# Solidarity, Responsibility, and Irony as Tools for the Developing of an Ethical Sensitivity in Saramago's work

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**Abstract**: This article will examine solidarity in Saramago's work. In his work, a kind of "game" identifies solidarity, which constitutes his ethical sensibility. I find that Saramago rarely speaks directly of solidarity as a social value. In most cultures, freedom and solidarity go hand in hand with human dignity and moral responsibility. When it comes to Irony, it often accompanies Saramago's work, and I will give some examples and focus mainly on *A jangada de pedra* (1986), the novel in which Saramago's development of the idea of solidarity is particularly ironic.

**Keywords:** solidarity – freedom – moral responsibility – irony – *A jangada de pedra.*

> Fala-se de direitos humanos, e tudo bem, é preciso continuar falando nisso, mas falamos muito pouco dos deveres humanos. Deveres de quê? Principalmente de solidariedade. De respeito humano, sobretudo. Estamos nos esquecendo que os direitos devem estar ao lado dos deveres. Quando falo em "compromisso ético" e "compromisso crítico", estou falando de se assumir a necessidade de falar sobre isso (Gómez Aguilera 448-449).

Saramago's work presents in its center people who do not experience freedom. Many subjects are illiterate, primarily due to the church. Freedom is expressed by few who can say "no," like Raimundo Silva (*História do cerco de Lisboa*, 1989) or José (*Todos os nomes*, 1997). Therefore, the "no" of Saramago's heroes is presented as a positive value. It allows Saramago to accurately present a world of moral values that do not pretend to be new. Therefore, negation is moral, and it is not a negation of a world that receives no meaning.

In culture, freedom goes hand in hand with human dignity and moral responsibility, and these values are accompanied by irony. Moreover, irony has become essential in our modern time, for history has become a chaotic stream of events, and everything seems contingent. These prominent themes are present in Saramago's work, and I reasonably argue that they progressively develop ethical sensitivity in its reader through moral imagination.

Saramago's work shows ironically many notable examples of churchmen, military men, dictators, and supposedly democratic leaders. High-ranking government officials are primarily responsible for the visible consequences of their direct actions: in the novel, *Memorial do Convento* (1982), the church shamelessly exploits the innocence of its believers. The king's cooperation with the church causes him to force hard labor upon the inhabitants who build a monstrous convent; it also leads to the activities of the Inquisition of Auto-da-fé in the city square in Lisbon. Devout believers, who come to the city of Fatima in the novel *O ano da morte de Ricardo Reis* (1984), in long queues, are crawling on their wounded knees to scarcely reach the statue of Saint Mary for requests for health, marriage, and more. Or, in the novel *As intermitências da morte* (2005), the church fears that the possible termination of the death of the inhabitants will undermine faith in the church. When the so-called democratic government cynically uses the term "responsibility," it requires citizens to be disciplined.

The active military typically represents the emissaries of the local regime, regardless of whether the government is dictatorial or democratic. They intentionally shoot and kill innocent civilians in the novel *Ensaio sobre a cegueira* (1995). In *Manual de pintura e caligrafia* (1977), they imprison people for their political views and impose a siege on a whole city in *Ensaio sobre a lucidez* (2004). Their responsibility, or rather their lack of responsibility, concerns the visible consequences of their direct actions. In the novels *Ensaio sobre a cegueira, Ensaio sobre a lucidez, Todos os nomes, A caverna* (2000), and *As intermitências da morte,* the responsibility for a good life is in the hands of people, for God is not present in these texts.

In *As intermitências da morte*, the apparent absurdity of using the word "responsibility" becomes more significant. Saramago describes a place where the local government cannot dominate the country or protect the safety of its citizens. In such chaos, an organization that will call itself the "new mafia" undoubtedly will lead life to unpredictable places (*Intermitências da Morte* 57).

Saramago typically presents the individual, the moral agent, or a morally damaged individual at the center of his work and confronts them with the distant past and present circumstances. Although there is frequently profound pessimism in Saramago's work, he ultimately possesses an interest in the possibility of people taking responsibility for their active lives and often for the lives of others. When heroes take responsibility, they express that they perform actions and cause changes in the world. "Moral responsibility" typically remains the direct link between the moral character of the deed or its potential consequences and the moral character of the agent's distinct personality (Kekes, *Facing Evil* 91).

In Saramago's view, the moral sense of responsibility relates directly to the interpersonal relationships and performances of those who confront us. These in common are authentic selves and not those who contain a transcendental element. Responsibility, as stated, represents not a matter of intention to do something; responsibility, on the other hand, is closely connected to actions. The absence of choice

does not preclude responsibility, and this is shown in Saramago's work. Even more, when a person is in a situation where he has no choice, he can still understand whether the action he is knowingly committing is evil and can choose whether to do it or not.

