



Saudade, To be at Home without a Home

Klaus Harju

With the lack of a given centre of knowledge together with continuously changing codes of conduct, individuals/collectives have ethics superjected upon them in such a manner that we are basically free to organise ourselves according to the frescoes that have been painted above our *milieux* as mementoes of potentialities. The only thing that exists in the centre is the melancholy of a bossa nova¹. There no longer is the singular par excellence creation of the uomo universale in The Sixtine Chapel. (Wo)man has the divine potential to paint her own heavens as ‘God’ is dead. One might refer to Vinicius de Moraes’ words “*tristeza não tem fim felicidade sim*”² but this is not a Greek drama – this is reality as tragically as we live it.

Life in the 21st century is now more than ever before in the history of human suffering labelled by a constant interbeingness – being stuck in the middle – as in an everlasting intermezzo. Our topography is marked by ongoing overlapping projects, transgressions between work and non-work, dissolutions of thoughts of (pre)determined space and time. Although the petit-bourgeoisie, now perhaps more eagerly than before, seeks walls and a roof on top of a home – it is time to understand that the shelter of the fortress started already crumbling in the middle ages with the decoding tendency of capitalism. We wander in the ruins of those walls like vagabonds.

There is no such thing as secure stable walls beyond pataphysics. Being free is far from what most modern people crave for. Definitions of ‘liberal’ societies are closely linked to ordered structures, home, family, factory/office-work, leisure... The above is history in today’s society in its becoming. The rhythm of the contemporary is the *wesen* of the bossa nova. It is joyful and sad in the same moment. It enjoys search but it knows how much suffering that takes. It is joyful in nature in the tragic sense of humanity. It embraces a longing for the unattainable.

Freedom – what the neo-liberalist pretends to strive for – is for the bourgeoisie nothing but ‘another word for nothing left to lose’. That is, if one is part of a commonplace game with a given set of rules. The now, as the social is constantly in motion, to put it boldly, is beyond a neatly served set. On the contrary the game is constantly interrupted

1 The new crack or fissure

2 Sorrow has no end, happiness yes.

by corruption. Players leave the courts as the games begin while the institutions attempt to make-up new regulations that would fit everyone. Absolute freedom is obviously an oxymoron but the idea of a serendipitous longing is to be in principle a transgressive insider/outsider. The state of the contemporary is not being – it is *maybe(ing)*.

Different multiplicities are nevertheless constantly being orchestrated into place because it is so hard to be homeless and feel insecure but this is the beautiful, tragic nature of human being. Depending on our active or reactive nature we have different longings or homesickness', *id est saudades*. *Saudade* is of course of a sad kind as the tune in Heidegger's *sorge*. Life is tragic in nature but that is precisely what is so sublime about it. Without longing there is no movement, no desire for the enterprise to touch.



The Mask
Photo by Bracha L. Ettinger

Being-in-the-world is shaped by our will or desire as we simultaneously care about something. This *saudade* as a will/care is in other forces' service if it is active in nature only in order to maintain the status quo or a predefined code. In a similar vein it is slave's logic if it is reactive for the sake of saying no. On the contrary it is potent and active if it is reactive in order to create and defies given orders. Above all it is also active by hailing the yes of being active implying a hailing of *saudade* itself. The active one is the one who is at home with homelessness – the one who has a 'coração vagabundo' – the heart of a vagabond.

The lives of the citizens of our era are marked by constant reassessment. Institutions of diverging kinds attempt to make account of that what is already on the move. They stamp passports as if they would put travellers on hold although a passport is merely a legitimization to go through doors – contrary to being held captive in abstract ports or camps. Capturing the moving mind is basically impossible. Society today is a multitude as *milieux*, as simultaneous mediums/environments, whose in principle infinite interconnectedness in their inbetweenness is equal to fascination for creation. The *milieux* bring with them processes as durations. Memory works out of the durations like an inverse *saudade* or another form of delonging.

The collective force of this world in becoming is that in it the potential is equal with the real. This is perfectly the case with problematisation, which is the sole virtue of *saudade*. Questioning from the will/care of questioning for the 'yes' is why the maybe or as perhaps lies at the core of *saudade*. When the 'as perhaps' becomes 'as such' or even 'as if', it no longer is of interest, since it can now be orchestrated towards banality. When something is questioned it is both potential and real at the very same time. Neither one precedes each other – whereas in the world of sovereign or commonplace ethics the potential always preconditions reality. Life as problematised is being amidst *milieux* of problems vis-à-vis a world that looks for origins and ends. Once one sees in line with Aristotelian thought that the potentiality of man lies in the abyss of human impotentiality one has to understand that anchors and shelters are beyond the active *saudade*. The enormous mountain one has to climb is not a conventional ass' 'oh no' – the infinite roads-not-taken are a challenging Yes! with a capital letter. The moving mind in this seemingly infinite universe makes people their own creators, artists, virtuosos.

It may feel that the polyphony and complexity of this time of ours appears as chaotic – but that is merely myopia caused by the falling institutions, which are already dragging behind. There is no longer an acropolis (higher place) to go to for answers. The ancient acropolis' are all destroyed. Life in the contemporary is being in the centre in the mother-womb of actuality in the metropolis (centre-mother-place). This is where everything is happening in such a way that the social creates itself like artists with no fear of the endless deserts of ignorance that surround them. This is where life resembles work of art. In the world where one is *at home without a home* one has journeying for the unattainable as the singular roadmap. It is synonymous to life because it wants itself beyond any constraints of the other. And life as an oeuvre makes life resemble creation beyond subjection. Schopenhauer said we need aesthetics to understand metaphysics and it may be closer to the quotidien than we have thought before. The beauty of life lies amidst this tragic *saudade* – the longing that maybe makes Yves Klein paint the goddess of victory blue.

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