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Illustration

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(CONTEMPORARY ARGENTINE PLASTIC ARTIST)

There was a time when man had flooded himself with light to escape the mystery, the darkness, the obscure. Thus he built Illuminism, Empiricism, and Rationalism. Everything was possible with reason. He excommunicated the heavens and the myths, that which had no explanation. The universe was an explanation of algebraic sums. Between that time and Positivism the passion of man was raised at the end of the eighteenth century to what was called Romanticism, which was not due to any artistic movement, but to the emotion of being alive, an attitude towards existence. Of being able to contemplate in vibration nature, the darkness of the cosmos, the lights of the dead stars, the light that fled in a growing space.

Agustina Mazzocco with “Ephemeral existence” warns of this struggle of man to belong and to mimic nature with his emotions. She also discloses that Romanticism was mortally wounded. It resembled the last green shoots before the final snow. Man with an impetus sustained in progress rushed to Positivism, in which everything became immediacy, transience, brutal materialism. Everything should have the utility of interest. Values were already simply mathematical. Solidarity was transformed into market trading. The power of man chased poverty and ignorance by killing its possessors. The visceral and ancestral impulse of the first man to annihilate was dominant. That tenacious materialism knocked at the doors of innocence with the fists of barbarism. Nietzsche’s “*nihilism is already here*” ceased to be a prophecy. Now, it mistreats the heart of every man.

The arrogance of progress coined the seal that brings together knowledge and mathematics. Experience and sensitivity withered with the last attempts at romanticism. All order would be rationally human, absolutely utilitarian. Nature itself lost its mystical character as a reserve to be ravaged up to levels of human risk. Today we cut it, we scrap it, and we pollute it. Everything must be trafficked. Even water.

Myths have been instruments of human survival as a thinking and social species. They were born of fear, since thought does not resolve, in relation to the origin, the existential meaning and pretended immortality. This has been the bias to which all religious, mythological, and largely philosophical systems collaborated. One cannot find explanations in these myths that aim to give a supernatural historical sense to what man has as an experience. To find them, as the first man detained at



“Ephemeral existence”
Mixed technique, 200 × 250 cm, 2016

this point, was the mother of deceit and responsible for human alienation by removing him from his “principle of sufficient reason,” placing him in the spot where both sense and no sense lack absolute validity and open an opportunity to mystery. The myth can be logical [logical-myth] from the fear of tragedy and not by the accumulated human logos or the free thought of fictions. It builds reason for the freedom of thought. It is not a codification between the inner and outer world; it is a link between fear and refuge. Fueled by myths, misunderstood in them, man found in their power the invitation to immortality and of being a demiurge in life. This underlies in the psyche of every “man-being”, even if he does not consciously acknowledge it.

The bridge between nature and knowledge -one leads to the other- should serve for the ubiquity of this “man-being.” It is close to the natural, to which it belongs. Knowledge used in another sense - as power - has made him a destructive being for its human, animal, vegetable and material ecology. This struggle for survival is not only a will to stay and be part of, it also cultivates progress, which has been inadequate to human equity. Some remain in the childhood of survival, expectant. Contemplative not only of the existential tragedy into which each individual is thrown in time, but also of the mundane,

which man builds up. You cannot combat the impossibility of the existential sense with effective fantasies. From ambition to obsession there is only one step and the risk is abysmal. This happened to man in his history of understanding his own tragedy and of alienating himself to tolerate it.

Let us not use the writings of man himself as the prophetic vision of his existence. This is not the concern that must weave human behavior. The conscience of men is not the cause of the origin of his history, but the consequence. After the appearance of conscience, its construction was due to the mixture of errors and successes. As a result of behavior and existential fears men forged an inauthentic existence, adapted to its drama. The destruction will occur not from the prophecies, but from the historical forge based fundamentally on its existential and acquired impulses. Man progressively divorced from nature. He assimilated it with knowledge and then confronted it until it kneeled. No kingdom of the natural was exempted from his conquest. Man himself suffered from his fury. Languages and cultures overwhelmed. Some speak of "archetypal fury" as a result of the expulsion from Eden, returning man to the first fear born of the greatest ignorance and then to the need to use it to assess power. Man cannot have another destiny, but he can build, with dignity between his origin and death, another existence. All other extrapolation to a before or an after leads him inexorably to mythology, fear, fiction, to the being tortured by a memory that he subscribed with fear. We have created debris with our historical step.

Man cannot choose between being and non-being. Once life is acquired, the impulse that leads him always tries to survive. Perhaps fear has been his connivance. A force that does not arise from his level of consciousness since this impulse is universal. It underlies every organic natural consciousness, no matter how small.

This duality of being and non-being is transferred to all his actions between what he desires and what he can, between good and evil, between tolerance and anger, between piety and violence. In this dilemma of being or non-being, embedded in each human action, the battle between the real human sense of existence and the fictional mythological sense of non-existence is found.

In Agustina Mazzocco's work there rises that shadow possessed by science, always in front of it, and that like the horizon cannot be reached, because at every step it moves forward and serves man's desire to persist in his existence. To have arrived to this point of divorce between science and the philosophical (including the metaphysical-religious) has detached man from the humanism advocated as man's qualifier par excellence. Not having understood that the metaphysical shadow (spirituality, faith) always walks in front of science and that invariably that gap corresponds to the existential mystery and to the ultimate sense of man, has unloaded on civilizations a growing search for the aspects instituted as signs of power. At this level of the shadow, beyond every metaphysical belief, a stoic morale may only grasp in a fist all these languages and dialects that have built a tower of Babel that distances it from the fundamental integrity that a concept like humanism needs and that in fact evolved in history towards an anti-humanism based on a painless ethic. Scientific advance always faces the mystery with which rational materialism collides, avoiding a stoic ethic and a real agnosticism to sustain human responsibility and dignity, sources of humanism, the only meaning we can find of life. "Ephemeral existence," by Mazzocco, a breath of humanism in the face of so much winter of the soul.

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