

Pedagogic Authority and Girard's Analysis of Human Violence

Bráulio Matos

*But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice
(Matthew, 9, 13)*

Introduction

The 20th century was one of mass education and great wars. The number of people killed on the battle fields (nearly 170 million) and the number of people working in and for the national school systems (nearly 20 per cent of the labor force in the USA) are quite impressive (Meira Penna, 1999). Also impressive is the close coexistence and concomitance of these two features. Is there a connection between school and violence? Deep antagonism or deep complicity have been the usual answers. But the facts themselves refute any oversimplified versions of these divergent theses. What would Diderot say, for instance, after witnessing the slaughter among literate Europeans 150 years after the publication of the *Encyclopédie*? Furthermore the eradication of illiteracy in communist countries seems not to have been decisive for the fall of the tyranny. On the other hand, if education is a mere euphemism for violence, as in much radical criticism of the status quo, why is there still preaching in favor of a 'libertarian education' (even after this discourse had become hegemonic inside schools)? Therefore our question requires a more accurate answer. The present article argues that René Girard's theory concerning human violence offers such an approach. It also argues that an appropriate extension of such a theory sheds new light on the issue of teaching authority. Specifically, our main aim here consists in setting up and clarifying the meaning of the three theses below.

I. The recognition of pedagogic authority has a straight validation relationship with the process of institutionalization of human antagonisms generated by mimetic desire. Within an effective social order, pedagogic authority

normally uses ritualized violence to protect objects (knowledge) mysteriously originating from a stronger and primary violence.

II. The Sacred, Law and Money are the three major known sovereignty principles by which social orders have been structured throughout history. The growing importance of Money in the life styles of modern societies is responsible for the creation and central role of professional hierarchies and for the kind of knowledge that is in the basis of school programs and teachers' authority.

III. Money faces a constant pressure from the Sacred and the Law as competitive sovereignty principles, and teaching authority finds part of its recognition in ritual and political orders which were predominant in past times and/or are progressively important in the present. Despite this it would be precipitate to say that we live on the eve of a radical crisis in the mercantile order (hence close to a violent transition). The growing number of contradictory signals we are receiving and producing in the present disturbs such a prognosis. Otherwise, even under that catastrophic hypothesis, we could not say that pedagogic authority will be swallowed up by the decadent mercantile order rather than revitalized by the effort to explore the competition among the three sovereignty principles in order to elevate human existence above bad mimesis and sacrificialism.

Once I have given some reasons in favor of these theses, I will end the article by raising a set of critical questions that I consider hardly soluble inside the approach I have just introduced.

Teaching authority as legitimized violence

The duality culture-violence and correlated forms (recompense-punishment, trust-fear, domination-respect, etc...) have always challenged the understanding of the best social theorists. It is well known, for instance, that Durkheim (1984) placed *coerciveness* among the main features of the 'social fact'. Also well known is the weight of criticism addressed to Durkheim's principles (reification, conservatism, etc...). For Girard, Durkheim is correct in identifying religion as the primary form of human society and the privileged locus of pre-contractual elements founding the social contract. The problem with Durkheim's functionalism is that he does not offer a better explanation than illuminist contractualism about *the origin* of social order. In the alternative

theoretical model proposed by Girard (1979), *Violence and the sacred* advances five theses which can be summarized as follows.

1) Human violence tends to be *contagious*, and it is easier to unlock it than to contain it. The 'response' of the victim tends to be stronger than the 'stimulus' of the aggressor. Ethological research shows that human beings do not have automatic mechanisms of self-control for aggression which are available to larger sized animals and that neuropsychological differences between individuals tend to be rapidly equalized when we are subjected to deadly pressure. So the escalation of vengeance is a permanent risk when a violent act is started (this is well shown by the awakened fury of a peaceful soccer supporter when he is attacked in stadiums). This concrete risk of falling into a state of 'essential violence' (*Homo homini lupus*) explains the strong fear provoked by blood in members of primitive communities, since such societies cannot count on a specialized power to interrupt violence once it is unlocked. They had to discover a preventive way to deal with violence. The recurrent taboos concerning menstrual blood and the frightening preventive rites used in several tribes in order to avoid fratricide also demonstrate it. As a matter of fact, we can see a 'residue' of that concern about spilled blood in modern society. Despite its central power, legal and military, prepared to interrupt violence after it is unlocked (to cure more than to prevent), contact with spilled blood persists as a powerful taboo. It could explain, for instance, why dealing with blood is confined to specialists, both health and death specialists (physicians, nurses, firemen, butchers, hangmen, military, etc...).

2) Rites and myths of sacrifice, the *anima* of social life, have a *cathartic function* (a terror-and-fascination effect which purifies), catalyzing for some special 'surrogate victims' (people, animals or plants) the 'capital of hate' accumulated daily in the community. Even if the immolations of such victims are terrifying (better to say precisely because they are terrifying), the 'legitimized violence' made in this way is considerably smaller than a generalized sequence of revenge. Rites and myths dramatically confirm (in a dramaturgy in which everyone is an actor and nobody, except divinities, writes the script) the best values of a culture. The culture itself consists in the network or such differences (right/wrong, beautiful/ugly, true/false, ignorant/wise etc). Thus, many taboos can be observed in tribal communities related with the fear that differences disappear and equality corresponds to violent dissolution (deifying or demonizing twin brothers and even twin plants).

