



The Vanishing Goal: a new interpretation of voluntarism

Victor Excelsius

University of Lisbon

Argument

Sex, seduction, is a *not-wanting-wanting*, in relation to the world, when you are frontal and say what you want, in a cosmopolitan, urban context, you end up throwing everything away. Hence the voluntarism, and the lack of it, in the confluence of the various cultures in a city context. You have to create a precedent, a way of acting, an image, a place in the sun.

Development

1.

This is because some, most, are more concerned with the impression they can make, than really themselves and this all depends on the deformity of the media, that is, what you are to one may not be to another, the media being secular, obscene, political and occupying the place that God would occupy in other times. Therefore, the subject gets tired of voluntarism and since all this is a circus, let's have a circus. In Lisbon.

2.

So man is always looking for the goal in his eagerness and gasping for reality, but it is always moving forward as he himself moves forward, and it is in this fatality that life lives. Until one day...

3.

Voluntarism is linked to solidarity and certainly to a Christian, I would even say Judeo-Christian, heritage. Because a secular attitude is linked to the implantation and legitimization of the social sciences, which see religion as one more feature of culture, alongside others, like economics and politics. This attitude, a recent inheritance, from the 19th century on, is linked to planning, to a scientific view of culture. But this is changing; on the part of the Church there is also this idea of planning and explaining man as a social being, and this in no way takes away from its supernatural, mystical face.

4.

Therefore, how should life be lived? By hedonism or by pure asceticism, in the clouds or on earth? Even the philosopher clings to immanence when he feels afflicted, the world is his fans and he doesn't want to die, no matter how much hardship he experiences in his existence, unlike others, who get fed up very quickly.

5.

The question is as old as mankind, that is, while some are lazy others do too much and enjoy too little...

6.

Therefore, man oscillates between honesty and dishonesty, between Good and Evil, in a Manichaeian vision implanted for centuries in his mind and which conditions his speech and behavior. And this binary conception extends to sexuality, it is ingrained in the innermost being, while there are generous, willing alpha males, this attribute seems to belong to the "different," to those who suffer discrimination the most?

7.

We have closely followed three books: *Elogio da Sede* by Tolentino de Mendonça, *The Age of Revolutions* by Eric Hobsbawm, and *Science and Philosophy* by R. Collingwood. What do these works have in common? Theology, History, and Philosophy. What led us here? Marginality and injustice, discrimination and ostracism. Even so, we continue, the Portuguese never liked the French or the Spanish, so there is nothing to be surprised about, everything was planned from the start.

8.

In fact, the one who offends the Other has low self-esteem. Because he needs to lean on the Other to assert himself.

9. "I am an ethnologist of myself"-said this year's Nobel Prize winner for Literature.

10.

In truth, what is truth? Is it fame, success, the deflowering of the social, individual success? And what about solidarity? Is it only for equal circumstances? Can it not be a guiding principle for action? Everything seems meaningless in this world, but you are an expert at looking for meaning, at reassembling, that's why you persist, you go forward, much further than a point would go, or going to meet it further, to the left, to the right, it doesn't matter...

11.

The world, your world, has taken a leap away from just over a year. You realized it, because you were paying attention, you watched, you drew conclusions, you talked to people. You are in the same place, and yet how has the world changed, between the TV and the street, in just one city? What would it be like in New York? In Beijing or Dili?

12.

Life, philosophically speaking, is essentially movement, some say becoming, others read Bergson, which doesn't mean that there isn't life in contemplation, sometimes more concentrated in space, more nervous and fervent... Between one and the other goes the movement in the days of the young person who works for someone else, because it is always complicated for someone to start a company when he is young, so he acquires some experience and joins a master, someone who knows more about the things of the world, to make money, because after all, that is what it all boils down to, subsistence in this rough and complicated world. But not so much, the recipe is simple, you need a head to make money, and most people have it or don't have it, on the other hand, they acquire it and others like me end up living with little, even if happy, wanting to do a lot of things and only meditating on what they do, good and bad, also taking into account the intermediate shades between black and white.

13.

So, how to interpret life? It is surprise, novelty all the time, when we thought we understood social life according to models either inherited or apprehended and learned, everything is undone and reconstructed from one moment to the next, like in the movie Rocky II...

14.

What we notice in certain social phenomena is that, at the same time, there can be a phenomenological anthropomorphization of beings as supremely active, acting entities and a more or less subliminal animalization, that is, if we focus on man, we perceive that he adapts as much to the environment as he dominates it... And this is recurrent in urban contexts, while in simple, traditional societies, it also happens that many humans take on the spirit of the animal with whom they coexist, whether it be turbulent or sweet and "lovable. Gaston Bachelard has a fabulous approach to this question in his "Psychoanalysis of Fire".

15.

So, still thinking about philosophy and anthropology, do these sciences protect the bad guys and not the good guys, since they are on the side of the minorities, primarily the former? No, besides the question of free will, there is the law, the law, religion, these sciences cannot be pits of knowledge, sometimes advancing theories totally out of touch with reality. And I also remember philosophy and human geography. They are *nomothetic* (rather than nomothetic) sciences, they act beyond any verification of guilt or judgment...

