

"It is necessary to speak face to face to be able to read the soul in the face, so that the heart sounds in words, a word spoken with conviction, with full sincerity and without fear, is worth much more than ten sheets of paper covered with words."

Fyodor Dostoevsky

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The Path of Illusion

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To my daughters,

*“My dreams were all my own; I accounted for them
to nobody; They were my refuge when annoyed - my
derest pleasure when free.”*

Mary Wollstonecraft

Introduction

The world, as we think we know it, has undergone a change since the beginning of this century, the changes we are currently experiencing have almost radically changed the essence of humanity.

The twentieth century was a period of enormous transformations, local and global, industrialization, the consolidation of the industrialization of the world better saying that, the technological advances of the end of the 20th century, the opening of Westernization to the world as a promise of humanistic, political and even economic evolution, the consolidation of European geography with the new states, coming from the dismantling of the former USSR, the former Yugoslavia, the end of autocratic regimes, Salazar's Portugal, Franco's Spain, Tito in Yugoslavia.

The end of the twentieth century also marks not the end of the Cold War between powers that one day in that century allied themselves against a common enemy, but its restructuring, moving from a pre-military conflict between the West and the USSR, to an economic conflict between the Western empire (UK, USA and EU) and the newly created Russian Federation.

The twentieth century was the creator of the world order, a unipolar order commanded by the US, and under the aegis of the *Rules Based International Order*, under which were born the institutions that for more than half a century have unilaterally dictated the rules of the world, the G7, the G20, the World Economic Forum, the World

Health Organization, the International Panel on Climate Change, NATO, the IMF, the European Union itself, and the various institutes and institutions in the fields of economic, health and social sciences.

Already in this century, the West has experienced an economic crisis, two health crises (H1N1 and Covid), three armed conflicts on European soil, direct terms: Yugoslavia, Serbia and Ukraine, four armed conflicts by proxy, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Afghanistan, we are witnessing the problems of mass migration, the humanitarian problem and the social problem that sub-Saharan and Middle Eastern migrations entail today and will still entail in the coming years, and the political crises that are gone all over Europe.

The Europe of the twenty-first century is going through troubled times, where the struggle for the hegemony of power is fierce and deadly. Never in the history of mankind has the struggle against life been so fierce, and the struggle against life is not only limited to armed, deadly and heartbreaking conflicts, but also manifests itself in the economic, scientific and human rights areas.

Wars proper, at the societal level, are for all practical purposes, the use of the military apparatus between contenders, and disputes are subject to the scrutiny of societies, the reasons, facts and effects depend on the point of view, affiliation and knowledge of the cause and diverge into two new contenders, peoples or societies are divided between the guardians of democracy and moral values and the guardians of dictatorships and criminals.

This is how society is today, but this fact is not only limited to war, this movement of society is verifiable in all the changes suffered in corporate life, it was so in the 2008/2013 crisis, in the H1N1 epidemic, in the Covid pandemic.

It is wrong to assume a single side, there is not in any crisis a side possessing exclusive qualities, nor another devoid of any quality, what exists is ignorance, lack of respect and stupidity.

The human being is naturally endowed with the capacity of logic and reason, is ¹indeed a product of the environment that surrounds him, and that can limit him, but even this limitation is artificial for the simple fact that the human being is able to overcome barriers, to create a critical mind, and to adapt.

¹ "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and must act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Article 1 of the Universal Charter of Human Rights.

We can affirm that the animal kingdom also brings with it these qualities, yes it is a fact, but it does not produce critical capacity, or rather, there are few who perform it, the primordial difference between the kingdom of Man and the Animal kingdom lies in the moderation of force, to animals hierarchies are established by force, in Man the same hierarchy can be established by reason.

The human being thinks as an individual first, and as an individual attending to his interests thinks of society, if we look at the meaning of this humanity, Man expects a society based on his personal belief which makes him hostage to his thought and society simultaneously. In this way one cannot expect an individual evolution, nor an evolution of society, and this century marks definitively the next phase of human life: if self-centered in perpetuity or if using reason and criticism, man becomes sociable and makes possible a full society.

The socialization of the human being has nothing in common with the socialization in social networks, social networks are for all practical purposes the opposite of socializing, social networks have become the showcases of human avarice of envy and the refuge of minds that, by force of the impossibility of keeping up with the advances of technology Humanity has retracted in itself. And he uses technology to build his castle, and to make known to the world, a beauty and existence, which for the most part, has unbearable costs - this is today's humanity empty of spirit and devoid of knowledge.

In this century, European society is experiencing the illusion of civil power, it is embedded in the perception of democracy (of a democracy that does not really exist), of freedom, whether of expression or of movements, and it does not free itself from the yoke of social xenophobia *and status*, it is a society where cynicism, vanity and ignorance prevail.

Portugal is no exception, Portuguese society travels a path along with its European counterparts from perceptions to illusions, at a time when the technological advancement achieved does not prevent the lack of knowledge and ignorance. But like all innovations available to society, they are not in *themselves* guarantors of success, they are tools, and like everything in life choices are decisive to the individual and individual choices have as collateral damage society and the form of society.

