



Fernando Pessoa's *Fausto* and the concept of Subjective Tragedy

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ABSTRACT. This paper intends to show, in an embryonic format, how Fernando Pessoa embodied the subjective process, presented in all his work through a heteronimic construction, in his writing project of Portuguese *Faust*. Consistent with the idea of Static Drama, Pessoa's *Fausto* sights the construction of an animistic and apathetic tragedy, supported on a discursive monologism and the tragic conception of existence.

Keywords: Fernando Pessoa, Faust, drama, tragedy, subjectivity.

O *Fausto* de Fernando Pessoa e o conceito de Tragédia Subjetiva

RESUMO. O presente texto busca apresentar, ainda que de forma embrionária, como Fernando Pessoa incorporou o processo de subjetivação presente em toda a sua obra por meio da construção heteronímica no seu projeto de escritura de um *Fausto* português. Consoante a ideia de Drama Estático, o *Fausto* de Pessoa enceta a construção de uma tragédia anímica e abúlica, alicerçada no monologismo discursivo e na concepção trágica da existência.

Palavras-chave: Fernando Pessoa, *Fausto*, drama, tragédia, subjetividade.

There is something which, for lack of a better name, we will call the tragic sense of life, which carries with it a whole conception of life itself and of the universe, a whole philosophy more or less formulated, more or less conscious (Miguel de Unamuno, 2012, p. 17).

Introduction

The assertive that Fernando Pessoa is more than a poet has already turned into a fact. The design of his heteronymy (specially Alberto Caeiro, Alvaro de Campos, Ricardo Reis and Bernardo Soares), since the early years of his youth, can be understood as a constitutive variant of his mental and creative apparatus. Even when Fernando Pessoa doesn't sign as one of his heteronymous, the multiplicity of 'personas' is already intrinsically presented to his texts. In other words, even if *Fausto* is not set as one of his heteronymous, he surely configures as more than one simple character.

The works of these three poets comprise, as it has been said, a dramatic set; and the intellectual interaction of personalities is properly studied, as well as their own personal relationships. All of this will consist of biographies to make, accompanied by horoscopes and possibly photographs, when published. It is a drama in 'personas', rather than acts. (If these three individualities are more or less real than the actual Fernando Pessoa – it is a

metaphysical problem, absented from the secret of Gods, and therefore by passing what is reality, that can never have been solved (Pessoa, 1993, p. 14)¹.

The poet seems to have found in the German myth his specular figure. The pursuit of German Faust for experience of totality, transposition of human limits, was also yearning and inquired by Fernando Pessoa himself. In spite of that, you must think that from behind this individual who has many individuals inside him, there is the subject as himself. Thus, to understand this category of subject, we must return to that term: subject.

Subjectivity and Fernando Pessoa

A term with a broad range of senses in continental philosophy, being at once a logical,

¹As obras destes três poetas formam, como se disse, um conjunto dramático; e está devidamente estudada a entreação intelectual das personalidades, assim como as suas próprias relações pessoais. Tudo isto constará de biografias a fazer, acompanhadas, quando se publicarem, de horóscopos e, talvez, de fotografias. É um drama em gente, em vez de em actos. (Se estas três individualidades são mais ou menos reais que o próprio Fernando Pessoa — é problema metafísico, que este, ausente do segredo dos Deuses, e ignorando portanto o que seja realidade, nunca poderá resolver.) All translations on this paper were performed by me under advising of Professor David E. Wellbery.

grammatical, epistemological and metaphysical. However, we can find some unity of meaning by looking at the etymology of the term. 'Subject' can be traced back to the Latin *subjectum*, which literally means 'thrown underneath': *sub-jectum*. Thus, it indicates an underlying basis and support, the foundation for the understanding. The logical and grammatical sense of 'subject' provides the basis for predication. Metaphysically, the term 'subject' is synonymous to the 'substantial', the ground and foundation.

Nevertheless, this understanding of the subject as the foundation of the world was radicalized by the philosophy of Descartes and, taking into account due proportions, it was used as a reference for understanding the life, always from an idea of an individual who thinks and determines all reality from himself. With Kant, the subject becomes transcendental, which means that the subject is now the condition of possibility of objectivity itself, and no longer problematically cut off from it. Eventually in German Idealism - particularly in Hegel - the subject is absolutized to become the totality of all that is the absolute Spirit. In Nietzsche, the subject is denounced as a lie, as what falsely pretends to be an underlying substrate, and is characterized as a grammatical habit, a fiction and an imaginary cause. In the twentieth century we will pay particular attention to Heidegger's ontological deconstruction of the subject, the displacement of the subject in psychoanalysis, and Lévinas's stress on the ethical dimension of the subject, though the question of the subject is also very important to Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida.

