

Artificialism, religion and media: communication and psychoanalysis¹

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Abstract: Presentation and application of the psychoanalytical concept of “revirão” – used to denote the continuous flux of reversions and returns in mental life and in everything – to start a case study based on the assumption that, since 2010, according to a Brazilian newspaper (O Globo), reports on pedophilia situations inside Christian institutions seem to have changed their denouncing and charging inflection, leaving its “selective scandal” character in favor of another way to treat the matter and its effects. This turning of inflection can be a change not only in this specific topic, pedophilia, but in the way any topic can be treated if it included the reference to an extreme point – called “bifid point” – in which all the valuations become equalized, thus enabling the expression of deeper meanings hitherto obstructed in the situations.

Keywords: new psychoanalysis; communication theories; religion

Resumo: Apresentação teórica e aplicação do conceito psicanalítico de “revirão” – fluxo contínuo de reversões e viravoltas da vida mental e do que há (o Haver) – para dar início a um estudo de caso a partir da ideia de que, desde 2010, artigos do jornal *O Globo* sobre situações de pedofilia em instituições católicas parecem ter mudado sua inflexão acusadora e denunciatória, diminuindo sua característica de “escândalo seletivo” em favor de outro modo de tratar da questão e seus efeitos. Esta virada na inflexão pode ser uma mudança não apenas no tratamento específico da pedofilia, mas também no modo como qualquer tema pode ser considerado se incluir a referência a um ponto extremo – chamado “ponto bifido” – em que todas as valorações se equalizam, disponibilizando assim o surgimento de outros sentidos cuja expressão estava até então obstruída na situação.

Palavras-chave: nova psicanálise; teorias da comunicação; religião

1. Artificial / natural

According to archeological records (Leroi-Gourhan [1964]) and the observation of anthropologists and thinkers in general, it is reasonable to say that our species has never fit like other living beings into what was taken for granted: its ways

¹ Paper presented at IAMCR (International Association for Media and Communication Research) Conference, Istanbul, July 16, 2011.

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and abilities would not immediately agree with nature's rhythms and conditions. This has certainly made the species excessively vulnerable until finding means (media) to enable its performances and lucubrations within the frequently hostile environment it dwelled.

By means of manufacturing tools, at last the humans were able not just to ensure survival before dangers (catastrophes, predators...) and seasonal variations (warm, cold...), but also to elaborate ways to understand themselves and their maladjustment to what was around. Such artifacts conditioned survival by making daily life bearable, and enabled more complex insights about the specificities of their mental functioning – sentencing them to the act of *creation* as the only chance to come to terms with the actual “madness” which was inside them and never ceased to demand that previous limits achieved should be overcome. Furthermore, there was not a limit to be satisfied, as it seemed to happen with other beings that did not care about remaining within what they were, since they somehow seemed to know what they really were. If a dog, for instance, as far as we can see, does not fancy flying like a bird, our species is beset by such possibility quite early throughout its history – and much was accomplished until the “heavier than air” was able to surpass the pressure of the law of gravity and could fly even higher than birds.

The pattern has been to regard the notion of “artificial” as opposed to “natural”. A strong trait of the species has always appeared to be the production of artifices (culture, symbols), and a different type would be the existing productions from immemorial times (earth, fauna, flora). In the mid-20th century, the difference “artifice / nature” was changed into “nature / culture”, which is the foundation of the structuralist thought (Lévi-Strauss [1947]; Dosse [1992]: v.2). This thought, in its turn, took such differences to the edge, which ended up exhausting its utility as an effective distinction. So today³, after this trajectory, we can be at ease to exercise ways of thinking that dismiss such boundaries as bases for their concepts and operations.

³ Cf., for example, Castells [1996]: 505: “We are just entering a new stage in which culture refers to culture, have superseded nature to the point that nature is artificially revived (‘preserved’) as a cultural form”.

2. General artificialism: The idioformations

So, from the 1980s on, one may state – as stated by the New Psychoanalysis⁴, which is our reference in this research – that: *everything is artifice* (Magno [1982]: 62)⁵. The full statement is: “Everything there is, is artifice” – and below we shall see some of the implications of the verb “haver” in Portuguese – from *habere*, in Latin –, which was translated above as “there is” [“Tudo que há...”]. “Haver” encompasses and surpasses the meaning of ‘to exist’, ‘to have’ and ‘to be’. It differs from other languages, even the closest neo-Latin ones, and is built from such a unique linguistic characteristic that the many aspects of its translation may be compromised. ‘Haver’, as used in new psychoanalysis, concerns the very fact that there is everything (including our species) before any existence that can be described in a discursive way.

