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THE ETERNAL RETURN OF NOTHINGNESS: A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF HOW I EMBRACED THE ABSURD

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"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing"²
Shakespeare – Macbeth, Act V, Scene V

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² Shakespeare, [n.d.], Act V, Scene V, "Life is nothing but a wandering shadow, a poor performer who struts and fidgets for an hour on the stage, and then nothing else is heard: it is a tale narrated by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

It's not my nature to talk about myself. Like Bukowski's blue bird³, I zealously take care to present myself as a sick, domesticated, improved animal (Nietzsche, 2017, p. 69) before modern society, without letting certain parts of my fragmented and updated *selfescape*⁴. Thus, it is not easy for me to write these lines, especially when I think that nothing relevant can come out of it. I am a mediocre man, in a mediocre life and mediocre thoughts⁵ – a Christian, therefore, should say to me: "God will vomit you out of his mouth!" (Bible, Revelation, 3:16). Apart from these proclaimed lamentations – not based, however, on false modesty, but consistent with part of the true song of my blue bird – I must undertake the present task of reporting this memorial as part of an external evaluation to which I am subjected.

I come from humble origins and this weighed heavily

³ One of the passages that I like the most from this poem, and which represents well the beginning of this memorial, is: "then I put him back,/but he's singing a little/in there, I haven't quite let him/die/and we sleep together like/that/with our/secret pact/and it's nice enough to/make a man/weep, but I don't/weep, do/you?". (Bukowski, 1995, p. 211). "Then I'll put him back, but there he's humming softly; I have not yet let him die completely. Thus we sleep with our secret covenant. And it's good enough to make a man cry, but I don't cry. Do you cry?"

⁴ This term I borrow from David Hume. Cf. Marcondes, 2011, p. 101-2.

⁵ Nietzsche, 2006, p. 192: "332 – The bad hour: There must have been a bad hour for every philosopher when he thought: 'What importance can I have, if they don't also believe in my bad arguments?' – And then a malicious bird, passing by him, began to chirp: 'What importance do you have? What importance do you have?'".

on me during all the social journey I have taken up to the time of this writing. Just as blacks are overdetermined by exteriority (Fanon, 2008, p. 108), the poor are also overdetermined and judged in the capitalist world by their lack of apparent visual resources, a lack that is easily perceived by the goods we possess and fail to possess in our historical trajectory, serving these many things and objects as eyewitnesses of their [the poor] inability to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Protestantism⁶).

⁶ "Not the work itself, but the rational professional work, that is exactly what God requires. The emphasis of the Puritan idea of profession always falls on this methodical character of vocational asceticism, and not, as in Luther, on resignation to the fate that God has given us once and for all. [...] — but even the change of profession is in no way regarded as something in itself reprehensible, provided it is not done lightly but in order to take up a profession more pleasing to God, that is, according to the general principle, a more useful profession. And first of all: the usefulness of a profession with the respective pleasure of God is guided in the first place by moral criteria and then by the importance that the goods to be produced in it have for the "collectivity", but there is a third point of view, the most important in practice, of course: the "capacity to make a profit" private economic profit. For if this God, whom the Puritan sees at work in all the circumstances of life, indicates to one of his own an opportunity for profit, it is because he has his intentions in doing so. Therefore, the Christian of faith has to follow this call and take advantage of the opportunity. 'If God points out to you a way in which, without harm to your soul or to others, you can gain more within the limits of the law than in any other way, and you reject it and follow the way that will bring lesser gain, then you are hindering one of the ends of your *calling*, you are refusing to be God's steward (*steward*) and to receive His gifts so that you can use them for Him if He requires it. Surely not for the purpose of the lust of the flesh and sin, but for God's sake, it is permissible to work to be rich.'" (Weber, 2004, 147-8).