3) The *origin* of such rites and myths is in what was called by Girard the 'scapegoat mechanism'. In a context of generalized violence (completely undifferentiated values) and having succeeded in avoiding the extinction of the group, the population had fallen *unanimously, fortuitously, convulsively and brutally* on a single individual, lynching her/him. Such *original lynching* of a 'scapegoat victim' had operated the miracle of transforming what was 'demoniac' into 'sacred' precisely because it eliminated diffused clashes by the elimination of someone who did not count on followers' desiring or having the possibility to avenge her/his death. So the one who seemed in the decisive instant to be the responsible for all the evils, by bringing peace with her/his death, ended by being revalued (and deified) by her/his murderers. Since then, a whole system of common rules and values (religion) had been affirmed and begins to rule social human life. The sacrifice of the 'surrogate victims', obeying strict codes, started to recollect (myth) and commemorate (rites) the lynching of the 'scapegoat victim', that did not observe any previous rule (but became worthy of cult for the peace and order and inspiration he brought). That's why the violence against the sacrificial victim is sacred: it is taken as 'external' to humanity and an instrument of the gods themselves). In other words, values *transcending* individuals and rendering the possibility of social human life come from an original lynching. If Girard is right, that is, if the scapegoat mechanism is effectively responsible for the *creation of culture* (passage from the kingdom of nature to the kingdom of culture), then we have to talk first about culture 'and' violence rather than culture 'versus' violence.

4) Such reality is not only a history of our ancestors, but something related to *human desire* at every time and place. But why are desire and violence so close to each other? To understand it we have to notice that desire is *primordially absence, absence of being*. But what does being mean? As we don't know it yet, it is reasonable to seek a satisfactory answer by looking at how others themselves answer the same question. And again, not having direct access to another's mind and heart, it is reasonable to interpret her/his desire of being through his actions of appropriation. After all who would possess things which were not somehow desired? Here the territory of the metonymic between 'to be' and 'to possess'. *In extremis* to be like the other transfigures into possessing the other. The crucial point is: since the other has the same kind of doubts that I have and makes analogous calculations to mine, human desire will present *a deep mimetic structure*. It means that we'll tend to desire what somebody else desires. This also makes us, at the same

time, 'models' and 'obstacles' to each other's desires. A mild but instructive illustration of such intrinsic disposition of desire to conflict may be seen in the disputes among children for the possession of toys. As soon as someone gets to convince one of them to yield the toy to her/his partner, the 'apple of discord' will move to a new toy desired by one of the children. That means that desire seems not to operate under the form subject-object, but under the form subject-object-rival. It was said that the object is actually only a 'pretext' that the ego uses to reach the other (and vice versa). However this triangulation is dynamic and produces decisive effects. We could say that the object plays a role somewhere between a minimum and a maximum degree of institutionalization of the rivalry. Under low institutionalization, rivalry tends to fall into 'essential violence', a situation in which the resolution of the conflicts will correspond to a struggle for survival. It must be said, however, that even slavery tends to be mediated by something more than the individuals' bodies (the gain or loss of honor, for instance). Yet under high institutionalization, the widespread rivalries tend to converge on and gravitate around the most appreciated object of the community (precisely the one generated by the scapegoat mechanism). I would say that this larger object of desire is protected by unanimous violence in at least two senses. First, nobody has the power, the right or even the intention to consume privately, deplete or replace this object (as it was there to be publicly interpreted). Secondly, this object will work as mediator of the multiplicity of exchanges (including the general statute of economic property). Rivalry will not disappear under such circumstances, but the 'culture' will mould, by legitimized violence inherent in effective values, the access of community members to all they simultaneously desire.

5) Primitive mythologies and modern humanisms are not linked to each other by a line of *ascendant progress*. Girard conceives such a relation as something very tortuous. On one hand, illuminist contractualism is supported by a *deep forgetfulness* concerning the role of violence in our lives. Such forgetfulness may be dangerous, since the judicial system does not make us necessarily immune to potential vengeance sequences. On the other hand, it seems that today we can better understand the meaning of violence inside human communities (partly because we can learn from the 'primitives' something they knew better than us). However, conquering a 'perfectly rational perspective' about the role of violence among us means being able to recognize in the infinite forms assumed by the 'demonic forces' something that is ultimately made *by our own disposition, means and responsibility*.

Apart from the innumerable theoretical and empirical details related to each of the theses above, we already have sufficient elements to approach the issue of teaching authority in the spirit of Girard's model. To be concise this preliminary reference will consider mainly the thesis of mimetic desire (and only mention the thesis of unanimity violence). Therefore it seems appropriate to state that the generic triangle subject-object-rival is expressed in the relationship between teacher and pupil in terms of a triangle *master-knowledge-apprentice*. By mimetism, the apprentice tends to search knowledge through the view of her/his master, which indicates to her/him that knowledge is something to be desired (desired also by her/him, the master, who once was the disciple of another master, and so successively, until the *model of every model*). However, the master is not only a model to the student, since the moment when the seduction of knowing starts to work, but also an obstacle for her/him. This is because the master will keep, for a long period, the privileged position of 'trustee' of such cultural heritage. This means, among other things, having access to a right and obligation to evaluate the student's progression to knowledge. If, for instance, the student has learned the operations of adding and subtracting, s/he does not have the right to be self-sufficient and to evoke for her/himself the knowing of mathematics. If s/he insists in such direction, it is the master's task to deny her/him the 'competence credential' in such a discipline. The series of refusals in the course of the educational process may have more or less 'offensive' forms. It may be limited to 'calling the attention' of the student to small demonstrations of negligence, evolve into a 'barrier' to her/him following on her/his scholarly carrier (failing exams), up to a criminal inquiry into physical aggression against the master, in the nearest police station.

