

Instinct, Passion and Competition

How man becomes what he is

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Argument

Competition has always been part of the history of man, in the most diverse contexts of its application. We should try to know how man was violent in primitive times and becomes so again in modern times, sometimes because he is out of touch with the domestication of the place that brings him mental comfort, sometimes because he is fighting for resources and social prestige. This is what we will try to address in this essay. In essence, it remains to know and equate who and how exercises power, whether the institutions, whether this still belongs to the citizen in the terms of a democratic regime, whether socialist or liberal.

Exploration

1.

What does a social scientist do in primary school? To become an anthropologist, he went on and fulfilled various rites of passage, both academic and to enter adulthood in society, the one he lives in, the one he analyses. In Portugal, in 2022 there are only two schools where anthropology is taught at secondary school level, this means that there are only two dozen students who are mature enough to understand the workings of society, of the cosmos. Everywhere, difference is present, competition, fraternity is rare, and even this has a price. Because city children, black or white, are sad, people say, because they don't know the simplicity of contact with nature. Action-reaction. Or revolution? Because competition gets on your nerves, causes nerves, stress, but so does fraternity, which takes more work to build. And he has the anthropologist to understand the whole, even giving others the opportunity to be happy. That is why he is an approach of/God, to God, all aware and zealous of his magnanimous task.

2.

We say all this without great pressure, without great stress, spontaneously. That is why what we write in these times is brilliant, still trusting in the regenerating effect of literature in today's society. Yes, because the younger people are arrivistas, they have the pretence of understanding something, when there is another that they patiently learn, because they know that social things are connected and that time will bring recognition. They are the ones who discreetly fulfil and carry out their role in society.

3.

So why the competition? Ethically, philosophically, do we have to step on the Other to be able to surpass him, to be able to go forward on our anxious path? Competition exists in animals, and will always exist among men, if only for the game of seduction, the myth of the civilising hero, the conquest of women. We imagine New York. It is good to live there, but pathologies abound, let us say it is a society of struggle, competition, selection, under Darwin's law. There are people to apollonian nations, others Dionysian, we don't always have to be in a good mood, there are good people in the country and in the city, after all what is normality? That is every man's struggle, to convert his inner madness into a "presentable" normality. The actor does that, but not every actor. The social actor does it too...

4.

Indeed, what is there between the I and the World? A truth, a justice, an oblivion. Society sometimes demands too much of you, more than you can give, in the name of others, of the Other? But what is society? Are we not all of us in our human inhumanity? So where is the order, the justice, the law? What is the criterion, the only one, for everything to go well? Each person has his or her own criterion in a regime of free-will? What about crime, rape, abuse? How can one be creative and at the same time maintain one's health and integrity, physical and psychological? Some give answers, within the framework of a scientific regime, to produce man-machines, others prefer to look away, others down, others up, and still others get tangled up with themselves within their own things.

5.

Yes, it is not only in the city, in the countryside there is also competition, natural selection, or *cultural selection*. And the relationship between normal and pathological? Can there not be another way out, another health, that is, to be a normal madman, a happy madman? And if the man in the city understands a gesture of kindness as an illness, a provocation, an offence? It is because there is something abnormal, far beyond morals and good manners. I would say that it all has to do with the relationship between the profane and the sacred, the latter being far removed from present-day societies and their core of wills... The sacred can be a sign of madness and vice versa, while the profane is a sign of immanence and fruitfulness...

6.

It is possible, it is good that the dream happens, but often it is a disappointment coming from the clouds. And man closes himself off, managing what shred of happiness he has left. Many of us dream a lot, I think that every man and woman has that inner desire for things to go better for the Other, if only because we were all children once.

7.

For that matter, where is selfishness rooted if not in social Darwinism? Everyone wants to be a hero, some through sport, others through science, still others through the dissemination of the sacred.

8.

The truth about men and things is never comfortable, the truth is most of the time quite cruel, horrible, unpleasant. Does man still have the courage to do and think as Rousseau's hero does?

9. Sometimes we walk backwards and the cart stops, the donkey or horse can no longer, otherwise it is the owner who is in pain or, worse still, the wheels are too worn or the load is too much for the same cart...

For those who suffer from OCD, the suffering is great, but if they are and develop their creative side, they can be recognised for their art, their literature, sculpture, philosophy, architecture, pottery, decoration, fashion, surfing, etc. The philosopher also suffers, he wants to love all the time and sometimes he can only put it off because somewhere in his life he was a frightened child, afraid of others, full of modesty and fancies and he always wanted to be recognised. That's what *bullying* is all about.

10.

On the other hand, the laws of imitation have always worked and will always, I believe, work, because not every subject, actor, social actor, is integrally original (let us leave that to God's creation), that is, good and bad examples are propagated equally by incredible forces that cross the minds of people according to the most diverse cultural contexts. That is why I spoke of *cultural selection*, that is, it is culture that controls everything, the biology, the anthropology of things. That is why it is so poor, because it is universal, like Assisi's message... What I find most strange are the remnants of mythology in underdeveloped countries, being so rich, relatively to most of them. Hunger and malnutrition continue to make deaths, among children and women. Domestic violence continues to kill, as do road accidents. An explanation? Unreason, the abuse of normality, when one cannot find a refuge of calm, serenity, peace, tranquillity

11.

