

DOSSIER ON SOCIOLOGY OF VIOLENCE PRESENTATION

What does the term violence mean? Looking up in the dictionary we can see that the word has many definitions, although the majority of them is related to the “action or effect of coercing, employing physical force (against someone or something) or moral intimidation against somebody. A violent act. Cruelty. Force”. All those definitions have a negative connotation. However, there is a fundamental question: if violence is used to prevent a violent or illegal act then it could be seen as legit. This motif is what made the author formulate the important concept of legitimate monopoly of violence, which, for Max Weber (1991[1922]), would be concentrated in the State and a condition to hinder or repress illegal forms of violence, being them disperse or having groups or organizations as origin. In this sense violence would not be negative, but positive and necessary to the process of social protection.

Norbert Elias (1993[1939]) uses this line of argument to talk about monopoly of violence by the State, which would allow pacification of social space as well as making internalization of self control by individuals possible. In his theory of civilizatory processes, Elias (1993[1939], page 205) states that

Education of self control, either called ‘reason’, ‘consciousness’, ‘ego’ or ‘superego’ is the resulting moderation of the wildest impulses or emotions, in short, the civilization of the young human being, never an entirely painless process, always leaving scars.

Still referring to internalization of values, or in its broader sense culture, Emile Durkheim (1978[1985]) highlights that the formation of the social being would happen, according to her theory, through coercion, what, in the words of the French sociologist, would mean that “it shall be imposed to the person, whether he or she like it or not” (1978[1985], page 88). Durkheim highlights that it is indeed the internalization of the so called categories of understanding, such as time and space, among others, that would form the frame of intelligence and that without them the next steps of the formation of the social being would be impossible.

This preamble intends to show, or make positive, another dimension for the “use of physical force and moral intimidation”. Hereafter we will work with its negative aspect and how it is taken by common sense and the media as well as how it can be observed in the intensive use of the idea of violence by those places of social life.

For the common sense, as well as for the learned common sense (BOURDIEU, 1989, Page 44), the term violence would have a relation, like an immediate affinity, to the feeling and perception of fear. Actually, the investigation of fear drives us mostly to the fear of violence, whose biggest evil would be represented by death. That is, the prediction of something bad to be perpetrated by the “use of physical force or moral intimidation”, which can also be taken under the aspect of unpredictability, understood as the possibility of breaking up the routine and suspension of fulfillment of expectations, frequently felt as fear or feeling of insecurity, which is basically the same thing.

We could easily say, without any exaggeration, that speaking of violence would mean triggering the fear, in a way that we could say – now pushing it a little – that violence is the name we give our fears, either individualized or the sum of all of them.

Just like the rest, violence and fear are historical, varying and differing according to the historical period under analysis. Like J. Delumenau taught us well (1989), there seem to be some elements that have been repeating themselves in different scenarios from the triggering of three categories: “the outsider”, the supernatural and the crime. As if fear could be personified in supernatural creatures or human beings elevated to the category of moral monsters, just like Foucault (2002) highlighted. Out of the three categories previously listed, we shall use one that has undoubtedly relation to fear – the crime.

It is true that all the acts understood as crime are perceived as violence, and its treatment by Criminal Law targets the punishment, which, theoretically, should be bigger according to the amount of damage and harm caused to the greatest *judicial element*: life. Truth is that acts listed as crimes go through a criminal filter that, just like E. Durkheim said, changes as time passes and it depends on the values expressed in and by the collective consciousness. Like Nils Christie would say (1998, page 13),

Crime does not exist. It is created. First there is the act. Then there is a long process of attributing meaning to those acts. Social distance has a peculiar importance. Distance increases the propensity of attributing to certain acts the meaning of crimes, and to people the simple attribute of criminals.

This is how homosexuality or truancy is no longer considered as criminal offenses and environmental crimes are now considered an offense. In this sense, the discussion of laws that intend to criminalize violence against homosexuals is even more radical and represent a change in the criminalizing flow.

It is important to highlight, anyway, that part of the judicial discussion is in the *must be scope* (WEBER, 1991[1922]) and that the intensity and application of punishment to alleged crimes are submitted to the power alibis represented by power and money.

