

Beyond the Body: a Christian social theory

Victor Excelsius

Keywords: body, theology, philosophy, social anthropology

Argument

Make anthropology dialogue with theology, beyond the secularism/religion debate. We follow closely the work „The Theology of the Body“, by Saint John Paul II

Development

1. A METAPHYSICS OF THE BODY

Will there be something wrong with our civilization when we separate love metaphysically, the body of the mind? Should sex be sublimated? At the limit, is a metaphysics of the body possible? Body consciousness brings the mind troubled, yet it is nothing without it, because it is proven in terms of a social, empirical anthropology. That man thinks with his body, not only through the sexual apparatus, but through others, the nervous system, the digestive system. If man thinks with his body, scientifically proven in neutral instances, that is, non-moral and much less religious, that is, exempt from an historical judgment, how can the mind be disconnected from the body? Then there are the three levels of man's superiority over the animal and other realms, namely, the spirit, the mind, the soul. While the mind has to do with a more or less secular tradition, laïc from the point of view of man, the spirit has to do with the most diverse philosophical traditions, from the Enlightenment to colonialism, and the discovery of other cultures by anthropologists, hand in hand not always with missionaries, but many, like Teilhard de Chardin were both. Then, according to human biology, the body is not only flesh, even in the spiritual sense, it is also mineral, vegetable. That is, this composite that is the human body, often comes into conflict with the mind, even if there is spiritual and soul harmony, but these three forms of manifestation of the spirit are, in essence, in some cultures, closely related to each other. It is as if it were an orchestra with several instruments of different order, for if there is harmony, they all have to be respected. But what is the end of the good functioning of man? It's not just any functionalism, but a goal of the order of happiness, that's what man seeks, being well, without great mental worries, because you of what is mental has its ratsthreshing floors... Therefore, if the world is not only mental, it is also not the men. In my youth, I made Franciscan initiation, which I finished, together with Year O of theological studies, a little book appeared in my hands with the title „Optimism Pills“. I never forgot. In the same way, I learned that, after being away from religion for so long, I must take religion, insert it into my soul, little by little,

like a pill that every morning, when I wake up, in order to have a good and cheerful day. Because there is a conflict in me that has to do not only with sexual identity, but also with the uses of the Other's body, that is, in terms of a separation between *jouissance* and reproduction poses a highly philosophical question, which is formulated by the question, if you like sex, do the prettiest go to church? And if you are a lover of sexual pleasures, you must see something perfectly worldly, profane, banal, in a woman, because, in my view, the body is not a temple, but a physical form of usufruct, namely to resolve certain inner tensions, already formulated by Freud and, ultimately, the problem of primordial violence. Once again, is a theology of the body possible? The body is something material, physical, but it is also supernatural, an instrument of love. And, we may ask, is sex not, cannot it be, something sacred, if it arouses such good feelings in us? Because theologians, like philosophers, if not hedonists, have a horror of everything pleasurable, as it were. As if they wanted to emphasize something metaphysical in their action, as if it were a sin to have and to give pleasure... instrument... so what is the body?...

2. THE DIRTY AND THE CLEAN

Linked to this idea is the idea that sex, namely anal sex, is something dirty, but we have to remember, don't we laugh when someone, or even ourselves, farts? It is something that comes out, sometimes solid, sometimes vaporous and that makes us laugh, as if it were the result, the surplus, of something that is inserted „above“, yes, the food. For this reason, the anus is also the locus of shame, and shame begins precisely there, with the impression, the impression, the obfeeling of being dirty, of having to clean that region of the body all the time, as if social life only referred to it, as if we were („at the door“) preparing the entrance of something or someone. That's why we want shower over and over a day, even in winter. Therefore, it is one thing to describe a situation, a state of mind, and another to point out solutions so that our life becomes, in a way, normal, and the concept of normality is very relative. and let us allocate it almost exclusively to psychiatry, when someone is mentally ill, he goes to a psychiatrist, when he has religious itching and his soul is ill, he goes to a priest or psychiatrist, if he believes in God or instead in Man, when he is ill spiritually, he goes to the priest if he believes anything he hears at mass. These thoughts were transmitted to me at home and at my parish church, where I stopped going to write this text.