With regard to the *thesis of unanimity violence*, the central point is the connection between the recognition of the current master and the lynching of the 'master of the masters'. Remember that the former tends to use ritualized violence to protect an object (knowledge) created by a stronger violence, itself deprived of inspiring examples (but a vital source of the maximum example). In such a sense, the special case of Socrates (comparable with Christ's fate) seems consistent with Girard's interpretation. Galileo and others could appear less dramatic examples of the scapegoat mechanism, but they also reveal intensive violence associated with such paradigmatic innovations. Girard's model seems to be coherent also with the observable fact that so many teachers of the 'official disciplines' evaluate their students in such a mechanical and narrow manner.

Of course we have the right to interrupt the argumentation at this point and ask ourselves if these 'universal laws' which Girard dared to extract from such documental vestiges can explain how and why the new canons settled by and/or in the name of such 'founding masters' are different throughout history. The best answer is probably negative. And since Girard's discoveries are relevant and our doubts legitimate we should persist in our investigation. So is the meaning of the second hypothesis.

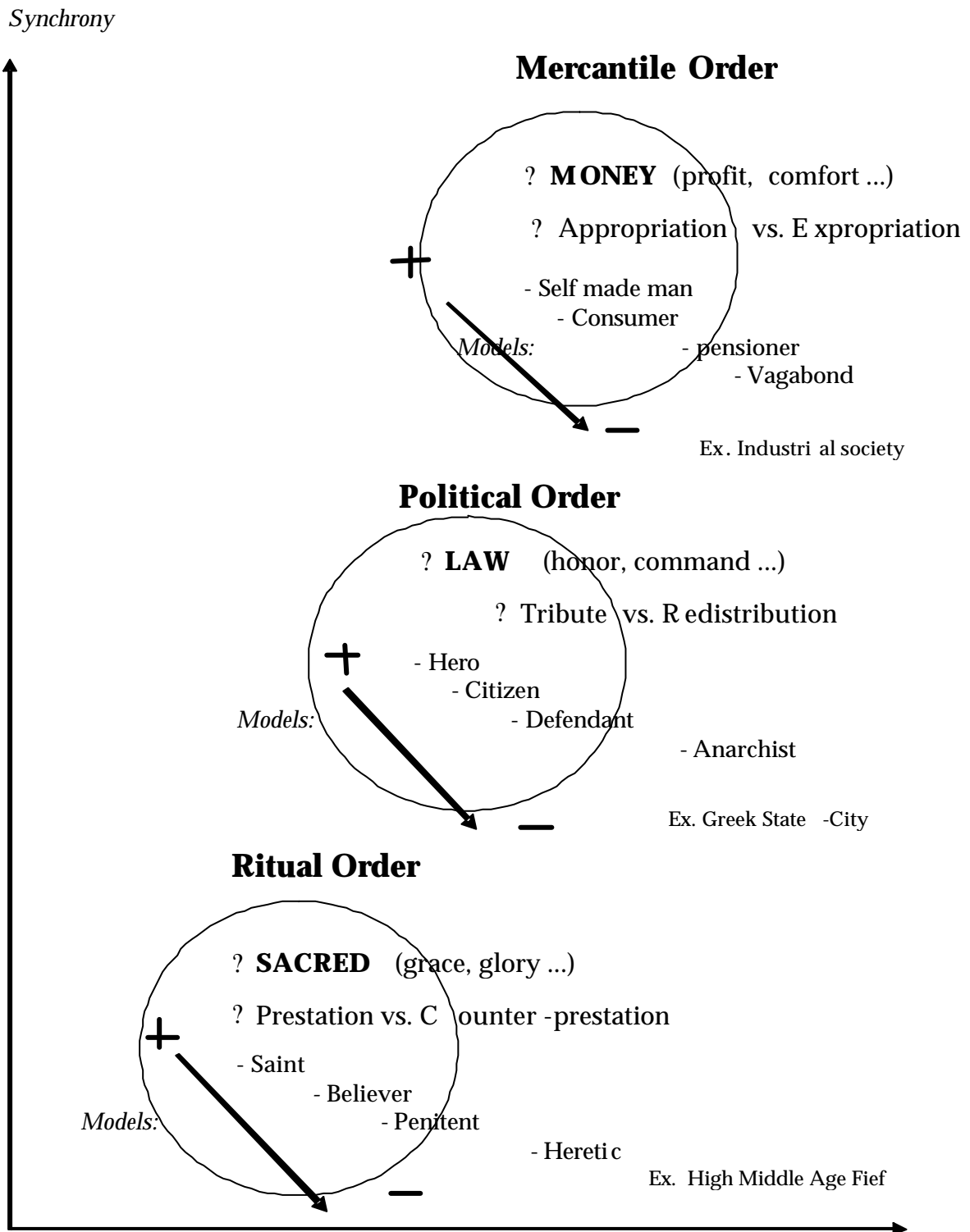
Teaching authority in a Monetary World

In relation to the second hypothesis we should also not ignore the classical precedents of the 'triadic' conception of social stratification. Certainly Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes and Weber are inescapable representatives of that tradition. And many important concepts were already formulated about this subject (like thinkers-warriors-artisans, wealth-power-honor, class-status-party etc...). Once more I will restrict my task to showing how Jacques Attali (1981), by his 'theory of three worlds', and Michel Aglietta & André Orléan (1982), by their 'theory of monetary violence', try to amplify the comprehension of social stratification incorporating elements of Girard's approach.