But, then, who are the social sciences and philosophy for? They serve the literature of things, the enchantment in front of the moment, between the problem equated in a certain way and the solution equated in another way?

16.

Because Good feeds Good and at some point (of Good) we are selfish, that's human nature, but better that than always insisting on Evil as if it were productive, valid, legitimate...

17.

That's why I tell you vehemently, don't keep anthropology to yourself and don't keep philosophy to yourself either, as if it were an intellectual food that turns you into an anonymous, cruel, strange being, even if you are sweet to the dogs that dirty the streets, even if you are nice, because after all you have a good heart, because if you hadn't maybe you wouldn't have invested in religion when you were young, when few did, but you just wanted to have an intellectual education and you got it, so you are also beyond America, where you should have gone by now, given the volume and quality of what you write, including from the point of view not only literary but philosophical, you were going to meet Susan Sontag and Laurie Anderson to exchange some ideas at the New School for Social Research.

18.

Voluntarism, then, will be a kind of religion, where I give not so that you give, as suggested by the anti-utilitarianism of Marcel Mauss (See *Revue du Mauss*, on the internet, a pearl that explains many logics of the current society, primitive and modern, in terms of the symbolic and effective exchange of goods between individuals from different groups and from the same group), but I give so that you don't give to me but to another... Strange sentinel of modern capitalism compared to the traditionalism of mechanical solidarity societies, more inclined to believe in God, when in NYC people only believe in Him after a long period of stress, so say the movies I get on my "cable TV"...

19.

That is why the nomoethical sciences, not only subdisciplines, but great sciences, such as philosophy and anthropology, but also human geography and sociology that put their finger on the pulse about what needs to be done about man, beyond Law, beyond Economics and Finance, because man is not a number, he is a Being and this does not assume any more or less transcendental attitude, it is something within the scope of what we have said in this essay and in previous ones...

20.

The existential path is still a speculative thing, when you are alone, you can't stop thinking about a thousand and one things and about death, too, your own death as well as the death of others, and you know that sooner or later this record that is you will end, so you choose to be good at heart, as you have always been, that is, to continue to be good, more and more, more and more, but you realize that the others don't follow you and that most of them are sewer rats... What do you do in that situation? Do you become one of them? No, you keep your conduit because at least the young people see you as an example, and that is worth much more than the example of certain parents...

21.

Art doesn't really exist, it's just a simulacrum of the mind objectified in reality, if you will, in social reality that will be seen by everyone else as a work of art by this or that artist. What does exist is the belief in God, the impetus of voluntarism to announce to the other that Christ is alive and is good for the health of the world, that is, the colonizing impetus was also a religious impetus, theogonic, as Paulo Borges would say

22.

But... what is Good after all? Doing what others expect of us? To have integrity on behalf of those we love? And what about Evil? What is Evil? Killing and stealing is evil, I was always taught, and there is a lot of evil to be done if you take the trouble to do it, and the hardest thing is to do good, and continuously, over a lifetime, seventy, eighty years...

23.

In this register you continue, analyzing the things of the world, while the things of heaven intermittently wait for you to manifest themselves to your mind, because after all who will be right, António Damásio or Tolentino de Mendonça? Yes, neuropsychiatry or the poetry of God? I've said it all, I prefer poetry, if it comes from God that's fine, I get along with it, because, after all, I have no vendetta going on and I just want not to survive, but to live, in the full and theological sense of the word?

24.

Then, you think of your work not as a calculation but as an offer of generosity in relation to the world, a world that has given you little, you have always had to climb upwards throughout your life to have a good intellectual education and most of the time without any affection from anyone, they have always demanded too much of you and given you little, even in Lisbon. That is why you are still waiting, still fighting, still doing some philosophy and anthropology, without any subsidy or scholarship, at your own expense, at the expense of your brothers, it is true, the existential truth of yourself, as Virgílio Ferreira would say, and because you are in an open field you continue, that is, to be honest, until the end, even if only in an apartment with the company of Silvestre, better, Farp...

25.

While many philosophers elaborate theory and have never strayed from philosophy, I am going along, trying to believe that social science is also a form of philosophy, that philosophy is also a form of anthropology, that is, we basically have several options in our existential destiny, this in my view: either we are ethnologists of ourselves, as the French author was, or we are traditional ethnologists, either of others, and that is always the music through which our existential has to oscillate, either I or the Other?

26.

Actually, one and the other takes work, philosophy like anthropology, you don't extract apothegms from your brain from one moment to the next, you need the sieve of experience, the data, the data, the experience, and that's really anthropology, listen to the opinion of others, the voice of the world, even if it's an echo directed to infinity, you always draw some conclusion from your relative smallness as a participant-observer...

27.

