the responsibility that derives from the human capacity for thought. In fact the only statement of fact possible is that human thought exists and the perceptible world exists. Hominitheism focuses on the human mind's ability to process information. In that way every person assumes in full the responsibility of his or her thought and action.

Atheism asserts the need to verify every phenomenon. At present we can neither deny nor affirm the existence of a cosmic divine principle. However, I consider it necessary to continue research into our relationship with the universe in order to seek answers to questions that have always been at the center of human life; questions so fascinating that they have made thought soar beyond what it is reasonable to think. Yet, even if taken to extremes, the questions are still of a scientific character and we cannot respond to them in mystical terms. Such an unlimited way of thinking, understood as a form of spirituality, cannot in any case leave us indifferent, but needs to be brought back within a complex sensibility comprised between knowledge and personal responsibility. The individual independence of spiritual awareness is at the heart of the Hominitheistic concept.

Art

In my view any reference to spiritual sensibility is proper to art. In modern art the religious *isms* have been replaced by artistic ones. Beginning with the Impressionism of the late 19th century, we have passed through Cubism, Surrealism, Dadaism, Expressionism and Abstractionism, before arriving at the Abstract Expressionism of the 1950s. Through this process art has progressively developed its own intellectual independence. In the fifties the avant-garde artist concentrated on the creation of a form of his own, a sign of his own, and encapsulated every spiritual, cultural and social meaning in it.

All religious and political symbols were compressed and fused in the unique, individual, subjective and autonomous sign of the artist. Thus art no longer represented God or any other power and neither did it set out to document ordinary life. The artistic sign has become the symbol of a self-referential thought, free from any subjection. In this way artists have withdrawn from the established systems of power, culturally underlining a sympathy with every aspiration to freedom, independence, liberation and renaissance. My thinking is profoundly linked to the modern conquest of autonomy by the artist. But, as a consequence, I have wanted through my work to transfer this artistic independence from subjective and personal engagement to engagement with the community. It is in this way that art opens itself up to comprehension, sharing and participation by all. Following the radical intellectual revision carried out by the artistic *isms* of the 20th century, art has arrived at a reappropriation of the concept of spirituality, identified with Hominitheism. The autonomy of the artist is made up of freedom and responsibility in equal measure. Since liberty by itself is dispersed in indeterminacy it has, in fact, to be balanced by the determination of responsibility. The mission of art is to bring into society a greater personal assumption of freedom and responsibility on the part of everyone.

Outstanding among the exercises of truth proposed earlier is the phenomenon of relativity, revealed by the mirror. Both Hominitheism and democracy are defined in relativity, as a principle of identity for both.

In Hominitheism individual thought constructs conscious interpersonal

relationships, just as in democracy political action is shaped by participation, exchange and dialogue between conscious people.

In Hominitheism and democracy the interaction between community and individual takes place on the broad and complex plane of relativity and not on a top-down one based on the absolute.

As I live amidst the creative labor of people in the world, I must make use of my art to bring divinity down to a human dimension and cooperate in the shaping of a society made up of conscious and responsible people.

Democracy

Democracy signifies “power of the people.”

How can the people exercise power if it is not assumed individually by each person and then extended to everyone else?

It is vague and specious to speak of democracy in a merely populist sense. What is needed is to set in motion practices of understanding, awareness and discernment on the part of the individual in the direct relations between people, and then spread them out to encompass the whole of democratic society.

The election of political representatives to govern them by citizens is the best that the democratic system offers us today, and yet nowhere has full democracy been achieved. What is getting in the way?

Research into behavioral economics has shown the extent to which the factor of individual fraud can estrange the terms of reference in any social, economic or political relationship. For example, the greater the distance that separates the elector from his or her political representative, the less possibility there is of the former being able to keep tabs on the honesty and correctness of the latter's actions. When the number of steps between the two increases, the opportunities for fraud increase too and the sense of guilt diminishes. It is in this light that the system that regulates the relationship between voting and governance should be reformed. Transferring this observation from the political plane to the religious one, it becomes clear that the distance that is created between the believer and God by all the intermediaries that stand between the two makes the possibility of fraud extremely high. Hence the invisibility of God favors the deceit of those who add to this distance. The religious phenomenon, in a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, could therefore be considered a fraud agreed to by all believers, as they are willing to accept the impossibility of verification and control.

Less distance between people is a prerequisite for a genuine rapport, which brought down to its essentials takes the form of a one-to-one relationship. Let us look, then, at the case of the mirror, whose division generates two mirrors; and when these two reflect one another they produce an infinite number of mirrors within themselves. All duality is formed by division. This is as true for the mirror as it is for cellular proliferation: to divide is to multiply. Thus multiplication is consequent on division, and the fact that it is a consequence means that it cannot be a principle. Yet the great economic, financial and political interests treat multiplication as a principle. In fact, on this basis, they have up to now produced accumulation of wealth on the one hand and exclusion and poverty on the other. Democracy, by contrast, can only be founded on the true principle, that of division, which economically and politically finds expression in what in Italian is called *condivisione*, or sharing.