Solidarity is one of the crucial issues in discussions about Human Rights. Hence, I will carefully question what kind of solidarity appears in Saramago's work. I will then categorize its performances in the examples I shall give. Finally, I shall try to correctly identify the visible manifestations of two distinct kinds of Solidarity. To discuss the versions of solidarity in Saramago's work, I adopt the pragmatic approach of Avi Sagi. He presents the extremes of the concept of solidarity: the realistic and the metaphysical (*Albert Camus and the Philosophy of the Absurd* 118-120).

In Camus' view, identification with the suffering of others equals solidarity, so that "Man's solidarity is founded upon rebellion, and rebellion, in its turn, can only find its justification in this solidarity" (*The Rebel* 15). Human beings live together, and every human being is engaged in the struggle to create meaning out of the meaninglessness of life. Because people are aware of their coexistence, rebellion is an inevitable social movement (the best example is *Levantado do chão*, 1980). In the revolt, it is essential to remember that the individual is not alone in embodying the values he strives to protect. He needs humanity to contain them. When the rebellious man identifies himself with other human beings, he transcends himself (*The Rebel* 11). From this perspective, human solidarity is "metaphysical." It relates to the entire human race and not only the "we" of which Richard Rorty speaks in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (192). That of the social and cultural solidarity that relates to the real life of people close to you.

Avi Sagi argues that we can distinguish between two theories about the nature of solidarity: historical-cultural solidarity and metaphysical solidarity. Camus's "us" include the entire human race (Sagi 118-120). Metaphysical solidarity expresses the ontological fact that man transcends the limits of his existence. In a profound sense, metaphysical solidarity is related to overcoming the distinctive appearance of the real personality and seeing the metaphysical human element through it. Thus, Camus' conception of metaphysical solidarity does not refer merely to sincere compassion for the suffering but rather to the one that positively relates to human justice.

In *Solidarity: From a Civic Friendship to a Global Community*, Brunkhorst argues that the modern conception of "democratic solidarity" typically represents the historical legacy of two cultural traditions: the Judeo-Christian solidarity and the Greek civil solidarity. But throughout history, Christian equality among human beings was limited to their community of devout believers. And civil equality in the Middle Ages was typically limited to local guilds. Thus, in his view, only the modern idea of solidarity allowed the separation from Christian idealism and the aristocratic uniqueness that limited civil liberty to a few select types in the historic center and the head of urban society (55).

The modern idea of solidarity was born from the constitutional revolutions of the eighteenth century. And its peak was in the French Revolution in 1789 (54). The slogan "brotherhood" accurately speaks of the remarkable fact that everyone should

meaningfully participate in public life if everybody were naturally born with equal and free rights. "Brotherhood" was identified correctly with the "Republic" and democracy and naturally turned to constitutional anchoring. Human rights in the modern sense of the word existed solely from that historical period (61).

Saramago expressed in many of his literary and non-literary statements a wish for the Iberian Peninsula to become one unit. Ironically it appears in *A jangada de pedra* when the Spanish TV announcer recites Miguel de Unamuno's saying: "Vejam-se os portugueses, ao longo das suas douradas praias, proa da Europa que foram e deixaram de ser, porque do cais europeu nos desprendemos, mas novamente fendendo as ondas do Atlântico" (*Jangada de pedra* 93-94). Instead, the former Portugal, which was 'the prow of Europe' and undoubtedly led to remarkable overseas discoveries, remained in the postcolonial era a small remote country on the western edge of Europe, meaningless in European policy or the world at large.

> Em Espanha, solidarizar-se é um verbo que todos os dias se conjuga simultaneamente nos seus três tempos: presente, passado e futuro. A lembrança da solidariedade passada reforça a solidariedade de que o presente necessita, e ambas, juntas, preparam o caminho para que a solidariedade, no futuro, volte a manifestar-se em toda a sua grandeza. O 11 de Março não foi só um dia de dor e de lágrimas, foi também o dia em que o espírito solidário do povo espanhol ascendeu ao sublime com uma dignidade que profundamente me tocou e que ainda hoje me emociona quando o recordo. O belo não é apenas uma categoria do estético, podemos encontrá-lo também na acção moral. Por isso direi que poucas vezes, em qualquer lugar do mundo, o rosto de um povo ferido pela tragédia terá tido tanta beleza (*O Caderno* 217).

Saramago expresses an interest in identifying solidarity, and he asks indirectly whether solidarity refers to a particular good or is a human tendency. Saramago plays in his writing a "double game": On the one hand, he has a dominant focus. The author's presence in the text provides us with the accurate identification of solidarity, reflecting his ethical sensitivity. On the other hand, he creates a text that aspires to be polyphonic with a pluralism of ideological positions. Still, he rarely speaks directly about solidarity as a social value. Saramago's text opens the door to absurdity, rebellion, and solidarity discussions. However, it is a pseudo-polyphonic text. The author (the implicit or the real Saramago) moves aside and allows other internal foci but takes back the reins and reinstates the dominant focus. The irony in Saramago's work appears as a combination of sounds within the text's formation of voices.

