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RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AND THE LOGIC OF WEAK THINKING:
BETWEEN R. GIRARD AND G. VATTIMO

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Abstract: Contemporary religious terrorism propels in the forefront of philosophical, sociological, anthropological and political discussions and analysis the issue of religious violence. The violence belongs to the nature itself of religion? If so, what mechanisms can be activated to reduce violence? How to reconcile Christianity's central idea – the love of our neighbor – with the sacred violence thesis? How can the idea of religious violence be reconciled with the idea of religious love? Weak thinking, that is the logic of a weak thinking may be a solution? We try to answer to such questions by appealing to the debate of ideas offered by the French anthropologist René Girard and the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo.

Key Words: religious violence; logic of identity; weak thinking; weak identity; mereology; holology; holomery.

From the idea of religious sacrifice to the weak thinking

In his famous work, *Violence and Sacred*¹, René Girard points out from the beginning that the term of religious sacrifice is ambivalent. On the one hand, the sacrifice expresses a "very holy thing", and on the other hand, it expresses a crime, a criminal violence. We move in this case literally in a circle: it is a criminal act to kill the victim because she is sacred, but the victim would not be sacred if she was not killed!² Can sacrifice and murder be substituted? If so, it means that the sacrifice possesses a mystery which yesterday and today humanisms try to hide. The anthropologist René Girard also calls recent studies about the physiological mechanisms of violence, studies which show that these mechanisms vary slightly from person to person and from one culture to another. But both in the animal world and in the human world the desire for violence exists. This may be easily triggered but hardly extinguished. Any unsatisfied violence is looking for an exchange victim. Starting from here, Girard believes that we can consider that the sacrifice of animals (as exchange victims) has the aim of diverting violence from beings who should be protected. And the victims are usually chosen from the milder animals, more innocent and more valuable by their utility. Thus it can be concluded that sacrificial substitution is aimed to deceive violence³, but it implies a certain ignorance. Jacob from *Genesis*, for example, as Ulysses in the *Odyssey*, has a certain cunning manipulation of sacrificial violence, but there is also some ignorance in the blind Isaac, respectively in the Cyclops.

Since the sacrificial operation requires a certain ignorance, it results also that faithful people are ignorant, because they know not the role of violence. After all, "the sacrifice protects the whole community of its own violence, diverting it to the victims who are outside them"⁴. There is therefore a sacrificial efficacy, because it, the sacrifice, restores community harmony, helping to strengthen social unity. Although the religion is aimed at calming violence, in fact the violence and the sacred can not be separated. Moreover, the sacrificial operation has a collective character, all members of community must participate in it, that is, there must be a unanimously violence. Under these conditions, how should a religious thinking present itself? It can not be shown but in relation to violence. And today violence has become extremely atrocious, considering the technological arming. For the first time, said René Girard, one must choose explicitly or even scientifically between total destruction or total renunciation of violence.

Can religion help us in these circumstances? The answer is affirmative if we believe that religions are not necessarily violent by their own nature, but that religion is more a science of human violence⁵. Especially by Christianity, by the revelation that the victims are innocent, one is gradually aware of the fact that people have assumed the role of persecutors. If we judge things from the anthropological perspective

proposed by Girard, then one can believe that through Christianity the man is released by "scapegoats", because he realizes that the victims are innocent, which was not the case in previous religions. But this is only one side of things, considers Girard, it is the creative and liberating Christianity. There is place – and this is the other side – for the negative, violent and destructive creativity.

Religious violence should not be confused with aggression, says Girard. Violence is inherent in social dynamics, because man is competitive. On the other hand, people are "mimetic", desire the same things. Because of these deep factors (competition and mimesis), society tends toward a potentially endless internal conflict.⁶ In myths and in the previous religions of Christianity, this internal conflict is settled by sacrificial operation, where the victim is always guilty. In Christianity the victim is innocent, but is condemned, however, by the mimetic crowd. So, with Christianity we are entering a new phase of human history, which we can call "modern" phase in Girard's opinion.