I have always felt this need to have, but I have also always understood that it was an external imposition on me, a fatal attempt by the general spirit to bend my will to his. I have never been able to build during my adult life that path I desired during the days of my childhood, something in a romantic whole, *à la* young Werther, that bordered on the bucolic hermit, isolated in his piece of land, in the land of his ancestors, who possessed little, because he knew that he who possesses less, so less if he is also possessed.⁷ This project of myself comes down the drain. It starts more from a personal ideology, with no place in the world of praxis; the right and well-said utopia⁸. I am betrayed by my lusts; Plato (2000, p. 58-60) would say that the sick horse of my soul fought a good fight against the healthy horse of reason, putting the whole chariot down, without being able to reach the path of the gods. So be it! I don't care about the gods. Like Ulysses, my destiny is with men, in my Ithaca, with my Penelope. If it was not in my power to make the world my way (*fortù*), I gave my way, I did what I could (*virtù*). In the following brief lines, this is what I will try to demonstrate.

I married early, at the age of eighteen. As I had no family support, I did it on the sly. This senseless and youthful conduct of mine then forced me to look for work. An inhabitant of Jaguarari-BA, I started the path of terror in the city of Philadelphia-BA. There he gave music lessons: guitar and violin. As the

⁷ "A free life is still free for great souls. For he who possesses little, so much less will be possessed: praise be to little poverty!" (Nietzsche, [undated], p. 47)

⁸ Utopia comes from the Greek οὐτόπιος, being "οὐ" (prefix of negation) and "τόπιος" (place); therefore, it etymologically means a "non-place".

salary was low, and the teaching conditions were precarious, I migrated, as soon as I had the opportunity, to take a technical course at Mineração Caraíba, district of Pilar, also in Jaguarari, 82 km from home. For a year, some friends and I hitchhiked together daily, to study during the theoretical part of the course. When the time came for the internship, they went to live in the district, but I continued the displacement alone. As I was now earning a little better, I used my financial resources, without the right to transportation assistance, to take the defunct bus from São Luiz to go to work. The year was 2013. I took the entire course, which I considered a victory, since I often decided to leave, but the costs did not allow me to do it. How I suffered harassment in all six months of internship⁹, I dropped out of the Faculty of Social Sciences at UNIVASF, which I did during the night shift in the city of Juazeiro, after a full day of work, and used all the free time I had to study for ENEM. In my thirst for justice, I headed for Law. I got the necessary score: I was in second place, of the only three vacancies offered in the wide competition. I moved to Jacobina and went to live in the UNEB house, along with 17 other people, divided between men and women. At the same time, I also passed the municipal exam for the Chamber of Senhor do Bonfim. With this twist, then I should

⁹ I made a complaint against old workers, who were – behind the knowledge of a colleague of mine, also an intern – saying, among other things, that she was easy because she already had children, and simulated in detail about having sexual relations with her. After my complaint, nothing happened to the technicians and my life became very difficult in the company, being even put to supply and unload garbage trucks, without the proper protections.

be happy, as in the song "Fool's Gold" by the late Raul Seixas: I passed one of the most competitive and difficult university courses in the region, with a very high grade, in a reputable university, with a guaranteed place in the university residence... In a short time, these achievements no longer meant much to me. The Caribbean was just a ghost now, and as time passed, the pains of the past embarrassed me less. As I said before, we are fragments, and the past was now a sad photograph for me. I feel that when it is outside of me, the world is always bright, beautiful, desirable and pleasant; but when I possess them, when they are integrated into my memory and my possession, they become corrupted. The enlightened old Schopenhauer (2017, p. 95), regarding my life, I can say that he was very accurate and happy, when he stated that "The life of man oscillates, like a pendulum, between pain and boredom [...]. Men have expressed this in a strange way: after having made hell the place of all torments and sufferings, what is left for heaven? Precisely boredom." People around me claim that I am always dissatisfied and that this is ingratitude. I don't deny that it is, I'm really ungrateful to God, starting with the fact that I killed it from my thoughts a long time ago (may my mother never know about it, or she'll die of heartbreak!), but if the whole universe and all life and all people... if everything is nothing more than a dream, a dream dreamed by an evil angel, and placed in me as a piece of comedy... well, I must confirm what Descartes brilliantly stated: the self is a truth, because thinking is the reflection of being. And if our thoughts are reflections of our being, then I cannot help but pay attention when this I within me, this different self