In essence the term *condivisione*, “dividing with” or sharing, applies both to the Hominitheistic spirit, as subdivision of the divine in each of us, and to the practice

of democracy, as subdivision of responsibility in social relations. "Dividing with" means bringing to the other one's own conscience, consciousness and cognition. In addition, if doing things for gain and without asking for anything in return are both present in equal measure, in a balancing of opposites, the interpersonal exchange will lead to shared wealth. Democracy grows in relation to the degree of sharing between the parts. Sharing is, in the first place, interpersonal and then extends to the global level. Careful, though: if the mutual understanding is restricted to a small and exclusive circle the democratic phenomenon is subverted and diametrically opposite effects are produced.

The Game of Profit

Use of the Web is increasingly within the reach of all. And yet in today's virtual age the whole of human society can still be subject to rules of the game invented and put into effect by groups made up of very few people who determine the moves by which the entire human race plays. The system of thought that has underpinned all planning for the future up to now has been shaped by the idea that economic power depends on the alternation of destruction and construction. The game played by a few based on this principle can deliberately bring about terrible catastrophes in accordance with the equation: the greater the disaster the greater the profit. It is possible to act on entire populations directly *in situ*, managing them from a distance, making them prosper at will or paralyzing them not just through a lack of physical material, but through computer viruses or other forms of infection. The level of the fraud referred to above has grown exponentially.

Regeneration

How can we develop a democracy that produces a healthy condition of life, overcoming systems of power that lead to practices that are increasingly distant from the obvious need for a sustainable balance in global society?

If we look at reality from the viewpoint of international politics we realize that the word democracy is used as a synonym for the culture of consumption. The system of growth in consumption, which is based on the blackmail of poverty, is still applied as the economic model of democracy. Today many parts of the world are going through the same process of development as the countries of Europe and North America (which have on the other hand begun to experience a slump in growth) and are benefiting from their emergence from conditions of hardship, privation and suffering, as if after a long war. But these nations will soon reach the saturation point that follows any rapid growth and the destructive consequences will be on a scale never seen before. Do we have to accept the prediction that catastrophe is endemically inevitable at the end of reconstruction?

Personally, I am one of those who are deeply committed to moving on to renewal while avoiding the abyss that yawns at the conclusion of this disproportionate growth of the artificial world. We are faced with a decisive question, one that has to be tackled to ensure that the artificial system of destruction-construction is reconciled with the natural one of regeneration. The process of nature turns on a combination of life and death, but is based on a sustainable balancing of this alternation. We, on the other hand, live in situations of profit that lead to the destruction of resources and to disastrous departures from the natural dynamics of regeneration. The forest, for example, always looks the same thanks to a continual

process of internal replacement. A very different phenomenon from the deforestation brought about by human beings for speculative purposes.

Morality

The basic problem is primarily a moral one.

We are accustomed to regarding religion as the source, repository, temple and caretaker of morality. Just as we are used to seeing spirituality as the monopoly of religion.

Can we consider the transcendent nature of religious faiths sufficient to check abuse of power, degradation, iniquity and the atrocities inflicted by people on people? Can reliance on divine admonition be enough to avoid the carnage, devastation and mass slaughter wrought by human beings?

In the modern era the dependence on transcendence as a source of morality is proving increasingly ineffective, while an ever-increasing barbarism driven by pure cynicism is permeating, corroding and corrupting society all over the world. So it is essential for us to completely reassess the way in which morality is understood and practiced.

This, in the social sphere, can be compared to the conduct of the most advanced scientific research. Nanotechnology is growing increasingly important, as we explore the smallest dimensions of existence in order to understand the effect they have on the universe. So perhaps we need to take an approach to morality based on forms of micro-research rather than sticking to the macroscopic one that has been applied up to now. It is necessary to set up debates and forums, networks for the reexamination and discussion of the subject of morality. To take codified forms of ethics and cut away at their structure in order to permit the introduction of new lifeblood, of ideas and procedures oriented toward interpersonal awareness and responsibility. That said, my personal quest has led me to the conclusion that morality should be identified with and practiced in the encounter, connection and interaction between opposing subjects or concepts, and the continual effort to find a balance between them.

Love Difference

As part of the process of shaping of a Hominitheistic and Demopractic morality, I created a work in 2000 entitled a *Multiconfessional and Secular Place of Meditation and Prayer*.² It takes the form of a temple that revives the concept of polytheism, bringing together Judaism, Catholicism, Islam and Buddhism in a common space. A unifying element is situated at the center of the space: the *Cubic Meter of Infinity*, something I conceived in 1965. It is a parallelepiped composed of six mirrors facing inward. We see only the back of the mirrors that form the cube, while on the inside the mirrors are multiplied endlessly.

With this work art becomes a catalyst of the meanings related to symbols of religion, each placed on a pedestal and arranged around the cube. An empty pedestal is dedicated to those who have no religion or to anyone wishing to bring the symbol of a religion that is not represented.