Gianni Vattimo agrees with Girard's premises, confessing that the readings of Girard and Heidegger's works marked him deeply. He says that "Girard allowed me to understand the essence of any historic, progressive Christianity and modernity"⁷. But for Vattimo, the Christian God himself is subject to becoming, God becomes "weak". And the history of Christianity is a history of "dissolution of elements of natural violence".⁸ Even if, in their tradition, Christians have set violent standards, these constraints and violent norms were largely secular. Secularization – Vattimo believes – is the effective development of Christianity as a non-sacrificial religion. Therefore secularization should be viewed positively because it does not mean the abandoning of sacred, but the opening of religion to an existence in which love takes the place of discipline.

But how far can the dynamism of the Christian revelation go, asks Vattimo? How far can Christianity bring on the dissolution of violence? Since Catholic traditionalism does not allow abortion and it says that one can not divorce and can not do experiments on embryos, etc., this does not show that violence persists? If Girard and Vattimo agree with assumptions noted above, by their answers to these questions are distanced from each other, proving themselves, in the end, supporters of different methodologies for understanding and explanation. Vattimo chooses the logic of progressive weakening of the violence, going at limit, to eliminate it. For the Italian philosopher, according to contemporary religious violence increase (associated to religious terrorism), the principle of equality (always invoked in conflict) should be favored by the principle of reducing violence. And in terms of Christianity, Vattimo proposes also historicization for the content of sacred texts, so that these texts be released by forms of persecution. At limit, the acceptance of a "weak faith" can assume – in a post-modern world – a "Christianity without Christianity".

In such a "logic of weakening" one can even get to the denial of the fundamentals. Vattimo is proposing to contemporary thought and ontology the metaphor "weak thought" (*pensiero debole*). He admits it's a deliberately metaphor and that is why he does not wish to specify, to trace the precise contours, but provide only an indication that strong rationality must give back. The post-modern age makes possible the dissolution of rationality and makes possible a "weak thinking" that is in line with religious experience. In the tradition of Nietzsche and Heidegger one can claim that being can not be "fundamental", but "interpretation" (after the famous Nietzschean idea that there are no facts, only interpretations), which means, says Vattimo, that one should not think any longer in terms of "foundation" and that thought must be freed of too strong structures of metaphysics. It leads to a "weak ontology", the conversion of truth into interpretation, in rhetoric and a "weak thinking", which is not longer considered sovereign.⁹

As Girard points, the main religious theme of Vattimo's meditation is the so called divine Kenosis, that is the "weak part" of God. Therefore for Vattimo the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God is just an announcement of an ontology of weakening. In these conditions the very purpose of hermeneutics is to weaken the violent onto-metaphysics structures. The adoption by the Christian Church of a strong ontology and of an objective truth, was only a historical strategy, says Vattimo, because they have no theoretical justification. The biblical text – says Vattimo – is not of a geometric, or cosmological, or anthropological type, but contains a different message, a message dissolving the authoritarian and objective structures. For example, if we read the biblical text in terms of "we believe that Christ is resurrected, as we read in the Bible", then our reading is of an authoritarian type. Biblical message, Vattimo believes, is to dissolve objectifying claims, so that it becomes more evident in Paul's words: "O death, where is your victory?"

It may, however, simply cancel any foundationalist action? Must we interpret Vattimo's ideas as an expression of an antifoundationalist program? "Vattimo's work is often described as antifoundationalist since some of his statements make us think that. Perhaps a more promising label for Vattimo and similar thinkers is post foundationalist ... What Vattimo's logic shows is that we can enhance the moral standing of democracy by decisively detaching its practices and institutions from historical artifacts of political violence".¹⁰ In fact, Vattimo himself emphasizes that in religion always remain traces, that we are forever dealing with re-comings, because what seems at a time forgotten or repressed re-returns as if after a long convalescence, or weakened, but never canceled. "In religion – says Vattimo – something that we had thought irrevocably forgotten is made present again, a dormant trace is reawakened, a wound re-opened, the repressed returns and what we took to be an *Überwindung* (overcoming, realization and thus a setting aside) is

no more than a *Verwindung*, a long convalescence that has once again to come to terms with the indelebile trace of its sickness".¹¹