and, at the same time, identical to myself, this I often inaccessible to my consciousness, he himself screamed and cried in my guts, when he was in those classrooms, hearing about the difference between a legal entity and an individual; monist theory vs dualist theory; difference between legal act and fact; legal nature of the unborn child and the natalist, conditionalist and conceptionist theories, etc., etc., etc. I hated studying law. Sometimes I took refuge in Nietzsche, Seneca, Kierkegaard and even Freud. I also often went to the house of my friend Erenilson Barbosa, responsible for publicly rescuing the memory of the black intellectual from Bonfim Antônio Vieira¹⁰. There, astonished, I listened to him speak in a unique way about our social ills, the sharp Marxist discourse, the Jewish mystique, Pierre Bourdieu, etc. But what made me change everything was not my volition or an "enlightened conscience"; In fact, it was the end of me, which became a new beginning: my then wife asked me for a divorce.

This was a period of darkness in my life, from which I was deeply depressed at that time. It's obvious that I'm not that Diêgo for a long time. This is so true that it is strange to me to know that I am already 30 years old; Sometimes I ask myself

¹⁰ Nilson (2018, p. 14) raises the following problems to understand Vieira's trajectory: "how did a black man, from the quilombo, in the middle of the northeastern hinterland, born in 1937 and of humble origin, achieve the status of university professor outside Brazil? Even though he belonged to a family of farmers and illiterate, how did this man break the obstacles of racism in such a recent era of slavery in Brazil? In what way can Antônio Vieira's trajectory contribute to the understanding of the timid presence of blacks as intellectuals and scientists in universities?"

"but what did I do in this interstice? Where did I leave these years, which I didn't even see them go by?"

My life felt like it was part of a chapter in Hamlet: there was something rotten in the Kingdom of Denmark, and I needed to deal with it somehow, as quickly as I could. An entire life had to be re-elaborated, resignified, re-edited. I quit Law, but I also let go of many other things that I liked to do, many of which I was never able to resume practice. I enter a deep depression and I can say without fear of making a mistake that I literally understood the old maxim of my friend Nietzsche (2001, p. 89): "Whoever must face monsters must remain careful not to become a monster himself. If you look too long inside an abyss, the abyss will end up looking inside you." I found part of my refuge in Philosophy; From this period also corresponds the little I know of the Japanese language¹¹.

¹¹ I studied for two years and ended up giving up. At the time, I was already studying materials for JLPT-3, of a total of five levels. Unfortunately I can say that I was left behind, but even today I can communicate the basics, like this: 「おはようございます、みんな。哲学の教師、ディエゴ・コスタです。私はブラジル人ですが、日本語は上手ではありません。間違いを犯したときは助けてください。」 (Romanji [Latin characters]: Ohayougozaimasu, min'na. Tetsugaku no kyoushi, Diego Costa desu. Watashi wa burajirujin desu ga, nihonho wa jouzu dewa arimasen. Machigai wo okashita toki wa tasuketekudasai) "Good morning everyone. I'm Diêgo Costa, professor of Philosophy. I'm Brazilian and my Japanese is not good. If I make a mistake, please help me." As for Japanese philosophy, I came to study Miyamoto Musashi and introduced Kitaro Nishida, a scholar philosopher and mathematician linked to the creation of the Kyoto School, through his book "Essay on the Good".

A friend¹², then, was the one who advised me to go to study Philosophy at a distance learning college. As I had been stopped since I decided to quit Law, I decided to do it. This same friend was the one who took me to take the permanent exam and the SEC-BA selection process, both in 2022. I passed both, even though I couldn't study anything because of depression. And when I asked for the end of the list in the SEC-BA call, because I was still at the beginning of the Philosophy course, and started my internship in February 2024, he was also the one who paid for my registration for the IF Baiano contest. As I was busy with the internship, and in the race to get the diploma before a new call, I did not give importance to this contest; In my mind, it was certain that I had no chance, since I had not even completed my degree at the time of the test. Well, today I am part of the staff of effective professors at IF Baiano, located on the Guanambi campus, and this is thanks to the virtuous friends I have. Even my entry into the professional master's degree at PROF-FILO, the nucleus of the IF Sertão Pernambucano, took place through the one I love with love $\phi\iota\lambda\iota\alpha$ (philia).