That was just a chronological recovery so we can identify in what subject category the understanding of the subjectivity concept in Fernando Pessoa's *Fausto* could be applied. Starting from this question, we analyze how is the subject-object relationship in the poetry of Fernando Pessoa, and a clue to the elaboration of this concept, philosophically conceived, may be found.

We start from the fact that Fernando Pessoa always thinks the relationship between the terms 'subject-object' in a metaphysical connotation. The idea of Metaphysics in Pessoa, like his identity as a poet, is broad and covered by a variety of subdivisions. He conceives Metaphysics as: a science of Being, of Truth and Reality; as a science of Absolute; as a science of the strength power and domain of Ideal; Metaphysics of Art; Metaphysics of Life, in other words, Metaphysics of the Will to Live, and so on. In the case of *Fausto*, it is appropriate to take the idea of Metaphysics linked to life experience, since in *Fausto* the antinomies

'life/death', 'reality/dream', 'existence/existing in itself' are constitutive of a faustian consciousness to 'being in the world', and this world is the 'world of life experience' (*Lebenswelt*). Therefore, it is not - in the first instance - a conception of transcendentalist bias experience. Even though one of the fundamental questions of Fernando Pessoa as a writer is the question about existence of God, Fausto's anguish is mainly focused on the following inquire: How can I understand the Mystery of Existence? This issue will be addressed on the fourth chapter of this book.

For now, it is enough to say that the idea of Metaphysics in the construction of the Faust subjectivity takes into consideration both the phenomenal and noumenal knowledge of his relationship with the world. This means that, in Faust, the world can be grasped as 'phenomena' (appearances and representations) and 'noumena' (things-in-themselves). It means that the world is representation, but it is also will, i.e. the metaphysical claim that the fundamental reality is will, more specifically, the will to live - to survive (as we can perceive in Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy). Thus, the subjectivity is made up of the relations between subject and object, although many of these relations cannot be explained, expressed or understood cognoscently. Developing this line of thought, Fernando Pessoa conceives the thought in the light of one 'irreducibly Reality', made up of subject and object, that is, for awareness and experience, or thought and feeling, in which subjectivity and objectivity does not exist by themselves in this 'Reality', but through own relationship of coexistence between subject and object:

The basis of all the speculation is the distinction between S[ubject] and O[bject]. (The relationship between them is called Knowledge). (In the excitement and desire there is no subject and object but only two objects). // 2. S[ubject] and O[bject] are irreducible. Nothing that is Object can be Subject, nothing that is Subject can be Object. // 3. Two things remain: Consciousness and Reality. These are irreducible. // 4. Consciousness is not Reality. Therefore, the C[onsciousness] does not exist. We cannot say that it exists, because to state that it exists is to assert that it is Object, and it is essentially the Pure Subject [...] (Pessoa, 2006a, p. 223).

This conception of relation between subject and object might partly explain the fact that Fernando Pessoa has sought to develop a multiplied personality in heteronyms, since thereby increasing the ability to elaborate a superior subjectivity, able to

grasp experiences which, if experienced by a less fragmented personality, would have as a result a less plural comprehension. Nay, in his poetry what can be perceived is a kaleidoscope of themes, frames, styles and conceptions that hamper a more didactic reading. That is one of the difficulties faced by critics, because at the same time it is a challenge to comprise the influences present in his work, it is also a pitfall, insofar as it is impossible to conceive all his philosophic and literary background.

Remember that Pessoa worked in a project to surpass all the Portuguese Literature in various ways, but especially in an attempt to overreach Luís de Camões as a great name in Portuguese poetry. Even taking into account the statement of the poet in relative terms, the pursuit to replace the figure of *Os Lusíadas*'s (1974) author as a new Portugal 'symbol-writer' is indeed a project aimed and achieved by Fernando. His idea of poetry takes place of what was addressed to Camões, it is in a sense of majesty, exceeding a limit, to overcome a tradition. Translated in other words, it is a narcissistic behavior, which would not achieve success in the period in which the poet was still alive, but it certainly only attained the status after his death because of his heteronymic writing. As stated in an article published in *A Águia* (1912) "[...]because inevitably the Great Poet, that this movement will generate" – Modernism of *Orpheu* – "[...] will move to second place the figure so far primatial, Camões" (Pessoa, 1980, p. 25)². In this regard, Pessoa has always lived on the limit of himself in an endeavor, through poetry, to study, to analyze, to understand life, in order to achieve happiness. Thus, one of the characteristics that comprise Fernando Pessoa's subjectivity is that he has never had a single personality, neither has he felt or thought, but dramatically:

So, I do not know whether it is a privilege or a disease, mental constitution, which produces it. The truth, however, is that the author of these lines - I do not know whether the author of these books - has never had a single personality, or ever thought or felt, if not dramatically, i.e. an individual or perceived personality, that more properly than himself could sense such feelings (Pessoa, 2009, p. 68).

This fragmented subjectivity, scattered in various egos, however presented in the same poet, represents a clue to understand the issue of subjectivity of *Fausto* in Pessoa. However, to a better understanding, it is necessary to turn a bit of

attention to aesthetics configuration into his poetry.

In case of philosophical terminology, Fernando Pessoa conceives, beyond any philosophical system, that human spirit is fundamentally dualistic. This means that, insofar as I deny the reality of the

[...] constitutive elements of experience – material and spiritual - [...] does not deny its 'existence' as 'unreality', as 'appearance', which translates the initial dualism 'spiritual / material' in a dualism 'reality-appearance.' (Pessoa, 2000, p. 151, *emphasis added*).

In relative terms, the whole Pessoa's poetry is also erected on the sign of dualism, uttered in the language of paradox, contradiction, antinomy and antithesis. It is an attempt to merge the Dionysian and Apollonian ways of art. In other words, the poet is searching to conceive an aesthetic that synthesize Classicism and Romanticism. The writer considers that

[...] the literary school that wants to represent our epoch, must be one designed to attain the ideal of all times, to be the living synthesis of times past all (Pessoa, 2000, p. 57).

The Classicism as an expression of abstract and universal, and Romanticism as an expression of the individual and concrete. The poet himself named this phenomenon 'Interseccionism'. It is this aesthetic category

[...] where the subjective and the objective, separate, come together, and are separated, where the real and the unreal are confused, so they are well distinct [...] (Pessoa, 2000, p. 72).

which Alvaro de Campos states that Pessoa orthonymously developed this 'intellectualized sensitivity'.

[...] And more, there would be nothing more truly Fernando Pessoa, more closely Fernando Pessoa. What else could better express his always intellectualized sensitivity, his intense and distracted attention, his warm finesse and cold analysis of himself, than these poems – intersections, where the state of mind is at once two (Pessoa, 2000, p. 113).

We can translate the words of Álvaro de Campos in the following statement: being different from Alberto Caeiro (who has the aesthetics of abstract intelligence, instinctive and sensory); Ricardo Reis, (whose sensitivity is restricted to the thought of limitation, does not make mathematical exclusively); and Álvaro de Campos, (exasperatedly sensitive and intelligent); Fernando Pessoa's intelligence and sensitivity interpenetrate, intersecting each other.

Generally speaking, in the poetry of Fernando Pessoa the concept of knowledge may also be

² [...] porque fatalmente o Grande Poeta, que este movimento gerará, deslocará para segundo plano a figura, até agora primacial, de Camões.

understood as dual, a 'thought' that 'feels'. This 'thought' that 'feels' is always thought and felt by a fictional subject. Therefore, the idea of subjectivity in Pessoa in addition to being shared with the idea of multiplicity, does not need to be considered from a dialectical fusion of opposites, but their simultaneous coexistence. This assertion converges into the idea that subjectivity in Fernando Pessoa has an idealistic or transcendental nature, while the reality is designed through the senses and our thinking. In other words, the direction in which the poet conceives the sense is expressed in the words of José Gil:

We have seen that the sensation has two symmetrical elements, 'the sensation of the outside world' and 'the abstract phenomenon of consciousness'. These elements define two directions or dimensions of feeling: on one hand, the object and the objective sensations, on the other, the subjective state and subjective associations linked to that object. In sum, the outer face and the inner face of sensation. Between these two poles, and from them, art must produce another type of sensation, 'abstract sensation' (Gil, 1987, p. 43, emphasis added)³.