To see whether it is possible to incorporate such contributions in a single perspective, also inserting my own elements (some social 'models'), I conceived Table 1. If it is not possible to explain each and every one of the elements there represented, we can at least elucidate the general intelligibility of such a table. Jacques Attali argues in *Les trois mondes* that humanity has known, until the present, three kinds of social orders, three *distinct modalities of conjuration of violence*. Although these three kinds of social orders may be not mutually exclusive, in each period one kind of such orders predominated over the other ones. Such predominance is due, according to the author, to the affirmation of a 'sovereignty principle' corresponding to each order. Thus, the three orders and the respective corresponding sovereignty principles are *the sacred in the ritual order, the law in the political (or imperial) order and money in the mercantile order*. I conceived and disposed the three orders in two axes, the first diachronic and the other synchronic, to suggest some *possible* patterns of hierarchy and succession (there is no intention to connect the model to any theory of historical evolution). I leave aside, by now, the issue of 'operational principles' of each order (expropriation-appropriation, tribute-redistribution, donation-counter-donation), since it would require an involvement with the

studies of Marcel Mauss (2000), Georges Bataille (1998), Karl Polanyi (2001), Albert Hirschman (1977) and Moisés Quadros (1993), among others.

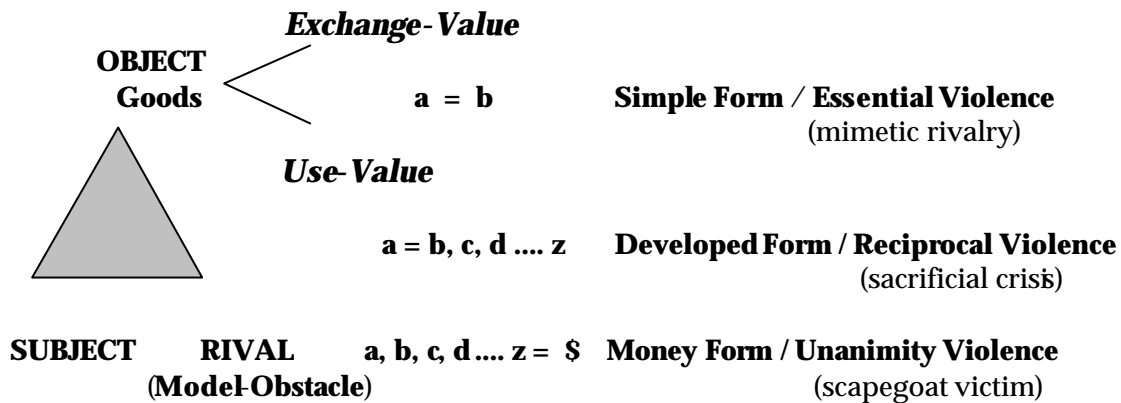
Table 1
The three worlds as defined by sovereignty principle



Regarding the addition of those models of status into each social order, there is no intention to be innovative here; nor does the perfect symmetry of the concepts necessarily decide their heuristic value. This insertion into this approach of what I consider good achievements by other sources can be rather taken as part of the effort to test the new and old conceptions.¹ Concerning the specific issue we are interested in, these models can help us to understand the original and subsequent status of teachers in the course of history (a relevant aspect of the next main thesis). Coming straight to the point, it is supposed that those social types can be hierarchically presented as follows: the *self made man*, the *hero* and the *saint* are figures *above common men*, represented by *consumers*, by the *citizen* and by the *believer*; the human kinds represented by the *pensioner*, the *defendant* and the *penitent* are marked by the *problematic character* of their relations with the *sovereignty principle* in their respective orders; finally, we find the human kinds represented by the *vagabond*, the *anarchist* and the *heretic*, some marginal types placed *outside the community*. So it is that, although some legitimate violence still affects such figures, with some efficacy, the legitimate violence that protects the central values of each total life style (money, law and the sacred), and its incompatibility with the social order in force is still smaller than the violence existing between each order and the types represented by the *vagabond*, the *anarchist* and the *heretic*.

Following the steps of Attali, Michel Aglietta and André Orléan, in *La violence de la monnaie*, concentrated their analysis on the institutional role of the money. Their main assumption is that not only does the *neoclassical theory of marginal utility* operate with a limited theory of socialization, based in 'natural behavior' motivation which annuls the sphere of individual decision; the *Marxist theory of labor-value* also uses this kind of inadequate approach, although the individual action there is annulled by the inflexible law of production. For Aglietta and Orléan, the theory of mimetic desire would help to clarify a good number of enigmas, very particularly regarding the relation between the use-value and the exchange-value, as we know a distinction conceived by classical economics and reinterpreted by Marxism through the concept of 'commodity fetishism'. Here I will just schematize the main elements used by Aglietta and Orléan in a table, as follows.