There are two types of artifice. Those with unknown origin, which were already all around us (water, air, heat...), many of them with functions necessary to the possibilities of life and reproduction as we know them. However, as their production processes have been technologically described more and more in detail, it becomes clear that the constitution of this production is also based on articulations whose laws can be depicted. That is why they can be categorized as *spontaneous artifices*. And there are also other types of formation, called *industrial artifices* (thoughts, artifacts, prosthesis) because they explicitly result from operations carried out by beings from our species⁶. And such artifices have promoted interventions and transformations in the very spontaneity of other formations.

Therefore we can say that *nature’s nature is artificial*⁷. In addition, what we see in our social technological environment – hybrid, multi-connected, multi-accessible and with boundaries between its regions fading everyday – is the ruling of an *artificialism* (Silveira Jr., 2006) in every level, to the point where the use of the term “natural” becomes ineffective to describe any procedure done by the species.

⁴ Created in the 1980s by MD Magno (cf. http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/MD_Magno).

⁵ “The conclusion is (...) that there is no distinction between nature and artifice: *all is artifice*, construction, therefore, *all is natural*” (Magno [2006]: 94).

⁶ “We don’t know any other species that, [...] due to being able to conceive what is called nature as a mere artifice, re-artificializes such artifice” (Magno [1981]: 109).

⁷ “... and nature is artificial...” (Magno [1985]: 42).

The term “Facture”⁸ (instead of “nature”) is more precise to designate the environment of emergences of everything *there is* (from the verb “haver”, cf. item 4 below), where the movements of the human beings take place and go beyond their biological basis. They have been referred to as prosthetic gods (Freud [1930]: 111), as beings with the communication media as their extensions (McLuhan [1964]), as post-human, post-organic, cyborgs... That is why the new psychoanalysis includes them no longer among the so-called “humans”, but among what was named “idioformations” (Magno [1995]: 229s.), i.e., formations that share a number of characteristics with other living beings but, in addition, carry the availability of, when facing any situation, demand for its opposite, suspend the differences and boundaries. In other words, the availability to say “no”. That is the availability detected by Freud in the Unconscious in general, and particularly in dreams, and which was regarded as an inherent fact of our mental competence.

The concept of idioformation refers to any formation – known or unknown to us (an extraterrestrial, for example) – that has the competence to *suspend* and even to reverse whatever is given to it. Then, even if we only observe such suspension working in biological beings, carbon-based, which are us, the conceptual realm of the new psychoanalysis is not restricted to “human”, but refers to the “species of idioformations”, whatever the shape they have or the planet they come from.

3. “Revirão”: neutralization and passage

Two other things are stated. First, the Mind’s functioning process – “mind” understood as an instance that comprehends everything, an instance which is relational and transitional, and which has no inside or outside – is that of “manufacturing” and presents itself in assorted ways within the “Haver” (here used as a noun). Second, the *Persons*⁹ (Magno [2005]: 109), nobody really knows why, also bear this process in their own constitution. The mind does not depend on the persons to exist and operate, but persons have been the only known formations which, like the mind, vis-à-vis anything that happens in the present or future (even as a thought),

⁸ “... whatever happens, it is GOD that’s thinking: FACTURE...” (Magno [1985]: 38).

⁹ Name given to the idioformations on our terrestrial situation.

operate by conjecturing over the possibility of passing through a neutral point where the differences between formations are suspended, and their opposites, their contraries, the non-them, become available even if just for an instant – and therefore become susceptible to transformations.

“Revirão”¹⁰ (Magno [1982]), which, in Portuguese, means simultaneously reversal and return, is the mind’s operational competence to require the opposition of anything, and, moreover, neutralize such opposition, thus enabling continuous passages from one pole to its opposite. “Revirão” encompasses what thinkers, writers and artists describe as the recurrent reversions and turnarounds throughout history of mankind (love turning into hate, winners into losers, matter into antimatter... and vice-versa), but is, most of all, the operation that conducts the species’ creative and innovative transformations¹¹.

Every transformation supposes the passing through a place of neutrality where the apparently insurmountable heterogeneity of the formations comes undone before the “homogeneity” which is an important characteristic of the “Haver” as a whole (cf. item 4 below). Freud was interested in slips of tongue, jokes and dreams because he saw in them a privileged spot to the functioning of such flows, reflows and changes between the formations, whichever they were, to the point of *in-differentiating* their established meanings. At this point, as we can no longer know which formation is which, or what, a window can be opened to the emergence of new senses and concatenations in the situations.