In an attempt to draw up a dramaturgical text of major proportions, Fernando Pessoa has been writing and rewriting between the years 1909 and 1933 the uncoordinated verses of his *Primeiro Fausto*, that can be compared to Goethe's *Urfaust*, respected their proper proportions. At this first version, whilst, even in the modified proposal, Pessoa also did not realize the theatrical unit, what predominate are monologue sections, incomplete fragments, an unfinished and imperceptible dramatic feature.

Although the legend of S. Frei Gil of Santarém in Portugal can be presented as an interesting parallel with the faustian legend, according to António Quadros (Pessoa, 1986), it was inspired by the German legend that Fernando Pessoa turned all his efforts onto trying to dramatize – according to his own thinking and his experience of an 'alchemist' poet – the searching for answers of the metaphysical mysteries, human enigmas and secrets of nature; and being himself a needy man, living in the shadows, and yet demanding light, solitary, and yet aspiring to love, living, and yet fearing death (focus on which he centralizes most of his poem's reason). Fernando Pessoa has failed in the task of trying to depersonalize himself, and what we read seems to be his long desperate confession about this failure.

It is sufficient to read some stanzas of this intriguing poem to verify that his *Fausto* is, at the same time, "the man and the monster", the poet speaking in first person, without a theatrical drapery and also without a scenography disguise. What he is writing to us is constituted of a series of lyrical monologues, though, with a strong tragic accent. This is written basically about four key themes which, for who is already initiated as a reader of Fernando Pessoa, suddenly recognizes as familiar: Mystery of the World, the Horror of Knowing, the Failure of Pleasure and Love, and the Fear of Death.

Albeit still fragmentary, there is a new version (more than a simple edition) of *Fausto*, which was conceived by Teresa Sobral Cunha, published in 1988, and reissued in 2013, entitled *Fausto, Tragédia Subjectiva* (Pessoa, 2013). In this version, the text is organized in five Acts, four Interacts and an Epilogue, structure that was already supposedly conceived by Fernando Pessoa, only being required here, a sort of arrangement into his fragments, by putting them in a likely chronological order.

Since it is clear that the pun of tensions and paradoxes, side by side with a hyperbolic language, are one of the poetic stamps of Fernando Pessoa's poetry, it is necessary for the reading of his *Fausto* to find some evidences of the specific nature of the poetic strategies embodied in the text. Furthermore, the title of the poem itself provides the reader a footprint to undertake a reading of the work from a theoretical point of view that offers them the investigation tools to treat the issue, namely: the subjectivity, the tragedy, and the *Faust* himself as myth and fictional character.

Fausto is a hybrid work in terms of genre. Frequently labeled as a piece of drama, it features a text organized and structured in a dramatic frame that provides us an illusion of drama. Nonetheless, far from being a play in which the dramatic action constitutes the linguistic nucleus of the discourse, what prevails in *Fausto* is the monologue, interrupted by interludes of lyrical nature, in which the author's choice for the Soliloquy is evident, addressed to his anti-hero, foreshadowing an existentialist behavior. This choice for the soliloquy is surely not casual. The monologue uses to reflect the unconscious and spontaneous effect of one human being upon another, though it does not always reflect the individuality of the poet – his own feelings and aspirations, convictions or reasons – except in an indirectly form (the problem of self-reference in poetry / the problem of the author). The monologue expresses the impressions which a certain character receives from events or from other people.

³ Vimos que a sensação tem dois elementos simétricos, "a sensação do mundo exterior" e "o fenómeno abstrato de consciência". Esses elementos definem duas direcções ou dimensões da sensação: de um lado, o objeto e as sensações objectivas, por outro, o estado subjetivo e associações subjetivas ligadas a esse objeto. Em suma, a face exterior e a face interior da sensação. Entre estes dois pólos e, a partir deles, a arte deve produzir um outro tipo de sensação, a "sensação abstrata".

On the first Act, presenting the dramatic ambience, the following description provides some hints that are necessary to understand the choice of monologue. The first act presents the struggle 'Intelligence wants to understand Life', in which Intelligence fails. He advises that the act is 'all intellectual and abstract disquisitions' in which the main theme of the work – the Mystery of the World – is repeatedly addressed. The poet also raises the question in other words, summarizing the conflict as 'intelligence with itself' or 'impossibility of knowledge'. Hereby, placed in this way, the inquiry that will guide all the reflection of the first act turns to the lyrical subject himself, as the possessor of intelligence (even though this term here is characterized as a character) and the failure of this intelligence in turning its real efforts to understand and comprehend life. The first aspect of the subjective character of the text is presented here, namely its purpose. It is clear that the establishment of this target of comprehension and understanding of life is a personal project, even if we cannot address it to the poet himself; it is certainly Fausto's aim at his path. (Pessoa, 1993).

