LE PREMIER VENU . . . ET LES AUTRES.

Il est indéniable, si l'on croit vivre en démocratie, que la culture, y compris la contre-culture et la nouvelle culture, comptent parmi les droits fondamentaux. Réduire la démocratie à ses traits essentiels, c'est établir le rapport de l'individu à l'État. En démocratie, l'individu vaut mieux que l'État. La Société est faite pour l'homme et non l'homme pour la Société. L'État doit mettre à la portée de toute personne qui tombe sous sa juridiction, en quelque lieu qu'elle se trouve, les outils éducatifs, culturels ou autres, nécessaires à son bonheur et à son épanouissement.

La démocratie s'oppose au racisme, au régime totalitaire; elle croit en une «étrange qualité de l'homme», à sa poésie, à son mystère. Une démocratie digne de ce nom admet que les hommes non seulement naissent et vivent égaux mais qu'ils soient capables de singularité. Elle favorise leur propre choix de vie dans un régime qui contient des modes d'action souples et variés.

La démocratie va loin dans le respect de l'homme; en retour, elle attend que l'homme aille loin dans le sens de la responsabilité, de la solidarité, «pour elle l'homme vaut par ce qu'il a de naturel, d'immédiat, de naïf plutôt que par ce qu'il acquiert». Elle lui donne les moyens d'acquérir, mais n'impose pas le grand savoir. Le premier venu vit dans un processus de culture aussi bien que le savant ou l'artiste, avec cette différence qu'en général, il ne le sait pas. Tenter de l'en convaincre, lui parler de son acquis réel, risque de le frustrer momentanément, mais le lent cheminement d'une civilisation ne se fait pas autrement. On a tellement galvaudé la notion de culture, qui est avant tout un état d'esprit, une attitude de la pensée et des sens, on l'a tellement confondue avec les outils culturels présentés comme privilèges des élites, qu'il ne faut pas s'étonner d'assister à une levée de boucliers contre la culture. Le phénomène est international; il est toutefois plus vivace, plus agressif dans les pays jeunes qui ont peu de culture traditionnelle.

Dans cet affrontement de la contre-culture et de la nouvelle culture avec la culture traditionnelle fermentent des bouillons de «création». Cette nouvelle phase-action semble aller du côté de l'engagement et de la prise de conscience. Il reste aux esprits justes à développer des pensées exactes! Il reste aussi à améliorer sans relâche la qualité du milieu ambiant.

Andrée PARADIS

English Translation, p. 73
TEXTS IN ENGLISH

FIRST COMERS... AND OTHERS

By André PARADIS

It cannot be denied, if we believe we are living in a democracy, that culture, including counter-culture and new culture, are to be reckoned among fundamental rights. To reduce democracy to its essential characteristics is to establish the relationship between individual and State. Under democracy, the individual is more important than the State. Society is made, not man for Society. The State must put within the reach of every person under its jurisdiction, wherever that person may be, the required educative, cultural and other tools necessary to his happiness and his full development.

Democracy is opposed to racism, to a totalitarian rule; it believes in a "strange quality of man", in his poetic capacity, in his mystery. A democracy worthy of the name admits not only that men are born and live as equals, but that they are capable of special characteristics. It encourages their own choice of lifestyle in a régime that contains supple and varied methods of action.

Democracy goes far in its respect for man; in return, it expects than man should go far in the direction of responsibility and solidarity, as "under democracy, man is valued through his natural, immediate, naive quality rather than through what he acquires". It gives him the means of acquiring, but does not demand great knowledge. The first comer lives in a process of culture as well as the scholar or the artist, with this difference, that in general he does not know it. To try to convince him of it, to speak to him of his real attainments, risks frustrating him temporarily, but the slow advancement of a civilization does not occur otherwise.

To such an extent have we botched the idea of culture, which is above all a state of mind, an attitude of thought and of the senses, so much have we confused it with cultural tools offered to him. It remains for well-rounded minds to develop exact thoughts! It gives him the necessary understanding and awareness. It remains for the counter-culture to convince ourselves of this, the single work Apollon (1974) would be enough to seize our gaze. One cannot follow a trail without giddiness. Jérôme plunges us right into a labyrinth. He captures visible light the better to abandon us to invisible light. The great black resonance permeates us. The Nocturnal night resounds like a summons. The earthly tissue of greenery, of solid brown, of love dense as a high vintage wine, of traces of fine blue, can only prepare the eye for the illuminating passage from gray to bold white, and what a violent vibration this is! but in order the eye should go, bewildered, into the abyss that black opens. Reversing a remark by Dufy, one might say that there are black backgrounds, equal in value to absolute white. But we come too late, friend. Yes, the gods live, shut up that door, tormented in the heart of another world." (Hooijkaas, Jérôme)

Fundamentally, Jean-Paul Jérôme is a painter of communication. In this sense, there is no sensitivity more modern. When he paints he captures the organization of matter. Each part of the picture, he begins by building a big basic network made up solely of straight lines. During this period he abandoned the curve. The Séquences de ciel (1973) are very significant. No curve at all. And already, by its silence, the gray window forecasts Mécanique céleste (1974). Jérôme has shaken off his gift for the curve or the sinuous. Other networks of straight lines are superimposed, become entangled, command attention, and leave us in suspense, confused. It would suffice him, in Grimeurs (1973), to conceive vertical zones joined beyond the canvas, to allow some modulating traces to rise. In order that art should go further, no line must remain without reflection, no element dizziness should involve us in the indescribable. Grimeurs, Le Rendonneur (1973) and Le Sud belliqueux (1974) are certainly celebrations, states of possession in which joy penetrates everything like telluric water.

In 1972, the last set of canvases had not yet been crossed. From Séquences de ciel, the curtain of linen is drawn. Forms are carried from one space to the other, are subdued or explode. We would see in Grimeurs (dip-tuch), a stroke travel through the four parts of the panel on the right. And in Matin de lumière, the line of the weave becomes a trail that crosses the volets and the centre panel, distributes the space, balances the lines. In the more recent works (Matin de lumière and others) spheres slide in the half light, as if veiled by a membrane of dull light. Thus, after the explosion of forms in Le Jardin de la licorne and the conquest of a space is so great that it irradiates in the andantino of Sonata for Piano in A Minor (1974), a Marc Chagall, a Henri Matisse, a Delacroix. The eye should go, bewildered, into the abyss that black opens. Reversing a remark by Dufy, one might say that there are black backgrounds, equal in value to absolute white. But we come too late, friend. Yes, the gods live, shut up that door, tormented in the heart of another world." (Hooijkaas, Jérôme)

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