Table 2
Labor and Desire under monetization



It is not clear how ‘Marxist’ these authors are, i.e. to what extent ‘work’ continues to be considered a first-order concept in relation to ‘desire’ (as a second-order concept). Nevertheless they seem to be very faithful to Marx’s ‘last opinion’ about the specificity of capitalism: a society whose origin, reproduction and Achilles’ heel lie in commodity fetishism (not in ‘hegemonic ideas’ nor in the ‘monopoly of force’). In the mid-twenties Rubin (1973) claimed that Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism had not occupied its due place in Marxist research agendas. Defeated by the division of labour, the ‘economists’ relegated that theory to the ‘sociologists’ (who took it as solved once and for all by Marx). Hence one could say that Aglietta and Orléan followed Rubin’s advice more than ‘Western Marxism’ and ‘Soviet Marxism’².

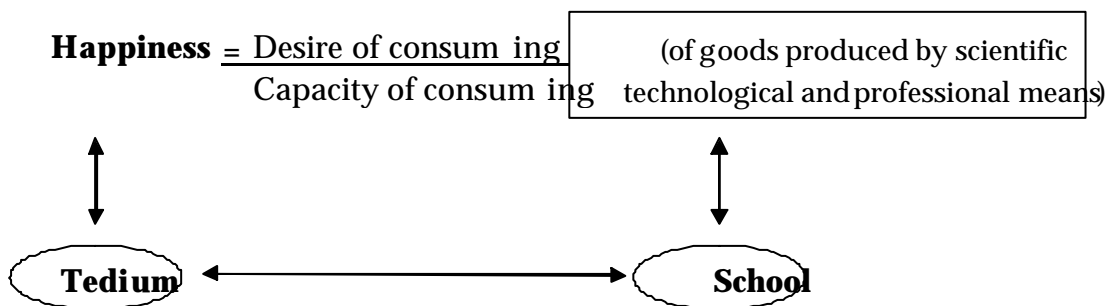
Finally, it is worth mentioning Moisés Quadros’ contribution to this new sociological approach in *The violence of social policy* (Quadros, 1993). According to him, ‘social security’ is a second-order fetishism of the salary-form just as interest is a second-order fetishism of the profit-form. To demonstrate this, he analyses five ‘original experiences’ by which the ‘social question’ was progressively subsumed by money. Those experiences reflected the progressive differentiation of the social question vis-à-vis the attempts made to ‘solve’ the problem via ritual, political or mercantile orders. As the heart of the social question is the ‘fate’ of that part of labor-power whose survival is more directly threatened, Quadros reconstructs this non-linear historical process

through the sequence: *passive* labour-power (Enclosures, Poor Laws, Speenhamland), *active* labour-power (proletarian class, trade-unionism), *inactive* labour-power (Bismarckian *Sozialpolitik*), *exceeding* labour-power (Beveridge Plan), *redundant* labour-power (corporation mimesis, new *lumpenproletariat* and criminalization of poverty). This way, he rejects, for instance, the idea that the social security form of social policy was created by Bismarck due to his paternalism and/or *Realpolitik* (increasing electoral power of social democracy). Social policy would be rather a defeat than a victory of the actual victims of the capitalism.

In what measure and how does teaching authority reflect and support the violence of money as a sovereignty principle? I don't know any work focused specifically in this issue. But I would say that the analysis Illich (1971) offers in his *Deschooling society*, published at the beginning of the 1970s, remains one of the most daring and suggestive possible answers to the question. Of course, other important works could also be evoked as an indirect answer, such as *Technology and Science as Ideology*, by Jürgen Habermas (1971), among others. Even so, Illich's diagnosis of the 'social function' of the school seems to lead faster and steadily to concepts like 'use-value', 'commodity fetishism', 'mimetism', 'rivalry' and so on. Moreover, now that so few people still irritate themselves with his proposal to abolish compulsory education, perhaps we can listen better to what he had to say. The following schema presents some key elements for such reflection and shall be specifically commented upon.

Illich's fundamental thesis is that people are no longer convinced that school has the special power to define, promote and administer what is considered the 'good life'. The objective examination of the school's social role can

Table 3
Happiness Myth, Mercantilization and School



however show that school has gathered the importance it has today (on a planetary level and independently of pedagogic divergences) because it is engaged in the process of mercantilization of life (also at a planetary level and independent of ideological divergences). Sooner the children are presented to such socialization agency and later they are leaving it, if we don't consider that on kindergartens are already written the terrible words found by Virgil at the portico of hell: *Ed io eterno duro. Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate!* (And myself, I last eternally. Abandon all hope, you who are entering!) But in the end why does the real effect of scholarization seem to Illich so radically opposed to the expected effect? I will mention five reasons: First, because school nourishes the myth of happiness as the consumption of goods scientifically produced, and this is a never-ending process, deliberately conceived to generate a diffuse dissatisfaction and artificial needs (or a satisfaction as provisional as the new brands of soap). What is good, beautiful and true is replaced by what is useful in the outcomes proposed for school education. Second, because school conceives education as a service offered by a specialist and not as a process of spiritual growth (an expressive movement of consciousness that can not be transferred from an individual to another, comparable, for instance, to going the toilet). Third, because school polarizes society and hierarchizes nations, constantly concentrating energies and resources and promising salvation to the poor of the technological era. Fourth, because school, besides being the receptor of the myth of never-ending consumption and the promoter of the rites for its consecration, intends to be the self-authorized reader of differences between myth and reality. Whenever school does not manage to introduce pupils in the sacred course of progressive consumption, it charges teaching authority to perform ceremonial rites to expiate the losers (school evaluation process), in order to convince the losers themselves that they are the sacrificial victims needed for progress. And fifth, because school finally leads us to physical pollution, social polarization and psychic impotence, three crucial dimensions of a process of global degradation and modernization of misery.