Simone de Beauvoir (who, influenced by Camus, published in 1947 her book *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* long before Rorty) warns us against this solidarity of the "we" alone and writes as follows:

> There are men who expect help from certain men and not from others, and these expectations define privileged lines of action. It is fitting that the negro fight for the negro, the Jew for the Jew, the proletarian for the proletarian, and the Spaniard in Spain. But the assertion of these particular solidarities must not contradict the will for universal solidarity, and each finite undertaking must also, be open on the totality of men (Beauvoir 64).

Kurt Bayertz, in his edited book *Solidarity*, points to the concept of solidarity as a historical problem that has not been defined as binding and, as a direct result, is used in diverse and often contradictory ways. It becomes clear when we compare "solidarity" with terms like "justice," "freedom," and "equality." Because of this theoretical lack, solidarity typically implies a moral obligation to act but does not require necessary action. Bayertz proposes "Four Diverse Uses of Solidarity":

1. Solidarity and Morality. The everyday use of the term solidarity refers to what binds all human beings to one vast moral community. The idea of the brotherhood of all "sons of God" laid the foundation for ethical universality. The practical term Solidarity naturally came into the language at the beginning of the twentieth century, mainly in a Christian religious context. The persuasive argument is that humans have sympathy and brotherhood; they feel hatred and rejection. The realistic view undoubtedly makes the term solidarity more accessible. Bayertz argues that Rorty's conception of the contingent of human character is exaggerated.

2. Solidarity and Society. Rorty presented an approach that claims that solidarity typically occurs following a recognition of the remarkable diversity of societies and traditions. Such solidarity presupposes tolerance but goes beyond the simple acceptance of the other as different (92). Emile Durkheim explains society's development through the transition of solidarity from mechanical solidarity to essential solidarity. He emphasizes that it is not the similarity, but rather the difference that is the constitutive element of solidarity. It means there is no "we" ahead of "they" that feed the principle of solidarity but the awareness of the need for reciprocity in a highly complex scenario (Durkheim 148, 187). In today's social context and global dependence, we can rediscover the urgent need for 'vital global solidarity' to positively establish a mature 'global society' in which "organic solidarity" must be formulated based on the considerable diversity and potential vulnerability of humans.

3. Solidarity and liberation. Another meaning of "solidarity" refers to people forming a group everywhere to defend their common rights. This solidarity can appear in a variety of groups. For example, people can create groups of potential criminals or soldiers who intentionally generate a junta to achieve their immoral goals. On the other hand, humans can connect to help others – for example, by participating in socialist movements to do justice to marginal and discriminated groups in society. An excellent example of this is the feminist movement. The sincere desire for equal rights was the primary concern of the people who correctly understood solidarity. Social protest

movements in the twentieth century undoubtedly modified the complicated situation of women and blacks in the United States, defeated Apartheid in South Africa, and the like. But we are still in an era of apparent human rights violations and discrimination against women and blacks (Bayertz 17). Upon this matter, one can add what Luce Irigaray wrote in her book (86-92). Irigaray examined the 1948 *Human Rights Declaration* and the violation of every right, especially concerning women. And what John Kekes makes in the examples he gives in his book *The Roots of Evil* (2005).

4. Solidarity and the Welfare State. As for solidarity and the modern welfare state in contemporary politics, "solidarity" is naturally concerned with an appropriate distribution of economic resources. The idea of a reciprocal relationship between citizens of a country like family ties appeared in various forms and precisely discovered its place in the political thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One can encounter Rawls' work considering the second essential principle of his theory of justice. Which states that one must measure the fairness of social and economic gaps by the degree to which others, especially the weakest in society, will undoubtedly benefit from them (Rawls 105).

The most challenging test for realizing solidarity is in places where regimes afraid of their fate shoot and murder their citizens. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries present many examples of a world that stands aside. Unlike the Second World War, the images flicker before our eyes on the different screens just as they occur. Where is the so-called universal "human solidarity"? Is there such solidarity? Or, as Rorty wrote: Humans tend to care for those close to them.

## Solidarity in Saramago's Work: The story "*Centauro*" – Metaphysical Solidarity

> O mal e o remédio estão em nós. A própria espécie humana, que agora nos indigna, se indignou antes e se indignará amanhã. Agora vivemos um tempo em que o egoísmo pessoal tapa todos os horizontes. Perdeu-se o senso da solidariedade, o senso cívico, que não deve ser confundido com a caridade... Talvez o homem não tenha remédio, não progredimos muito em bondade em milhares de anos na Terra. Talvez estejamos percorrendo um longo e interminável caminho que nos leva ao ser humano. Talvez, Não sei onde nem quando, chegaremos a ser aquilo que temos de ser. Quando a metade do mundo morre de fome e a outra metade não faz nada... algo não funciona. Quem sabe um dia! (Gómez Aguilera 140).

The short story "Centauro" (*Objecto quase*) shows a special connection between a woman and a centaur, half human, and half animal. The centaur has physicality and dreams.

However, it is persecuted because of its unusual body and, ultimately, it appears to be more human than humans, who in the story act like animals.