I can't say how big my achievements are, since I tend to minimize them; But what I hate most about my writing is the possessive pronoun "my" and its variables. I do not feel at all that what I have achieved is solely mine. To return to Machiavelli, I do recognize that there is a lot of *Virtù*, but virtue alone

¹² I know that mentioning the names of friends here is a problem. I even redid part of this memorial by removing those whom I had honored in the body of the text, because I understood that, being a section of my life, I would privilege some names, and others, important in other areas, would be secondary.

is not enough, as the example of César Borja has well demonstrated. It took love, relatives, friends... and above all luck. The goddess Fortuna worked on my behalf. Blessed are you among women!¹³

The Philosophy

In a world haunted by demons, to make an honorable mention to Carl Sagan's work, Philosophy served as a light for me. But I do not want to give it that religious tone that the metaphor seems to want to lend to it as if by force. In order not to romanticize it, I affirm in advance that Philosophy does not save, does not solve the problems of life and does not give meaning to anything. It is always the human who does it, and whenever he wants to do it [to make sense of nothingness], he will do it in a thousand and diverse ways, not needing to correspond necessarily or sufficiently with the "lover of wisdom"¹⁴. We are the ones who go out playing in life meaning where there is none, starting with the use of words themselves. But I do not want to develop this debate here. It is necessary to make it fixed a priori that Philosophy is one of so many forms of knowledge; And that if it fills so-and-so's emptiness, science fills So-and-so's and religion fills Beltrano's. And if I can say that the religiosity of Malcolm Little, which took him out of his physical and men-

¹³ Heresy.

¹⁴ From the Greek Φιλοσοφία (philosophy) literally "love of wisdom", whose creation of the term is attributed to Pythagoras of Samos.

tal prisons and transformed him from a house burglar into Malcolm X, one of the greatest defenders of black civil rights in the history of the United States of America¹⁵, I cannot, however, say that this experience of life, however fantastic and spectacular it may be, can be universalized and applied to all human individuals, as if there were a universal truth just waiting to be found by someone. By the way, regarding the truth, I prefer Pontius Pilate's answer to Jesus¹⁶, who had told him that he had come into the world to testify to the truth, and that all those who are

¹⁵ MALCOLM X, 1992, p. 167: "The most difficult test I have ever faced in my life was praying [...] But bowing my knees to pray – this act – required me at least a week. / They have already discovered what my life had been like. Picking up a lock pick to break into someone's house was the only time my knees had bended before. I had to make a tremendous effort to bend my knees. And waves of shame and embarrassment forced me to stand up again. For the wicked, to bend the knee, to admit one's guilt, to beg God's forgiveness, is the hardest thing in the world. It is easy for me to understand and say this now. But on that occasion, when I was the embodiment of evil, it was terrible. Time and time again, I forced myself to stay in the posture of praying to Allah. When I finally managed to take it on without immediately getting up... I found that I didn't know what to say to Allah."

¹⁶ Nietzsche (2002, p. 42), in *The Antichrist*, also mentions this passage, in the following terms: "– I must add that, in the entire New Testament, there appears only one figure deserving of honor: Pilate, the Roman governor. Taking Jewish matters seriously – he was far above that. One more or less Jew – does it matter?... The noble irony of the Roman before whom the word 'truth' was cynically abused has enriched the New Testament with the only passage that has any value – which is its criticism and its destruction: 'What is truth?' ...".

of the truth (re)know his voice; And the Roman governor replied, "What is truth?" (BIBLE, John 18:37-38). I don't believe in truth, just as I don't believe in happiness as an objectively valid entity. Recalling a reading of Popper, a very interesting passage came to my mind that I make a point of quoting:

"For us," says Reichenbach, "the principle of induction is the means by which science decides about truth. More precisely, we should say that it serves to decide on probability, since it is not given to Science to arrive at either truth or falsity (...) but scientific statements can only reach successive degrees of probability, whose **unattainable** limits, upper and lower, are truth and falsehood" (Reichenbach, 1930, p.186 *apud* Popper, 2008, p. 30, emphasis mine)