From a structural point of view, the poem is closer to the interactions than the Acts of Pessoa's drama. However, the thematic approach is extremely affine to Portuguese poet's works. Pessimism, the search for comprehension of himself, the presence of metaphysical inquiry finds in *Fausto* an apparent reverberation.

Another aspect to consider is that the choice of the poet soliloquy does not completely mischaracterize the play as a drama. Although the concept of drama immediately requires the presence of the action (plot), in this case, action takes place inside the character, a kind of intellectual work, repeated exhaustively. Therefore, we can consider the 'dramatic monologue' closest to all this drama instead of just its characterization as 'soliloquy'. Pessoa uses a technique of recording a continuum of impressions, thoughts and impulses either prompted by conscious experience or arising from the well of the subconscious. Some critics would call it 'stream of consciousness', a technique which seeks to depict the multitudinous thoughts and feelings which run through the mind. The name of the term does not really matter. An important question to rise is why, among many other genres, the dramatic monologue serves more properly the purposes of writing a subjective tragedy. Perhaps, it is because the dramatic monologue would associate drama and lyrical elements for the construction of the text and its precise addressing. George Steiner also corroborates the idea of rapprochement between the

poetry of Fernando Pessoa and the concept of this genre. In his book *The Poetry of Thought* (2011), he writes about Pessoa's *Fausto*:

[...] Metaphysical nihilism cannot negate the impulse towards understanding. Repeatedly Pessoa's dramatic monologue reverts to a nightmare horror: possessed by vain but imperative reflection, Faust 'suffocates within his own soul'. Metaphysical inquiry induces live burial (Steiner, 2011, p. 169, emphasis added).

Associating the foundations of dramatic monologue to the poet's drama, a review of lyricism as a genre is necessary, so that we understand in which aspects the notion of subjectivism is deployed as a language strategy in the play. Charles Baudelaire stated that "[...] hyperbole and apostrophe are two forms of language that are not only most necessary but most pleasing lyric in" (Baudelaire, 1976, p.28).

Supported by this statement, I resort to the theory composition of lyrical genre, recovered by the work of Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (2015). As I have already mentioned, Fernando Pessoa's *Fausto* is a text divided into five acts and four interacts, which apparently does not maintain a dramatic unity among themselves. This means that, in this frame, a sequence of events is not arranged or coordinated in space and time, offering the reader - potential spectator - an idea of sequence. In Fernando Pessoa's *Fausto* only a disconnected and fragmentary discourse can be seen. A statement of a negative adventure experienced by a negative hero. There are in Pessoa's *Fausto* no positive aspects that would have featured Goethe's romantic *Faust*. Moreover, the sense of History in the twentieth century, of course, has also been modified, so *Fausto* shows us a strongly lyrical tone to the detriment of a dramatic ambience. The theatrical element realizes itself by the way in which they are composed by the lyricism of the fragments. This lyricism is mainly characterized by: a) Irresolution of an intense condensation of antinomies; b) Irresolution of an intense and not aligned condensation, in sections of sense.

Pessoa's *Fausto* in this sense contradicts the concept of drama in Hegel, because its lyrical subjectivity does not match its epic objectivity. In other words, the interiority does not recognize itself in an exteriority organization. Those aspects come up motivated by several reasons, some from a more formal nature, others, subjective in nature. Among those that could be enumerated as formal matters, and that we could also call 'technical', are: The fact that the text is mostly built in the shape of dramatic monologue; The acts and interacts do not count -

with rare exceptions - on elements of Attic tragedy, either, are not easily detectable elements like 'hybris, moira, peripeteia, denouement, desis' - commonly constituents of the tragedies in general, even the current ones.

Generally, the presence of lyric characteristics includes especially: a) The question of the enunciative apparatus of lyric, that contains possibilities of indirection. In other words, into its enunciative forms, it poses the question of an 'absent' as related to the notions of voice and voicing. The lyric creates effects of voicing (amality), which Paul de Man expressed stating that "The principle of intelligibility in lyric poetry depends on the phenomenalization of the poetic voice [...]" (De Man, 2015, p. 156); b) The Lyric's attempt to be an event itself rather the representation of an event. Albeit, it can contain 'representations of action', in lyric, the narration, that is, the presence of discourse or articulations cannot be reduced to the narration of past events - on the contrary - the narrated events seem to be subsumed by the presence of lyric enunciation. In this case, a distinctive feature of Lyric seems to be an attempt to create the impression of something happening now, in the present time of discourse, creating 'effects of presence'; c) The ritualistic dimensions of the Lyric, including the patterning of rhythm and rhyme; the repetition of stanza forms and the sonority aspect are opposed to the fictional aspect. Adding to it, the role of reader, or the listener, as a sort of performers.

