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**FONDAZIONE
Aurelio Peccei**



ELEONORA BARBIERI MASINI

The Legacy of Aurelio Peccei

and the Continuing Relevance of his Anticipatory Vision

Eleonora Barbieri Masini

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Preface

Aurelio Peccei was born in a dynamic decade. At the beginning of the 20th century man had conquered the air with planes and zeppelins and the first European capitals had constructed metro lines. There was the spirit of progress in the heart and minds of people and it was not until 1972, when "Limits to Growth" was published as the first report to the Club of Rome, that a public discussion started on the question as to whether mankind was moving towards a disaster even in the absence of unrest and war.

Peccei played a historical role in bringing scientists and statesmen together, and motivating them to think about how to tackle the problems of humankind. His concept has been practiced successfully for around 40 years in the Club of Rome, and recently a group of young people have started to work together in the spirit of the Club of Rome, 'The Think Tank 30'. Unfortunately, the members of this group and also an increasing number of members of the Club of Rome never had the opportunity to meet Peccei personally as he passed away in 1984. His heritage is kept alive by the Aurelio Peccei Foundation which organizes events such as the Aurelio Peccei Lectures in Rome.

One of these lectures was held in 2004 by Prof. em. Eleonora Barbieri Masini, who joined the Club of Rome already in 1975. The presentation was the basis for this publication, which addresses those readers who have collaborated with Peccei and would like to have a look back, and also those from the younger generation who are interested in his work.

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Aurelio Peccei's Biography and Career*

Aurelio Peccei was born and raised in Torino in 1908. There, influenced by his family and the local social culture, he developed his life-view in which man, with his human resources and his desire for freedom, was the central element. He graduated from university in Torino with a degree in economics in 1930. During the early 1930s, he acted on his desire to meet different people and visit new places, went to the Sorbonne with a scholarship and was awarded a free trip to the Soviet Union. His knowledge of other languages and his proven desire to travel beyond Italy's borders brought him to Fiat, which gave him the opportunity to work and lead their activities in China, Shanghai, and Nanchang in the mid 1930s.

In China, Peccei got to know the country and its people, whose human capacities he held in high esteem throughout his life - another example of his ability to be forward-thinking. Peccei highly admired the ability of the Chinese people to undertake any kind of work, no matter how new or complicated it might be, and found their wisdom and patience, distilled from centuries of culture, very interesting.

Having returned to Italy at the eve of World War II, Peccei soon became involved in the anti-fascist movement and the Resistance, where he was a member of 'Giustizia e Libertà'. During the war he was arrested, tortured and underwent a number of vicissitudes that only those who lived in that period can truly understand in their complexities and drama. However, as Peccei wrote, this period served to make him better understand the importance of mankind's inner capacity and strength, which allows men and women in terrible situations to defend human dignity. His experiences in China and the dramatic period of the resistance confirmed his interest in human potential.

After the war, Peccei was engaged in the rebuilding of Fiat and was involved with the same energy and ability to look beyond the present, in various of the private and public efforts then under way to rebuild Italy, including the founding of Alitalia. This myriad of activities was carried out without accepting any political or economic posts, which he could easily have had, given his role in the Italian Resistance. In 1949 his desire to experience and operate in a larger context led him to accept a trip to Latin America to help Fiat restart their operations there, which had essentially been halted during the war. He settled in Argentina, where he lived for nearly a decade with his family. During this period, he started Fiat Concord, which built cars and tractors, and became rapidly one of the most successful automotive firms in Latin America. He poured enormous energies into Fiat's activities in the whole of Latin America, and contributed to the industrial rebirth of this region, something for which he is still fondly remembered.

During this period, however, he continued to maintain his broader interests in mankind, irrespective of social status, and kept an eye open for political and social developments in other regions, including the Mediterranean. This led him, in 1958 with the backing of Fiat, to found Italconsult and become the Chairman of the Board, a

position he held until the 1970s when he became Honorary President. Italconsult was an engineering and economic consulting group for developing countries, in which Italian firms were engaged. It operated under Peccei's leadership, on the whole, mostly as a non-profit consortium. Also during this activity, Peccei left his mark through the development of human potential.