Life, personal and collective, is made of that, attempt, error, mistakes, more error, more attempt, that's how the world "leaps and bounds", as the song says. Little is guaranteed to us and learning is always at our disposal, sometimes we are exempt from school fees, other times we have to support the priests, but they are the ones who give us the greatest comfort, they are specialists in this, in helping people to feel good about themselves, without much fuss or fuss.

12.

When I did my doctoral thesis, I realised this, and not too late, I hope. Man (like woman) thinks with his body, because it is immanence that is closer, impregnated in his spirit. But the spirit cannot be seen, but needs a body to speak, so transcendence has an immanence attached to it, a root of thought, so to speak, as a young historian from my country said. The woman, when she is pregnant, also thinks with her body and, let us say, thinks doubly, in function of herself and of the being she has inside her (her soul? Her body?). For this very reason, I see more advantage in thinking of the Other and being happy for him, rather than selfishly taking place only for ourselves, because the good has a return and the evil dries up further on after it is done (felt).

13.

Let's say that we are in an era of *shattering criteria*, that is, nowadays everyone is professional and clings to that certainty as if they were desperately going to die, the doctrine of the Church remains retrograde because the Church, let's say, is not of this world, it pulls so much upwards that it stretches man's beards until they hurt a lot, without sense, with more or less fanaticism and without picking up much of the intellectual thought of the left. It is (continuing) globalisation, what can we do? Can we stop it? No! Life cannot be stopped, because it always pours out, sooner or later, even in the most inhospitable terrain.

14.

The West has long lived under the sign of what I might call the *pragmatic drive for proof*, that is, having to demonstrate scientifically, and even philosophically, anything and everything. The West is a factory of heroes, beyond the Sandokan. This generates stress, power and money generate stress, sometimes because we are immediately concerned about spending it, sometimes because we have difficulty managing it. The Jewish question can be reduced to this, to money. But that's not all, the body is the transmitter of a sick soul, schools all over the world are sick, said a philosopher in the newspaper *Público* a few days ago. As I proved before, in Portugal there is no "fear of existing", as José Gil suggested years ago, perhaps influenced by the highly abstract philosophers of Paris. And the schools are not sick, there is a tendency, the Western man tends, to see everything as disease, deviation, etc., when

the disease is only the consequence of an actor of courage and heroism badly managed socially on the part of the subject and even of society, of the group, so to speak. And, after all, what is success? Is it being a star, going after others, being richer, coming first? The first will be last, says the Church.

15.

When we do things under pressure, we are going against our will and nature. But in fact, to live in society we are in a regime of compromise, of understanding social things, and so we can't be totally free. But there you are, that's also a form of freedom, that is, to comply with the rules. It is a way of realising Being. Sometimes, having overwhelms being and being forgets belonging, living and the poetry of looking out the window of the house to the street where people and cars pass by...

16.

Then there is another idea that I call the *itching of the mental situation*, representations piled up in our brain or that it produces, like successive *tweets* that unfold and replicate before and after a certain state of thought, as if the brain were ecstatic at the lack of movement, interior and exterior, of reality. Then, the hard problem of reality... Because mental reality, however perfect, does not equal reality beyond the gaze, the senses, when our civilisation is influenced by the gaze from an early age. Yes, we are a *civilisation of the gaze*.

17.

The great innovation of my thesis was to give to philosophy what belonged to social anthropology, that is, the method, the methodology. But it also enriched anthropology itself, within the framework of a philosophy of social and human relations. But there are more points, which I will develop a little more one of these days when the occasion arises.

18.

Does competition, then, have anything to do with urban environments? Hollywood shows us that it is in competition that man fulfils himself, first of all because it is a relationship, relativity, whether in the conquest of women or of goods, status, prestige. Ethology teaches us how this also applies to the human-social context, that is to say, animals only lack language, but, like us, they act with their bodies, I would go further, they think with their bodies. This is why it is said that pornography is animal (and not vegetable), it is profane, obscene, because after the liberation it causes, a great emptiness is installed. But... aren't relationships, in their non-romantic aspect, also just that? What is romantic is, let's say, the project of life, of a life for two, in which sex is no longer the focus of attention, more or less neurotic or obsessive, to become commitment, dependence in the good sense of the word.

19.

Pornography can form, inform, but some insist that it is only a pretext to abuse women and men, to enter into a predatory role, under the justification that it is art. In my view, it isn't, it's just a technique, a technique that many dismiss because they prefer metaphysics and to occupy their time with many more useful, pleasurable things, before waiting, to curb desire so that it is, let's say, more powerful later on, in a way to be applied in the scenario of social life.

20.

Thus, solidarity in the city has to do with roles, in a regime of *roleplay*, of phenomenology and event, i.e., the event and the anthropology of belief is faster and more immediate there, where values have the same value as, say, in the countryside, but are physically and fiscally applied in a different way, planting a scenario of permissiveness and compliance with the law superimposed on a certain illegality of feelings. Even so, dishonesty dies on the corner, it is not so blatant, because there are cameras and police...politics!