Into the natural world that has become the source of human interest, Saramago introduces the last centaur on earth, which has already seen that all mythological creatures have disappeared from the planet. The centaur has been in a state of roaming for thousands of years. Once, he could move day and night, exposed to daylight and human eyes in the mythological world. Now that he is the last of his kind, he had to wait for the night to move.

Saramago describes throughout the story a creature with a double body and soul, which has a kind of "self" that is "I am a horse." This creature has no reflective awareness, such as "I am a person." This combination presents this strange self, found in one whole but incomplete creature. Throughout the story, he shows dispositions representing each part of this "self." When the rural dwellers chase the centaur, the horse part kicks a dog and kills it. When the centaur kidnaps the woman and treats her gently, this is the part of the human in him.

This story is a kind of metaphor for human beings, who, like the centaur, also have these two parts: the animal and the human one, and act accordingly in the story. The upper body, human-like, strives to control the lower body, which belongs to a horse. A war occurs between the thinking and feeling parts of the upper body. The head and chest are "a thinking entity." And the lower part, the animal-like one, is spontaneous, cruel, rebellious, and defensive. When this centaur has sex, he "cobria a égua como um cavalo e que depois chorava como um homem" (*Objeto Quase* 122).

It is only when there is a connection between the centaur and the woman, that metaphysical solidarity is expressed in a brief dialogue that arouses excitement. When the centaur gently places the woman on the ground, it is said: "Então, segurando a mulher por baixo dos braços, olhando-a em todo o corpo, com todo o luar despindo-a, disse na sua velha língua, na língua dos bosques, dos favos de mel, das colunas brancas, do mar sonoro, do riso as montanhas: – Não me queiras mal" (*Objeto Quase* 134-135).

While the human population in the story acts brutally and like animals toward the centaur, this woman is the only one who shows compassion. She believes that the centaur, about which she heard, does exist. He talks to her, and she is willing to accept him: "Come to me," she says, in the sense of receiving the other; in the purpose of receiving the part of the man in the centaur, and in the feeling of wanting to contain this different other with an understanding of its sensitivity. For this woman, the centaur is not a strange animal, and she treats him as a human being, and as such, he deserves a caring attitude that is aware of the suffering of the other. In doing so, they both realize a position of metaphysical solidarity, which refers to a person as such. However, he cannot "come" to her. He cannot achieve his being half-human. He runs away frustrated by the inability to fulfill the emotional-sexual part and thus realizes the spiritual aspect of love. The centaur is a horse and a human being; he is powerful and sensitive, haunted by the gods and the humans until his death.

The people who chase him want to catch him alive. These are people whose experience of solidarity is realistic, related only to those who are like "us" and not to the possibility of "them" or of the other. The centaur falls, and his body splits in two. He will die. He, too, now becomes "Objecto Quase," almost an object, almost a human being. The people who persecuted him treated him as an object, and when the other is seen as an object, it is impossible to feel any solidarity towards him.

The short story "Centauro" confronts us with ethical questions relating to the meaning of life. Unlike other stories and novels written by Saramago, this story lacks irony. Humans lead in the story's world in a very unremarkable layer of "how to behave" in fear, and cruelty is the answer they give. Both the woman and the centaur realize what Harry Frankfurt calls "What do I care" in *The Importance of What We Care About* (1988). At the beginning of an article that bears the same name, Frankfurt says that philosophers have systematically focused their attention on two sets of questions that stem from concern for the disturbing aspects of our lives. In the first system that establishes the field of epistemology, the central question is "in what to believe." The general theme of the second system is "how to behave" if it is a matter of ethics. It is also possible to sketch the third branch of research, which deals with a set of questions that pertain to a thematic and another principle of human existence – namely "what we care about" (*Objeto Quase* 80).

In "Centauro," Saramago succeeds in attaining reflective self-esteem in this mythological creature as well. The animal part of the horse does indeed act out of a "first-order value" and makes choices related to food, sleep, and defense against a possible enemy. However, the human part of the centaur is already operating from "second-order values," striving to have a human experience of merging with a woman's body. According to Frankfurt, the ideal to live a good life is to find what we care about and live in this way (12, 16). Kekes expands on the repertoire of how we will make our lives better and deals mainly with the subject of "moral imagination" (*The Enlargement of Life*). This enlargement of our lives allows us to see the suffering of the other and show solidarity towards the other.

## *The Tale of the Unknown Island* – The Meaning of Life and Solidarity learned through the experience of a couple

*The Tale of the Unknown Island* opens like a fairy tale. It introduces a king who lives in his palace and sits all day by the gate of favors to enjoy his loyal subjects' gifts. But this palace has several gates, including the "gate of favors" and the "gate for petitions," which are two gates dealing with the material. It also has the "gate of dilemmas" and the "decision gate" which are already in the field of the spirit: "The door of decisions, which is rarely used, but when it is used, it decidedly is" (*The Tale* 17).

The "petitions gate" is where the king expects to fulfill the requests. But this king, who was busy receiving the gifts, was not accessible to the petitions of his subjects. So,

as is the case with every ruler, he sent his officials and clerks to the gate and even the cleaning woman, equipped with an unequivocal order, to quickly remove these "harassers" who dare to bother him with his pleasures.