For such reasons, Illich reached the conclusion that only by 'de-schooling society' would it be possible to rectify the erroneous world view concerning the nature of education. Although the *abolition of obligatory education set in constitutions* seemed to him an appropriate and effective starting point, it remains clear that the precise issue is not the existence of schools. The problem is that the *imagination of the whole society was colonized* by a kind of scholar *ethos* which is as pretentious in its explicit finality (the monopoly of knowledge) as

it is poor in its potential finality (mercantile utilitarianism). Thus the proposition of de-schooling seems so absurd: because such world vision only accepts as legitimized knowledge those attested by a school which is mythically engaged in mercantilizing life. Also for such reason auto-didactic methods are mistrusted and professional corporations control them by means of police.

Let's now examine the third hypothesis, related to the degree of potential conflicts involved in the affirmation and refusal of teaching authority.

Competition among the sovereignty principles

This hypothesis is the one which is most affected by the imponderability of circumstances and by the need of a sense of 'prophetic'. Thus, we will only briefly refer to the three key terms present in this hypothesis, which are the competition among the orders, the crisis of hegemonic order and the alternatives foreseen to it.

The reality and the constancy of competition among those three principles of sovereignty, hierarchically integrated, may be identified in the daily opinion debates in the media. Even if in unequal proportions, and for this very reason, we observe the presence of personalities which are not limited to the world of work (businessmen, engineers, union leaders, etc...), but include personalities from the world of politics and religion (politicians, lawyers, policemen, priests, devotees, etc...). Also, the internal scene of the scholarly environment is marked by such tension among principles, both diachronically and synchronically. Whenever we observe, for instance, the history of the older universities, some of them existing for more than eight centuries, it is possible to see the diversity of functions they perform (in economic, political and even religious fields), with evident consequences for the role of teaching. What a contrast there is between the present curriculum aiming to teach a profession and that which Aristotle taught to Alexander!

It is a fact that the tension among the sovereignty principles may be currently identified inside the educational process. The specialization of teaching as a profession tends to move the trade union discourse to a position against what it considers as a 'conservative ideology' (an ancient instructress who evokes the sense of a 'sacerdotal mission' and 'parental love' as distinctive features of teaching activity). The famous Brazilian educator Paulo Freire is

a partisan of this criticism (Freire, 2002). In his works one will find the frequent use of words like 'correlation of forces', 'combat strategy', 'militancy' and many others which indicate a sort of 'colonization' of the school world by military jargon. Since Anatol Rapoport showed that the three basic ways to solve conflicts are dueling (elimination), gaming (bluffing) and debating (convincing), I guess it is appropriate here to say that: first, armies, parliaments and education institutions are 'specialized' in solving conflicts according to those three logics, so it is proper to link armies to duels, parliaments to games and educational institutions to debates; second, a democratic way of life is characterized by a sort of political game that disciplines and rules on the use of power by means of a public debate as enlightened as possible; and third, that the affirmation of teaching authority is ruled at first by the logic of debates more than by the logic of a political game or by those of military combat.³ Therefore, Freire and his followers' discourse promote a special form of 'wishful thinking'.

Moreover, the persistence of 'traditionalism' against the modern criticism suggests that this is more than a case of values surviving by inertia, and led us to the issue of an active competition between different social orders.

The second key term of the third hypothesis advocates the structural nature of the present crisis. In this sense, the following 'paradox' is remarkable: although the great majority of those rewarded with the Nobel Prize, which was created in 1905, are still alive and active, and so many wonderful inventions are being applied to raise the material satisfaction of peoples, at the same moment, the 'crisis of modernity', 'a crisis of paradigms', the necessity of 'trans-disciplinarity approaches' and so on, are profusely announced. At present time, for instance, one can notice in Brazilian pedagogy the growth of a curious discourse, a mixture of Gramsci and Capra, among others (Carvalho, 1994).

It is a fact that the 'enlightened readings' of science are progressively sharing space with '*somber readings*' of the same knowledge in the same school context. It is not clear, however, if the ethos of value-free science (as in Weber's prescription) has only positive effects (avoiding insoluble ideological conflict inside the academy, for instance), and does not also have negative effects (entropy effects concerning the moral responsibility of teachers, for instance). If so, the more the pupils are pressed to discuss *the quality* of their life outside educational establishments, the less attractive will become the 'sci-

entificist discourse'. In this case, De La Taille (1996) would be also right to claim that *apathy* better expresses the present state of spirit of students in regard to their teachers than *indiscipline* (subject to the provision, I would say, that the priority of the 'debate' in relation to the 'duel' should be taken as a natural feature of the genuine education in any time and place.

