

Illustration

JORGE SIMONETTI
CONTEMPORARY ARGENTINE SCULPTOR

There is so much reality between man and the art of Jorge Simonetti that modifying the presentation of his works is mere inanity. The creator, like a demiurge, models under a paradisiac frond. Centennial trees meet on his roofs causing the light to steal into a maze. In a padded space of green tapestry, the works he builds are as ephemeral as man and events. Clay will thresh without pause making time its verdict. Passion, which from his heart is poured through his hands, makes the figures a reliable representation of how man converted his existence. Simonetti goes to the cruel extreme, then he denounces that embarrassed vision of the sufferer, what should not have happened in this atrocious step of humanity, to which the saints, the tramps and the artists opposed with fervor, with example and with passion.

The artist sculpted under the drizzle below a precarious metal roof in the natural amphitheater offered to him as atelier every day. I watched him without trying to change his tension as a doer. Human figures rose from faded wood surfaces, old, cracked, splattered with clay. I did not try to modify anything to take to the page. The being was created at that birth with an art of strict purity and legitimacy, in a world that man had turned into mud and fiction. Antonio Pujía (1929-2018), the great Argentine sculptor, used to say that he had never seen in Bellas Artes an artist with the emotional sensitivity that Jorge Simonetti treasures. I think the artist guessed my thoughts while retouching "The March of the Dispossessed" (cover work). Then he spoke without leaving his work.

-If God does not exist this is a tragedy.

-You believe in him.

-I have always doubted.

-So?

-You should understand, sir, that doubt in religion is hope.

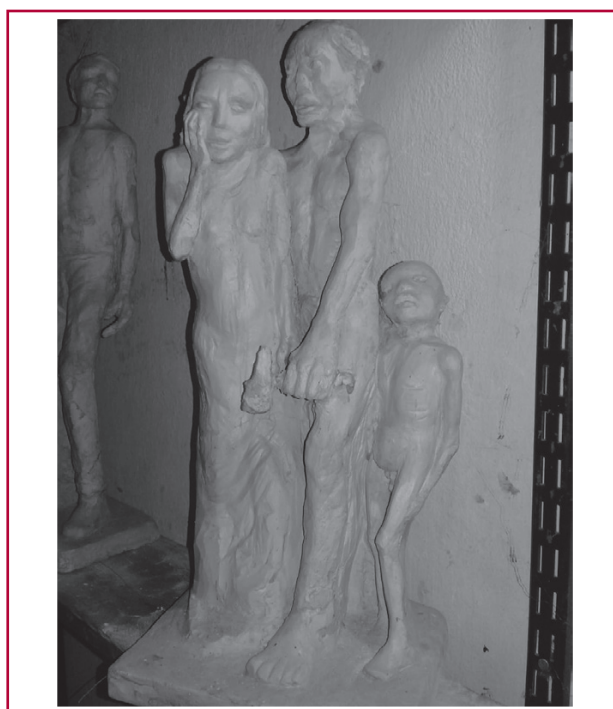
Perhaps impressed by the existential depth I observed I tried to moderate the conversation. -You transform life into agony. Death is inevitable.

-Please understand that so is life. The meaning of my art is to attempt justice and betray anguish.

-Dostoyevsky said that if God does not exist we are free to act as we wish.

Simonetti raised his face that did not denounce the 97 years of life, except by his dense and ashen temples. He stopped his hands. - Are we savages?

-We only hide it.



"Those without work"
Sculpture, 2019

-I could never understand this phrase. It is beyond us. It depends on the initial condition of the society where we are molded.

-I agree, but it seems that we must adapt to evil to survive. You have lived enough to not understand this of life.

-You are wrong; the artist is the only one screaming.

-It occurs to me that what they make us ignore is much more important than what we can know.

-And what should we ignore? - he replied intrigued again stopping his work.

-That creation has no meaning and even less a morality. He did not reply, he had returned to his sculpture.

Man should not think about his centrality, but understand that the extremes of his temporality, full of nothingness and emptiness, are the basis of that subjectivity that identifies him. Man cannot elaborate his humanism through finding an existential sense in his



"The Scream"
Sculpture, 2019

life; on the contrary he must build it by disregarding all metaphysics and find its meaning with his neighbor. Humanism is not a natural heritage of man, but a construction that must be installed with ethical duty and affection, having to overcome his ignominy of not being the center of the scene but the witness of his conscious and historical temporality. In this construction he must return to his shadows as many times as needed to compare them with the light, because light and shadows co-exist in man. This is his challenge, to separate them at every step, knowing that they are not absolute neither in the individual nor in their own essence.

Man acknowledges things to experience his own being. Heidegger tells in the "*Letter on Humanism*" that the old philosopher Heraclitus was suddenly surprised by some unexpected visitors who went to see him think. Finding him sitting next to a bread oven trying to protect himself from the cold, they were disappointed. Then Heraclitus said to them "*the gods are also present here.*" Man does not have a superior principle that governs the absolute of good and evil, but it is actually himself who dictates his ethical duty and humanism with his "*fervor to others.*" And this is possible through his ethics. At this point we stand in the *being-there* of Heidegger. Man is condemned to stretch subjectivity as a subject and to deepen metaphysics to find its meaning. Thought is not accessed leaving subjectivism aside. Man thinks things from his being, so the precautions on ethics and humanism must be undeniable, before they become an act. They must agree that nothing is as dangerous as the certainty of being right. At this point he finds the most dignified position that corresponds to him.

Societies are evolving systems within traits of val-

ues, beliefs and customs dictated by men. In their evolution societies are submitted to the principle of far-from-equilibrium systems, which are nonlinear and subject to bifurcations and chaotic states that attempt a reorganization process. These states are far from dynamic equilibrium, being structures that reproduce their own elements and interrelationships to prevail. As every system it tends to achieve a higher organizational level in relation to simplicity.

There are three major variables that influence the production of human bifurcations. They are: technical progress, economic situations and conflicts that happen in society. However, these variables do not modify the individual sense of human survival with its existential anguish, which underlies any activity or situation that occurs.

The evolution of societies is not easy to foresee but men can direct them by intervening at the right time. Management and strategy by conscious members can influence bifurcations and avoid chaotic systems. A change in ethics is necessary to avoid the selfish and blind meanness that interferes with cooperation among men and places nations before catastrophic bifurcations. At present, social organizations suffer from lack of convergences (hypercycles in third-state systems according to the theories of dissipative structures of Ilya Prigogine) that lead to equity. The flows of currency, raw materials, manufactures, food, people, techniques, constitute the elements for reorganization, but the fundamental tool will always be the "human factor," the "fervor for the neighbor". But this scheme needs a different attitude on the part of man. On the contrary, the industrial revolution that includes information, automation and communication has deepened the gap between nations, companies and men. Thus, new technologies or economic developments are not enough. It is necessary to have values, images and a new ethics. Projects must be directed towards humanism and changes should not be conceived through industrial revolutions with high human cost. The convergence of economic power in a few nations and multinational companies does not lead to justice and equity. In today's society, political and economic considerations and mechanisms of power are more predominant than innovative techniques, promoting the development of an aristocracy bordering the monarchies. At this point Einstein's phrase "*The energy released from the atom has changed everything, except our way of thinking*" is the prophecy that systems do not lead us to humanism but that this must be a construction of man himself.

The rain was still zigzagging as I walked away. I felt his hurried steps behind my back. He took me by the arm and with a convinced and whispering voice approached me: "when man understands that he was born from an artist, his affection will save him. I am more frightened of man's behavior than of the non-existence of God."

Jorge C. Trainini