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Illustration

Manuel Gutiérrez
(CONTEMPORARY ARGENTINE PLASTIC ARTIST)

In "The violinist gazing at the moon" Manuel Gutiérrez reflects that moment in which man, despite struggling for his life with art, the most sublime tool, collapses in the face of existential anguish. The fallen violinist, with the instrument shattered at his side, still raises his hand towards a moon that has always inspired human emotion and has also drawn closer to his discerning ability the distances of inexplicable references. The unknown violinist who executed art as a poetic act, previous and intuitive to the moral and ethical development of man, before knowledge, understands that he must start again towards that indecipherable path of anguish that man perpetually possesses. However, there is no defeat in him; he understood that creation, inspiration in art, is the legacy that enables him to take this world out of its cold image of loneliness, of anguish to the unknown.

It is evident that technique (the *tekhne iatriqué*) since its inception in Greece and in the hands of a man without humanism, has led us to repeated holocausts in the different cultures built by civilization. Man has been "humanicide." That's what Adorno was talking about when he said, "after Auschwitz you cannot think of poetry". What happened later reminds us that what came before and after this sentence was always the same. A chain of genocides, famines and injustices. The genesis of these effects is a consequence of the persistence in history of selfishness and greed. Only forgetfulness and ignorance occasionally allow us to be surprised that the horror of history is so attenuated.

Barbarism is built by the powers that are in charge of designing a culture that serves and justifies their interests. It molds individuals, submits those it includes and marginalizes those who do not align. It has alienated morality and ethics from man's humanistic progress, massifying a sector of human society that has no capacity to defend its most vital principles which are used by the great systems of power. Man ends up belonging to a show while he can dance. When he is incapacitated for the scene and is not useful for the possibility of power, he is exonerated from the great theater of the world. This scenario withdraws individual intellectuality in favor of corporations. The



"The violinist gazing at the moon"
Oil on cardboard, 50 x 40 cm, 1998

reality of the anonymous man is aborted, ignored by the truth of power.

Civilization has always been a sludge of events in which reason is used in compliance with the most varied purposes. In this context you cannot talk about humanism. It is understood that reason must be discussed, what is not understood is that the anonymous is marginalized, used or ignored.

Man's evolution will need to detach from the territoriality that dominates him in every sense of life (instinctive, geographical, economic, social state) in order to move towards humanism. This is a starting point that exceeds the laws. Humanism is not a legal act, but an existential one, that is why a stoic morality represents the way. It differs from what happened in human history because man did not build his civiliza-

tion with spiritual feeling, but with dialectical reason and irrational power. And this decision to build a humanism is a solitary, individual, autistic enterprise of a deep concentration to reach the bottom of each being, freed from the external drive to constitute a cultural state of the whole humanity.

In this immediacy, in which time is scarce despite instantaneous communication, it seems more difficult than in other times to achieve a humanistic social behavior when events happened without haste, when there was still room for the romanticism of the idea, the emotion, and the neighbor. At present, time seems to accelerate and the anonymous man remains aside trying not to be postponed by the novelties that change permanently. Humanism is not explained when it comes out of its word. It has no action. It's as Mallarmé's saying about the word rose: "*the ideal flower absent from the bouquet.*"

The established cultural order does not explain itself with a thought that allows it to reach the essence of its being. This is the difference between man-being who can with its capacity qualify the universe and the spiritual-being, in its help to the neighbor. It is not what Voltaire dictates to his character in "*Candide and other stories*": "*evil has taken hold of the earth.*" Simply evil and good are complementary. This possibility of existing simultaneously between contradictions, determines that this breach does not exist, it is a thin crisscrossed line even for human reason. Hence the moral stoicity that man needs to elevate above himself.

The fallen violinist in Manuel Gutierrez's painting understands that language is precarious to express emotion. That tiny moment of connecting thoughts or finding the exact word violates the accuracy of the previously felt expression. Vibration should smoothly turn into writing without delay. This delay also acts on human action. The question that arises is how strong is the instinctive archetype of man that in that

delay between thought and action he cannot stop before exerting an act against another human being. It is as if the action-damage combination were more experienced to act without delay. It is as if language, evolving later than instinctive action, still did not have the capacity with a quick expression of being instantaneous.

However, on that night with a full moon the people, who passed by without stopping, could not avoid listening to the violinist's final plea: "I have been condemned by life to live in the sadness of this world. I come from anguish and pain. Now I understand that any mood is indistinct. Finally everything hurts. What we do not acquire and the fear to lose what we have. Only turning my bowels into fire lies in me. I walk without pause looking for my own essence. This only lies in the anonymous, wandering, circumstantial, ephemeral, in what seems to be. Everything is equal to nothing, whose meaning we do not understand, deduced by the absence of being, as if consciousness were its opposite. As long as I do not understand it, the path that goes from anguish to sadness will continue in me. The flesh is numbed, it seems to resist in a weariness of fear, destroying itself in levity. In a shipwreck without dock or horizon. The satisfaction of the senses is a nefarious influence, the temptation that uses us as puppets for the obscene game of the gods. In them there is no spirit of feeling. It has become an adequate distraction for time to fulfill its role as an executioner. It is the one that strikes at the feet of every man until it falls down definitively into the most atrocious and impious oblivion. Irrevocable, time mistreats, knowing that it is the reality. It is the only one that surpasses reality until it corners man in imagination. The last refuge he has left before the final defeat. Man hides in this trench the temporal, subjective, painful truth."

Jorge C. Trainini