Try to reason with me: if truth is unattainable in scientific thought, if we can never be sure of it, if it is more of a compass, a principle, than a concrete fact, if truth is as Protagoras thought: the measure of man himself¹⁷, I cannot believe that this subjectivity, that this thing that can never be attained, not even tangential, it should be an object of search, much less of a guide

¹⁷ "SOCRATES: Perhaps your definition of knowledge has some value; it is the definition of Protagoras; In other words, he said the same thing. He affirmed that man is the measure of all things, of the existence of those that exist and the non-existence of those that do not exist. Surely you've read that?" (Plato, [n.d.], p. 11)

– because how will I be guided by something that has never even been spoken/said? By the way, Parmenides here partially serves me: the unsaid cannot even be thought!¹⁸ But before proceeding, allow me to close this truth thing right away: not to say, like Reichenbach, that it is unattainable, I think that in the field of language and logic we can see relations of variables that give us this certainty, in spite of the fact that it cannot expand beyond this lexical framework. An example: if I say that the sky is blue, you can look at what we call the sky (exactly! without metaphysics here, this archaic and almost cave medieval fantasy) and see if there is a correspondence with the coloring that we apply the name of blue. If there is a correspondence, we say that the statement is true. In the field of logic, we can devote our attention to the conditional premises, fundamental for the construction of hypotheses in the field of Science¹⁹, which are always true when the antecedent premise is false, and in the case of the antecedent being true, the sentence will only be true when the

¹⁸ "2. And now I will speak; and you, listen to my words and keep them well, for I am going to tell you of the only conceivable paths of inquiry. The first [says] that [being] is and that non-being is not; This is the path of conviction, for it leads to the truth. The second, that it is not, is, and that non-being is necessary; this way, I tell you, is inscrutable; for you cannot know what is not – that is impossible – nor express it in word. 3. For to think and to be is the same." (Marcondes, 2011, p. 13)

¹⁹ "There are several ways to formulate hypotheses, but the most common is 'If x , then y ', where x and y are variables linked to each other by the words 'if' and 'then'". (Lakatos & Marconi, 2003, p. 128).

consequent is also true; thus, by deduction, the Ponens and Tollens methods are created as a consequence²⁰. Using such deductive methods, we can conclude from a valid initial premise (e.g., **p** - if it rains, **q** - I won't go to the beach) that, looking at the concrete, material reality, noting that it rained (**p**), I must infer only one possible conclusion: therefore, **q** (I didn't go to the beach). Here there is truth, in the correspondence of the world with the word. Moreover, we are in the world of contingencies and relativisms – nothing absolute can come from this; If someone says so, he is either a liar or ignorant of the nature of this metaphysical entity called truth²¹.

Returning to the point of the romanticization of Philosophy. Here I found my way of being and living; I feel like a butterfly must feel out of the cocoon, or a little bird that has escaped from the cage and regained its freedom, or the chimpanzee in its natural habitat, away from human jester and slavery. Freedom is indeed "a necessary presupposition for the realization of

²⁰ The Ponens method states the antecedent, and it is also necessary to conclude the consequent: 1 - If **P**, then **Q**. (*Premise*); 2 - **P**. (*Premise*); 3 - Therefore, **Q**. (*Conclusion*). Tollens starts from the opposite, and from the negation: that is, one denies the conclusion, denying the antecedent: 1 - If **P**, then **Q**. (*Premise*); 2 - No (\sim) **Q**. (*Premise*); 3 - Therefore, no (\sim) **P**. (*Conclusion*).

²¹ I have nothing against the use of this term by common sense, since in everyday life lexical precision is left aside to give way to a more direct and effective communication regarding its objectives, unlike the resource of language in a scientific nature, which is what I deal with here. Only an idiot would believe, e.g., that an atheist, when he says "thank God" or the like, would be acting in a flawed act, affirming *a contrario sensu* the sovereignty of this omnipresent and omniscient Being.