*The Tale of the Unknown Island* is about a simple nameless man who is bizarre in his society. Like many of Saramago's heroes who rebel against oppression, he refuses to obey the country's laws, according to which you can meet the king only if you give him gifts. While the requests to encounter only the assistants and make their way back to the applicant came. It is a story about the stubborn, brave, and dreamy man who refuses to go away from the gate of petitions until the king himself comes and hears his strange request: he wants the king to give him a boat designed to look for the unknown island, which is not yet on the king's maps. His stubbornness bore fruit, bringing the king to the gate of petitions. The king is afraid of the reaction of the residents living next door, peering out of their windows, and watching this man behave in a "shameful" manner, threatening the king and the movement of gifts flowing to the gate of favors.

This story is also the story of the cleaning woman (every woman). This woman is fed up with her empty life and understands that leaving the palace, which does not guarantee her any change, will allow her to float on the wings of imagination. This woman understood this dreamy man who appeared at the gate of petitions, and with him, she could fulfill her dream on the longed-for island. And her longed-for island will not necessarily change her functional role as a cleaner because she is willing to be the cleaner of his boat and even other ships.

Saramago creates a story of a joint solidarity search for an "unknown island," which is the place of longing and dreams of both man and woman: an island of the fulfillment of a "dream" and an "unknown longing." An island of the realization of the authentic "I"; it is a realization of the "I – the artist," and it is also an island of recognition of love, searching, and finding the "other." For even in our story, the man, who seems determined to go out and search for his unknown island, takes the unexpected appearance of the woman naturally, and it often appears that her encouragement and courage are reassuring to him that there is this desired place. This woman also reflects the "muse," as described in the creative process of many artists.

*The Tale of the Unknown Island* is also a story of a spontaneous love between a man and a woman. There is a man and a woman here, each of whom presents a human disposition that cares about the other and thus makes the loved one valuable. In the sarcastic irony typical of José Saramago, this story also offers attitudes about the meaning of life.

Saramago, who puts the question of the meaning of life at the center of his work, will agree with John Kekes (*The Meaning of Life* 31). Saramago is a person whose philosophy and ethics are an inseparable part of his life and his literary work. His philosophy is written inside his experiences and not outside of them. For Saramago life is the way people shape it, and the responsibility for how they live their lives rests within

the human beings and only with them. No other divine or external entity can make the individual better. The individual shapes his life and his good and evil tendencies together.

This is how the man and the woman conduct themselves in *The Tale of the Unknown Island* in the solidarity of couples, and so do many protagonists in Saramago's work. Saramago recognizes the contingent of life and the individual ways of coping with human beings. It is not just a matter of will or innate genes with which man spends his life on earth. If heroes know how to say "no" and maintain their freedom, life still has meaning in case freedom is taken from them.

### ***Baltasar and Blimunda* (*Memorial do Convento*) – Expansion of Solidarity in a small group**

The novel *Memorial do Convento* (1982) is built upon the real story of eighteenth-century King João V, who makes a vow that if he has an heir, he will build a large convent in Mafra. The novel also includes a fictitious story, which contains fantastic elements of the joining of Blimunda and Baltasar to Pastor Bartolomeu de Gusmão **(**who is also a historical figure who builds his flight machine). But, of course, Saramago is a writer connected to reality, and his fiction is born to rewrite the history already written. But it is a type of fiction that has no naiveté, and so it exists and receives life through the "truth" of a particular period or of a specific world, with many winks to the present.

In *Memorial do Convento*, a narrator builds a story with irony, which serves as a weapon to illuminate the told stories. Critical irony presents the illusion of a distant perspective of the author-writer, which nonchalantly shows historical facts, and describes a world in which the narrator creates and reconstructs history in a traditionally moving plot. However, Saramago manages to 'shake' the readers' feeling that these distant past facts are close to the present. Reading an ironic work makes it desirable and perhaps requires a rereading. The heroes depicted in this novel are characterized by the anonymity of someone who is soundless, timeless, and without essential truths. This novel is a story for readers but a reality for many people.

Saramago speaks of the origin of humanity as deriving from the same place

> e contudo com este mundo mesmo se virão defrontar, como rei ou soldado, como frade ou assassino, como inglesa em Barbadas ou sentenciada no Rossio, alguma coisa sempre, que tudo nunca pode ser, e nada menos ainda. Porque, enfim, podemos fugir de tudo, não de nós próprios (*Memorial* 72).

When Saramago describes the princess's birth, he talks about the beginnings of humanity and presents his ideology: Human beings were created identical to each other and then changed within the world. Therefore, all human beings – kings, queens, princes, and workers – came from the same source. "Já andam os lavradores lavrando, vão para o

campo mesmo debaixo de chuva, a leiva cresce da terra húmida [...], suspira ao sentir-se rasgada pelo ferro, e deita-se de lado [...]. Todos os homens são reis, rainhas são todas as mulheres, e príncipes os trabalhos de todos" (*Memorial* 74).