The evolution of technology and the current communicational transfusion have enabled the stretching of the reach of such competence of in-difference to the very “Haver” in general, no longer restricting it to the mental formations investigated by Freud. The possibility of in-differentiation is now thought of as available¹² to everything, as long as proper investment is made (of time and money, for example). Therefore we can look at news like the production of the first synthetic bacterium cell by American geneticist Craig Venter, regarded by some as the first production of

¹⁰ For in-depth definition on the concept, cf.: <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revir%C3%A3o>

¹¹ For instance, the production of antimatter starting from punctual suspension of matters’ hegemony.

¹² Directly available on Idioformations, and indirectly on other formations that only suffer from the effects of in-differentiations that are produced within the “Haver”.

artificial life¹³, as an indication of the in-differentiation between natural and artificial made possible by technology, as well as an indication of *artificialism* as a basic characteristic of the persons and the “Haver” itself.

4. “Haver” and “Arreligião”

Once we have the psychoanalytic verification of a general artificialism working in the processes of the “Haver” and as the functioning mode of the persons, we intend to place the question of religion under this perspective. A question which, today, spans explicitly or implicitly every type of knowledge (Magno [2002]: 26), despite the illuminist pretension of secular western rationalism.

The idioformations – which, as we learned, are the formations that carry the “revirão” – “necessarily produce language, necessarily produce God” (id., p. 27). The “God hypothesis” is mandatory¹⁴ because they suffer directly the pressure that comes from the place of in-differentiation of the formations of the “Haver”. To understand what this pressure is about, we will employ the concept of “Haver” as the matrix for considerations on artificialism and religion. Such employment implies in a conceptual device different from the usual reflection methods, those of traditional Western philosophy, which approach everything under the perspective of Being, that is, those methods that invest in the description of phenomena only with discursive resources.

“Haver” is distinguished from Being and is, first and foremost, an “experience” (Magno [2006]: 108). The new psychoanalysis regards this experience as common to each and everyone: each person has the experience of “haver” here and now, of being sentenced to “haver” and that there is no way out of this immediate fact of “haver”. It is an experience of direct contact with the “Haver”, whose entire expression and impact is not possible through the symbolic devices (languages, speech) used in the reflections upon Being. But besides this experience of presence, of “haver” here and

¹³ As read on the first page of *O Globo* newspaper on May 11th, 2010: “Artificial life created”, followed by the caption: “Synthetic Genome generates a new form of organism and changes biology”.

¹⁴ “The hypothesis of the divine indefectibly inhabits, even if through denial” – [Nietzsche’s ‘God is dead’, for example] –, “the minds of all those who are affected by Revirão” (Magno [1996]: 183).

absolutely alone, not knowing why – which is what each person calls “I” –, there is the experience that there are things, formations.

The thought about these two positions of the experience of “Haver” – of the sheer presence of the “I”, and of the formations – derives from the concept of Drive (*Trieb*), which Freud ([1920]) called “death drive”. He called it that to describe what he detected in organic and mental lives as a compulsive and repetitive pressure that tends to reduce to zero any emerging excitation¹⁵. Today, especially after the developments in thermodynamics, the researches on supersymmetry, etc., it is no longer necessary to associate the drive with some “death”, as Freud intended, because it is possible to think that this repetitive compulsion is subject to the pressure of an ubiquitous, permanent and constant movement, whose ultimate goal is its own extinction as a movement.

To express this movement directed to an absolute extinction of everything, the new psychoanalysis enunciates a general Law for the Haver’s movement: “Haver (A) desire of non-Haver (Ã)”, which is formulated as: $A \rightarrow \tilde{A}$. We can notice that this Law claims that there is only the desire of “non-Haver”, and not of “Haver”, discarding any other definition for “life” than *resistance* to the Haver’s movement. This movement is, as a matter of fact, unfeasible, for there is no way to take it to an end, that is, effectively no longer “haver” and simultaneously keep desiring “non-Haver”. This fact leaves an only option of getting to a maximum point of intensification, of exasperation, of not being able to “non-Haver”, and revolving to “inside” itself due to the lack of a way out (there is not a “non-Haver”, as the very name says). It is the option of turning around the senses of its polarizations, of remaining in this constant impulse to search for the “non-Haver”, not getting there, revolving “inside” again...