The argument developed up to this moment should be taken as the basis of building and cutting of the present dossier, which discusses the sociology of violence. The first explanation given to the themes approached i.e. the punishment through incarceration, patterns of Police work and public policies for prevention of violence against young people, although there are other forms of manifestation of violence, luckily largely mentioned these days, such as violence to genre, ethnic, elderly and children, just to name a few. Besides the physical limits of this dossier and the opportunities regarding the offer of articles, we would like to emphasize that the cases approached herein aim at preventing, repressing and punishing criminal violence based on legitimate violence instituted by the State. However, as it is not unheard, the articles now presented also show that the agencies that should have been responsible for fulfilling their promises are also the ones responsible for increasing the general level of violence by using discriminatory actions, both illegal and illegitimate, challenging the State's own legitimacy.

Once again we look at those policies directed to certain classes and social groups, yore defined as dangerous classes: poor people, residents of the outskirts and/or slums

and poor young people, of course. This is the kind of people who should be thought of for a social policy or action but instead are frequently and directly remembered by Police forces, as it is the case of the Pacifying Police Units (UPPs) or the use of a relatively new subterfuge, which is the *policialization* of social policies, that is, attributing responsibilities to agencies aiming at the repression and punishment as if they were social policies, or seen as a first step in the implementation of those policies (BODÊ DE MORAES; KULAITIS, 2013).

Such movement can be associated to the advance, at least formal, of democratic parameters and social inclusion, which has little to do with idealized inclusion and, in a way, accomplished in some countries through the implementation of the Social Welfare State, not applied in Brazil, where, if ever existed, was in a residual way.

The articles composing this dossier have in common, besides the analysis of the referred policies for prevention and repression of crime (whatever that means), the attempt of a moral reform of the poor (MACHADO DA SILVA, 2008).

The article written by Luis Antônio Bogo Chies, named ***The Penitentiary Matter: epistemological obstacles and complexity***, discusses an ancient way of moral reform of the poor: the punishment through incarceration. The author highlights his intention to focus his reflection on epistemological, methodological and paradigmatic aspects in order to achieve the complexity that the Penitentiary Matter requires. Thus, the resumption of criticism to the “re philosophy” (resocializing, reeducational, readaptive, etc) is associated to a canny articulation between cultural permanence and the technical discourse which lead to the trap of a good prison, whose analysis intends to deconstruct.

In **Challenges of Police reform in Brazil**, Luiz Antônio Francisco de Souza and Thais Battibugli discuss how the several police forces, especially the Military Police, still resist or react to any attempt of institutional reform, remaining as archaic institutions strongly impacted on the construction of a new pattern for police work and public safety, at the same time using violent practices and relations towards the poor population residing in the outskirts. The authors argue that only “demilitarization, transparency and breach of institutional isolation” will enable an effective change. It is relevant to ask if it is not about something larger than a reform may offer, or a re-foundation of the police force, using a term from Luis Eduardo Soares (2014).

Dinaldo Almendra, in his article **The UPPs, the Elite and the Press: militarization and consumption in the process of “pacification” in Rio**, based on a real case, i.e. the implementation of Pacifying Police Units (UPPs) in Rio de Janeiro, shows how this experience allows a ramification of the Police pattern described in the previous article written by Souza e Battibugli, in an attempt to develop a proximity police work, highlighting the role of the media in the legitimization of the process. The author emphasizes that the process intends to “intervene and reorganize parameters of civility and public order fully accepted by the elites” inside the territories of poverty, a model case of policialization and militarization of social policies that intensified segregation and stigmatization of that population.

The fourth article, written by Carlos Henrique Aguiar Serra and Thiago Rodrigues, is named **Rule of Law and Punishment: the logic of war in Rio de Janeiro**, presents the process in which Criminal Law is triggered (as we know it should be a *ultima ratio*)

for the management of the poor population, somehow, transformed into an enemy to be eliminated. Therefore, it completes previous analysis and allows them to be articulated inside the criminal justice system. The system of criminal justice, composed of the penitentiary system, the police forces, judiciary system and the Public Ministry, acts on the service of a true State of Exception, whose target is the poor population.

Rodrigo Gusso's article analyzes a model case of policialization of public policies. Named **Lost youth? The police process of youth policies through PRONASCI (National Program of Public Security and Citizenship)**, the article focuses on PROTEJO, Program for Protection of Young People in Vulnerable Territory, a part of PRONASCI that deals with young people, using one of the most ambiguous concepts of state ideology, the vulnerability (See MACHADO DA SILVA, 2008, pages 50 on). The text shows how youth is taken as a limit case between vulnerability and dangerousness, the two sides of the coin, once the vulnerable youth, once again poor people living in the outskirts could oscillate from one extreme to another and that the state intervention would try to prevent such movement.

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