On the other hand, we have subjective aspects that compose this frame, which may be named substance. Certainly those elements are constituted in the poem through language that includes the lyrical aspect, the transmutation of drama as a genre, the text organization shaped in soliloquy. It means that into this structure and in that speech, the subjective content materializes itself. However, it is very important to list which aspects of this subjectivity are developed within Pessoa's tragedy.

Lyricism seems to seek to remake the universe as a world, giving a spiritual dimension to matter. This pursuit is carried out through the creation of a particular world, built by an encrypted, the symbolic language, from which the allegory and analogy prevail.

These aspects converge at our reading. At the opening of his subjective tragedy, Fernando Pessoa (the lyrical voice of a not yet named Fausto) writes:

Ah, everything is symbol and analogy!
The wind that passes, the night that cools
Are other things yonder the night and the wind –

Shadows of life and thought.

Everything we see is another thing.

The vast tide, the eager tide,

It is the echo of another tide that is

Where is real the world which is.

All we have is oblivion.

The cold night, the fleeting wind

Are shadows of hands whose gestures are

The 'mother-illusion' of this illusion. (Pessoa, 2006b, p. 400).

These initial stanzas of the poem provide us some keys to understand how the lyrical and dramatic compose the proposal coexistence throughout the piece.

In the first verse, the poetic voice asserts that 'Everything is symbol and analogy'. This is a very important statement for understanding the concept of subjectivity and tragedy within the poem. Assuming that everything is symbol and analogy, the poetic voice assumes that its propositions must be placed under suspicion, since what is being categorized during the development of poetic instances is always the image or the 'simulacrum' of something else that is not being said directly.

This conclusion may seem rather obvious. If I take the familiar paradox of Epimenides – 'Everything that I say is a lie' – I may say that one of the facets that characterize literature is the faking, the distortion of 'truth', the oblique glance at the 'reality'. However, in this case, especially when it is dealing with Fernando Pessoa, this aspect gets very specific outlines. First, we must confirm that the poet had to multiply himself to exercise his writing craft, or his poetic personality did not fit in a single biological personality. Secondly, we have to consider that most of his poetry carries meta-poetic features, to the point that the poet asserts himself as 'a faker' 'par excellence'. Last, but not least, if everything is symbol and analogy, it is regarded, analyzed, devised, understood, represented in the light of a poetic uniqueness that also reinvents the tragedy from his own identity in his own contours, which metaphorizes and transgresses the regular limits of the tragedy as a genre, whose nucleus is the action (plot).

Autopsichography

The poet is a faker

Who's so good at his act

He even fakes the pain

Of pain he feels in fact.
 And those who read his words
 Will feel in his writing
 Neither of the pains he has
 But just the one they're missing.
 And so around its track
 This thing called the heart winds,
 A little clockwork train
 To entertain our minds. (Pessoa, 2006b, p. 314).

In this contact of a desperate Fausto within his world, there are no certainties, only doubts. Dreams, illusions, are reverberant components of a reality which cannot be grasped, but as a tragedy. From this, we may conceive that what most matters in *Fausto* is not exactly what characterizes the play as a tragedy, but the tragic ambience that is present in drama. In an interesting essay on the tragic in ancient drama, that reflected in the tragic in modern drama, Søren Kierkegaard observed that the tragic, after all, is always tragic, and the idea of tragic remains essentially the same, as its natural remains for mankind to weep (Kierkegaard, 1988).

According to Annamaria Cascetta, 'the consciousness of the tragic has transversed Western culture for millennia' and carries within the notion of inexorability of human limits, its contradictions and ambiguities, and especially its concern and hesitation in the face of suffering. Cascetta states that the 'awareness of the tragic' is a 'permanent structure of human consciousness' and, although the nineteenth century has witnessed the gradual decline of the tragedy in the model designed by Aristotle, the concept of 'tragic' was being elaborated 'as a philosophical idea', establishing a new paradigm for the interpretation of 'human existence and reality' (Cascetta, 2014).