Learning well his lesson by Heidegger, Vattimo uses ambivalent German terms, in line with the religious ambivalence of sacrifice, for the term *Überwindung* signifies both victory and defeat, (as victory is considered the Christian recognition of sacrificial victim's innocence), but also an overcome (as a verb, *überwinden's* meaning is the action to overcome it), a ruling (including of one's self). Naturally, *Überwindung* can tell more than *Verwindung*, the latter term emphasizing forgetting and healing, although it has also the meaning of torsion, a torsion which suggests that that something which was forgot does not disappear, but returns under other form. That is, the victory and the overcoming from *Überwindung* is a first perception, in fact this "overcoming" is not more than a "forgetting" for the moment (*Verwindung*), and finally a return. Heidegger acted in the same way when, for a past that does not disappear, he did not use the normal term *Vergangenheit*, but that of *Gewesen*, something that was, but this "was" has the quality of persistence (because *Wesen's* meaning is not only being, but also essence, what persists).

After these clarifications, we can say that Vattimo is approaching again to a certain extent Girard's position. Only to a certain extent, because if for Girard the foundationalist approach always remains valid, for Vattimo, however, such an approach must be weakened and constantly exceeded, even if it comes back, and this process remains open. If for Vattimo "God is relativist" because He also becomes, becoming even "weak", for Girard relativism is not accepted. Girard believes that behind the many ways to encode social cohabitation (= relativism), there is always an unit, because the various ways mentioned have a common purpose: the prevention of conflicts.

These different positions are full of consequences. One is that of limits. Admitting relativism, Vattimo considers that the process of weakening of violence is infinitely open, has no limits. For Vattimo, the Christianity posits the idea of human nature without limits, because the increase of love has no boundaries. We must not believe in laws of nature, within limits, because "Jesus came to tell you that *nothing* is impossible",¹² emphasizes Vattimo. That is, one must accept a "consuming dynamics" of Christianity, a boundless love forward. In this case ethics (typical example of the need for limits) should not be more than the principle of love plus traffic rules (they must operate out of love for each other). In turn, Girard believes that Vattimo is too optimistic. Christianity – says Girard – may be open to love, but also may be open to high violence. Then, considers Girard, Vattimo is indebted to the meaning given by Max Weber to secularization, but we need a better theory of this phenomenon, because Weber did not go only halfway up the discovery of this paradoxical process.¹³ We can accept that there is an entropy of sacrifice and violence, secularization signifying the end of sacrifices. But why not see that in the

contemporary world, although there is a concern for the victims that hasn't existed in any other civilization before, we assist, paradoxically, at a stage where people are persecuted and killed more than ever? That is why, says Girard, we need limits, we need ethics!

Another major implication of the debate Girard – Vattimo is the logic of religion. What logic in a broad sense, so as methodology also, subsist to the two positions? This issue is of particular interest to us hereinafter. It is especially important as the two analysts of religion and religious violence do not explicitly address it or in their terms, but rather through metaphors. We assume the task in the following to try to emphasize the underlying logic of a "weak thinking", as the aim of the debate outlined so far counts in Vattimo's project, which considers itself a breakthrough.

The weak thought and the logic of weak identity

As we have seen since the beginning, for Girard religious thinking is to think the destiny of the city according to the violence. This hypothesis was confirmed by the study of ancient myths and religions, but the theory can be extended – Girard believes – to the Judeo-Christian direction and all cultures. In other words, his theory becomes a global theory, not an average theory. Girard is aware that his theory is paradoxical, because it "claims to be based on empirical facts of nature which is not empirically verifiable".¹⁴ These facts are accessible only through texts, but texts often provide indirect evidence and not infrequently distorted one. Isn't it the same with the theory of the evolution of living beings? Here only studying fossils are studied and no isolated anatomical fact can lead us to the concept of evolution. Here no direct empirical observations or empirical verification can take place.