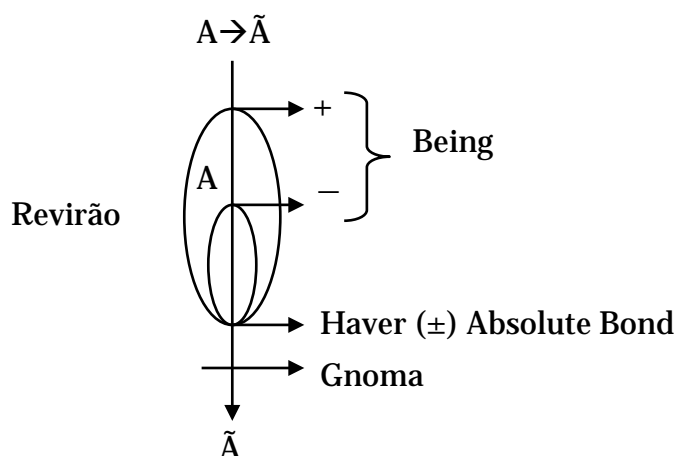
We can generate a scheme of these operations using the graphic representation of the longitudinal path on a Moebius strip. As we know, there is in this strip a continuous passage from side to side¹⁶:

¹⁵ Freud (1920) identifies this tendency while analyzing what happens in the patient-doctor transference, in traumatic dreams of neurotic war veterans and in children’s plays.

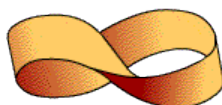
¹⁶ On the Moebius strip, a line drawn starting from the seam down the middle will meet back at the seam but at the “other side”:



- longitudinal path -



The scheme depicts the Haver (A) as a plan of immanence of the formations, whose movement is directed (\downarrow) to a transcendent which is not there (\tilde{A}). It is a transcendence which, due to its inexistence, ends up suspending the opposites (+/-) in a point of *in-differentiation* (\pm), called “bifid point”, which is the extreme point of “Haver” as an unspeakable experience in the realm of Being, that is, as an “experience of ‘haver’ without discourse” (Magno [2006]: 108). An *absolute bond* – and therefore without relation to or dependence on the formations and their contents – can be conceived as a real link of all *persons* (not between each other, but) with this in-differentiating place that everyone has experienced at least once and which is, as we mentioned, where the only difference that cannot be eliminated – the one between “Haver” and “non-Haver” (A/ \tilde{A}) – is intensified and exasperated.



Once there is this passage, the very idea of “side” is suspended (the Moebius strip only has one side). If continued the line will meet the starting point and will be double the length of the original strip. This single continuous curve demonstrates that the Moebius strip also has only one boundary.

Reviewing the theoretical points mentioned above, we have the Drive axiom expressed in the Law “Haver desire of non-Haver”, which is the starting point to state that: (a) the “Haver” functions as an endless “revirão”, for there is no “non-Haver”, and (b) the “Haver” is defined as everything that occurs beneath the place where the ultimate difference between the “Haver” and the “non-Haver” is exasperated. This place is indicated as *Gnoma* in the scheme above.

5. Pedophilia and the media

Articulating the conception of “Haver” with what has been said about the “revirão” as an operation where a continuing passage between opposites is available, we can proceed to a few observations over some events that involve religion and its repercussion in the media. So if we accept that (a) everything there is, the “Haver”, is guided by a general artificialism (spontaneous and industrial), and (b) that the “revirão” is the functioning way of the “Haver”, we can use these two new tools to sketch the beginning of a case study.

We shall then return to a topic approached in other opportunities (Silveira Jr., 2002, 2006 e 2007; Alonso, 2009), but whose manifestations over the past one year, display aspects that had not been shown with due clarity. We shall focus on three articles published on the Brazilian newspaper *O Globo* on the 3rd, the 5th and the 6th of May, 2010. On the first, the journalist Carlos Alberto di Franco, writing about *The crisis in journalism*, says:

(...) Part of the media defined the [sexual] abuses [in the Church] with a clearly mistaken expression: “Epidemic pedophilia”. A serene examination would show without a doubt that the number of delicts is a lot smaller among catholic priests than in any other community. (...) Along several decades, only one hundred high priests were denounced in Italy, while six thousand teachers were judged and sentenced for the same delict. In Germany, since 1995, there have been 210 thousand abuse reports. Why do we care only about the 300 reports against the Church? As I wrote in another article, it is a selective scandal. (...) The poor quality of the coverage of pedophilia cases in the Church is the tip of the iceberg of something more

critical. There is no printed media crisis, but there is a crucial crisis in the making of journalism...

Two days later, we read: *Archbishop claims: 'Current society is pedophile'*. Under the title, the caption: *To dean Dadeus Grings, abuse reports are more frequent among doctors and teachers than priests*. The context is the 48th General Assembly of the National Confederation of the Bishops of Brazil (CNBB):

– The current society is pedophile, that's the problem. So people easily fall into it. And it is a good sign to denounce that – he said.

