

It would be far too easy to read the history of mankind as though it were a process of liberation. Liberation from need, from binding limitations, individual or collective liberation, liberation from instincts. Inside this great process it is possible to trace a fundamental dividing line between liberation from material needs and liberation from psychological, moral or mental needs. With the Illuminist period we pass from a concept of liberty which concerns material needs (essentially liberation from the power of others to make decisions about one's own life) , to the concept of liberty which concerns thought, or we could say the power to decide freely for oneself. We move from a concrete and practical limitation, where the individual was subject to the will of the sovereign, to the possibility of programming one's own life through free thinking and personal organisation. After this period any observation regarding liberty will essentially be based on managing and organizing the various inner components of the spirit and the human mind. From the depths of the grotesque and the "horribly" natural, up to the heights of the sublime, passing thus through the attraction wrought by sylvan abysses on to the ecstatic and paradisiacal representations worthy of Previati, even that which had no value for a mind engrossed in the various strategies, finds a valid outlet by having recourse to a kind of liberty which in this period is always a catalogue of what is apparently useless and irrational. Dreams, nostalgia, reverie, a longing for the unknown, irrational and unmotivated passion are finally accepted and invade art. Moral and aesthetic rules are invented which permit us to represent in a convenient way all our inner world and this is either for or against nature loved and nostalgically sought after (Rousseau), or hated for its lack of form and uselessness (Hegel). For Gadamer the task of creating some kind of harmony between these evocations falls to Goethe who is worthy of ever more consideration and merits the appellation of universal and innovative peacemaker.

The work of Elvio Chiricozzi revisits these ideas through the themes of beauty (the naked body), flight (human omnipotence), birds (instinct), separation from Earth (the oneiric dimension), of their fusion (pan-like adolescence). The study of an uncertain, confused dimension unites all this, as the artist unites what has already been and what is still to come. From this springs a hybrid condition which is always present in Chiricozzi's work. Man is present in the first works, but often suspended between two places, as though he were falling. This calls to mind an original, Eden-like condition, from which we are falling, because with civilisation comes corruption: Chiricozzi's bodies are naked because they are pure, and can only be corrupted. Nothing comes along to change Chiricozzi's figures, so it is as though they had just emerged from Paradise on Earth. They are complete men but without a beginning, without that starting point which will give rise to guilt and civilisation. Whichever way you look at it the beginning is always unitarian, as though Chiricozzi's man were all humanity, all science and all knowledge. In the same way any single deviation from the original set-up, Eden-like, brings with it successive waves of corruption. In this the artist follows the lesson to be found in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, which is a single long reflection on the concept of the beginning of creation, which never ceases to produce the world.

For art this kind of research is always pertinent, timeless, and here lies the difference with technique. We all pass from an animal –like state to civilisation, where we have control of our bodies, this state corresponds to pre-school age; we all move from adolescence to adulthood commensuring our capabilities and our faculties. For years Elvio Chiricozzi has been interested in the hybrid moment of adolescence and in its mysterious rites of passage, in this society within society, where adulthood is so dangerously close, so miraculously far off. During adolescence there is no perception of one's own powers and one's own possibilities, and so everything is based on measuring bodies, capabilities, organs, which in this period undergo colossal metamorphoses. There is a continual contest between who can jump higher or further, between who is more afraid of entering a wood or of the dark. The fundamental horror of *Blair Witch Project* is typical of adolescence.

It is legitimate to refer to German Idealism as in adolescence there lies the problem of self-determination. I use this term as it occurs frequently in German culture and is to be found in Heidegger, so self-determination is similar to awareness, but it also resembles a re-found assurance in one's own capabilities through constant testing, and this attitude is ever-present in adolescence. The expressions of Elio Chirozzi's subjects are those of characters who do not yet know their own worth because they are not yet adults, characters who do not know the range of their liberty and their possibilities. Let us accept however that the debate about liberty verges on the problem of subsistence and independence: Kafka, Licini, Stevens, for example, only just a short time back had to work in other sectors in order to gain their liberty as writers. Probably the process of total enfranchisement of culture will never end, as every cultural production is intimately linked to the scope of its success and acclaim. It is for this reason that so many authors are discovered posthumously.