In 1964 he was asked to manage Olivetti. This large and established firm, which had been at the forefront in the development of typewriters and other office machines, was also well known for its internal social policies and for supporting the links between industry and culture. Olivetti was in significant difficulties at that time due to the profound changes in the office machine sector. Peccei, with his foresight and his entrepreneurial vision, as well as his strong belief that the human potential can be the key to change, was able to successfully turn Olivetti's situation around in this instance.

As a result of activities that started in the 1960s and continued into the 1970s, Peccei was one of the principal architects of the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Laxenburg, Austria in 1972. This Institute was formed after a considerable struggle, but then served as an important bridge between East and West, partly because its founders included the United States (through the National Academy of Sciences), the Soviet Union (through the Soviet Academy of Sciences), and further countries in the then Western and Eastern sector of the world, such as the Italian Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche. IIASA became a meeting place for scholars and scientists from around the globe and provided a bridging function for the scientific world, producing important studies in different fields, including climate change, energy and agriculture.

It was during this same period, partly as a result of some of these activities and partly because his attention was focused more and more on global issues, that Peccei began to seriously worry about global problems, particularly in the area of the environment. He became involved in the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as a member of its International Board, and was a strong supporter of their mission, not only internationally but also locally in Italy.

**This chapter is based mainly on Aurelio Peccei's book from 1976 'The Human Quality', as well as on the introduction by Umberto Colombo to "Lezioni per il ventunesimo secolo" (2000)*

Peccei's Attitudes - First Publications

Before describing Aurelio Peccei's publications, it is important to indicate the fundamental thrusts of the thinking and action which emerge from the brief sketch of his life given above. One can see a first, or initial, stage of development which is centred on his ability as an entrepreneur and his knowledge of the global economy. This first stage, however, is overtaken by a second stage, where his capacity of ranging beyond a given enterprise, country, or even a continent, and to understand the linkages

between disparate phenomena, plays a fundamental role. This is then followed by a final stage of development, what might be called his 'red line' or the baseline of all his future activities. This is centred on his unstoppable commitment and sense of responsibility for mankind and its human potential, irrespective of where one lived or of whatever responsibility one had in life. Peccei recognized, in fact, the human potential of entrepreneurs and intellectuals, just as well as that of farmers, workers and artists, irrespective of whether they were from Russia, Latin America, the United States, Austria or Italy. Throughout his life he worried about how to develop this human potential further, recognizing that this is the key to changing society into one that is more human.

The introduction of his 1976 book 'The Human Quality' is quite telling about Peccei's thinking. After an analysis of global problems, he writes "Why do we have this general and incurable moral, political, social, psychological, economic and ecological crisis which, in different forms, subtle or explosive, touches us all, developed or not, making us lose our bearings and pushing us towards dark futures?". To overcome the difficulties he saw for the world in 1976, he asks further "Don't we need something quite different than what is being proposed by the various social actors, be they national politicians or the United Nations, on what is by now a global chess-board?". He answers this question by suggesting that what is needed "is a true and proper mutation, a new way to live for man which would put him in harmony with the reality he continually manipulates, transforms, and creates himself". This is the jump in human quality he discusses in his book. It gives a true sense of his thinking and the need for action he felt, and proves his anticipatory capacity which became so clear with his total engagement with and for the Club of Rome.

It is important at this point to refer to the book he wrote prior to 'The Human Quality' – the 1969 book 'The Chasm Ahead'. This was identified by Dennis Meadows during the Club of Rome meeting in Helsinki in 2004 as the book which helped start all the debate about limits and which has now lasted for more than 30 years since the publication of 'Limits to Growth'. The book illuminates clearly the principles which became the vision of the Club of Rome. This vision was one directed to the future, and is the key to both Peccei's and the Club of Rome's message. In 'The Chasm Ahead', Peccei identified the following key principles which emerge when thinking about the future:

- Humanity and the global environment are both parts of the same integrated macro-system.
- Many of the components of this macro-system are at risk of breaking down, or even of totally being destroyed.
- Developing such a global plan and implementing it are a collective obligation of all groups that have the capacity to do so.