In the range that one can find in the performances of solidarity in Saramago's work, as in real life, situations may arise where the "we" of realist solidarity becomes the "we" who acts with the common good in mind, but its action is harmful. The term solidarity usually carries positive connotations, but a brief study of the auto-da-fé at the beginning of the story shows that solidarity is not motivated by moral motives:

> Porém, hoje é dia de alegria geral, porventura a palavra será imprópria [...], olhar esta cidade saindo de suas casas, despejando-se pelas ruas e praças [...]. E estando já passados quase dois anos que se queimaram pessoas em Lisboa, está o Rossio cheio de povo duas vezes em festa por ser domingo e haver auto-de-fé, nunca sé chegará a saber de que mais gostam os moradores, se disto, se das touradas, mesmo quando só estas se usarem [...]. Grita o povinho furiosos impropérios aos condenados, guincham as mulheres debruçadas dos peitoris, alanzoam os frades, a procissão é uma serpente enorme que não cabe direita no Rossio e por isso se vai curvando e recurvando como se determinasse chegar a toda a parte ou oferecer o espectáculo edificante a toda a cidade (*Memorial* 50-52).

Saramago decides to give names to the people who built this convent because the king and the church have no interest in the individual subjects involved in the construction. So he makes a list of Portuguese names in alphabetical orders as if each name represents all the people whose name begins with the same letter: "ao menos deixemos os nomes escritos, é essa a nossa obrigação, só para isso escrevemos, torná-los imortais, pois aí ficam, se de nós depende" (*Memorial* 244). This convent is a total negation of all human meaning. It is a human creation as an act of the contingent victimization of the Portuguese's circumstances in the eighteenth century in Portugal. Accordingly, he redraws the image of a Portuguese time in which thousands of men and women built this monstrous convent, thus creating a sense of solidarity among these anonymous people.

The sense of absurdity grows with many descriptions of the size of the stone and the way people carry it. The journey will be long and continuous, with ups and downs – just like the stone sliding of Sisyphus – especially the hard way downhill because every minute, the cart slipped, and the men had to put stones in front of its wheels immediately. The men who lead the stone gather on the way, and a sense of solidarity appears between them. They support each other, depend on each other for harmonious work that allows the stone to go smoothly, and at night they gather to tell stories they know by heart, legends reminiscent of the Thousand- and One-Nights stories (*Memorial* 243-266).

Frightened and helpless in the face of the cruel authorities, these workers unite in solidarity that allows them to continue living. For eight whole days, the men were on their

way to Mafra. "Toda a gente se admirava com o tamanho desmedido da pedra, Tão grande. Mas Baltasar murmurou, olhando a basílica, Tão pequena" (*Memorial* 266). And so Saramago's irony is expressed, alongside the manifestations of solidarity as presented in this novel.

## ***A jangada de pedra*** **– Expansion of Solidarity in a larger group**

> Sou razoavelmente irónico [...]. Creio que a troça é o pior de tudo; o sarcasmo, às vezes, é a única solução, enquanto que o humor é uma espécie de gazua e a ironia pode ser um disfarce de qualquer coisa grave, dor ou angústia, mas também pode ser prova ou demonstração de amor. De qualquer modo, tento não sentimentalizar as situações que pareciam estar faladas para tal (Gómez Aguilera 232).

The novel *A jangada de pedra* opens with five strange puzzles, unnatural and mysterious, that connect simultaneously. A fantastically imagined description of five people who seem to perform innocent actions that reveal fateful for the Iberian Peninsula. Joana Carda came from Aveiro but had previously lived in Coimbra. She sits on the border between Spain and France. Joana Carda scratched the ground with an elm branch and triggered this miraculous journey of the Iberian Peninsula disengaging from continental Europe. At the same time or earlier, Joaquim Sassa, who came from Ribatejo, throws a heavy stone into the water, a sort of metaphysical act, for even he does not believe he has succeeded in doing so with his weak powers. Elsewhere, Pedro Orce, who came from Spain, rises from his chair and thinks that that was the possible reason for the earthquake. The following day, José Anaiço, from the northern coast of Portugal, walked among poplar trees with a flock of starlings accompanying him. And he wondered: "Ora, para este caso não há explicação. Se um bando de estorninhos acompanha um homem em seu passeio matinal" (*A jangada* 17). And Maria Guavaira, who came from Galicia, north of Santiago de Compostela, is unraveling the stitches of an old sock, and the long strand of wool is still unwinding. Yet, the sock does not appear to get any smaller. "Maria Guavaira não se chama Ariadne, com este fio não sairemos do labirinto, acaso com ele conseguiremos enfim perder-nos. A ponta, onde está" (*A jangada* 18).

This group of five people, each of whom had a different mystical experience, joins together on a journey that will adequately indicate the possibility of realistic and metaphysical solidarity performances in an ironic tone characteristic of Saramago.