Even anthropology celebrates the end of childhood, and associates this moment with initiation rites, where the adolescent or the follower enters the adult world or the world of the initiated. It all turns on understanding who we are equal to, who is worthy of our competition, on gaining a point of reference which is so reliable that we can use it to understand ourselves, to become part of the group. We are represented by and become representatives of a world order as soon as we leave childhood. From this moment on culture is unsparing: from Ben Shan to Musil to Mann, from Salvatores to Alain Fournier the various scrutinizing appreciations regarding this difficult period are many and stimulating. Adolescents have a strange form of knowledge that never ceases to fascinate culture, starting with Jesus who converses on equal terms with the high priests. It is as though they *already* know about the world of grown-ups, but are reluctant to become part of it. It is possible that all of this lies beneath the awkward expression of Chiricozzi's adolescents, with their ever present sorrowful smile, like those people who are never clearly represented by anything at all. These adolescents do not know whether they should isolate themselves like Crusoe, put their capabilities to the test while remaining totally and doggedly isolated, or embrace the social set-up like Torless, opting thus for competition. On the one hand there are the material difficulties, on the other the desire to become part of a group whose urge to form identities they do not wholly share.

This is also evident in Elvio Chiricozzi's stylistic choice of architecture, in the way he organizes the space, where we can already see the theme of flight because the objects seem to be suspended, and at the same time impacted in a timeless aura, as happens in Carrà's seascapes, as though they are inside an overwhelming problem concerning special relationships which are also human relationships. In the works belonging to the middle period the buildings are represented as though

only they were real in the scene, suspended in an aura where there is no time and no space. This seems strangely true to me, in fact when we recall the places linked to our first dates and meetings we remember them devoid of any context, much loved faces have no physiognomy, as we have buried them deeply in our most inner self. At the same time we know that a thought such as this is irrational. And thus it is that adolescence ravel and unravels itself in this idiotic way, and this is what we see in these faces. Adolescence is in fact half way between the *docta ignorantia* as far as the adult world goes, and the spasmodic desire to escape from anything common place, as outlined by Flaubert.

Perhaps the curiosity and the interest evoked by starlings comes from the same propensity. This celestial society is fascinating because we do not fully understand the mechanism which governs the fusion and the splitting up of these birds in *Ciò Che Non Muta*, and thus neither do we understand the link or importance of imitation. From a social point of view these dynamics have been studied by Sartre who spoke of series and classes. Firstly there is no coordination between the subjects, just as there is no coordination in a queue, secondly coordination is fundamental, as it is in a football team. If we have no identity we can never know our worth, which makes us wonder whether the starlings have a single mass identity or whether this magnetizing community spirit is created by each single will.

Elvio Chiricozzi manages to depict the idea of group dependency as no other artist does. There is a void where these figures float, and the void is feared by all adolescents, the void of isolation. The profound theme of these works is therefore the attraction and the composition of a multitude.

Speculation on liberty is present in this sphere. Elvio Chiricozzi seems to confess to an immense desire for liberation, I have stated this at the start of my work, and it seems to be the *trait d'union* with the complexity of this artist's work. The recent representation of the starlings, on the contrary, their infinite repetitiveness, is testimony to an *idée fixe*. There is the lengthy tolerant patience of the craftsman, who in the repetition of delicately varied actions and the masterly honing of a gesture, sees how to reach purification, and thus salvation. This does not lie in discovered beauty, but in dedication, in the search for perfection. I find this attitude in the cello *Suite* by Bach: practice and diligence will save the passion and this will save the world. The rhythm of these pieces, their *ductus* allow us to enter a world where anything of value gains extra worth and importance through accumulation: only when together do the starlings find a meaning, a value. This takes us back to pre-individualistic eras, and a warning against personal importance and worth. Perhaps dedication can be seen as a valid answer to homologation. In Elvio Chiricozzi's drawings we often find the figure of Icarus, and so we must find out in what way these starlings are or are not Icarus. There is a precise representation of the human attitudes in the action of flight. This is accomplished by opening and closing the wings, but this movement is like the opening and the closing of a book (in Latin the same term is used to indicate both book [libro] and free [libero]), and so to be free is to close the book. Opening this book on the other hand means becoming completely involved and victorious but only if this state of being involved leads us to the discovery of knowledge and air. Only in aesthetics, where everything is totally free, can the subject express itself. Contemporary art represents this movement, which is also an existential state, in a most precise way. Often, while analyzing the textures of Mark Tobey and Jackson Pollock some years ago, (and Chiricozzi's textures are likewise refined even figurative) a push/pull movement was talked about. This term described the mechanism of welcoming/rejecting a look, and also the mechanism guiding the conformation of an ideal space inside or outside the canvas, which could be convex or concave, and