Peccei as Founder of the Club of Rome

With the previously described ideas, Peccei began to think in earnest about how to move them forward. His thinking crystallized after a chance encounter in 1967 with Alexander King, the Director General for Scientific Affairs for the OCED in Paris at that time. Peccei and King decided to organize a meeting on 7-8 April 1968 of around thirty scholars at the Accademia dei Lincei in Rome, to discuss their ideas about the global aspects of problems facing mankind and of the necessity of acting at the global level.

The meeting at the Accademia dei Lincei was not a success, partly due to the difficulty of the participants to focus on a distant future. After the meeting, there was an informal gathering of a few people in Peccei's home, which included Erich Jantsch, Alexander King, and Hugo Thieman. The Club of Rome grew out of this meeting of minds and people who were focused on the same problem.

Perhaps more than anything else what helped the Club of Rome to get started was the will and perseverance of Aurelio Peccei, fully backed by Alexander King. Thus started what Peccei called "the adventure of the spirit". He was fond to state that "if the Club of Rome has any merit, it is that of having been the first to rebel against the suicidal ignorance of the human condition". Another quote by Peccei, in this respect, is particularly telling - "It is not impossible to foster a human revolution capable of changing our present course".

After a series of different attempts, which could be of interest to historians of future thinking, it was decided to ask a group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to undertake a project for the Club of Rome. The project, which by now had become a clear objective for the Club of Rome, was to describe the 'World Problematique' through a mathematical model that would be able to represent its various aspects and which could be used as a guide for future actions. The risky aspect for the Club of Rome was to want to have a mathematical model for the problems of the globe.

Meanwhile, there had been some clarification on what kind of an organization the Club of Rome should be. It should be small, with not more than 100 members; it should not have much funding in order to preserve its independence; it should be apolitical but transcultural (in terms of disciplines and cultures); and, finally, it should be informal. In a sense, it should be a non-organization, and one that should be dissolved once its objectives had been reached.

The Club should be an interdisciplinary group that would focus on the long term, not a group with a narrow vision which would look at things only from a certain disciplinary bias (irrespective of how deep the discipline is), or from the standpoint of a given country or region. It really needed to be transcultural.

The First Report to the Club of Rome – ‘Limits to Growth’

The Club of Rome’s MIT project originated from a proposal made by Jay Forrester. Forrester who, for a number of years had been working on dynamic systems at MIT, outlined a mathematical model for the World which contained the by now well-known interdependent parameters of population, depletion of non-renewable resources, industrialization, food production, and environmental degradation. Forrester entrusted the project to Dennis Meadows, who at that time was a young researcher in his group. This was how ‘The Limits to Growth’, the first Report to the Club of Rome, was born. This report was presented publicly at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington on 12 March 1972. ‘The Limits to Growth’ was translated into 30 languages and 10 million copies of the book were sold, helping the Club of Rome gain the world stage.

Dennis Meadows revisited the model in 1992. The first presentation of this reanalysis was supported by the Fondazione Aurelio Peccei, and occurred during a lecture entitled ‘Beyond the Limits’. What emerges from this up-dating of the input data for the 1972 mathematical model was that humanity had already gone beyond the limits indicated in the original book. That meant that, from this new analysis, it appeared that human use of many essential resources and generation of many kinds of pollutants had already surpassed sustainable rates.

A third volume appeared in 2004 and confirms what was written 12 years previously, that we have overshoot. That is that humanity has unintentionally gone beyond the limits of our globe. The unintentional nature of this phenomenon reminds us of Peccei’s thinking on the ignorance prevailing in our times. A quote from him in 1979 is very apropos - “The dominant cultural thinking privileges detailed analyses, which flood one with information, forgetting that only a desire for synthesis allows one to translate all this information into true and proper knowledge, and a source for wisdom”.

