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Illustration

FRANCISCO TORRENT GUASP

(DOCTOR, RESEARCHER AND CONTEMPORARY SPANISH ARTIST, 1931-2005)

I reached that spot in Spain in search of the doctor. I strolled around swaying huddled wooded gorges coloring their canopies with the first autumn copper. Some leaves fell in a final flight. Something always dies. Denia was born Roman, was then Arabic, but remained definitely Spanish. An Alicante village, at a very short distance it runs behind a rock into another gem, Javea, belonging to the Valencian community. There, Joaquín Sorolla knew how to bring the transparent magic of the Mediterranean color to his canvases. Located on the last rough steps of the mountains appeased on the jagged coastline of the sea, it rises between sloping streets and white houses that seem to lean one against the other. Its past shows the offering of each conqueror that possessed it. Its figure contoured by an infinite light is drawn in the dancing of the emerald waters that conferred it glory and destiny. I wandered along the meandering street where Francisco Torrent Guasp is still present; imagining that from his working place in the attic a watchful eye was still peering to where the future of silent men reached. I remembered François Jacob [Nobel Prize in Medicine, 1965] who would always repeat “humility does not suit the wise or the ideas he has to defend.” Upon entering I met the researcher and the artist who would exhibit in Paris under the patronage of the Unesco. His home is bound by a creativity that extends from the human heart he explored to the meaning of life. One of his paintings captured me. That existential tunnel that man travels observing his own reality resembles Plato’s cavern. Suddenly he faces its end, with the somber nothingness represented by a sky as mysterious as invulnerable. There is something else in the meaning of the work. The branches peeping out at the end is the green that contrasts with so much human and mystic gray, waiting to match the being to the natural.

In a vicious circle, imagination imposes on man the cruelty of a path based on suffering. It is the imperative need to remain unreal, building up his alienation, far from the natural example that holds him. This inventive power violates any moral and ethical structure. It pervades over the validity of consciousness, of reality, and transforms man in his pursuit of a further step. Imagination is born from within. It grows vis-



ceral, in the inexorable need to remain. Even the fact of putting an end to his days has been psychologically denied to man. The disloyal command of the gods appears through every crack. When more defeated and overwhelmed, the human being does not cease in the search of his salvation. Then the need of transmission and perpetuation in the offspring appears. Procreation declares to life the unbridled escalation of the imagination. And within it the zenith of his concern is that pretended eternity. Man resorted to any excuse that could comfort him with its spell; to the crusade of faith, and also to the exchange of his moral and natural ethics for the “song” and dogma of eternal salvation. Is this effort an unconscious way of resembling God, or simply the despair of a condemned man, who still dreams of another destiny on the gallows?

As long as there is doubt and chance, dreams are possible. It is what man has found useful faced to the inevitability of death. Life, on the other hand, has no possible uncertainty to allow us to fantasize with its destiny. To understand that body-soul is an indissoluble unity is the last sacrifice that man is missing in this straying of life. When the human being has the courage to assume definitively this concept he will reappraise existence to unthinkable limits. He will assimilate the state of his current evolution determined

by opportunity and chance. This situation, of being able to admit true nature, is tragic and cruel. It is not mitigated by disguise; it only makes life lose its exact no sense. This consideration is the only possibility of human dignity. Although he is a circumstantial victim, it is better for man to assume this role than to feel dependent on the imagined mercy of the supernatural.

Man establishes a schism with the rest of the natural. The difference lies in the imagination he imposes on his existence. The rest of nature assumes and submits to the realism of circumstances. It lies and underlies it. Man needs to predict in order to survive, to climb utopias and challenges. Tomorrow only exists in him. The day after is a clear figurative attitude. On the other hand, history is the interested accumulation of his life. Tomorrow represents a fraud to desire. All this is found in a desperate context of continuity, and in finding justifications that explain it, that allow it. Therefore, the imagination is the palpable attitude of his helplessness. Not assuming it is the attitude treasured by the defeated and the beggars. The first, as a means to tolerate anguish. They use it to an extent in which the fear of "not being" transports them again to battles without reason. The beggar exercises the refusal to fantasy as a sublime act to this indecorous attitude of assuming consciousness. To stand before those who, with the power of being gods, led the human creature to the most exasperating limits of an unexplained game.

The only continuous fact is time or its impression. Its permanent transformation. Everything else restarts. Sequences repeat but always in somewhat different circles, in different paths. On the other hand, the pious fragmentation of existence pursues the discontinuity of time. Being powerless with its magnitude we recur to separate the incidents of life in a palliative act for existential anguish. We flee forward because it is the only possible alternative left for survival. The weapons to dream these chimeras, that allow us to divide and to restart existence, are in our own geography. And so we cling to them as castaways. Recollections and omissions, memories and oblivions are their salvation boards.

We are embedded among fears. Fears that originate in our instinctive history, which come from our ancestors. Everything around us keeps us open-eyed, alert. We are wary of suffering, afraid of not meeting the demands, of being dissatisfied; forcing us not to show ourselves as we are. Shame is the intimate con-

notation of fear; it is a barely perceptible manipulation. Terror is the maxim; we activate all the physical and psychical defenses. All these apprehensions are related to everyday life and become bearable when in our integrity the fear of "not-being" sets in. We are immobilized. Not so much because of the ignorance that we have of it, but because it will inevitably reach us. We do not want to be aware of "not-being", that is why we desire it to be quick and deadly, not to understand what is happening.

Actually, life is fragmented, a succession of images in which continuity is difficult. Sometimes these images do not tolerate any relation with those that follow. A fracture separates them as corresponding to different lives. There is no sequence in those representations that constitute our lives. They seem to be drawn from other existences, from other events. In one life it becomes impossible to connect the fragments that constitute it. There are several abysses. As if in the period of consciousness we were born and died several times. Coherence among these images is a utopia. We live fractionally. The only real continuity is time. We are inserted in it, but the events that happen lose their adaptability and start again. That is the characteristic of our lives. The random, chaotic, unpredictable and uncertain are the genuine lines of argument. In order to understand and visualize this naturalness, we must lose prominence. See what happens as a spectator at a distance from everyday life. To be prepared for the unexpected. Uneasiness inevitably follows. Calmness predicts nothing good.

Torrent Guasp' painting is a need to make man congenial with dignity and to accept its position within the natural laws, with no intention of interfering them. In the human being this possibility is remote. Inaccessible as long as it protects itself in its physical disappearance, as a bridge to spiritual eternity; as long as he does not accept that soul-body is an undivided unity. This state maintains the enthusiasm of his existence, and attenuates the desperation of the human condition for not being able to become God's heir. Thus, hypocrisy takes the place of its dignity and its ethics.

I returned looking at the forested little streets of Denia. The sun spilled fully without casting any shadow. It was situated at the exact point where emotion meets with absence. The exercise of admiration for the work of Torrent Guasp was fulfilled.

Jorge C. Trainini