A multiconfessional place exists in reality too and has been handed down to us by history. It is the city of Jerusalem. But here art has not yet placed a symbol that would, like the *Cubic Meter of Infinity*, be capable of stimulating the attainment of a reconciliation of its political and religious conflicts, which have ruinous consequences for the world as a whole.

² *Lieu de recueillement et de prière pluriconfessionnel*, realized in 2000 at the Paoli-Calmettes cancer hospital in Marseilles.

The same intention as the *Multiconfessional and Secular Place of Meditation and Prayer*, but this time with a political aspect, lies behind *Love Difference, Artistic Movement for an Inter-Mediterranean Policy*, launched at Cittadellarte in 2002. The path taken by Love Difference proceeds through operations that unite the traditions of different cultures, with the aim of setting in motion a process of change where their differences find points in common. Loving differences takes the place of the concept of tolerance, implying the involvement of feeling as well as reason. The project was conceived as a preliminary step toward the establishment of a Mediterranean Cultural Parliament, that would create a vast cultural network and foster an exchange between religions, educational systems, idioms and tastes, with the aim of making possible the birth of a genuine democratic politics of the Mediterranean.

Mediterranean means between the lands. *Love Difference* does not just concern the sea called the Mediterranean, but also the other six seas that have the same characteristics, inasmuch as they are surrounded by countries with different cultures, traditions, religions and economies. They are the Black Sea, Red Sea, South China Sea, Sea of Japan, Baltic Sea and Caribbean Sea. *Love Difference* works on fertilization of the differences in these seas between lands. So it functions as a workshop focused on realizing the aims put forward by the Third Paradise.

Workshop of Democracy

I have just spoken of Jerusalem, a Mediterranean city sacred to the three main monotheistic religions, which have a common root: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. And I have also spoken specifically of the Mediterranean, the sea that unites three of the six continents. The humanity of today originated in Africa and spread initially through Asia and Europe and then to the rest of the world. If we look at the reality of human society today, we cannot help but realize that the Mediterranean Sea has become the center of political, economic and religious tensions that pervade the whole planet. Religions provoke political wars, the financial economy sets off religious wars and politics unleashes economic and financial wars. It is paradoxical that religions, which developed to protect and reassure human beings, are the incessant cause of horror and calamity.

The Mediterranean is a crucible of civilization, but at the same time it is a sea in which civilization founders. Conflicts are concentrated around the Mediterranean, where they reach their highest levels of tension. So a workshop on the responsible transformation of society finds extraordinary material for study here. We have seen that that the uprisings that have taken place in the Middle East and the Maghreb, like the Arab Spring, or the wars and revolutions that resulted in the fall of dictatorships in Iraq, Egypt and Libya, have led to new and tragic conflicts. From all this it is clear that it is very difficult for revolts, of whatever kind they may be, to bring a new balance into society. Let us take art as an example. Many artists produce significant works of denunciation, where the condemnation, born out of noble intentions, is continually bought and promoted by the very systems that the artists want to denounce and combat. The same thing happens in rebellions: the young throw themselves into them with enthusiasm, not realizing that a bigger game is being played, guided from afar by systems opposed to their ideals, in which they are mere pawns. And that make a profit out of them.

Cittadellarte marries art with politics, trying to solve the problem of the ineffectiveness of systems based on pure rebellion and passing from condemnation

to proposition. Criticism is inherent in the proposal of an alternative but it does not stop at this, leading instead to the creation of new conditions. Cittadellarte is a school where the critical issues the world is facing are identified in order to find new methods of education, based on the idea that before starting any revolution it is necessary to acquire the capacity to propose new systems able to handle the identity to which we aspire in politics, in economics and in every part of the social fabric . It is a school of democratic political education for young people who intend to devote their energies to a responsible transformation of society.

Cittadellarte

The Dalai Lama has explained to the world that we have to find an ethics that goes beyond religions. This is desirable since we have reached the point where a genuine anthropological mutation has become a necessity. While science and technology have made extraordinary achievements, moral and social consciousness remain largely untouched. It is necessary for it to make progress, in order to inspire a new responsibility in science. With this intention in mind I set up Cittadellarte in 1998, an experimental laboratory made up of experts on and researchers into various sectors of the social fabric that has the aim of *inspiring and producing a responsible change in society*. The name Cittadellarte incorporates two meanings: that of art citadel, in other words an area in which art is protected and well defended, and that of a city of art, which corresponds to the idea of an openness to the world and a complex interrelationship with it. Cittadellarte, in fact, pursues the objective of combining the aesthetic qualities of art with a fundamental ethical commitment to bringing about a real transformation in every area of civil society. With this resolve Cittadellarte is helping to steer the profound and epoch-making changes underway in a responsible and beneficial direction, thereby extending the initial idea of a *City* to that of a *Civilization of Art*. We are entering a new phase of society, one of which we are all *co-authors*.

