

2000 / 2009 trajectories

At the end of these first ten years, although I understood that my idea of "photography of the real" had changed, I had not yet gauged to what degree, nor in concrete terms, in what way, my relation to the object of the photographic gaze had become radically different. Similarly, I understood that to my mind photographs were no longer, and perhaps never had been, answers, but instead were a horizon of questionings which would not move as long as I did not question it. Moreover, I realized that though I did not photograph "to understand", I needed direct confrontation with the reality of the questions I was asking myself, in order to push that horizon a little further. However, at this moment I did not yet clearly know how to proceed. I felt a desire for a much broader dimension, no longer solely masculine and Western, but human in the full sense. I began with the term "religion", correcting it to "the religions of the world" before correcting it once more a few months later to "spirituality and the forms of belief". It is said that "to believe is a gift". And so I entitled the new project, which I began in January 2000, "The Gift". At that time, I had not yet grasped the breadth and implications of that word "gift" which would lead me on to a further photographic evolution. Contrary to *Men*, I knew that I wished to carry out a single project whose elements would take on their meaning in relation to a unifying idea. I also understood that it was not a matter of drawing up an inventory, but of charting a path. The problem would arise anew insofar as the subjects, the people and subsequently, the places, which I would photograph were not in themselves the theme of the research. Instead, the theme was that which animated and inhabited them. In other words, the relation which the individual has to his or her own perception of the mystery of existence, to the unknown and the Sacred, within the multiplicity of expressions that different human and cultural realities give rise to. Three years passed and I realized that the element which arose most frequently in this work I was pursuing "on spirituality" was the human body. It was a coming to awareness which triggered the first key revelation in the development of my project: the human body as the visual manifestation of mystery. Though this realization helped define the project tangibly speaking, I could not as yet fathom why. In the course of the following years, through the gradual confrontation between the cultures I was exploring, the echoes between rituals belonging to often very different cultures began to multiply. These were complex correspondences, whose meaning I did not fully understand, which seemed to fly back into the mists of time. The realization began to take shape that most of these rituals were articulated mainly around the acts of offering and thanking. During the seventh year of the project I finally grasped the meaning of the word which had accompanied me from the start - gift - a transitive term towards which the civilisations of the whole world converged to meet. The object of this exchange, giving and receiving, propitiation and grace, is human life in its perpetual cycle, and thus death too. The body which

lives and dies, which crosses, as both witness and messenger, the space that lies between the two furthest poles of existence.

*...And I've seen limbs pierced by multiple blades not shedding a drop of blood, twirling human bodies like spinning-tops for fifteen minutes in a row; human bodies motionless for interminable time under the hammer of 2° Celsius waterfall falling from hundreds of meters; human bodies collapsed into pools of mud, excrement and blood; bodies crossing the mountains for days crawling with their chest over the rocks, naked human bodies, painted, tattooed, covered of inscriptions, scars or covered in exquisite precious adornments, composed in poses and gestures, enthralled in raving dances.*

Over the last few years which lead to the completion of this particular pathway the scenario of a new quest, or perhaps a further evolution of the same, has emerged, still articulated around the human "figure". This project, as yet still in its conception and experimentation phase, is entitled *Humanum*.