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Illustration

SOFÍA SABSAY

(ARGENTINE CONTEMPORARY ARTIST, 1924-2008)

Sofía Sabsay's artwork has a spatial and architectural aspect. In it we encounter a setting which seeks to recapture humanism, in a combination of reason and nature, spirit and matter, to bring instinct to sensitivity. In her representations- alchemy of bodies and nature- human materiality emerges from an organic cosmos, a spiritual path and a creative order. This constructivist essence pursues the comprehension between reason and faith. Imaginary figures, alchemy combinations of man with city and trees, are disturbing effigies that warn us of the egocentric profile we attribute to life. Her work leads us to transcendence without utopias or anguish, only revealing who we are through the eye of consciousness, which can describe the universe and also tell us of our relativity in any judgment we undertake.

The fields of the various scientific and human disciplines have diversified into a range of possibilities with no connection between them, with a language that turned them foreign, sharing a Tower of Babel. They have become incomprehensible to the common man. They impacted in human progress while marginalizing large segments of society, unable to climb on the "current inadequate progress." Materialism imposed on the particular development of each science has even avoided metaphysical and philosophical edges, those which inhabit in man's psyche since the very beginning denying the soul-body integrity. Not to mention the term "religion" (intimate and personal behavior of each individual), because this dialectical materialism does not contemplate the spirituality that exists in every man since its genesis, as if this aspect would disqualify the reason imposed by a positivism that still divorces soul and body. Metaphysics was needed since the first man to fill that void of existential anguish and fear of death. This is not pondered from reason or unreason, but only from doubt and from man's deep intimate need.

Man's meta-philosophical thinking is inherent to his own subjectivity (existence in Heidegger's "Being and Time") and represents the shelter, his dwelling through language, which science cannot inhabit because it is incomplete for the needs of the human spirit. Beyond trying to progress in knowledge, man will need the magical thinking, otherwise his being will be pointless. And this is a thought not claimed in the streets, but inherent to the privacy of the individual, in that place where the comprehension of consciousness does not reach. In that shelter that lacks reason or unreason, which has doubts and beliefs; and that by not understanding the fact of



"In my heart ..."
Pencil, charcoal and sepia on paper, 1983

death, leads us to anguish and oblivion. In that place where ignorance gives us our true stature.

Science does not define human beings with its materialism. We would be betting on a uniquely organic conception, far from the integration between body and soul, between ex-istence (subjectivity) and existence (worldliness). The particular postmodern virtue of formatting the great human mass by the material interests of a few men (let us remember that 1% of the world population possesses most of the gross domestic product) has been that the major problems (hunger, unemployment, ignorance) have not ceased to be present in all human history, to which occasional social riots and thinkers' allegations have opposed. The causes remain to make "humanism" only an aspiration or a tribute. This conception of body-soul divorce and the material

conception of life, ignoring that existence possesses a moral value, have been lethal for the construction of the real humanism, which urgently needs to change the equation and put the anonymous man as a project and not as an instrument. The political-economic use of science did not help this task; it deepened the gap between man and humanist, firstly, because man is not simply a material accomplishment and secondly, because the ability of knowledge to reach humanism is lost in the system of interests it produces, in a mortally anti-human attitude. Today, this humanism does not represent a human quality, but a debt of sincerity and a pending action that reflects its rhetorical use. The more the gap between man and humanist is undermined, the worse the soothing needed by man to find existential relief. These dividends have been also confiscated by the present world with its distortion of life, promoting them even further, representing a contrast to the cosmic integrity depicted in Sofia Sabsay's work. In it the artist distills her humanistic vocation manifested in the desire of having embraced the medical art. Perhaps she did not envision that her philosophy left an undying artistic mark in pursue of man's comprehension, a search that will sink deep roots in the proper being. It is reaffirmed in her own words: "We must go beyond what we believe to grasp at first glance, in order to discover another reality ..."

Clearly the technique (*tekhne iatriké* in Greece) in the hands of a man without humanism has led to repeated holocausts in the different cultures that civilization built. Man has been a "humanicide". That is what Adorno meant when he said "*It is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz*". Subsequent events recall that both what happened before and after this phrase, was always the same. A chain of genocides, famine, refugees, terrorism, persecution, war, weapon business, etc. Only the balm of forgetfulness and unawareness distilled by ignorance, allow us from time to time to be surprised that the horror of human history understanding is still so dimmed. That is why we do not agree when some inquire about the need for a new humanism. The answer is that this concept never built a culture in its real sense of brotherhood. It only had isolated, individual, decentralized and disintegrated glimpses in man's chronicle. Humanism was always the utopia of benign men. Today the construction of this humanism seems beyond man, as he has detached, through science and intellectuality, from the philosophical-metaphysical basis that composes him in his psychic foundation, entering a materialis-

tic positivism where the "*being*" is master or slave. This paradigm is assembled with isolated reason and formal logic in which the components are only sustained by the material and with an interested value as support. Instituting humanism with this paradigm is giving up the invaluable such as spirituality, ethics, morality and solidarity. The philosophical-metaphysical basis of human life cannot be sustained only by reasoning; it only enables to reach the limit of existential ignorance. That which lies beyond must be alchemy of dignity and social responsibility and respect for the intimate spirituality of every being. Science cannot explain this; it makes human life more distressing by disregarding the emotional behavior. With isolated reasoning we persist in a vacuum, without allowing us to fasten to the illusion that holds us to life, although it is represented in another man and not in a religion that requires faith.

Today barbarism is built by powers that are in charge of designing a culture that serves and justifies their interests, that shapes the individuals, that includes those who submit and marginalizes those not aligned. This culture has alienated morality and ethics from the general public, which has no ability to defend its most vital principles and is used by large systems of power. As long as man can dance he belongs to the show, when incapacitated for the scene and not useful to the possibility of power he will be even unable to witness the great theater of the world. This scenario removed individual intelligentsia in favor of corporations. The reality of the anonymous man is aborted, ignored by the truth of power. Passion is repressed. It only persists in a conduct of holiness, in an artist, a wanderer who philosophizes without interests knowing his limitations.

It is hard to express when suffering finds no refuge. Reflection is a wave that hits the shores of consciousness but does not find the key lock, which frees man. Suffering is the genesis of a fall without a final reference, a collapse accompanied by its cause in order to avoid him a moment of peace. Even this thought symbolizes a few words that are diluted, without mitigating an iota the pain, in a contemplation to see him crash in the face of destiny. Sometimes as a final consolation you can only expect to see what is behind it. And the work of Sofia Sabsay is one of these encouraging circumstances. Her words in a farewell clarify: "I'm satisfied with this person I am living, what satisfies me is that she has been true, as a person and as an artist".

Jorge C. Trainini