So, Girard does not hesitate to compare his theory with that of evolution. As the theory of evolution is accepted as a science, so should the theory of religious violence. Girard admits an evolution of violence, its entropy, but never its final cancellation. The way of religious violence is circular, perhaps after a spiral conformation. In Girard's words: "We can not escape the circle. The tendency to remove the sacred, to eliminate it completely, prepares the return of the sacred in silence, in a form not transcendent, but immanent, in the form of violence and of knowledge of violence ... Any thinking describes a circle around the founding violence ...".¹⁵

The circle model imply a structure which closes, a repetitive structure, which means the need for limits and laws. If he agreed with Girard's theory assumptions, Vattimo does not longer agree with the underlying model of this theory, considering that circle model is not appropriate. The circle should be broken and must be a model of linear development, openness to infinity. Christianity, says Vattimo, requires us it because in the incarnation process and then by that of secularization, it

proves that evolution is not circular, but linear, without limits and structures. It is true true, the same Vattimo, as we have seen, accepts that the nucleus of religious violence always comes, but it must be weakened permanently, religious thought itself becoming a weak thought. This process involves in the logical register, to clarify the situation of identity of the founding act of violence in religion. What kind of identity we can talk of in the solution offered by Vattimo? About a weak identity, of course, but what does it mean and how does it work? Vattimo does not seem interested in the logical situation behind of weak thought, but exegesis must not bypass this. Furthermore, we believe that clarification of this issue could lead to a proper understanding of the metaphor "weak thought".

Vattimo's position is more important from a philosophical point of view than that of Girard (which, moreover, does not want to theorize the philosophical, but is interested only in the anthropological register), because he feels that the great philosophy can occur only in relation to the feeling of a big break. Thus Vattimo agrees with Girard when he emphasizes the break between mythologies and previous religions and Christianity, when giving up "scapegoats". But if the break is for Girard just that finding on an anthropological level, for Vattimo it takes this special connotation, that the circle of violence is broken and that we enter in a new world, a world with love without limits. Therefore, rupture is a huge advantage and awaiting philosophical problem-solving.

The philosophical core of the problem-solving which engages Vattimo is the idea of identity of violence. But there are two fundamental aspects of the problem of identity: synchronous identity and diachronic identity.¹⁶ If the first issue is simply aimed at the same time temporal identity, the second issue is extremely complicated, because time requires ongoing identity. The principle of identity has remained since ancient times to this day a milestone for any philosophical and scientific approach.¹⁷ Aristotle offers a developed theory of identity. In Bochenski's¹⁸ opinion, the theory of Aristotle would be more profound than that of Russell in *Principia Mathematica*.

However, Aristotle's later philosophy never ceased to take again and again the analysis of the relationship of identity, always dissatisfied with the solutions. In the logical meaning of the word the notion of identity seems simple and obvious, and the identity principle seems even trivial.¹⁹ In fact, recognizes Béziau, identity is something complex, mysterious and unformulated. For Wittgenstein the problem has no solution, because to say that something is identical with itself is to say nothing, and to say that two different things are identical is nonsense. It may be that identity in difference, may be a logical absurdity, is trying Béziau to comment, but it is obvious that all of our conceptualizing capacity is precisely to identify different things. Quine does not agree with Wittgenstein, highlighting, after Frege, that there is a non-trivial identity, as in cases where two

names, two signs or two different expressions designate the same object, as in Frege's two different meanings which can have the same reference. It is true, Quine also speaks of indeterminacy of translation, which means that we can have a maximum relative identity, never absolute.

For Romanian philosophy, Lucian Blaga offers a nuanced analysis of the principle of identity. Relying on a solid knowledge of the history of philosophy and science, the Romanian philosopher observes that the principle of identity was always used to rationalize the experience. But using a "pure identity" is almost impossible because it would cancel existential diversity and becoming in time. Testimony to this is Eleatic philosophy. But the identity can not be waived. So different variants of it were stated, and Blaga established the following: a) the attenuated identity, which has two species: partial identity, as work on the report type – species, and elastic identity, that identity that allows the purchase of new notes content of the concept, b) identity as mathematical equality, so a quantitative or structural equality, c) the contradictory identity, specific to dialectical thinking.²⁰

For the purpose of our study, the most important variable is that of *attenuated identity*, with its two subspecies. This is because in the line of partial identity we arrive at the distributive conjunction, and in the line of elastic identity we arrive at the collective conjunction. On another occasion I found that dividing concepts in "distributive" (division) and "collective" is in solidarity with the distinction, in the operator of conjunction, between distributive conjunctions and collective conjunctions. The two types of conjunctions can help to clarify some aspects of multiple efforts to rationalizing of experience.