Finally, the third thesis claims the possibility of rescuing pedagogic authority in the meanwhile of the mentioned crisis. In this sense, the fundamental issue is whether, now that we better understand the 'logic of violence', it is possible to establish a *polyarchical sovereignty principle* without resorting to mimetic rivalry and sacrificial mechanism. Obviously such an achievement requires more than revivals of traditionalism or festivals of utopias.

Conclusion

I will end by addressing two sets of questions about the approach I have just introduced, leaving open the ways I imagine they could be answered. Regarding the 'general theory of society' presented, a distinction has to be made between Girard's personal approach and his 'followers' affiliated to the Marxist tradition. Girard himself recommended prudence on the scope of mimetism and the application of such a concept to the social-economic analysis:

On the conception of human being underlying the mimetic theory, it is to be noted that I don't affirm that human being is limited to mimetic desire or is reducible to mimetic desire, because this would mean to say that is fundamentally violence. When the Christian vision is eliminated from the mimetic problematic, we have an extremely pessimistic, a radically negativist, and terrible definition of human being, But this is not exact. Two things may have contributed for the fact that some defend such a vision. First, some sociological and economic applications of mimetic theory may present in some way such an impression. I don't know if in Aglietta and Orléan's work *The violence of money* is there some of this...Second, my book *The violence and the sacred* may reinforce such impression, be it by its title, which I today consider too ambiguous, or by the approach limited to primitive societies and to cultural anthropology (Assman, 1991:50).

In spite of this warning, the nature and scope of mimetism are not clear either in Girard's conception. Aiming to stand off from Freudian biologism, he ponders the convenience of replacing the libidinal concept of 'desire' by Sartre's concept of 'project' flavored with Kierkegaard's idea of 'passionate subjectivity' (Girard, 1996). I cannot see any 'happy end' to this marriage. Could it make clear, for instance, the utmost difference between 'good' and 'bad' mimesis (a necessity also suggested by Girard)? What I see is an amplification of difficulties. To what extent and how does the Sartrean dialectic of mutual slavery between the lovers reflect also the dialectic between the master and the pupil (Sartre 1974)? Would not Girard be buying 'a pig in a poke' in the sense that the Sartrean (anti)conception of love will never be able to overcome the metonymy Being-Possession and take seriously into consideration the contemplative/metaphysical dimension of knowledge? I think so, but to make this point clear we would have to better understand what expressions like 'to possess some knowledge' and 'to be sincere and grateful' mean in philosophical terms.⁴ I would dare say this philosophical weakness of Girard's approach lies in the frequent 'jumps' he makes from his anthropological achievement to Christian theology.⁵ And without this philosophical account his analysis cannot actually distinguish between 'bad' and 'good' mimesis better than 'public opinion' or Sartrean narcissism.

The Marxist-Girardian sociological approach (Attali, Aglietta, etc...) must answer at least four basic questions. First, is there actually such a 'sovereignty principle', i.e. an object so intensively desired that becomes responsible for sociability of the community as a whole (from biological survival to the most sophisticated cultural values)? Of course those authors could simply say: 'don't you see that money mediates the consumption and the production?' We can certainly see that. But what happens if, on one hand, the birth of private property involves voluntary contracts more than usurpation (Lepage, 1982), and, on the other hand, the consumers have no reason to feel guilt about their behavior (Elster, 1986)? Second, is money really the most representative commodity of the mercantile order or is it rather a political entity? Third, how exactly does the dependence of money on science (of the stock exchange on cosmological theories, for instance) occur? Fourth, where can the function of teaching be placed? Of course we want to know more than the general statement that the educational system serves the sovereign order (teaching how to pray, to legislate or to produce goods), and professional competence occupies the hard core of the contemporary scholarly curriculum (courses of 'civics' and 'ecumenism' being almost ornamental). We want

to know why and how the 'charisma' frequently associated with pedagogic authority persists throughout history even after centuries of the modernization process.⁶

Regarding specifically the issue of teaching authority, my conclusion will be very concise. As the general approach underlying the hypothesis in question is not well known, I have clarified it as much as I could. I hope, however, that the set of critical questions presented above are sufficient at least to make sense of the following hypothesis: Girard and his associates cannot build a bridge between their concept of violence and their hope for a non-violent sociability because they do not have and they cannot provide a good *theory of communication*. Human communication is a kind of phenomenon that can be hardly understood without integrating philosophical, sociological and psychological perspectives. The theoretical apprehension of this phenomenon requires and favors clear concepts about 'power', 'recognition', 'discourse', 'sincerity' and 'trust', to mention only some of those indispensable to attaining a good concept of 'teaching authority'.⁷

Gabriel Ortega y Gasset formulated an idea about the meaning of 'study' that I consider the most compatible with (and fruitful for) a good concept of teaching authority. According to him, *study is a falseness*.

If science was not already present, the good student would not feel it necessary at all, that is to say, would not be a student. To study is, for him, a external necessity, which is imposed on him. So when a person is placed in the student's position, he is obliged to do something false, to pretend a necessity which is not felt by him. (...) The act of studying is thus a human labor which denies itself, being simultaneously necessary and useless. It is necessary to study to reach a certain goal, but, after all, this goal is not attained by such mean. It is specifically for that reason, because both things are simultaneously true – the necessity and the uselessness – that to study is a problem. (...) To teach is primarily and fundamentally to teach the necessity of a science and not to teach a science the necessity of which it is impossible to make the student feel (Ortega, in Pombo, 2000: 100).