Democratic Horizontality

Democracy cannot be achieved by following the principle of absolutism, and so the monotheism on which the absolute is based cannot be a reference for democracy. Monotheism established itself during the persecution of the Jews by the pharaohs.³ The pharaoh had political authority over the entire kingdom of Egypt, and at the same time was endowed with the nature of a deity within the polytheistic system. As the Jewish people were split into tribes, they had no single leader with the political power and divine nature of the pharaoh. This state of affairs made the Jews captives of the government that had subjugated and enslaved them. Lacking a figure recognized as a political leader of divine nature, the Jewish people exalted political power to the level of the sublime, equating it with the oneness of God. This is how the Jews were able to find the strength that has allowed them to remain a cohesive whole, wherever they might be. The formula of monotheism was the salvation of the Jewish people. And it was later adopted by that part of humanity which was struggling to free itself from subjugation by the great oppressive powers. Over time, monotheism has systematized the divinization of power, bringing

³ A historic decision to impose a monotheistic faith was taken by the pharaoh Akhenaten in the 14th century BC, which is why he came to be known as the Heretic. The attempt was not a success and was never made again in ancient Egypt.

religion and politics, united, to a verticality that leads to the absolute, and thus to absolutism and dictatorship.

Today this dictatorship finds clear and unmistakable expression in the great concentrations of power, and it also creeps in every moment into the recesses of our daily lives. Even in avowedly democratic political structures. So it has become necessary and urgent to flush out vertical power and replace it with a horizontal practice of political and social relations. This happens with Hominitheism, which is achieved horizontally through the exercise of personal and intraindividual responsibility. It penetrates into the sufferings and injustices that are rife in the lower levels of society and brings effective solutions, avoiding their subversion by religion and the politics from the height of their vertical power.

At this point, the very term democracy has to be reconsidered, so as to eliminate the concept of power that, even if it is attributed to the people, retains an atavistic defect of domination.

By moving more and more toward new practices aimed at attaining a sociopolitical equilibrium it will become possible for us to replace the concept of power, i.e. *-kratos*, with that of practice, i.e. *-praxis*, so that we will be able to speak of *demopraxy*.⁴ So the work that needs to be done is the development of good practices.

The Myth of the Navel

The navel has always had mythic status because it is the symbol of birth that every person carries at the center of his or her body. The joining of all severed umbilical cords, binding humanity together ideally, has perpetuated this myth to the present day. We presume that it will be perpetuated in the future. Each navel, through the umbilical cord, unites the son or daughter to the mother. For this reason, the woman carries with her the instinct for preservation of the children she has brought into the world. As a consequence the woman spontaneously assumes responsibility for giving humanity a future on the planet.

The central circle of the Third Paradise is the symbol of the womb of a new humanity. So the myth of the navel is inherent in the myth of the Third Paradise. The child born from this womb will be given an education that will turn him or her into a responsible adult, able to deal advisedly and on a daily basis with all the dualities out of which life is woven. Among them, just and unjust, good and bad, dignity and ignominy, love and hate. And instead of seeing them as drastic opposites, be able to arrange them in a profound concept of morality. Thereby continuing with the formation of the future society.

Theorem of Trinamics

Trinamics is the dynamics of the number three. It is the combination of two units that gives rise to a third distinct and new unit. In *Trinamics* three always represents a birth, which occurs by fortuitous or deliberate combination of two subjects.

Trinamics comes into effect in the process of conjunction, connection, combination, conjugation, interaction and fusion of two elements that are in themselves simple or complex. The Trinamic phenomenon occurs in chemistry and in physics, extends to the physiology of bodies and can even be applied to social life in its cultural, political, economic and religious aspects. The *sign-formula* of Trinamics, also used

⁴ Paolo Naldini "L'Arte della Demopraxia," in *Arte al Centro di una Trasformazione sociale responsabile* (Biella: Cittadellarte Edizioni, October 2012).

as the symbol of the Third Paradise, consists of three circles in a line. The two outer circles represent all opposites and any kind of duality. In the Theorem of Trinamics the middle circle, generated from the conjunction of the two outer circles, represents a third and previously nonexistent subject. Trinamics acts in the natural sphere as well as in the artificial one, including every area and aspect of human society. We find it at work for example in the reaction between oxygen and hydrogen that gives rise to water; in the interaction between masses of warm and cold air, causing thunderstorms; in the connection between positive and negative poles which produces electric power; in the union between male and female that generates a new being; in the dialectic between thesis and antithesis that produces synthesis; in the fusion of the opposing political models of absolutism and anarchy out of which democracy has developed.

In the specific terms of this manifesto Hominitheism and Demopraxy are two different subjects that produce a new social system when joined.

Trinamics is the principle of creation, the science of relations and balances.

Creation

First of all we must make clear where the difference lies between the term *creation* and the term *creativity*. *Creativity* is something that every human being possesses. This prerogative of our species originates from a primordial *creation* that marked the beginning of the development of the artificial world. *Creation* takes place every time there is a passage from nonexistence to existence. In this sense any initiatory event in society is a recurrence of creation.