The authors of ‘Limits to Growth’ never claimed that they intended, or intend, to forecast the future through their model analyses. Rather, they hope that the model could point to alternative scenarios for possible futures. Indeed, the principal motivation for the 1992 and 2004 updates, besides bringing the input data up to date and showing that mankind was indeed going beyond the limits, was to encourage the citizens of the world to shoulder more responsibility for their own future. The message of the Club of Rome is therefore still alive.

The Meetings of Heads of State in Salzburg, Berlin and Guanajuto

In the decade between 1970 and 1980, Peccei put into action a plan to increase sensitivity of high level decision makers for their responsibility towards the long-term survival of mankind. With the backing of Bruno Kreisky, Chancellor of Austria, Peccei was able to convene an informal meeting of Heads of State in Salzburg,

Austria. This was remarkable, as it is well known that Heads of State always meet in formal settings, which does not help them discuss what is truly important for their citizens. The informal Salzburg meeting of 1974, which occurred away from TV cameras, allowed a number of Heads of State to talk about some of the true problems of the world and the 'World Problematique'. Besides Bruno Kreisky, the following Heads of State were present in Salzburg: Leopold Senghor (President of Senegal), Luis Echeverria (President of Mexico), Joop den Uyl (President of Holland), Olof Palme (Prime Minister of Sweden), Pierre Trudeau (Prime Minister of Canada), as well as the representatives of the Prime Ministers of Algeria and Ireland. Having an informal meeting on such a political level would seem almost unthinkable today and, even in 1974, was not that easy to arrange. What emerged from Salzburg was an increased awareness for the need to assume a collective global responsibility, and the understanding that certain national aspirations, although desirable, can only be reached in the long term within a global context.

Other informal Heads of State meetings in 1974 were held in West Berlin, and in 1975 in Guanajuato, a city that is a symbol of Mexican independence. One sees from these meetings that Peccei's scope was not only to bring the 'World Problematique' to the attention of intellectuals, but also to that of true decision makers. The Heads of State meetings, even though they are one of the more interesting activities of Peccei during this period, are not so well known. After the meeting in Salzburg, many other small intensive meetings took place and were followed by meetings at which the various reports to the Club of Rome were presented. Many of the meetings were chaired with great capacity by Gerhart Bruckman, political scientist and member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Further Reports to the Club of Rome

In parallel with these activities, various projects and reports to the Club of Rome were made public and achieved world recognition. One of these was the second Report to the Club of Rome, 'Mankind at the Turning Point' by Mihailo Mesarovic and Eduard Pestel. The book was published in 1974 and was extremely interesting from a methodological point of view, having divided the world into 10 regions. Although the report did not gain the fame of 'The Limits to Growth', the disaggregated nature of its model proved very useful, and a number of countries used the model for decision-making purposes.

This project was followed in 1976 by the RIO project. RIO stands for 'Reshaping the International Order' and was the title of the third Report to the Club of Rome. The work was directed by Jan Tinbergen, Nobel Prize winner in Economics and, in contrast to the previous reports, was not based on a mathematical model. Nevertheless, the project contained some of the elements that were central to Peccei's vision, namely that in a project with global reach, it was necessary to have contributions from people with different cultural backgrounds and different ideologies.

A group of scientists dealing with energy sources and technical change produced the fourth Report to the Club of Rome under the title 'Beyond the Age of Waste'. It was published in 1978 by Dennis Gabor, Umberto Colombo, Alexander King and Riccardo Galli, and was more along the lines of 'The Limits to Growth'.

In 1978 there was again a project of a totally qualitative nature - the fifth Report to the Club of Rome entitled 'Goals for Mankind'. The activity was led by the philosopher and cybernetic, Ervin Laszlo, and tried to address the question about common goals for mankind in a global world. This project illustrated well the development of thinking by Peccei, since finding common goals for mankind was part of his vision. In 1978 there was also the publication of the sixth Report to the Club of Rome, 'Energy - The Countdown' by Thierry de Montbrial and, during the same period, as an answer to an important need expressed by Peccei, more intensive thought about education for the future.