the individual in what he wishes to be" (Araújo Neto, 2011, p. 81). I love Philosophy, and that is to love the historical men and women who are involved with the creation, destruction, reconstruction and consolidation of this knowledge, all this in a dialectical logic that goes back to the ancients, in an infinite cycle of being and non-being, just as Heraclitus stated that "36. For souls (*psychai*), to die is to be transformed into water, for water, to die is to be transformed into earth. From the earth, however, water is formed, and from water the soul" (Marcondes, 2011, p. 16). If ψύχῃ (*psyche*) means vital breath, spirit of life, the thing that animates beings, being their engine, so Philosophy assumed in me the condition of soul. If the soul, for Heraclitus, is constantly dying and being born, in a dialectical relationship that is intrinsic to it, then this knowledge in me must always not be, it will always flee from truth and perfection, it will always seek knowledge, because love is lacking in beauty, and the mythological nature of the philosopher is the lack of knowledge.²² The one who knows, the holder of the truth, of the absolute, is a sage or a god.

²² "It's a bit long to explain," she said; yet I will tell you. When Aphrodite was born, the gods feasted, and among the rest was also the son of Prudence, Recurso. After they had finished supper, he came to alms of the feast to Poverty, and stayed by the door. Now Resource, drunk with nectar, for there was no wine yet, entered the garden of Zeus, and fell asleep heavily. Poverty then, plotting in his lack of resources to beget a child of Resource, lies down beside him and soon conceives Love. That is why Love became the companion and servant of Aphrodite, begotten on her birthday, while by nature a lover of beauty, because Aphrodite is also beautiful. And because he was a son, the Love of Resource and Poverty, this was the condition in which he

stayed. At first he is always poor, and far from being delicate and beautiful, as most imagine, but he is hard, dry, barefoot and homeless, always on the ground and without a liner, lying in the shelter, at the doors and on the paths, because he has the nature of a mother, always living with precision. According to his father, however, he is insidious with what is beautiful and good, and courageous, resolute and energetic, a terrible hunter, always weaving machinations, greedy for wisdom and full of resources, philosophizing all his life, terrible magician, sorcerer, sophist: and neither immortal is his nature nor mortal, and on the same day now he germinates and lives, when it gets richer; sometimes he dies and rises again, thanks to the nature of the father; and what he achieves always eludes him, so that he neither impoverishes Love nor enriches it, just as he is also in the midst of wisdom and ignorance. That is what is happening. No god philosophizes or wants to be wise - because he already is - just as if someone else is wise, he does not philosophize. Nor do the ignorant philosophize or wish to be wise; for it is in this very thing that lies the difficulty of ignorance, in thinking, who is not a distinguished and gentle man, nor intelligent, that is enough for him in this way. Therefore, those who do not imagine themselves to be deficient in what they do not think are necessary do not want [sic] them.

"Who then, Diotima," I asked him, "who philosophize, if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant?"

"This is what is evident right now," he replied, "even to a child: they are those who are between these two extremes, and one of them would be Love. For one of the most beautiful things is wisdom, and Love is love for beauty, so that Love must be a philosopher, and a philosopher must be between the wise and the ignorant. And the cause of his condition is his origin: for he is the son of a wise and rich father and a mother who is not wise and poor. This, then, O Socrates, is the nature of this genius; as for what you thought was Love, it is nothing surprising what you had. For you thought, it seems to me to take away from what you say, that Love was the beloved and not the lover; that is why, as I think, Love seemed to you to be all beautiful. And indeed what is lovely is that it is really beautiful, delicate, perfect, and blessed;

I am not, however, a "dogmatic skeptic" – that, in fact, would be a paradox. I have already stated that truth exists as a requirement of logic. Skepticism must serve as an anchor so that we do not fall into the snare of dogmatism and become incapable of living the fluidity of the philosophical soul, which as I said above: never is! Nothing, in turn, prevents us from having a provisional truth or dogma, just as Descartes proposed a provisional morality²³, it is in this way that Philosophy serves me as a staff in this world of such stony and thorny roads.

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the lover, however, is his character different, as I have explained." (Plato, 2003, 36-37).

²³ "In the same way, in order not to hesitate in my actions, as long as reason compelled me to do so, in my judgments, and in order to continue to live from then on in the happiest way possible, I conceived for myself a provisional morality, which consisted only of three or four maxims [...]" (Descartes, [n.d.], p. 14)

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