In this regard, a tragic conception as a contradictory suffering is the center of subjective incarnation of drama in Fernando Pessoa. The concept of tragedy implied as irredeemable disaster is still presented in his *Fausto* with another guise. In the classical understanding of tragedy, this disaster has involved the combination of two elements: failure and unforeseeability. In *Fausto*, unforeseeability is transformed into foreseeability because his failure is a condition for its existence in a sense that, somehow, he exceeds his limits in an attempt to try to understand his own reason for being in the world. In other words, Fausto does not challenge the mortal limits with his 'hibrys', angering the Gods, provoking their 'nemesis', nor

accepts and fulfills his 'moira'. His tragedy is concentrated in the insolubility of a problem presented inside himself, from the moment that he has inquired his own existence. He cannot solve a new riddle of the Sphinx, because there is no reasonable answer to it.

Differently from action traditionally presented in many of tragedies, in which the mystery is solved at the end (in some way, we can affirm that there is no mystery in traditional tragedies), we finally find the reason why the hero, throughout his trajectory, has faced a series of misfortunes, or we realize whether he is being punished or condemned. In Fernando Pessoa's poem, otherwise, we envision a path in which the character is condemned to eternal misunderstanding, a punishment to existence in which the death even appears as a way to relieve his grief, although does not lead to the redemption of character as well. Following the initial verses of the poem, Fausto confesses that his faith is dead, and he is feeling devoid of reason or belief. His aspiration, or whatever it is, is a "[...] noisy and deaf immense tide, / to die on seashore of the limit" (Pessoa, 2013, p. 6)⁴.

This hopelessness experienced by the protagonist can be understood as another trace constituent of the tragic, which finds resonance in Peter Szondi's understanding on the Drama from the second half of the nineteenth century. According to him, this period experiences a crisis that is also represented in a transformation of Drama, that...

[...] can also be traced to the forces that drove people out of interpersonal relations and into isolation. The dramatic style called into question by this isolation survived nonetheless because the isolated individual, formal whose equivalent is silence or the monologue (Szondi, 1987, p. 68).

This monological form in the poem is actually a dialectical monologism, inasmuch as the struggle, in the poetry of Fernando Pessoa, between his inside and outside, but that is condensed in a lyrical persona which in this case is inseparable from the author. If the poem under review cannot be considered a tragedy in his dramatic oneness, because there is a lack of the presence of the action (the plot), where would its tragicalness lie?

Considering the question, perhaps its tragicalness would lie on the fact that Pessoa has been presented the terror of human existence, the prevalence of misery and death, the triumph of wickedness, the scornful play of chance, and the irretrievable fall of the innocence, the justice and the

⁴ Mare imensa rumorosa e surda/
 Para morrer na praia do limite.

good. More than other manifestation of poetry, *Fausto* as a drama presents the antagonism of the will with itself, because in an attempt to pursue the understanding of existence from the principle of sufficient reason, the protagonist realizes that his life is being actually directed by the will, and the essential misery of his life is to be condemned to misunderstand this direction. Due to the fact that he does not understand why he exists, Fausto enters in a whirlwind of nonsense and disappointment. There is no way out in this maelstrom. The second aspect deals with the fact that Fausto, though perceiving his existence as a being in the world, cannot live like any other men, because he has been sentenced to not feel the existence and feelings that are subordinated to him. The only emotions that he feels are fear and terror. The phenomena that take place in Fernando Pessoa's *Fausto* is a sort of transfiguration of tragedy to a theater of ideas - a theater of voices - in which the lyrical dimension of discourse is predominant. This dimension comprises an almost emptied path of meaning, the ideas and the problems find an extreme construction, almost reduced to this single formula: the radical impossibility of a reliable objectivity, as if the author aspired to an external mechanism from a divine nature and, as well, exterior to the language mechanism, that would certify the real value of the contents of consciousness.

Bernardo Soares (one of the most anguished poetical voices of Pessoa) asserts that his life is "[...] a tragedy booted off stage by the gods, ★ never getting beyond the first act" (Soares, 2011, p. 34). This tragic awareness of existence, of life, finds repercussion in all his work, just before *Fausto* has obtained a public notoriety. The poet assumes that there is no

[...] higher tragedy than the same intensity, in the same soul and in the same man, of the intellectual sense and moral sense [...]: For a man to be distinctive and absolutely moral, he must be a bit stupid. For a man to be absolutely intellectual, he has to be a bit immoral. I am not sure what trick or irony of things condemns a man to the impossibility of this duality. [...] To my wretchedness, it gives up on me. It was not the excess of a quality, nevertheless the excess of these two which has been etiolated me for my whole life (Teive, 2001, p. 45)⁵.