The remarkable "journey" that the Iberian Peninsula is commencing at sea is a journey that has no precise address and, therefore, can be a form of inspiration when one

considers the etymology of the word "utopia" from "topos," meaning 'lack of space.' It is a new organization related to the Iberian Peninsula's significant problem. It is a metaphor for a new social organization that might take place on its long Atlantic voyage of the Iberian Peninsula, allowing for widespread solidarity among the peninsula inhabitants and the world they travel.

Saramago describes in this novel a comprehensive range of examples of the concept of solidarity. The specific references to solidarity that I will bring hither from the novel *A jangada de pedra* indicate expanding the idea from the smallest solidarity group between spouses to the extended group encompassing heroes and all the Iberian citizens. On the one hand, Saramago will present an intimate sense of solidarity between spouses or between groups. On the other hand, he writes many meaningless sentences with the word solidarity and even universal solidarity, which could naturally lead to metaphysical solidarity. But when no specific acts accompany the declarations, there is no solidarity, not in the realist sense presented by Rorty or in the metaphysical view of Camus.

As noted above, although Saramago perceives the concept of solidarity in his positive connotation, the irony and criticism are sufficiently expressed in the passages presented here:

1. After a crack is discovered between Spain and France, trucks arrived from Spain and France, concrete mixers, and aid forces. When the height of the cement surface rose, and it appeared that "the battle was over," it was said:

> Abraçavam-se os técnicos, os engenheiros, os operários, os polícias, agitavam-se bandeiras, os locutores da televisão, nervosos, liam o último comunicado e davam as suas próprias opiniões, enaltecendo a luta titânica, a gesta colectiva, a solidariedade internacional em acção, até de Portugal, esse pequeno país, saiu um comboio de dez betoneiras (*A jangada de pedra* 29).

This solidarity is a hypocrisy in the guise of capitalism and globalization represented by a commitment to a joint enterprise: the joining is out of genuine fear rather than solidarity positively associated with accurate identification, sincere sympathy, and caring for others.

2. During a meeting of the common market, it said: if the Iberian Peninsula wishes to go away, then let it go. The mistake was to have allowed it to come in: "Também tinha sido pedida à Organização do Tratado do Atlântico Norte uma declaração de solidariedade atlantista, mas a resposta, não sendo embora negativa, veio a resumir-se numa frase impublicável, Wait and see" (*A jangada de pedra* 44). The market countries would have been happy publicly and secretly if the Iberian Peninsula had departed from this partnership. Saramago resolutely opposed this European Union and moving the Iberian Peninsula toward Latin America seemed more natural to him.

3. The Prime Minister turns to the citizens of Portugal and informs them that they are under heavy pressure from the European countries, where masses of demonstrators are rioting in the streets:

> pela descida à rua de grandes massas de manifestantes que, de maneira entusiástica, quiseram exprimir a sua solidariedade com os países e povos da península, o que veio evidenciar uma grave contradição em que se debatem os governos da Europa, a que já não pertencemos, diante dos profundos movimentos sociais e culturais desses países, que veem na aventura histórica em que nos achamos lançados a promessa de um futuro mais feliz e, Para tudo dizer em poucas palavras, a esperança de um rejuvenescimento da humanidade (*A jangada de pedra* 169).

In our story, masses of people demonstrate and express their solidarity with the people of the Iberian Peninsula. Nevertheless, demonstrations do not derive from the enthusiasm of solidarity with the other. On the contrary, they are bothered about the acts taking place in their country and are anxious about their fate. When a person places his interest before the caring attitude toward the suffering of the other, the gathering of the demonstrators undoubtedly loses the metaphysical meaning of solidarity. The matter remains in the realm of concern for "we," which is characteristic of social-cultural solidarity. Moreover, the protest in the streets remains within the boundaries of Europe, and it seems that if a similar case had occurred in another continent, it would not have received any expressions of sympathy, indeed not manifestations of solidarity.

4. The fifteenth chapter of the novel infused with irony and political criticism and "international solidarity" is also mocked. A one-party regime does not function satisfactorily in times of crisis. There is no "broad national consensus"; therefore, we must find an alternative government. A "national unity government" arises when the homeland needs it, and it rarely requires it. Absurdity – the rescuing countries cannot accept the people because of the "immigration laws" (*A jangada de pedra* 214). The interests of countries abroad not to open their doors to migrants are at the top of their agenda. There is no appearance of international solidarity here that carries any concern for the suffering of the other. Before the establishment of the new government, the so-called "rescue government" should seek solutions for the situation:

> O presidente da República [...] já apelou para a solidariedade internacional, graças à qual, como estamos lembrados, e este é apenas um dos muitos exemplos que poderíamos apresentar, se evitou a fome em África [...]. Quanto aos Estados Unidos da América do Norte, que assim por extensão inteira deverão ser sempre nomeados [...], o ideal, se querem que vos diga, e esse é o sonho secreto do Departamento de Estado e do Pentágono, seria que as ilhas detivessem, mesmo que com alguns estragos, a península, que assim ficaria fixada a meio do Atlântico (*A jangada de pedra* 213-214).