All this, this problem, also has to do with what is seen as dirty and clean and the other categories white/black and has a lot to do with skin color, race, the idea that there is a race superior to all others, being what this feeling is identity common to all races, to all and ethnies, that is, what makes a race persist in socio-identity, it is not only the feeling of homogeneity as a group (social, national), but the affirmation of a certain racial superiority that in one way or another we all reap, because in fact. In addition, it has to be said, there are ethnicities and origins that are more permeable than others, both in terms of marital unions and mere social, commercial relationships, in the utilitarian sense. Then, this problem also has to do with the uses of water, that is, water is considered „clean“ because it is transcendent, although there is also the concept of „dirty water“, like that of the miners in the Amazon... I put forward the concept of „ceremonial fear“, that is, I need to be clean to deal with close with my God and there's nothing strange about that, as long as it's not psycho, repetitive, but the questioning of other aspects of social life, such as work, rest, people shower before going to bed because they need to feel

unconsciously clean, or in the morning, to be on the street clean...

The anthropologist Maria Manuel, my colleague at ISCTE, studied these uses of water in connection with the Spa and even Rosa Perez, my teacher, introduced soap in the state of Gujarat, India, after several years of fieldwork, which resulted in her Phd thesis and other various books. I remember them when I was on a bed's hospital due to my troubled OCD and depression...

Then, Jesus came and as the true, thaumaturgies of humanity and, we might say, why not believe it? Why not believe that in Him and beyond medicine, psychiatry, there is room for faith, which is knowledge of the religious, of what not only makes us feel integrated, in the company of Someone, anything but alone, even if physically isolated, restricted from what makes us feel at peace with the world. Of course, the path of faith is not an easy path, hardness sometimes it makes us shake our legs and lose our sense, but then we have to be strong and trust Him blindly, because, in a sense, it is not only a form of salvation, but I dare say, the only salvation. But... the question persists, beautiful women do not go to the Church, as if I wanted at the same time a beautiful, intelligent and physically voluptuous woman... that is, the best of two worlds, that of God and that of Love... when God is all that, it's love and then too sex, being love, is transcendent, divine. But, however, it became a commodity, like all things in the ambit of capitalist democratic societies, therefore, the body was democratized as a stage of knowledge and even of madness, used for all purposes in the most diverse paraphilias, because that who interacts with the rest of society, who is a model of behavior, is a dutiful, exemplary, measured person, who does not exaggerate, not even with women...

3. A NEW HOPE

Now, in my opinion, Christ was a great scientist. Social. To implement what would become his Church, he had to sacrifice his life, at the distinguished age of 33. He solved the conundrum between theory and practice within a historical context by putting it in hopelessly moral, implacable terms. pervasive through the centuries, and then took the ride of the Roman Empire to found an aesthetic within an anthropology of belief that survives through the centuries in the collective memory of almost all of humanity. So you will have to ask, what becomes of other religions? Will they not also be right, will they not also have their share of reason? Well, nowadays a small group can start a Church... The State allows that. But everything has to do, I think, with historical weight, with tradition, with *without take part of...*

In other words, the great prophet of the perfect society is Christ. There may be people who don't believe, who believe in other things, in other gods, like socialite, fame, money, crazy sex, parties, drugs, alcohol, but when the Being revolves to find himself in Christ, in the crucible of the God who can do everything, this Being is immensely happy and even if it is only for a couple of hours, it was worth living to feel this experience.

Therefore, the officiating body, as in the Mass, is the clean body, while the body of eroticism and work is the body the dirty, i.e. for recreational purposes the concern is less, but when dealing with the sacred, the concern (ceremonial fear) is greater, as exemplified by Jean Duvignaud regarding the pagan festivals, hence anthropology is not as clean as philosophy and theology, because it has more to do with the profane than these two... I think we can put the question in these terms...

What amazes us is the renewal of amazement (Iturra), that is, the change of the world, the becoming of Time, the happening of always something new in the social world. Yes, because the world is natural, supernatural, but it is also social. Then there is something wrong with a certain social psychology, and a purely psychological, not to say psychiatric, foucauldian root: societies are not people and the idea that a society is the sum of individuals, in the manner of the rest of durkheimianism, is now more than outdated. This is also the mistake of some anthropologists and most sociologists today, when they see the subject as just a part of a large mechanical gear, with the aim of analyzing and transforming society. Meanwhile, the anthropologist lets himself be, he doesn't want to transform society, doesn't have the Marxist-Leninist, ideologue, sociologist's, social psychologist's sense, he also wants to solve problems with his finger like this...m in the rear, perhaps because I know in advance what the house spends...

