

# Illustration

ELENA VALDÉS  
(ARGENTINE CONTEMPORARY ARTIST)

*Elena Valdés's technique is installed in the transition between Gothic and early Renaissance. There is space filled with a solid composition through linear perspective. The fresh and delicate colors give emotional depth to the work. The faces do not reflect the devotion they expressed in the work of Fra Angelico (1395-1455), to whose technique the artist relates. They emanate communion with the Absolute, where reason and unreason suffer from praxis and are simply imaginative words which cannot solve the problem with their own limits. Neither is Heidegger's anguish found in the contemplation of the features when faced with the "self" or confronted by "nothingness." There is, however, an approach to the "you" uttered with fervor in the style of Kierkegaard, in an open system. Thus, the artist finds in these contours of calm spirituality, not only integration but also the cosmic understanding of man.*

Where to run away? wonders the being when it rises above man to try to attain spirituality. This post-modernism seems to use the dogmatic faith, stigma of power over the aspirations of a man trying to rebel from the instinctive being and climb with its "unfortunate conscience" to the understanding of nature and the "other" as supreme ideals. It is not about reason or unreason. With both we reach those neutral words that man imagined without ever unearthing an explanation, be it home, end, nothing.

The being lies between two paradoxes, the beginning and the end, birth and death, Eros and Thanatos. Between these extremes he is thrown into a project with a single certainty, death. This is exact. The unknown is that interregnum called life. Unverifiable and with lack of accuracy for a limited awareness in this "project thrown to death." This torments him. Then man responds healing from life and death through his reflection or decides to live as if he were by reflection eternal, turning power into his foundation. In this project of life man is forced to be a magician, to use imagination in order not to collapse into reality. To hoard power to avoid losing his "eternity".

To be sure of being right has been the greatest danger man has confronted. Faced with the dilemma of what moral to use, he did not hesitate to pursue his opponent to defeat, abdication or death. The powers man acquired were almost always used in the service



"Spiritual Guides II"  
Oil on canvas, diameter: 32 cm

of killing, for devastation as well as for the restriction of the community's so called "progress."

If reason by force became the brutal and reprehensible method of human history, hypocrisy did not cease in its use; it was the subtle way empowered with the capacity to produce the same disastrous effects. The results which derived from subjugating and postponing his neighbor allowed achieving stipends such as power, wealth and honors. Those who were not discouraged at this state of affairs were relegated to a precarious condition in the race for survival. Not few persecutions are recorded in history, despite its well-written chronicle suitable to the need of the victorious.

The other moral, the opposite, that which accepted being crucified alongside the thieves, was only a caricature of its legacy. Used to pour mercy and understanding in the dispossessed, it was the perfect complement hypocrisy needed to subjugate men. Because we still keep some indulgence in our honorability,



"Spiritual Guides III"  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm

the "weak principle" of our moral, we have improved something this situation. That in whose behalf we tear our clothes and abjure to die for, but only support in our declamatory.

Man is not magnanimous. He only traffics to vilify some of his morals. The history he carries hides almost everything. Despite the tragedy and cruelty depicted in its pages, the wickedness of man in ignoring his own future, that distilled by history, is a pale image of what took place. The drama emanating from his legacy has not been an obstacle to tirelessly repeating in his days the same iniquities.

History buries the vast swath of the humiliated of all times. People postponed, enslaved, reviled and martyred in the name of faith, of power, of despicable interests. The chronicles were written in praise of the victorious. The outlaws were never able to appeal.

We believe that to belong to a state of consciousness is enough to encourage a transition we have granted the gods. Greed engendered at the level of intelligibility has become our own disaster. We have humiliated our tempering naturalness and in fact we avoid the present. We are not able to demystify olden times and the tempting utopias. Without thinking we share the past and the future only in fantasy, we occupy our thoughts with images similar to those reflected in a mirror. Furtive representations that replicate us to infinity. Which are not in our coexistence, but outside the mental reality that identifies us.

In pursuit of existential testimony we assume the need to incorporate ideologies as an essential element. Faced with such long foolishness in understanding existence, acquired delirium is proclaimed as logical thinking. Lucidity to oppose to this slip and assume our reliable structure holds instead the lost wisdom.

This distortion in the proper use of reason has precipitated us to be exegetes of the inexplicable. We have been the most faithful servants in the pursuit of an "irrational order." With the priority of seeking salvation we have clouded reason, providing it with the necessary tricks to preserve utopias. We have built a story not to refute ourselves. We shield in its vision, building idolatry and needing the offering of effort, but we hide her other face. The one that brings us back to the same return. The circumstances of life may differ in their chance, but the passing of each being is inscribed in the same circle of origin, death and pain.

Man does not accept inaction; he can only fill it with weariness. He needs to include the use of the future tense in a conscious effort to feel in force; with enough impudence not to clothe his tragedy as lucidity. To that end we have bartered the lessons left by the past based on the inability to accept our condition. In this debauchery we hide the minor revelation of inanity. What poisoned arrow burns in our blood with the sole purpose of prolonging nothingness? Ultimately this proposal that hits without reply does not retrace us to reality, but to madness. We avoid reflecting on the orphan drama of escape. We only escape from her through death, which actually represents the metamorphosis of matter and the oblivion of spirit. Unsuccessful in their attempts to get answers, the demiurges were defeated one after the other. Those myths calling for revenge and immolations led to heavenly trials and promised resuscitations. A truce for the man in his existence, where spilling his blood on the ground is no longer required by the rule of the threatening gods. Punishment is exonerated after death, in the hidden dwelling of divinity.

*Emptiness is our mortal remedy. And we should assume it to avoid alienation. We are saved in emptiness by the comprehension of what we are, although we are far from its explanation. If man cannot get rid of consciousness or evolve until he achieves an existential project he will live in anguish. Only an infinite self would be possible if it carried memory. But can we carry memory forever? The previous void was everything, because happiness lies in the ignorance of being. In that vacuum may have stayed the happiness we seek and that we lost at birth.*

*Elena Valdés understands this. She does not react with power and eternity as palliatives. She tries to find in man's transference towards spirituality the thoughtful way to understand that although consciousness seems a slip of the universe, the negative to existence should be searched in it to find the positive sense of having supported it.*

**Jorge C. Trainini**