This is a considerable criticism of the apparent hypocrisy of "a kind of solidarity." No Western country has eradicated hunger in Africa. The United States of America is the model hated by Saramago for capitalism and globalization, and here he fiercely criticized it with profound irony. The most capable country in the world promises to confront the world's problems but secretly wants to isolate the distressing factors far from its home. Hence, it is in the story before us, and so it is in contemporary reality. Only when there is a fear of harm to the sovereignty and peace of its inhabitants causes the United States of America to become involved. There is no international solidarity here, metaphysical solidarity that positively relates to humanity, and Saramago mocks at it in this reference.

5. The Portuguese rescue government established immediately begins to operate. The prime minister is talking about saving money, that wherever two people eat, three may eat, which is very common among the family. But some will need broader solidarity: "Ficariam sem recurso os solitários, os sem família, os misantropos, mas mesmo estes não ficarão automaticamente excluídos da sociedade, há que ter confiança nas solidariedades espontâneas, naquele irreprimível amor ao próximo que em todas as ocasiões se manifesta" (*A jangada de pedra* 224).

The Portuguese government rejects the appropriate treatment of the weak people who will remain destitute and traditionally rely on the spontaneous "feelings of solidarity" among the local population. However, does the government trust that its inhabitants can maintain metaphysical solidarity, characterized by love for others and caring for the suffering of every human being? Or is it Saramago's wishful wish that there is also the sincere hope that these people will find to carefully place the good of the other in an important place in their lives and help?

6. The eighteenth chapter opens with differences of opinion among scientists as to why the Iberian Peninsula moves from its proper place and presents four different theses, all of which are saturated with typical Saramago's irony: a thesis advocating complete randomness of the new direction; another thesis says that the journey of the peninsula and its progress will begin at a new right angle each time, and the peninsula may ultimately return to its starting point; the third thesis suggests that there is a magnetic field on the peninsula that creates a rejection process; the fourth thesis is required for forces considered Metapsychic: "afirmando que a península foi desviada da colisão por um vector formado pela concentração, em uma décima de segundo, das ânsias de salvação e dos terrores das populações afligidas. Esta explicação ganhou grande popularidade" (*A jangada de pedra* 252). But the village where the travelers now found themselves did not hear of these matters, the only news that came was that the United States of America had promised. If they continue to move in this direction, the Iberian Peninsula will be received with open arms. "Mas esta declaração, de extraordinário alcance, tanto do ponto de vista humanitário como geoestratégico, veio a apagar-se um pouco com o súbito alvoroço das agências de turismo de todo o mundo, assediadas pelos clientes que queriam viajar para o Corvo o mais rapidamente possível" (*A jangada de pedra* 272). Morally, the agreement in

pleasant words of welcoming the Iberian Peninsula with open arms sounds promising, and the supposedly guaranteed financial aid is also hopeful. However, it is understandable to everyone that these are empty promises. Therefore, the Portuguese' want to travel to the Portuguese island of Corvo, because they believe that perhaps the solidarity and care may come from the Portuguese government, an idea that is also highly questionable.

The novel ends with an optimistic utopia. The peninsula stopped moving. Old Pedro Orce died, and the heroes naturally thought the dog did not want to separate from his master and remained standing by the grave. Still, the dog moved away with a bowed head, and they never saw it again.

*A jangada de pedra* is conceivably the most optimistic book written by Saramago. This novel directly references the concept of "Solidarity," and its authentic performances are more numerous here than in any other book he wrote about Portugal. Moreover, it is a manifestation of the author directed to the citizens of the Iberia Peninsula as he wrote in his last diary:

> *A jangada de pedra* que, se não deu a volta ao mundo, conseguiu perturbar algumas mentes europeias, excessivamente suscetíveis, que pretenderam ver nele, para além da ficção que é, um documento de protesto e de rejeição contra a Europa Comunitária [...]. O romance *A jangada de pedra* é, todo ele, da primeira à última página, a consequência literária de um ressentimento histórico pessoalmente assumido [...] que sempre foi a existência de duas Europas, uma central, outra periférica, com o consequente lastro de injustiças, descriminações e ressentimentos [...] para os Estados europeus mais ricos – que, se acreditamos na sua opinião narcisista, se consideram culturalmente superiores –, o resto do continente continua a ser algo ou menos vago e difuso – um tanto exótico, um tanto pitoresco, merecedor, quando muito, do interesse de antropólogos e arqueólogos – com que, apesar de tudo, contando com as adequadas colaborações locais, ainda se podem fazer alguns bons negócios [...]. Entretanto, a jangada de pedra navegou mais algumas milhas para Sul. A rota terminará algures no Atlântico, num ponto situado entre a África e a América. Como nova ilha, aí se deterá [...]. [...] [D]escobrir o Outro significará sempre descobrir-se a si próprio, esclareço que o meu desejo ao escrever este livro foi que uma nova descoberta, um encontro com os povos ibero-americanos e ibero-africanos digno desse nome, permitisse descobrir em nós, ibéricos, capacidades e energias com sinal contrário aos que fizeram do nosso passado de colonizadores um terrível fardo na consciência (*Último caderno* 254-267).

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