Ortega's reflection leads me to the idea that teaching authority can be conceived as a *reverence to the master by the pupil based on the authentication of the necessity to study*. I believe that such concept enables us to deal with the existential tension between 'violence' and 'communication' in a better way than a pure

Girardian approach. Given something like an 'omnipresence of the no' in our lives, teaching authority faces daily the necessity to distinguish between the 'no' that enlightens and the 'no' that humiliates (the better way to examine the problem of 'authoritarianism' in educational processes). Perhaps Christopher Lasch (1979) is right when he claims that one of the sources of 'educational failure' in our time comes from an artificial work division between 'affection' (parents) and 'authority' (social workers). According to him, the real problem lies in a wrong concept of love. In the same sense, Aristotle (2000) argues convincingly that neither pleasure nor economic advantage essentially define friendship, but rather the wish that the other grow in his own terms. As Eli Bonini very well defines it: *a friend is the one to whom we confer the right to say no.*

Of course the validity of the concept above is far from being evident and it raises many important problems. Look for instance at the 'timing' involved in the recognition of the master by the pupil. We may also consider the ascendancy of the master over the pupil whenever the latter 'acquires a knowledge' about the edifying role of the former post mortem. Let us think also about the epistemological status of what the pupil considers as learned from his master. It is obvious that if we become sensible to the 'necessity to study', we have already learned something, independently of the specific knowledge we may acquire by following the studies. Anyhow, 'to learn something' suggests some kind of 'objectiveness' related to what we further know. And, in such a sense, we will try to better comprehend how different criteria of 'truth' participate in the general concept of teaching authority. How to cover under the same concept of teaching authority, for instance, metaphysical truths (private and apodictic) and scientific truths (public and provisional)? How to integrate such diverse elements in a theory of the communicative applied to the issue of teaching authority? These are some of the questions I intend to answer in subsequent articles.

For the moment, I would be glad if the reader considers reasonable my arguments in favor of a critical extension of René Girard's approach to the educational field in general and to teaching authority in particular (a very delicate matter in the double sense that the exercise of teaching can oscillate from 'irritation' to 'caring').

Bráulio Matos (braulioporto@terra.com.br) (Sociology DPhil University of Brasília, Brazil) was associated with the Centre for Critical Social Theory at the University of Sussex for a period of post-doctorate work in 2003-4. He is working with William Outhwaite on unpublished manuscripts left by Zevedei Barbu, a Rumanian-British social scientist who was one of the first professors at the University of Sussex.

Notes

1. It is worth mentioning, for instance, Duby (1974). Also suggestive for me has been Olavo de Carvalho's reflection about what he calls 'renewed caste theory', a critical derivation from Aristotle (Carvalho, 1995).
2. Of course this is a very debatable issue. One could argue that the analysis of the Culture Industry must be considered a remarkable Western Marxist contribution. Probably Rubin would accept this statement subject to one provision: money itself, the most desired of goods, is not an object of advertising.
3. I do not entirely agree with the distinction made by Rapoport (1960) between 'argumentation' and 'debate', based on the idea that the first involves *rationality* and the second *persuasion*. One would need a more comprehensive theory of discourse to clarify in which sense discourse is rational. Aristotle provides such a theory (poetic, rhetorical, dialectic and analytic), as well demonstrated by Carvalho (1996).
4. This may seem to be a 'fussy' subject. Nevertheless, since knowledge is the 'privileged object' around which teaching authority is affirmed, considerations on the 'appropriation' of this object become inevitable and suppose an understanding about the concept of *propriety* and its various forms. Here I guess we have to face the issue on two fronts. Philosophically, it is necessary to distinguish between 'active life' and 'contemplative life' as it is present in the metaphysical tradition (Aquinas 2000). Sociologically, it is necessary to observe the ascendancy of information as a special kind of 'capital'. Alvin Toffler, for instance, observes that *property of information is something different from property of 'real things' in the sense that it is not finite. I can use them and you simultaneously do the same. In reality, if more people use them, greater is the probability that more information is created*" (Toffler, 1987: 114). Of course, this is a debatable issue, and its subsequent treatment should evoke, among others, Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of 'cultural capital' and the strategies used to monopolize such power in the 'scientific field'.
5. Girard says that his conversion to Christianity is related to his intellectual discoveries (Assmann 1991). According to him, Christ would express at the same time the crystalline conscience of the 'scapegoat mechanism' and a model which enables us to

disarm this same mechanism. Yet Girard's biblical exegesis is not clear. During his mentioned meeting with Brazilian theologians, for instance, he demonstrated much sympathy for the so-called Liberation Theology. I suspect we are here and once more facing another case of disastrous marriage.

6. Ferri (1997) observed empirically in Brazil important 'deviations' between scales of revenue, power and prestige 'constructed' by the community regarding fifteen given occupations (among them *teacher*). She verified, for instance, that people tend to attribute more prestige than power or revenue to teachers. She verified also that teachers tend to see themselves in a worse situation than other members of the community see them.

7. At the present time, I am investigating the consistency, scope and depth of Habermas (1984). Whatever has been the assessment of those books it is worth saying that pre-materialist traditions (Judaic-Christian, Ancient Greece, etc) had already centered sociality in the role of the 'word'.

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