could represent cardiac movement, an emotive movement linked to introjections/ejection. In our case all this takes place within the dialogue with the wall, more precisely with the environment (so three dimensions), which we can sense as either welcoming or rejecting, like air. In this context there appears an attitude which is fundamental in art: painting must be able to articulate thoughts through forms and its instruments. Elvio Chiricozzi on the contrary turns to a more radical form of *understatement* and instead of creating signs on the surfaces, gives us mimetic objects to represent what he wants to reproduce. Here we do not see painted birds, but small birds which are placed one over the other, forming a kind of *bas relief*, which obviously does not intend to reproduce reality in a grossly repetitive way, but definitely wants to go beyond the tactile optimistic agnosticism of painting and signs, in order to reach a kind of unknown representative tactility. And this too is a hybrid. Chiricozzi is part of a generation which grew up with formal installations, but one who on the contrary reflects once again on representation as established over the ages, and he formulates anew the question of mimesis. There exists not only the way indicated by the avant-garde movement regarding artistic creation, and so we discover that the problematic essence of humanism will never end. To discover that it is this constant questioning which moves art and not progress determines a radical change of attitude the consequences of which we do not yet know. Probably the crisis brought on by the new century is not only a crisis which concerns productivity, but also representation, which looks into the fundamental questions surrounding references (of figurativeness) in the hope of answering them once and for all. The compulsive mosaic- like characteristic of *Ciò che non muta* reveals an obsession with the repetition of the tessellated birds which should be investigated in more detail, infact Elvio Chiricozzi's *understatement* offers once more the same obtuseness present in his adolescents, as though the artist did not realise he was capable of using his brushes, and in order to represent his group of birds had to construct it using glue and *bas-relief*. Actually there is a negation of the technical ability of the artist, just as all Heidegger rejects technique, harbinger of conflict. We find ourselves confronted with a basic type of atomism, and therefore if in a flock of birds there is a certain number of birds, an equal number will be found, real, on the wall. The thickness testifies to the number without subterfuge. There is mimesis, not representation, which is always illusory because it is metaphorical. The mutual overlapping of these figures, thrown down onto these panels as of from high, imitates the meeting of atoms, who thanks to their inclination, to their *clinamen*, meet according to Lucretius. In this way we witness the Hegelian transformation of quantity in quality: through a concrete operation, a process strictly additive, the artistic composition is created and, actually, beauty too. Things are reduced to a material level, a concrete level, by this aerial mosaic creator, who always wants the spectator to enter into himself, and in a contradictory way, when he soars up totally immersed in flight, would like him to return to earth and consider nature as inevitably a false copy of this action and of every other human conquest, like Icarus. Elvio Chiricozzi wants us to discover time and again the process of adding figures to his work, as though he wants to count the number of brush strokes which make up a picture. This testifies to an kind of honesty which is so radical that it borders on self-destruction, within a mental dimension which experiences in a profoundly tragic way the negative aspects of beauty and language. This exhibition also speculates on the theme of duality, the process which takes place between us and the objects/birds, while these latter, both in the real world and in the gallery, are united in a kind of social contortionism, seemingly attracting and repulsing each other while duplicating themselves at the same time. We must add, however, that the part played by subjectivism, although it may not seem so, is remarkably important: works

so full of routes to follow trace a space which is delicately psychotic. It is something “just too full” which wishes to escape through the walls of the gallery and invade that inter-personal space.

In Elvio Chiricozzi's work the wings would like to take the place of the words, as though the society formed by flocks of birds were a metaphor for human society, as though the representative movement put the high against the low (this however is still a push/pull movement). This calls to mind once again the ancient project of speculative representation of the universe, as can be seen in many baroque cupolas, where we gain the impression that our place in the world is questioned, and that we are being scrutinized by what stands on high. Here we have a radical overturning of the point of observation, which is no longer simply earthly and not only optical, but is also existential, as the roles of the observer / observed could be inverted (the “mass” of the birds against the “singleness” of the spectator who identifies himself with these birds, and which recalls a problem of adolescence) , and all this testifies to the profound dialogue which exists between the components of the vision. Such a mechanism is to be found in flight: birds fly thanks to a movement which welcomes and repulses (still the push/pull idea) the air, and liberty is nothing but the possibility to do as one wishes within elements which offer no resistance. From this point of view the desire to fly is none other than the representation of the affirmation of the “I”, in an element which offers no resistance as it has already been conquered. It is therefore a question concerning the relationship between I and all else as well, the strengthening of social approval, and thus we return to the themes of adolescence, which are the questions surrounding everything which has a dual nature, uncertain, hybrid, like a bird, which has at one and the same time a celestial and a terrestrial nature. This desire reaches its peak during adolescence, where there is opposition to the adult world , but, above all, there is a strong existential uncertainty, which in this period causes formidable mutations both in the aspect and in the mental conformation of the adolescent. To fly means to rise above the empty appearances which exclude habits and over-used forms that the I has produced, and thus flight is made perennial. This work wishes to bring together all the demands for liberty that language and its role may entail.

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