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Il Futuro (The Future)

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Abstract

This is a film review of *Il Futuro (The Future)* (2013) directed by Alicia Scherson.

Keywords

Buddhism, Eschatology, Future

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Il Futuro (The Future)

Directed by Alicia Scherson

World Dramatic Competition



Far from the hopeful ways people tend to talk about the future, the characters in *Il Futuro* cast it in much smaller and

pragmatic terms. Orphaned by their parents' car accident, nineteen-year-old Bianca (Manuela Martelli) and slightly younger Tomas (Luigi Ciardo) find they must contemplate their professional choices earlier than expected. Bianca, who is apprenticing at a hair salon, says she wants to open her own salon, but not a big one, as "the future is in small, exclusive spaces." Tomas counters, "No, the future is in computers, AI, neural networks." But Bianca finds she will not even be allowed to cut hair on her own for three years, and the home computer is in a permanent state of disrepair (the father had been in the midst of fixing it when he died). Thus even these modest aspirations must remain deferred by reality. Bianca sometimes even expects – hopes? – that her future will be cut short by a catastrophe, like a meteor crashing into the city.

In many ways, *Il Futuro* is paean to a Buddhist pragmatism about reality. The Buddha qualifies as unwholesome the state of mind we call “the future” (as well as “the present” and “the past”) in the eight-fold path of liberation. To build your life on a desire that cannot be fulfilled yet and will not even be when one’s life arrives at the hoped-for time, is the epitome of delusion. Unfortunately, without any real anchors in the past, present, or future, Bianca and Tomas begin to drift aimlessly, eventually allowing to live with them a pair of lunkheads from the local gym. These fellows come up with a plan to radically alter their present circumstances by robbing a former American Mr. Universe and star of Hercules-style epics named Maciste (a surprisingly warm and funny Rutger Hauer). Bianca’s sexuality is their crucial bait.

At first put off by Maciste’s advanced age and blindness, unsentimental Bianca comes to love the former perfect specimen exactly as he is. (Asked what it means to be Mr. Universe, he says, “it means there’s no one like you in the whole universe.”) As her feelings for Maciste grow, her interest in the robbery fades, prompting one of the gym lugs to complain, “You’re forgetting about the plan – you’re forgetting about the future.” But Bianca recognizes that even her life with Maciste is built on deception and there’s no future in it. In a last act of liberation,

she undoes the dishonesty in her life and reconnects with her brother, the only part of her life where a future can be made from compassion rather than lies.

—Dereck Daschke