



Poetry and Humanity
or:
Poetry: redressing the unbalanced

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The German philosopher Martin Heidegger claimed, that the language is the home of being, of existence and that human beings should learn again to life in it. Unfortunately, nowadays we see that the majority of people abandoned the house they should live in. As a consequence, the poem, by far the purest form of the language, suffers from the same abandonment. Alike the language it remains home but for an extremely small minority, and the poet, the philosopher Diogenes alike, errs with his lantern through the crowded streets of this world, searching for a human, for more humanity.

According to Aristotle, *being* is the most universal concept and Heidegger, even more than other philosophers in search of the sense of it asked: but the being (*das Sein*), what is being? It is itself, its pure existence, he replied. However, are human beings still their selves, do they still dispose of their own being, of their own, personal existence, or have they become hardly more than puppets on the New World Order's string?

Through the ages, the philosophers alike, poets have been in search of the sense of human existence on this planet. And the poem, what else is the poem than the poet's tool to search for the sense of our being in relation with our fellow-humans? *Writing*, wrote the Spanish poet José Ángel Valente, *is not the reproduction of a pre-existing experience, but the process and the creation of it*. Therefore, as a multiplier of emotions, the genuine poem goes beyond all possible human feelings. As yet, one cannot expect the modern poet to be an optimistic visionary, but he can be a contemporary Diogenes, using his poetry as a lantern, a tool to find in the brainwashing light of media & multinationals, the real, the illuminating light.

It is not obvious to speak in a not too pessimistic way about "Poetry and Humanity" in these times where the world is lead – or rather mislead – by liars, demagogues and extremists. The world is full of ice and winter, estranged the god of love and mercy. Power-mad men opened Pandora's box, Chaos, the Greek goddess of disorder reigns and her daughter Nyx, the winged goddess of the night rides across the sky throwing her dark shades on the earth. Poetry, even less than before, cannot make the world more human, it merely can describe the nature of human beings, as Homer, the first great Western poet did. We can but relate the human Odyssey, which hardly changed: in spite of so many ages of apprenticeship and defiant technical progress.

Day by day we are confronted with merciless cruelty, with hate, murder and death which irrevocable appears to be human's destiny.

All poetry did and can do, is to be an obstacle: *Do not sleep while the vindicators of the world are busy*, warned the German poet Günter Eich, *be suspicious against their power which they pretend to acquire for you! Take care that your hearts are not empty, when they count with their emptiness!*

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*Do what is useless; sing the songs they do not expect from one's mouth!
Be sand, not oil, in the driving gear of the world.*

Poetry can warn, criticize, resist when humanity is threatened. Especially in Latin-America a large number of poets wrote critical, revolting poetry. Although not of mass destruction, the word is a weapon. Leaders know it. As soon as they have grasped power they grasp the writers, imprison, or intimidate them. Poetry is a mirror in which human life is reflected in all its facets: it's ugliness but also it's beauty, its greatness. As in Homer's Odyssey poetry speaks about death but also about human courage, about love, about hope, about the gods, the universe. Poetry describes what we are, as the Persian poet born in Afghanistan, Maulana Rumi did:

We are the mirror and in the mirror the face.
Continuously, minute by minute, we taste eternity.
We are the pain and what cures the pain. We are
the sweet, refreshing water and the jar that pours it.

Plea

Oh angel of dawn
bind up with healing bandages
the deep wounds of the night

remove the sting
from the naked heart

pour out the horizon
in golden cups

say

that not may submerge

the light.

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