Artists do not like to be described as *creative* because they see themselves as *creators*, that is to say capable of making something completely new.

But looking further, we find that the word creation was first used for the work of God, considering it is by his will that the universe exists, whereas before it did not. Thus the work of God is that of *a supreme artist*. This is what creationists believe, in contrast to evolutionists, who investigate existence through scientific research.

As an artist, I do not identify with creationism, even though my work falls within the concept of creation. I believe in fact that it brings knowledge which did not exist previously. I say knowledge because the result of my work is not limited to my personal expression, but it also pursues the aim of a search for understanding of what exists, just as happens in science.

It is important to bear in mind that I am a visual artist, and so my research does not deal directly with the physicality of things, but investigates them through their image. With the *Mirror Paintings* I was able to identify the image phenomenologically with space-time, i.e. the fourth dimension. Now, as well as with the image, I continue to work with the imagination. Through it, I propose to shape a scenario that opens onto the future.

Grasping the symbolic property of art, I drew the Trinamic sign that represents creative duality, contained in the two outer circles, and the event of creation, contained in the inner circle. The symbol is valid for nature, in which creation takes place continually through the connection of different elements. But the symbol is also valid for artificial creation, produced by human action. In addition, the same symbol also holds good for the connection between an element created in nature and an element that is created artificially.

This connection sets in motion the process that we have called the Third Paradise.

Now let us ask ourselves what we really want, seeking at the same time to answer the question: what is the reason for living?

In nature creation is ruthless, it shows no mercy.

On the one hand human creation acts ruthlessly, and on the other it is able to generate mercy. The act of placing mercilessness and mercy in the two outer circles to obtain a third element is in itself a point in favor of human creation with respect to natural creation. Thus the use of the Trinamic symbol becomes decisive in the attempt to find a balance between the monstrous and the virtuous that coexist within us and at the same time divide us, as happens in the interpersonal context. To attain this equilibrium, it is indispensable for the sapient being—*Homo sapiens*—to draw on the sense of responsibility that lies behind every color of skin, and make it a constant practice.

The Empty and the Full

In 1968, in a text entitled “Tra” (“Between”), I wrote about my group of works called *Minus Objects 1965-66*: “...rather than the objects what interests me is the passage between objects.... We move between objects in a room along conventional and stale routes because we take only the presence of the objects into consideration and not the empty space that we are really living in.... When two individuals move, for example, they consider their own and the other’s bodies to be real, rather than the space without substance that lies between them. It is in this empty space that they can actually meet and communicate.... My presence is made manifest not in the space and time of objects but in the invisibility of their non-presence....”

In the *Mirror Paintings* we see the mirror as a total void filled with the whole of existence. The mirror, in fact, has no semantic properties, no signs or images of its own, but gathers within itself all possible signs and the images. The semantic void of the mirror demonstrates that the void exists. Extending the emptiness of the mirror universally signifies filling it with images of the whole of physical existence. So it can be argued that absence and presence, like the empty and the full, nothing and everything, are both primary elements of creation. It follows that the physical universe would not exist without the void, i.e. nothingness, that contains it. Affirmation and negation are partners in duality; nothing and everything affirm and negate each other in turn, giving substance to creation and at the same time denying it. The same thing is true for the extreme relationship between never and always, according to which the whole of time contains all and nothing in every instant.

Everything exists just once, in the moment in which it is reflected in the mirror, between the nothing of before and the nothing of after. But there is an image of reality that is reflected in both the nothing of before and the nothing of after. In this way the chain of nothing and of things is forged: the chain of things is intertwined with the chain of nothing, and the chain of nothing is intertwined with the chain of things.

For everything that exists carries its negation within it. In fact what exists now was not there before, while what had come into existence is already no longer there, because it has become something else. So *creation* is matched by *uncreation*, an annulment already present in birth.

For science, the maximum speed is that of light, for it is unable to measure the speed of nothing. The empty and the full, like the nonexistent and the existent, are revealed at every instant of our life between everything done and everything to be done, in a present that is annulled in becoming and becomes by annulling itself. The answer to Hamlet’s question “to be or not to be?” is “be and don’t be.” The empty

and the full, like the all and the nothing, are also perceived unconsciously: between two moments or between two people, between one decision and the next, between two feelings or two emotions, between two wishes and two decisions. Getting up in the morning we are faced with the emptiness of the day and in one way or another we get going, seeking a coordination in activity, in order to fill that vacuum. Happiness and distress alternate in the quest to fill the emptiness that pervades life. The need to obtain food is a biological cure for the sickness of the void and all artificial means are useful in curing the sickness of the void that pervades society. The lack of power gives a sense of emptiness. In the past a *horror vacui* held sway in the corridors of power, so that all space was filled with decorations and all time with music. Today the great occasions of aggregation, such as the rock concerts and football games that fill stadiums, serve to fill the vacuum between people. I feel this sensation of emptiness and I practice art to understand what existence is through the void of the mirror, in which the infinite comes to an end at every instant. In 1993, when I presented Cittadellarte, in the still empty space at Biella, I declared publicly: "My legacy will be an empty space."