21.

Evidence is dangerous for both the artistic and the social actor, if he is in a hurry of intercourse or unaware of the rules of the socio-cultural context where his action is performed, unfolds. Because, in the face of need, a certain individual is not capable of calculation, that is, he uses his heart more than his brain, not knowing that the two are linked to each other, concurring in a satisfactory, non-offensive social action (the ethics of care of which Hans Jonas speaks) and prefiguring himself as a fumbler in relationships, that is to say, it would make a perfect theatre comedy, as indeed is all human life, it has the most diverse condiments to be appreciated, depression, excitement, euphoria and then rest, just like in a football match between two great teams and they do not need to be professionals.

22.

So, perhaps the true philosopher is the hero of Voltaire's *Candide*, just like in the film *Mustang*, of the crusading horse that beats all the others after being beaten on one side and on the other. This is, **incidentally, the** idea of Luso-tropicalism and of Gilberto Freire or Guimarães Rosa...

23.

And, we ask ourselves, is anthropology at the margins? Or is it at the heart of all this, alongside the law and theology? I can't and shouldn't bother my neighbour, but I can lend him things, offer him a cake for his birthday, etc. In life, one of the central issues is learning, and even in the world of the street, that learning is quicker and more quickly transmitted, to your group, to your family. Goody and Iturra talk about this. Ricardo Vieira, among others, just continue that thought. I am proud to have been his student and much of my anthropological thinking has to do with this, with the exchange, the symbol, the right methodology to arrive at rebutting more or less challenging hypotheses.

24.

Resentment, offence, indifference. The attentive obliviousness to the city, namely in the metro, is almost criminal, there is no empathy, just puppets who unroll their social or individual roles in a certain open sky scenario, thinking they can do what they want just because they are in the city, the same goes for the countryside and mixed grounds. Portugal is losing the spontaneity of relationships and is slowly going mad, just as France and Spain are already mad, I could see on some recent ethnographic trips.

25.

Collective madness, individual madness, what is the relationship, you have to go to the root of the problems, people have discarded anthropology because they prefer cinema, a world of illusion and crime, because they are no longer satisfied with themselves however much they have, success, prestige, women and men, status, image, media.

26.

The healthy body, the addicted body, the healthy mind and the addicted mind, satiated, in a projection of death that will happen before the small deaths and in a regimen of energy management, who knows why, just to live and enjoy life, time, the margin, the passage?

27.

Even in political terms, the country is heading for another crisis, there will be hunger, a lot of hunger and misery, because the right will have the power to do what the left, moderate or not, did not dare to do. Then there is the phenomenon of Chega and the risk of extremism, in a country that is dependent on others in various economic sectors and essentially dependent on tourism, which increases its visibility before those who can manipulate it, who may want to keep the prices of restaurants, leisure and overnight stays low, not to mention other less advisable things: tourists, precisely.

28.

Yes, Portugal is an emotional-dependent country, it accepts everything that comes from outside and when it remembers that it's bad, it becomes xenophobic, that's the economic profile of Chega. A sanitization of filth and street dogs, when who pays is the rubbish man, who probably knows better the lives of nationals (for the rubbish) than many academics who sit on professorships of exact sciences or even humanities and the like. And classism is still discussed, while the majority of the population does not read because they have to work to pay the medicine or the school, many panoveiam-if infinitely in the universities and the students swallow loudly these tics, these customs more or less soft, white. Yes, because everything is out there in droves and nobody wants to die socially right away, to lose their group, their friends, and they are never more corny, or pious, as someone said, than those who have been in the convent.

29.

A lecherous country, liberal in some things, extremely conservative in others, open to some things, extremely closed to others, because it is not the men who are most to blame for domestic violence and the like, but the women, who get caught up in provincial romanticisms, in silly cosmopolitanisms and, deep down, without studying the customs of the people, or in other words, it is the law of the jungle, I am interested in being friends with everyone, but only when I am well, because when I am bad I want them to help me and be my friends. Hum?!

30.

In other words, I don't bother anyone, I do my philosophy and even if alone and needy, because that is the price of all literature, I still have to say thank you and if necessary I have to drop my trousers at the service of others. The education system, from the hazing to the evaluations, is marked by this, this poverty of spirit that permeates opportunist students because their parents were already opportunists, the law explains everything, conditions everything and journalists only have to inform, to scarify the moment of the wound of public opinion in the face of the one who bites a Rocha pear in the street above...

31.

Yes, there's a fight between the Parisian and the Lisboner, or the Lisboner, perhaps they're both racist, perhaps not, but between one and the other they certainly are. While one is direct and straightforward, the other is always in the wrong all the time, invents, goes round and round and is psycho, or in other words, takes everything personally. Hence the competition (of cocks). But, otherwise, between the north and the south, the dispute is also the same, i.e., in football you can see this fight and if a man like Pinto da Costa has touched on this sensitive point over the years, for the affirmation of his club, it is because the Lisboner feels it, this difference between north and south, which is also drawn and articulated in a particularly sharp way in politics, where the majority of PSD voters are from the centre and north of the country, those of the PS from the centre and south...

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