The seventh Report to the Club of Rome was published with the title 'No Limits to Learning'. This book demonstrated Peccei's desire of defeating ignorance through an educational effort aimed at developing human qualities by directly improving each person, but also as a means of avoiding damages to the environment and to society itself. This is very much in the spirit of the 'red line' mentioned above. 'No Limits to Learning' was led by three people of quite different backgrounds, Mircea Malitza, (Romania, mathematician), Mahdi Elmandjra (Morocco, political scientist) and James Botkin (USA, higher education specialist). Once again, the approach was intercultural and interdisciplinary.

Giorgio Nebbia wrote an article in the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* in memory of Aurelio Peccei, 20 years after his death, and identified two key themes that guided Peccei's actions and, indeed, his life - what has been called "attention to, and education for, the future" and "a vision for the future of humankind" is a very important part of Peccei's later thinking. This thrust and spirit led Peccei to devote a good portion of his last years to the assembly of a group of young people under thirty years of age, coming from different countries, with the firm belief that the Club of Rome also needed the input of the young on what could or should be their future. This endeavour was considered fascinating. Unfortunately, after Peccei's death, the Club of Rome decided to discontinue this activity. It is good to note that in 2000 the Club of Rome has decided to help a group of young people to establish the Think Tank 30 of the Club of Rome.

Meetings in Japan, Hungary and Colombia

Peccei organized a variety of international meetings such as a meeting in Tokyo in 1982 with the title 'Approaching the 21st Century: Global Problems and Human Choices', which involved some leading world figures. Here again, one sees Peccei's clear effort to make important decision makers become more aware of what the choices are for mankind. Two of them were Saburo Okita, one of the architects of the

development of the Japanese economy (we were then in the middle of Japan's economic boom), and Soedijatmoko, the then Rector of the United Nations University in Tokyo. Both became members of the Club of Rome.

Another important meeting took place in Budapest in 1982 on the theme 'Food for Six Billion'. This meeting, which occurred when the Berlin Wall still existed, benefited from the presence of important personalities in the Soviet Union and of other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, in addition to Hungary. Their contributions, as well as the support of the Director General of FAO, made this meeting particularly important. The meeting was organized jointly by Peccei and József Bognar, one of the main people responsible for the survival of Hungarian agriculture, which allowed for the co-existence of small privately owned farms with the large state-supported agribusinesses. The former helped Hungary emerge from the crisis caused by the fall of the Soviet Union.

The last meeting Peccei organized and participated in was in Bogotá, Colombia, in December 1983, with the striking and brave title of 'Development in a World of Peace'. This title was particularly brave for a country in a semi-permanent guerilla status, with very serious political and economic divisions. Co-organizer of the meeting was the President of Colombia, Belisario Betancour. Even today this meeting is remembered by many Colombians for its vision and courage, and all events had a deep effect on the participants.

It is interesting to note the venue of these meetings, both from a historical and geographical standpoint. Peccei was very much aware of the historical importance of events for the choices one makes, and guidance one has, of possible futures. Thus, he held a meeting in Japan on responsible development in the middle of a strong economic expansion; one in Hungary with a model agricultural society tackling the difficult issue of food for the world in the future, and one in Colombia where it was obvious that for development, peace is a necessity.

The Reception of Peccei's Vision in Italy

Unfortunately, not so much attention was paid to the thinking of Peccei in Italy at that time compared to his success on the global level, but there were co-operations with the Italian chapter of WWF and the Gregorian University, which invited him to speak on various occasions and published some of his writing, and where some of these texts still form part of the course materials at the Gregorian University, Faculty of Social Sciences for a course on Human Ecology. Giorgio Nebbia wrote in 2004 that "The majority of economists, politicians, and businessmen in Italy made fun of Peccei's theses. These attacks, and the irony he was subject to, saddened Peccei while he lived. However, today at a distance of more than thirty years a number of people in Italy also seem to agree with him ... shouldn't we, perhaps, re-read what Peccei wrote?"