All of us feel the presence of the great nothing at every moment, even though science does not recognize it because it works in the completely full. And the religions venture into the void, creating God and the gods, in an attempt to fill the mental vacuum in which humanity flounders. But they cannot fail to recognize the duality in opposites, and thus assert the existence of both God and the devil. In Christianity there is also the Trinity, which places the "Holy Spirit" at the center. In the decorations of the remote past we often find drawings that resemble the Triple Circle of Trinamics. We have no explanations of these, but they already convey a sense of energy and balance. Visiting the Sistine Chapel, we always look up to admire the frescoes of Michelangelo Buonarroti. But if we were to look down, we would see the Triple Circle on the floor, used as a decorative element but undoubtedly chosen for the emotional charge of its significance.

In the drawing of the Triple Circle the central space can be seen as the vacuum that is filled with our collective creation. We are seeking the rules of the universe, but in the meantime we can at least try to create a human society that is able to combine science with mercy.

Power

Let us look at the concept of power. To this end it will be useful to refer to a photographic work of mine from 1975, entitled *La conferenza (The Lecture)*.

A speaker stood in front of an audience made up of twenty people. A camera was given to each of them. The audience photographed the lecturer and at the same time the lecturer photographed the audience.

At the end we reproduced the image of the lecturer twenty times, while the whole audience was reproduced in a single image, the one taken by the lecturer. This is a photograph of power: the whole of the public is concentrated in the person of the speaker, while the person of the speaker is multiplied by the number of people that are in the audience. The lecturer can be someone who speaks to us in the name of God and the audience can be the congregation kneeling in front of him. The lecturer can be the dictator and the audience the people who listen to him.

This work makes it clear how, in both politics and religion, a condition of dominance and subjugation can be produced.

The democratic stance is very different, finding expression in the effort, made by every person, to understand and be understood by everyone else, as represented in

another of my works in which everyone takes each other's picture. This generates a chain of mutual projections and comprehensions. Thus the Trinamic effect of the interpersonal relationship radiates out into society, producing a widespread and Hominitheistic democracy.

Money

Money meets the requirements of the Theorem of Trinamics in so far as it is a third element created through mediation between the parts. It came into being with the function of facilitating exchange between human capacities and activities, in precise quantities and qualities.

The purpose of currency is to symbolize the values that are proper to things and people.

Over time, however, it has lost its function of mediation. As a result value has been transferred from things to money, invalidating the very reason for which it was invented. Out of this comes the antagonism between money and what it represents.

Today we have to meet two pressing needs. The first, to find a balance again in the relationship between work, production, trade and shared prosperity, giving money back its original function.

The second, to create new rules, so that money will take on a social function, becoming a guarantee of the dignity of all people.

Doing Something for Nothing

It is necessary for democracy to dissociate itself from the destructive model of exponential consumption and turn back to the principle of sharing. This principle will have to be put into effect in the relations between people and be extended to those between people and the environment. The concept of doing something for nothing fits into this sharing. Nature regenerates itself without expecting anything in return, while human beings no longer seem able to renounce the search for profit. The time has come to bring the relationship between human speculation and natural processes back into proportion.

Making a profit and doing something for free seem to be opposites, but they can be complementary. They just have to find a balance. Pecuniary advantage cannot be regarded as the highest and sole objective. The attainment of an equitable life for all people is a value that is in itself free of charge and it is the true aim. The balance between these two extremes, making a profit and doing something for nothing, should be sought, in a society that is today undergoing profound transformation, through ethical goals that cannot be achieved if the accumulation of money is the sole aim. Above and beyond philanthropic donations, everyone, from the richest to the poorest, has the space and time to do something for the responsible transformation of society without expecting anything in return. Democracy, in fact, is not the prerogative of a particular class. Everyone is called on to contribute to the good of society, which has no cost. It is a question of shifting the desire for the personal accumulation of power and money toward a scheme of universal fairness. An example is *Rebirth Third Paradise*, a work of worldwide involvement, in which everyone participates with the means at their disposal, voluntarily contributing their own capacity for transformation.

Sharing

A human being needs another human being.

I am one or the other of a pair.

No one can accept being really alone, the search for the other is continual for all. God has been created as the other for everyone. Religions have always placed God between two people to solve the dramatic difficulties they face in their direct relationship. Direct connection between individuals is essential. The exchange of love is important but not enough; an exchange of authority is needed. I have to be authoritative for you and you authoritative for me. Authoritative does not mean authoritarian. The democratic system is sustained by an authority that spreads and branches out among people, i.e. by the possibility and capacity that each of them has to vouch for the other. I vouch for you and you vouch for me. It is a matter of creating mutual trust. If believing means trusting, I have to be able to believe in you and you in me. If the two of us learn to trust one another we do not have to fear betrayal.