So, choose a life without addictions, without tobacco or alcohol, even if they find you boring, the most important thing is to be alive, it is the opposite of being dead, as the people say, and you love being on this side, even if it annoys some souls that were consigned to you. That's how social relationships are, it's hard to give, as the singer David Fonseca says, but it is by giving that you receive, *do ut des*, and remember the gift, be generous, at least you'll be at peace with yourself, willing, because then...

28.

Then you have to learn a little bit of economics, that is, learn to run the house as if you were its own steward, that is, instill in your mind an idea of efficiency and, moreover, of effectiveness, so that you don't keep looking back at the whole and, in the end, fall behind in time. So, there are several variables that you have to control, from ecumenism to economics...

29.

So here is the survival instinct at full proof after watching American movies, while Ahmed from the store down the street is watching Bollywood, because we all need some romanticism in our lives, even if it is the romanticism of travel, of leaving everything behind and going out and away from where you are, Remember, the journey is long, as the song says, but as Voltaire said, go all the way, even if you get hit on the way, because after all you could have gone to the Foreign Legion...

30.

Fight, always fight to get through that milk mist that is in front of your forehead, your eyes, as if it were a big obstacle, wash it away or dry it, after all it comes out powdered milk to give to the kids at school. Resist, respond, hold on, No Pain, No Pain!

31.

Think of it this way, remotely, you have been through many difficulties, but now you are free, and on top of that you are alone, not alone, because no one is ever really alone, says sociology in particular and the social sciences in general, you can do whatever you want and you don't even need a lot of money to have fun, look at the metaphysics and the phenomenology of wind, of the rain that hits you in the face and on the neck, that makes you nervous because it is so cold, because you didn't bring your umbrella from the village... Not everything is a session of psychoanalysis, things are simple, so enjoy the simple things, a good plate of alheira sausage or even a bitoque or even a good hamburger at MacDonalds accompanied by a small beer, which is what I am drinking at this hour...

32.

You chose writing and, in the midst of so much luck, frustration and disappointment, you are lucky, let's say, your art perfects itself with time, so go, persist, forget, especially the house and let the kitten take care of it for a few hours and get on that subway that takes you to cais do Sodré and goes to Cascais, you might find someone there to talk to, and as Bobo Dylan's song says, "you're not old, settle down, find a girl, you can houses if you want, look at me, I'm old but I'm happy"...

33.

So, don't give up on being a Philosophy professor, that's what I mean, eat within yourself the pulse of time, of the moment as well as the structure, go ahead, even if you are zigzagging, always progress a little, even if you are distracted and if you wander further, don't be ashamed of your sin and go to Mass a little, or simply go to Church to reconcile with Him, the one who gave you life because he is of your stock, so there is something sanguine in all this, of identity, of heart and firmness, that's right, it is the need to be a just person alongside others, to somehow hold them back a little on the side of justice...

34.

And, after all, you have a psychiatric pathology, besides all these thoughts that you have been having in the social sciences and philosophy, even psychology, you would make a good psychologist, as much as you would make a good sociologist, but you are not, you are an anthropologist practically by birth and a philosopher by adoption at the various universities in Lisbon, which some call colleges, where Philosophy is taught and, after all, the Catholic University teaches social sciences because of your *démarche* of having come from theology to social anthropology, many take advantage of this to have convenience and academic brilliance?but that's a different matter, one day you will have to settle accounts with those who took advantage of your father's money while you were there and violated your body while you were (not) there...

35.

Everything flows into psychiatry, who cares about religion, only the simple, naive souls, who are beginning their connection with the world...is it really like this? I have never seen such a good book as *The Essence of Christianity*, by Ludwig Fuerbach, it could have been written today and today it is really current, very current. Few people remember this. Or they don't want to remember it because it doesn't suit them. Meanwhile, Anselmo Borges remains in the drawer, outdone by a guy who studied social anthropology and I don't think Tolentino is a better writer than him, who isn't even a priest...

36.

Otherwise, with so much knowledge, you don't know how to walk. You have unraveled a world, between Eliade and Lévi-Bruhul, between Beckett and Henry-Lévi, who also liked the work *Os Cús de Judas*, by Lobo Antunes, who is going to donate all his books to the Benfica library, the new one. Such is life, while some lucky authors give classes, others travel at the expense of a publishing house to fill the eyes of their provincial readers who don't even dare to go near Lisbon because they fear the New World...

37.

We live in a society that is behind in everything but tourism and wine. Mental

illness is taboo, you see people both sad, immensely depressed, moody, and happy, euphoric, as if they had a rave of more than three nights and three days.

in a row. I don't usually spit in my food, but there are certain things I can't tolerate. The unfairness of effort and talent. Because they are always the same. Then, sexuality. Every guy wants to get an honest girl to do his digs on the side. And they say that's the spirit of Lisbon. *The Lisbon State of Mind*, as someone engraved in a white T-shirt and announced Lisbon outside and inside... And it is in these sad circumstances that we end this essay...

Lisbon, October 10, 2022

