

The Human's Fate

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The 21st century will be spiritual or it will not be,

André Malraux

André Malraux was thirty-one years old when he wrote *The Human Condition*. He had lived in Vietnam, had been arrested as an antique thief, became a radical critic of colonialism, then into a defender of freedom and a fierce critic of dictatorships.

I read *The Human's Fate* (*The Human Condition*) for the first time many years ago. The book tells us, in the form of a novel, the Shanghai Massacre, which had happened five years earlier, in 1927. Malraux's connections with the Orient were deep. The story revolves around the movement led by Tchang Kaï-chek crushing and killing a large number of Communists. Later, in 1949, aided by the former Soviet Union, Mao Zedong would conquer power and Tchang Kaï-chek would transfer his government, which defended democratic principles, to the island of Taiwan.

Malraux's book was written with boiling blood and clear memory of his Eastern experiences. It is about a world in revolution. In a sense, we are experiencing a similar revolution today - the metamorphosis of the electronic society. Like in Malraux's time, many values and principles are continually questioned today. Who are we, what world do we want? And just as at that time, today the moods are exalted, gradually projecting in old friends divisions of an imaginary that is rarely lucidly verbalized.

Many people started to be afraid to talk about simply and vulgar social facts, regarding freedom, rights or duties, because a clear possibility of being wrongly classified inside some closed set of ideas and prejudices became present a little everywhere.

The first time there was the possibility of making a film based on Malraux's *The Human Condition* was with Serguei Eisenstein in 1936, who quickly gave up to make it, considering that the book was too anti-Stalinist. For decades, dozens of filmmakers, in addition to Eisenstein, like Michael Cimino, Jean-Pierre Melville and even Bernardo Bertolucci, have tried to film that work of Malraux, always without success. The cinematographic reading of André Malraux's book passed to be considered cursed.

In 2016, the French film critic Pascal Mérigeau said: "Will we ever see the 'Human Condition' on the screen? (...) The list of names associated with a possible adaptation is endless, as well as the dizzying succession of announcements, false starts, renouncements, disappointed hopes".

I started filming *The Human Condition* three years earlier, in 2013.

Filming took place over five years in five cities: Paris, New York, Lisbon, São Paulo and Bolognano - a village in the Abruzzo mountain, in Italy, dedicated to contemporary art, where Joseph Beuys lived. The contemporary art dimension of Bolognano, now worldwide recognized, was established by Baroness Lucrezia De Domizio Durini.

It is a feature movie, with one hour and eighteen minutes. But it isn't a conventional film. Instead! It is, at the same time, a documentary and an art film, a film of animation, but also a musical concert. It is a sensory experience.

It's a movie about each of us, about human life on the planet today. A film without dialogues or words. It is a continuous exercise of voyeurism about ourselves. It is the narcissus inside out.

Some images are clearly present - like the fascinating shadow of a cat's ears at the beginning of the novel. But now it is another animal, half-human, in a process where the imaginary is transported to another epoch - paradoxically taking visual elements from when Malraux wrote his work in the 1930s.

Thus, the description of a world in metamorphosis is, in fact, an observation associated with our own imaginations.

The book of Malraux is divided into seven chapters. The film-concert is structured in seven parts: five sections of the film and two movements of the music.

Music and film were created at totally different moments, completely independently.

This is the first film about Malraux's *The Human Condition*.

He is dedicated to my dear friend, composer, artist and American filmmaker Phill Niblock. It was with him, at the Experimental Intermedia

Foundation of New York, that this film began.

When, in 2017, I told my dear friend Philippe-Henri Latimier du Clésieux about the film, which was not yet concluded, he was deeply delighted. He was starting a new film festival in Paris, focused on issues related to governance, green growth, and ethics in a planetary scale. Philippe-Henri had invited me to join him in the festival, as one of the founders and as director of the experimental film area.

I immediately accepted his invitation and he insisted that we take the world premiere of *The Human Condition* at the opening of the festival in Paris. Independently of that world premiere, I was responsible for the film selection of several countries like Brazil, United States, Portugal, Italy, India or Japan, at the festival.

At that same time, in 2017, Jean Olaniszyn - dear friend, artist and curator, with whom I've developed several works over the years - invited me to participate in the creation of the PAN Muralto Cinema and Photography Association, in Switzerland, near Locarno. In fact, this Swiss Association is more an international movement, a planetary observatory focused on the contemporary universe and its roots.

We started, along with other brilliant partners, developing this project in Switzerland. Immediately, I put Jean and Philippe-Henri in touch and we began considering common projects for Switzerland and France.

But as if *The Human Condition* curse for cinema was still alive, Philippe-Henri suddenly died in 2018, few weeks before the festival in Paris!

With his death, everything was uncoordinated in the French festival.

But Nature always seems to weave its paths.

With the death of Philippe-Henri, I dedicated the movie to his memory, in addition to its dedication to Phill Niblock - coincidentally, both of them are Phillips that, etymologically, means "knight", "warrior".

And *The Human Condition* world première was transferred from Paris to Muralto-Locarno, coinciding with the presentation of the PAN Cinema and Photography Association Muralto, in an art gallery - where, in fact, the film should know its first presentation.

In *The Human Condition* film, we all are closer to Gisors, than to his revolutionary son Kyo or to his disciple Tchen. And if many of us don't share his political ideas, we certainly belong to his human dimension.