[...]

This sharing of trust and authority extends to the dimension of small, medium-sized and large communities and all the way up to society as a whole. Authority is what each of us seeks in the other. If we don't find it in those who are close to us then we look for it farther away. But distance, as was pointed out earlier, increases the risk of fraud. Democratic society is formed between people who are in close contact and exchange their complementary capacities. The Web increases the possibility of meeting at a distance while maintaining a relationship of proximity between people. In this sense participatory politics takes on a planetary dimension. However, it is necessary for these virtual relationships to expand into ethical cooperation, and for them to be interwoven with experiences carried out in actual practice.

From Predation to Domesticity.

The globalizing dimension of contemporary society obliges us to tackle the current widespread crisis on all levels: spiritual, cultural, political, economic, environmental and demographic.

We are reaping the consequences of the failure to complete the process, which began millennia ago and has accelerated over the last century, of taking our species from the animal state to the "human" one by means of artificial progress.

Specifically we have not yet freed ourselves from the instinct of predation, which still holds sway over us despite the fact that scientific and technological progress makes it possible to obtain from nature the sustenance needed for the survival of the whole planet's population. Not only have we continued to kill and eat every kind of animal, but we have applied the concept of race within the same human species, extending the act of predation to people as if they were beasts, in order to "feed" on our fellows.

In doing this we have transposed the phenomenon of predation on animals onto the cultural plane; thus we can speak of outright "cultural cannibalism."

This practice has given rise to two alternative outcomes in the relationship between individuals: war, which has as its consequence the survival of just one of the two parties, or a state of subjugation, exploitation or annihilation by one person of another. History shows us that the two outcomes are linked, consequential and repeated.

At the present moment in the history of our species, therefore, the abnormal contrast between the advances in scientific knowledge and the backwardness of the behavior in which we all remain caught is all too evident. And it is on this profound discrepancy that there is an urgent need to work. In fact we can only speak of progress by freeing ourselves from the natural predatory instinct, which still conditions people and affects the way that the whole of society operates. In order for

this to happen it is indispensable to take our cue from situations in which the predatory nature has already been overcome.

They are situations that can be summed up in a key word: domesticity.

It is easy to grasp how the meaning of this term offers a solution to the dilemma of human incompleteness if we consider how the animals that live with us, in the domestic environment, have been brought to a point where they have overcome the instinct of predation. The dog has been transformed from a predatory wolf into a tame and faithful companion.

Extending the phenomenon of domestication from the relationship with animals to the relationship between people, it would be possible to develop a civilization liberated from the primitive condition that has up to now justified the proverb *homo homini lupus*, man is a wolf to man.

[...]

Domesticity is a realization of the desire to share the moments and spaces of life, in other words it is the practice of being together with mutual satisfaction. In this sense the gratification of relationship overrides the instinct to subjugate and “consume” the other.

A new maxim ought to be: do in order to give, and give in order to have, i.e. I feed you and you feed me. In this way the concept of “use” is subverted: the other is not eliminated to your advantage, but you obtain spontaneously the benefit of what has been done and given to satisfy the other. A benefit that is spread not only between people, but also between people and the environment that surrounds them, with which it is possible to establish a mutual understanding, satisfying for both. We have found a way to bring animals into our homes by domesticating them, so it is we who are offering animals the possibility of being domestic. Just as human beings work together for their common good, animals are taught to do their part of the collective labor. Knowing that they have, in an embryonic state, the same capacities for learning as have been developed by humans themselves. But between the possibility of learning and training the human being can act toward the animal in a coercive and violent manner, something that also happens very frequently between people in the context of education. This type of training is inherent in predatory culture and is done exclusively for the benefit of the trainers. Such practices need to be replaced by an education in the family and school that develops on the interpersonal level the kind of empathic relations that are established with animals when the exchange is extended from a question of sustenance to the emotional plane, producing respect, trust and sharing. It is a way of handling relationships that ought to become customary in civil society. The idea that domesticity can provide an example on which to base a harmonious coexistence should be given serious consideration and explored by bringing many different opinions to bear on it. However, it remains clear that the main problem to be solved, in order to achieve this harmony, is hunger. The first act in the process of domesticating a predatory animal is to offer it food. Once hunger has been eliminated it is possible to move on to trust, friendship and mutual benefit.

Thus, in human society, once the need for sustenance has been met, it becomes possible to establish a balanced and peaceful relationship in all the others aspects of life in common.

Scientific and technological progress, steered in an ethical direction and toward sustainability, is capable of providing the population of the entire planet with food. It is now just a question of will. And this means a commitment to responsible change in the cultural, economic and political sphere. The craving for possession and power leads instead to the worst use of culture and science. So it is essential to solve the problem of hunger. Succeeding in meeting the physical needs for food on a global scale would also result in the intellectual regeneration of human beings. In

this way, through domesticity, we could rid ourselves of cultural cannibalism. In short let us say that by making the best use of science, technology and the arts we can give sustenance to humanity and rise above the instinct for predation that the animals which live with us have already overcome in an elementary way. We should not forget that the term domesticity comes from the Greek *doma* and Latin *domus*, house, which is the home of coexistence.