Society is not only constituted in a cluster of citizens, society encompasses citizens, government, public and private institutions, physical structures and abstract structures, a society, it is also philosophy, culture, customs and traditions, history has an important meaning, it is from the past that the present has been derived in the same way that the future will be born from the present.

And what future will emerge from today's society mired in social, economic and governance problems?

This society of today has lived a period of tranquility, which it mistakenly assumes as the fruit of its existence, more wrong it could not be, because it lives a relative tranquility offered by the previous generation.

Before embarking on the challenge of solving the problems of the present and laying the foundations of the future, it is imperative that we identify the problems that plague us today, because a society that without identifying the root of its nightmares, intends to apply any remedy to its suffering, neither cures the nightmares nor ceases to suffer from the evils that come from the solutions inefficiently applied.

The moment that society is going through is a moment of reflection, or it should be.

It is this reflection that this book is about, not a reflection of society like any civil plenary, but a reflection of its own, individual and reflects the vision and the lines of thought that, factually elaborated and expressed here, are inserted.

Truth takes on as many faces as the eyes that observe it, so to assume that truth is one and indivisible has been the greatest problem of this society.

If we observe it from the religious point of view, Christianity, the theological basis of the Portuguese faith, we see in it two truths, the truth of the divine for believers, and the truth of human creation for non-believers, and the same applies to all areas in which man has a hand, the truths are to be discussed, Facts exist to

be exposed to the realities created by them and the measurement of what is true and false is reached if to the extent that the truth discussed is corroborated by the facts exposed, there is no truth without facts that complement it or falsehood with facts that repudiate it.

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A thank you to the group that meets regularly, and that dares to disagree, to discuss and to share, knowledge, emotions and opinions, between forkfuls at dinner.

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To all, my gratitude and my friendship.

Thank you.

Foreword

It was my honor to preface this book written by an already "old friend," and that qualifier is justified in terms of depth and honesty, qualities that we all really like to find in friends. Then he challenged me in an unusual way to add to his work one more line, perhaps excused.

But since I am called to this challenge, I will try to at least reach the level that Valter's narrative imposes, leaving in it my impressions about the times in which we live in the close relationship with the guiding thread of this book.

If we look at the present times with due attention, we find that we are at the best time to take the right path, our right path. All are called, but few are those who keep alive the call and this choice! You have to remember and wake up...

The demolitions of the old regimes that ruled the countries with an iron hand until the last quartile of the last century and millennium did not lead them and their peoples to the much-propagated "garden of delights on earth", with the banners of freedom and democracy declaring the perpetual peace and happiness of the peoples! These flags were already very faded from the previous revolutions in various parts and that here at the beginning of this century had dethroned the monarchy and the old social structure.

In fact, Man does not change and when he manages to usurp the previous power with the arguments he brings with him, he almost always becomes a much worse character than the one he had just removed from his chair! Some naively thought in their youth and irreverence that their utopias were even possible and achievable once the "tyrant father" was overcome, while others more cunning used them cynically for their benefit. Almost always it was the latter who generated the current tribunes of politics, people ruthless in personal confrontation, but with very little stature to lead the peoples and worse than that bear the weight of the sword of Damocles!

And that should be the first lesson to be drawn for the future of the new generations for which this book is also intended: either man changes, or societies will continue to suffer from the same scourge over and over again, even if it comes differently and wrapped up in something else or nothing.

Going back to the beginning, in fact this is the best historical moment for each of us to choose our own path and make the pace of an entire people right. Not wanting to dwell on the old messianic tradition of the end times in which this choice would be made in an agrarian narrative, it is only important to affirm that only one thing can give us a direction: the way of Truth!

This seems to be a very trivial and yet very worn description, but if we look as I said at the present times, Truth is the only thing that really gives power to those who do not have it by condition of birth. The Truth

aggrandizes the will and makes Man fall on his feet like the trees when his time is up, but it is also the force that solidifies trusts in ourselves and in those around us and without it there are no foundations or the cement for the construction of a more just and more fraternal society.

Unfortunately this word – the Truth – is increasingly used, sold and speculated in the mouths of such politicians whose youth has been influenced by the last winds of the revolutionary chaos of anything goes... and if here we had the revolution of the carnations to end our sixteenth-century Empire (an empire that lasted because it was not, because it never had the courage to have had emperors ...), in 1945 we had the post-great war, the second, with the same principle of revolutionary chaos in the face of what came from behind, then having the fall of the Berlin Wall, to foreshadow the end of the USSR from 1989 to 1991, placing the last funerary tombstone over the old world.

From here the utopias that had led this world to the ultimate chaos, were slowly replaced by the Laws of Economy and Markets, the new Scientific-Technological religion, thinking that they – the young revolutionaries of the last quarter of the millennium – that this new order would place the world in such perpetual peace and bring us closer and closer to the "garden of delights"!

The generations from these, already with "God deposed" and not having the old utopias to follow nor the catechisms of the defunct religions, quickly adopted another "opium of the people" not foreseen by Marx or even foreseen... Religion was perhaps not the true opium