Thus, Christological hope does not only have to do with one of the ways of connecting with the body, the individual and the social, but with a new project that is based on a certain theory, the social sureness by a document, a book, the Bible. Here are planted rules of conduct and philosophical principles, but also forms of love and ways of loving, ways to lead an ethical conduct, first more radical with the Torah and then more complacent. ent, human, with the New Testament. And if that theory was revolutionary, despite Marxism as a competitor at that time, it still is today, for the improvement (A Roca e o Fuso would be a good title for this idea) of the pastoral faith, directed towards a world that always needs more and more, answers, which Christianity obviously provides in a complete way, in my opinion.

4. THE VALUE OF HISTORY

Often, even inside the church as an architectural building, we doubt of ourselves. It's faith, because we don't want a blind, fanatical faith, despite the fact that many people hate us, but what Christianity and the Church have that is most profoundly human is their history. Of course, the Church, being tangible, of the world, has his problems, his questions (eg. paedophilia, women's priesthood, the delay in taking certain measures in the face of the whirlwind of the world), but that is left to the social sciences, which do not pretend to be morally respectable, on the contrary. Therefore, in any case, it is possible and a social theory of Christianity can be undertaken, so the Church is a total social phenomenon, first of all and also with her travel tradition, linked to the expansion of the faith, to European colonialism, to the history of peoples in their „condition more human than divine", to recall Malraux.

A way of dialogue with civil society is that Church that sees itself as a heritage of humanity, as a design in the history of humanity, far beyond of the sketch of the innumerable professorships. Then just for this world from outside. Sacred art, for example, *ex-votos*, pilgrimages to Fátima or Compostela, the countless religious manifestations in a country like ours, where there is religious freedom, albeit with some collaboration with the financial issue...

Therefore, not only is the Bible a treatise on sociology, but the Church itself is a total institution, with the exchange of goods and offerings with the due consent of the Holy Spirit, that is, if society is capable of being treated as an object of study (stop my improvement of that same society), the Church is also a total institution, within that greater whole that is society, that is, as an engineer friend of mine would say, religion defines society (for the layman) but, on the other hand, for the social scientist, is a trait of society, while for the ascetic IT IS society...

Now, how does the body live with these mysteries, secrets, asceticisms? The body is resentful, it is a vehicle, even if you do not practice society. Have you noticed that certain nuns are doing so well preserved, with an astonishing joviality? Yes, that seems supernatural. Is it because they do not surrender, like other women, to the pleasures of sex, of the body? I remember Teresa of Ávila, whose ascetic eroticism converted many women to simply a poorer life. Better, more dignified, most sacred. From the other hand, there is the profane and, I would say like Seneca, *satis*, all in your measure...

Therefore, the reasons of the Church's history legitimize its message, which comes from afar, from the dawn of time and that the primitive Christianity only improved to pass it on as a witness that of that race in which God runs for us. But... are we calling on God's name in vain? What part of the work of faith should man respect? Precisely this simultaneously vertical relationship is horizontal, with the brothers and the One who dwells on High, in a kind of sign of the cross...

There are quite controversial ideals and ideas in the political-ideological spectrum of European countries, namely in Latin, Mediterranean, southern Europe, priests do not they can marry and the curia insists on that and perhaps we have to give Max Weber right in this regard, that is, it was the Protestant morality of certain countries, cultural contexts, that allowed a certain economic development, which remained in an almost larval in countries like Portugal, whose industrial experience is still being carried out, that is, the Church has some difficulty in dealing with issues of sexual pleasure and it is not only because priests cannot marry, but because their empire of faith made them if at the cost of this sacrifice, the withdrawal of many men throughout history. I may ask, then why aren't women ordained? Because there are issues of power that the Church cannot abdicate, such as the patriarchal aspect of her heritage and message, her *theorylogy* and we can even say that, one day, faced with so many people knocking on God's door to be part of his Church more actively, dynamically, complete, He will give in. Pope Francis has already given some signs, showing that this is not the most important issue. So that, being a priest is an option that also has to do with a physical disposition, say we even love the sphere of sexuality, because the priest does not do anything to be more available to the brothers and it is this availability that is his joy as a priest, seeing others happy, spreading the faith, energizing your little world that is the parish or the diocese, in case you are a bishop...