From Democracy to Demopraxy

In democracy organizing does not mean constructing the pyramid of your own power, but responding to the trust placed in you by creating more trust to give back to society. It is necessary to devise and put into effect practices that will make the relationship of trust inescapable in the whole of society, i.e. to establish a web of close interpersonal and intercommunity ties that will permit an immediate verification of the processes of collective living, through the reciprocity of a continual exchange that is never passive or inert.

Monocultural systems, from religion to politics and including the agricultural practice of growing a single crop and the centralization of economic and financial processes, reduce or eliminate the possibility of establishing this network of relationships. Consequently these systems remove the possibility of control from individuals, relegating them to an essentially passive role.

The elimination of differences produces a monotheistic and monopolistic culture and *devitalizes* the different individual elements. So we are trying to get a kind of politics into place in which people can participate directly, allowing them to channel their energies into their own capacities, in the physical and practical sphere as well as the intellectual and spiritual one. The participation of citizens can no longer be limited to the delegation of power to a representative, but neither can it be permitted to get bogged down in endless debate. We need to develop practical methods to take concrete decisions and actions that affect the real life of individuals and communities.

Since its foundation in the nineties, Cittadellarte has been a laboratory in which to try out and develop these practices aimed at encouraging the active participation of people in processes that concern every aspect of society.

In 2011, a process of democratic practice was set in motion at the Urban Art Biennale held in the city of Bordeaux. Called *Evento*, I was responsible for its artistic direction. That occasion saw the opening of the *Working Groups of Shared Knowledge*, organized by artists invited to devise and realize meeting places for the participation of bodies like neighborhood associations, schools and social and cultural centers.

The program of the *Working Groups* was drawn up in such a way as to offer all the inhabitants of the city a chance to find out whether they were capable of sharing their knowledge and their aspirations for common civic participation. Cittadellarte is continuing this practice through the *Rebirth* project, setting up forums in various countries that bring together members of public and private institutions, entrepreneurs, university teachers, researchers and people active in civil society. At each forum subjects and questions are discussed and turned into guidelines and programs of action to be developed in *Working Groups for the Responsible Transformation of Society* that will operate for a year, at the end of which the results will be used to hold a new forum.

The participants are split into teams of 8-10 people, a size that permits an effective dialogue and exchange of ideas. Those ideas are brought together through the mediation of facilitators, who encourage the participation of all the individuals in

each team and are responsible for drawing up generally agreed summaries. We think that this method, which we find has already been applied in a variety of cases and situations, can be utilized in a specific way to set up practical systems of governance around which to organize politics on every level.

The *forums* are the first structured systems of demo-practice, individual organic elements that constitute the physical framework from which the social body takes its shape. The *forums* have a common constitution, but differ from one another in relation to the places in which the system of governance is going to be applied.

With the direct participation of citizens in the management of public affairs, the concept of “power” undergoes a radical change: instead of being seen as a dominating force, it is conceived as “empowerment” on the part of each and every one of us.

Thus expressions that in some way take us back to the idea of power as an overriding, monotheistic and monopolistic phenomenon do not apply to the process which we are trying to put in place, which aims to get everyone to acquire greater freedom and take on greater responsibility in the context of society. Thus, the word power, *kratos* in Greek, from which the term “democracy” is derived, does not chime with a process which involves putting people in a position where they “can do.” So we intend to replace the word *democracy* with that of *demopraxy*, from the Greek *praxis*, which means practice or doing. The objective is to establish a truly “demopractical” politics.

We think that people’s education, from nursery school to university, should be based on the project of *demopraxy*, so that this demopractical approach becomes integrated into the daily behavior of people in all walks of life.

Homo Artisticus

What has been said up to now concerns a commitment made by art to human society. The commitment is to lead this society through and beyond the phase of transition which it has reached. This “last manifesto” of mine does not end here, but I want to briefly take stock of what has happened and is happening with respect to the prospects for our future.

From the time it took possession of the human system, *Homo sapiens* has moved further and further toward possession of the whole world. And today it is demonstrating, unequivocally, its ability to do so. *Homo sapiens* has realized that it can itself produce what nature has not yet produced.

The passage from the First Paradise, when we were totally integrated into nature, to the Second Paradise, the artificial one, could be said to have reached its conclusion here and now: with the emergence of *Homo techno*.

As a living being and an artist can I remain wholly indifferent to this transition from *Homo sapiens* to *Homo techno*? Can I do this while I myself have one foot in one and one foot in the other of the two *Homines*? As a responsible artist, I want to give myself a body that has both of these feet. And standing on both is able to find a new balance. Succeeding in this intent means giving rise to *Homo artisticus*, which, partly by ceasing to abscond from nature, is capable of taking us into the Third Paradise.

Michelangelo Pistoletto

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