In every corner of Fausto we can see Pessoa's

own life's tragedy. It is no coincidence that Eduardo Lourenço, in his preface to the edition of 2013, has used as a title 'Fausto or an Ontological Vertigo'. *Fausto* lives the tragedy of life from the moment in which he plunges inside himself and, in this inner space, he only finds the abyss. The tragedy in Fausto appears, therefore, as a series of failures. The first one consists in a failure to achieve knowledge that supposedly would give meaning to his life. In this sequence, Fausto is trapped in a kind of curse caused by the attempt to discover the mystery of existence, which carries the failure of the experience to live in the world. This failure includes the impossibility of love, friendship, pleasure and enjoyment. Finally, the successive failures take Fausto to choose death instead of life, since the only life that he is allowed to live, is a life full of horror and suffering.

In regard to Goethe's *Faust*, we can find the primordial echoes of Pessoa's tragedy, insofar as it is also missing in the Germanic *Faust* the dramatic drive delegated to us by the thought of Aristotle. The structure of Goethe's *Faust* as a category of content is not presented to the reader as well as a unified work. It is customary to attribute this lack of uniqueness to the fact that Goethe had written his work during sixty years, between 1770 and 1832, when he made the revisions on the second part. Jane K. Brown claims that

[...] it seems reasonable to regard that *Faust II* for an extended reflection on Part I, an elaboration, an unfolding and interpretation of what was implicit in Part I (Brown, 1986, p. 8).

Anyway, reading two parts as a continuous text may seem problematic. However, both in Fernando Pessoa as in Goethe's *Faust*, the tragic element serves as a poetic motor of history, in Goethe in a more universal way, and in Pessoa, with a more individual nature.

This arrangement leads me to believe that we can assign to Fernando Pessoa's *Fausto*, as well as it happens in Goethe's *Faust* somehow, its nature to represent the tragic sense of life. Perhaps, more than in the case of Goethe, the epoch when *Fausto* was written coincides with a historical moment of deep pessimism and hopelessness. The solutions to fix the world have already been tried in different ways and manners. The Enlightenment and its historical consequences did not address nations to be led by the Hegelian 'absolute spirit', nor triumphed the discoveries of science and all the Positivism celebrated around the rationality, from Descartes to Comte. The world in which Fernando Pessoa lived, was a world of economical, social, and political misery, but above all, was a world of human misery.

⁵ Não há maior tragédia do que a igual intensidade, na mesma alma ou no mesmo homem, do sentimento intelectual e do sentimento moral. Para que um homem possa ser distintivamente e absolutamente moral, tem que ser um pouco estúpido. Para que um homem possa ser absolutamente intelectual, tem que ser um pouco imoral. Não sei que jogo ou ironia das coisas condena o homem à impossibilidade desta dualidade em grande. Por meu mal, ela dá-se em mim. Assim, por ter duas virtudes, nunca pude fazer nada de mim. Não foi o excesso de uma qualidade, mas o excesso de duas, que me matou para a vida.

The tragedy of the humanity is echoed in the Latin adage: 'homo hominis lupus', which illustrates the tragic sense of Western life in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Final considerations

In both representations of this modern man paradigm, we have witnessed the human desperation represented into a relentless and vain pursuit for the truth. Once again, in *Goethe*, in a universal sense of this truth; In Pessoa, in a more individual one. The Portuguese *Fausto* presents that his particular aim is seeking for the answer to the question that Fernando, as a man, has asked himself all the time. A tragic subject who has dramatized his own life in setting up his heteronymous in an attempt to transmigrate his own fears, failures, disappointments and disillusion through his fragmented, but magnificent poetry. Specular in Unamuno's thought, the tragic sense of life in Fernando Pessoa's *Fausto* is not more definite as a simple 'fin-du-Siècle' melancholy disposition, nonetheless a constant feeling, intimately connected with a brooding on death and the destiny of the individual soul, in an interlude between the finite and the infinite. Inasmuch we can perceive the German *Faust* as the *Theatre of the World*, in Pessoa's *Fausto* we are watching the *Theater of a Man*, nevertheless a multiple one. He is his own *Drama in persona* (*Drama em gente*), as he has told us his whole life.

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