Therefore, God is also a Body, He is in the tabernacle because He can simply affirm this message, because It is possible, it is passable. able to constitute a human form that matches the body of each one of its faithful, in all its designs, corners and perfect imperfections. The Church was thus finding a way to dialogue with two worlds, the tangible and the sacred, the supernatural, the intangible, the one that satisfies man spiritually and gives him the desire to launch himself with peace and serenity (*serendipiti*) in a world that, from the outset, he does not know. Therefore, the palm of this world is the starting point of recognition in another world, in an eternalin' way of being happy and the more God is with me the happier I am here and now. The Hindu has a different conception from ours, for example, for them the sexual act is sacred, so perhaps they did not trivialize it so much and, on the other hand, they openly proclaim the incarnation, a second life in the form of another being. I think that, as a Christian, we should be more open to other religions, to other ways of understanding the sacred and the spiritual. ritual, except, of course, avoid fundamentalisms. But then there is a central problem not only for the Christian, but for every man, whom which is that of violence, that is, therefore who attacks me, verbally or physically, should I, like Christ, turn the other cheek? Some say no, some say yes. But there are ways and ways to do things, to relate...

But, let's see, it is violence, physical, psychological, that founds empires (the Roman, the Inquisition), territories, nations. No wonder the Vatican is the smallest state in the world; your kingdom is not of this world...

CONCLUSION

I have long held that the Bible is as man thinks. It is a reflection of a high state of humanity, but also of a revelation that is perpetuated every day in the life of those who believe, it is a manual on how to make sense. Beside this, I have always argued that computers reflects a way of thinking, binarism and et cetera, other ways of equating reality, that is, being love it or not at risk of being robots, the myth of the efficient man also has to do with the Christian, who seeks better to pray your life from a spiritual point of view by prayer and reading and reflection on the holy scriptures. In the Bible there are battles, betrayals, deaths, a little of everything and even eroticism, in the *Canticle of Canticles*. Humanity does not walk in a progressive way and if it does, one might argue, is going to crash into a great wall, a wall, which will, later or later, do so. sooner, bring back to one and state of purity that the virtual has injured and that we are trying, in one way or another, to repair, even if only for smaller links, to have a better future, at least better than ours. Thus, a Christian social theory is possible, there is no lack of stories, stories, narratives, arguments and arguments, the Bible is flat on that, but will Christians be fundamentalists to the point of just looking at the Book and not commenting? NoI believe the Christian man has a critical sense and a keen will to ethics. Well, it's easy today, after all, if Christ was in some way a philosopher, I don't think he can't also be a philosopher. considered as a social scientist. In his life story there is everything and even more and above all the magical power to convince, to suggesting, to create illusion, as the Spaniards say, because, after all, the Church has its history made by men, imperfect with or all who are not Christian and of deaths, with certainty, perhaps because an institution has to adapt to the vortex of times, of time, it has to adapt and cannot be tied to power, it has to know how to relate men to each other and to God, as it does well. proposes and. Therefore, the body of Christ is my body, it is the body of the Church of which I am a part, it is the body of the woman I love, it is the body that is in the tabernacle so that I can contemplate it in all its beauty and meaning, as if from a beautiful woman's face and if it was, in the subway or in a painting by Vermeer...

Bibliography:

- SERRES, Michel. „Variations sur le Corps“
VALE DE ALMEIDA, Miguel (org.), „Body Present:
Thirteen Anthropological Reflections on the Body“
JOHN PAUL II, „Theology of the body“
BATAILLE, GEORGES, „Erotism“
ALBERONI, Francesco, „Erotism“
SIMMEL, GEORG, „Philosophie de l'Amour“
GIRARD, René, „La Violence et le Sacré“
DE HEUSH, Luc, „Le Bouc Émissaire“
LEIRIS, Michel, „L'Afrique Fantôme“
BAYARD, Jean-François, „L'état en Afrique-La Politique du Ventre“
LIENHARDT, Godfrey, „Divinity and Experience-The Religion of the Nuer“
LE NOIR, Jacques, „Christ the Philosopher“
LÉVINAS, Emmanuel, „Totality and Infinite“
MAUSS, Marcel, „Essay on the Gift“