Functionality in the knowledge of partial identity is found in the classic report type – species and involves a conjunction of such distribution. For D.D. Rosca, for example, the instinct of conservation requires us the principle of identity. The human knowledge advances from identical to identical (as Meyerson observed), although identical is still not pure. Generally speaking, says D.D. Rosca, "all our knowledge could be set by following the grammatical scheme: X phenomenon is only in this or that aspect Y phenomenon".²¹ And Lucian Blaga, in turn, notes that through the partial identity procedure one includes such species in the genre, thus subordinating notions in the same series.

Interesting to note is that through partial identity, which includes distributive conjunction behind it, there is a distribution of ontological entity or notes of concepts (in the logical plan) as a single feature, after a single dimension. Thus the distributive conjunction "and - and" acts as a *one-dimensional indicator*. For example, human individuals A, B, C, as different from each other by various characteristics (height, age, gender, etc.), are included in the species "man" after the same characteristics (to be "rational beings"). Identity principle works here quite rigid and gives us reliable knowledge, because the distributive conjunction allows a

translation of characteristics from time to time in advance of knowledge. This is the case of Girard's theorizing about the identity of religious violence and his belief that the theory he proposes is a scientific one. Girard agrees that religious violence can know the different forms on the axis of time, but these are subject to the partial identity. All forms of religious violence are subject to the inclusive conjunction and to the extensive axiom.

A formal treatment of these cases we believe makes things clearer. According to Girard's theory, religious violence is found in every society in various forms, some with a higher degree of violence, others with a lower degree, being "weak". But all mean violence, all have something in common, even if the common part is not total but partial. Say, for example, that sometimes sacrificial violence prevails (marked with V1 as a predicate for the class of phenomena of religious violence), sometimes confessional violence (marked with V2), and religious terrorist violence in other situations (marked with V3). We have such a class of predicates of religious violence consisted of {V1, V2, V3}, and if you take a partial temporal identity, we know that any particular form (say x) of V1 implies V2 and also V3. The mechanism of partial identity will then work as follows:

$$(\forall x)(V_1x \rightarrow V_2x) \text{ and}$$

$$(\forall x)(V_1x \rightarrow V_3x)$$

As it is known, the identity is a form of equivalence, and the equivalence relation has the properties of reflexivity, transitivity and symmetry. Such a relationship is too strong, it allows the operation of substitution. But then we have a complete identity, which is not the case, calling Girard's theory of partial identity. And in general, in any empirical scientific approach one can not call a complete identity, but a partial one. But we must be aware that partial identity supposes the comparison operation, and in the comparative assessment appear items that are not interchangeable. This means that the property of symmetry of equivalence should be removed. This will establish an order relation, order relation (as opposed to equivalence) being born by the replacing of symmetry with antisymmetry.²² The antisymmetry is reached through a form of conversion that changes the symmetry only in order of terms, not the relationship.²³ For example, if we have the order relation $\leq$, then the property of antisymmetry can be expressed as follows:²⁴

$$[(x \leq y) \text{ \& } (y \leq x)] \rightarrow (x = y)$$

This highlights the fact that the relationship between the subordination from the order relation $x \leq y$ and the conjunctive equation (by distributive, inclusive type) $x \cap y = x$, is very close, because the

common core of partial identity can only be x . Hence, replacing the x in the relation of order, we have $x \cap y \leq y$. So if we have $x \cap y = x$, then we have $x \leq y$. This means that between the relationship order and the conjunctive equation we have an equivalence:²⁵

$$(x \leq y) \leftrightarrow (x \cap y = x)$$

In other words, the common core of a partial identity allows – because of equivalence reported – to achieve a substitution of elements too.