Dean Dadeus, 73 years old, criticized the sexual liberation for its 'generating behavior disorders'. To him, just as the homosexual community conquered space and civil rights, the same could happen with pedophiles.

– When sexuality is made banal, of course it is going to hit every case. Homosexuality is a case. In formerly days people did not talk about homosexuality. And it was discriminated. When they start saying that they have rights, the right to manifest in public, soon they will find the rights of the pedophiles – he said.

The archbishop was designated by CNBB to give the first press conference with three other bishops. (...)

Next day, it is published that, according to dean Orani Tempesta, spokesperson of the 48th CNBB's General Assembly, "CNBB unauthorizes the bishop's statement about pedophilia".

However, as in the archbishop's line, [CNBB] tried to share with the society the responsibility for sexual abuse practiced by religious leaders.

– We don't share the idea of accusing anyone, but of course it (the Church) suffers with the reality of the world, of today's society itself – said dean Orani (...)

We will attempt to follow the trajectory of the three articles with the idea that the movement of expression of the formations runs inevitably along a process which, as it develops, wears out its oppositions until a point where they fade away. This is inevitable, it is part of the dynamic of the movement of expression and does not depend on the previous interests of those involved in the situation.

From the first article, we have a turnover in how the theme has been treated by the media. If the Church was emphasized as the villain up to that point, a universe where it is presented as a minor issue was revealed. For that, however, it was necessary to bring the theme outside the walls of the Church, take a step not only in the sense of comparing the weight that was bestowed upon the clergy, but, above all, of exposing the issue of pedophilia and its consequences more widely.

On the second article, the positions are crossed. From accused, the Church becomes the accuser: “the society is pedophile”. Since this statement cannot be sustained beyond a certain point – or else it has to be admitted that sinning is general and salvation impossible –, it quickly casts a threat that the pedophiles, as well as homosexuals, may conquer “more space and more rights”. Here we have the threat of the horror that the idea of such a fact would represent. Pro-homosexual groups immediately manifested against that association with pedophilia. Therefore, another group of social actors is included in the game between the formations.

The third article unauthorizes the archbishop’s statements. It was made clear, within one day, that they could turn against the Church with even more force. As we have said, the formations’ expressions cannot stop the development of the oppositions reaching a point where its senses are mixed, its distinctions are faded, and as a consequence it is necessary to deal with a reconfigured situation, to which other senses have been added. Since such senses redistribute the weight bestowed upon the formations, on the one side there is a possibility – it is only a possibility, it is not mandatory – to recognize and collect elements which, because they were not available before, prevented a wider understanding of the situation. But on the other hand, reactively, bigger investment may occur to keep an early defensive attitude, as seen on the third article, where there is an explicit use of the argument of sharing the “guilt” that was centered upon the clergy. Whatever the direction taken, the situation is evidently transformed and this transformation will have an effect in its future developments.

As for the objectives of the present paper, we may advance that such transformation can be followed through the ways that pedophilia – both as a general issue and as a practice related to the clergy – started to be expressed in the Brazilian media after the sequence of the three articles we have mapped. This is a hypothesis to

be pursued from now on. Here, we restrict the subject to the moment of passage from a situation where the media approach is questioned by the media itself, which gives the clergy the chance to change from accused to accuser, resulting in the distribution of the pedophilia situation to society in general. Such distribution does not imply that this position of accuser can be sustained, but that accusers and media, admitting to it or not, are both deeply involved in the situation.

* * *

As a conclusion, we expect to have briefly indicated that the established religions will more and more be faced with the task of bearing with the contents they used to fill the place of the Gnoma (cf. item 5 above) in order to build their dogma and to demand obligations. It is an impossible, expensive and even useless task, for those contents are only vicars and unable to cumulate the radical emptiness of this place. Our proposition here goes the other way. Its direction is: to assume this place as impossible to fulfill; to regard it artificially, that is, to regard any content as relative and temporary (cf. items 1 and 2); to recognize that the “Haver” is exasperated by the absolute impossibility to become “non-Haver”, impossibility that makes the “God hypothesis” necessary as an artificial means to deal with such exasperation (item 4); and to regard the “revirão” as the functioning way of the “Haver” and persons (item 3).

We assume that these are more suitable proposals to understand the dynamic of flows and transformations that characterize our current times, which cannot be restricted to its previous political, sociological or religious contents, no matter how efficient and tranquilizing they seemed to be.

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