Conclusion

Peccei's last writing in March 1984 was 'The Club of Rome: Agenda for the End of the Century'. The importance of this document is perhaps attested to by the fact that Senator Pell introduced it on 28 June 2004 in the Congressional Record of the United States Senate. This document was finished by Peccei less than 12 hours before his death; it was not re-read by him, and in some way is considered his spiritual testament. The text survived because it was dictated to his assistant, Anna Pignocchi, who subsequently transcribed it. Peccei began the document by pointing out that there are only 6000 days before humankind would reach the year 2000 and then goes on to make a number of observations, many of which are still valid today:

- what will happen in these 6000 days will depend almost exclusively on what human beings will do and when and how they will do it;
- the growth of population in the world in these 6000 days will be such that it will require great changes to take place;
- the relations between mankind and the environment will continue to deteriorate;
- human society will grow not only in size, but also in the complexity and intricacy of its relations;
- new technologies will continue to emerge and develop, like microelectronics, genetic engineering, etc.;
- fatal decisions will be made on whether or not to continue the arms race;
- we need to understand that there is a mission, or a series of missions, the human society must undertake before the end of the century (here Peccei clearly envisions a leading role for the Club of Rome);
- in underscoring the growth in population in the developing world, Peccei notes the linked necessity of providing food, health care, education, housing, and especially work. The lack of these necessary provisions, or an insufficient response to these needs, will produce immense suffering but also the explosion of rebellions and of suppressed violence in these countries;
- the harmonious coexistence between man and the environment is not only something of immediate interest and crucial for our future survival, but is also a fundamental cultural value;
- the necessity of solid governance for the world is fundamental;
- one of the reasons we lack good global governance is due to the rivalry between East and West, and North and South in the world. The development of all of humankind, in its disparate variety, is essential, irrespective of what may be the obstacles or the consequences;
- human development is the most important goal;
- the idea of living in a non-violent society should become one of our basic cultural values;
- peace is the principal and basic factor for development, the quality of life, and the fulfilment of each person. Non-violence should be viewed not only as necessary at all levels and sectors in human society, but also as a key to the relations between human society and nature.

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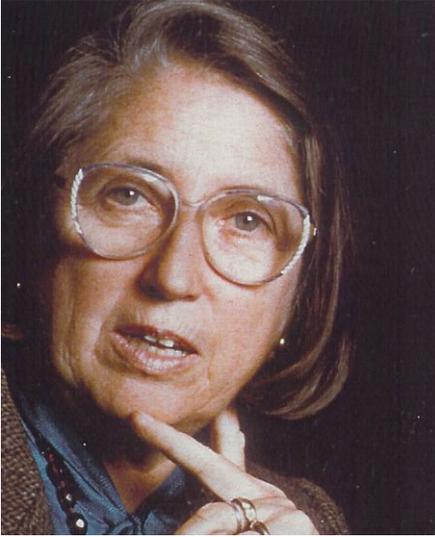
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"Aurelio Peccei had the capacity to listen to transcultural and interdisciplinary messages, with a view of discerning concrete actions to take to craft a better world for all humanity, irrespective of their differences."

Eleonora Barbieri Masini

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE CLUB OF ROME
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Since the end of the 1960s, or even before, Aurelio Peccei, the initiator and one of the founders of the Club of Rome, was profoundly aware of the changes occurring, their interrelations, and particularly of the global nature of these changes. This led him to coin the concept of the 'World Problematique' which became the underlying concept of the work of the Club of Rome. Peccei's thought was anticipatory, his vision of the future arose from a necessary and concrete analysis of facts. Even though he often called himself a hopeless generalist and refused to think of himself as a scientist, his deep and seminal thinking had considerable scientific value. Peccei's ability to listen was by no means selective and he was ready to be informed by different cultures, thoughts, and religions in an open way and with a certain humility so as to better understand how to put together a better action plan. Peccei was a humanist, who had both a keen knowledge of the dynamic global economy and who, on the other hand, was capable of drawing lessons from his observations of the ongoing dynamics, always with the scope of better guiding and furthering important global decisions.



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