But different experiences of knowledge, including in the religious sphere, show us that in many cases the distributive conjunction is too low and needs other procedures too. The principle of identity must become a "flexible," says Blaga, and the conjunction operator a "collective". In this case the conjunction "and - and" will play a function of *multidimensional generator*, adding in a unit several different entities or more features. At this point Vattimo's view is different from Girard's. For Vattimo, the evolution of religious violence can encompass not only different elements compared to the previous stage, but even negations of it. Such a negation produces Christianity by postulating love an essential feature, which means that identity of violence can weaken until annihilation.

What are the characteristics of weak identity? Let's admit it, the solution proposed by Vattimo is a challenge for the logic of identity. As you can understand intuitively, the problem of identity on the temporal axis involves the problem of persistence. In its sense of partial identity, the persistence of a core was provided. But in the weak version, which allows denial, the nucleus may be canceled, even if only at limit. Thus, the issue of "persistence" in change leads us into a dilemma: a) the maintain of identity, change; b) the maintain of change, which means denying identity.²⁶

How to avoid the dilemma? In branch a) is claimed to be inferred from the persistence of a thing his invariability in time (for preservation of identity, persistence work that would guarantee invariability). But the persistence concerns a numerical identity (a same), and the invariability concerns the qualitative identity (something that does not change over time), which would mean that the immediate and analytical inference to be made from the numerical identity to the qualitative identity, will fail on the logical plan. If we consider branch b) of dilemma (they kept changing but denied identity), we find the ambiguity with opposite sign, because he claims to extract in an analytical way the numerical distinction from the qualitative variability in temporal become.²⁷ These ambiguities show us in fact that the concept of persistence does not include the concept of invariability, moreover, the two concepts are independent of each other.

Let's return to Vattimo's ideas. The Italian philosopher observes that Christianity produces a rupture in the understanding of religious violence.

However, this rupture has a continuity. Violence occurs, but one is aware that the victim is innocent. Rupture refers to the status of victim, but violence continues. This is a first moment. The second moment is something new, violence is denied and in its place posits love. What about logic now? For Girard the situation is the classic relation type genre-species, and diachronic identity is a partial identity. Vattimo does not agree with this interpretation, for him the pre-Christian religious violence and religious love of Christianity do not fall within the same series, are not in type – species relation, but rather in relation from a whole different compared to other whole different. In this case we do not have a partial identity, but a weak one that gradually decreases and at limit may disappear. For what violence can exist in love? Only the violence which is supposed by self-defense, because the love of our neighbor should not be cancel the love of one's self.

So Vattimo's ideas claim a different logically interpretation than those of Girard. Weak identity should be able to reveal us under what conditions a temporal succession may be a continuation from a whole to another. It's not about type – species relationship, but the relationship between wholes, between wholes and parts. And it's not about substantially whole, but the wholes of values, the logic of values. It is, in Vattimo's theory, about a hermeneutics logic. When talking about wholes, the philosophical tradition has at least two ways of analysis: the *mereological* tradition, initiated by Lesniewski, in which case we have an optical upward because "is based on the parties and claims that any party is part of a whole which, in turn, is part of a whole sequence and so on";²⁸ a *holological* way, a way with opposite direction, being a descendant from whole to parts, then the parties by their parties, this theorizing is initiated by Brentano.

In what Lesniewski's perspective is concerned, it is of a functional emphasis, a *functional mereology*,²⁹ in which case we are witnessing a full integration from part to whole, as in a relationship "one to many", in co-univocal relationship, where we have the properties:

reflexivity: $(\forall x) (\forall y) ((Rxy \vee Ryx) \rightarrow Rxx)$;

asymmetry: $(\forall x) (\forall y) (Rxy \rightarrow \neg Ryx)$;

transitivity $(\forall x) (\forall y) (\forall z) ((Rxy \wedge Ryz) \rightarrow Rxz)$.

Does this type of mereology help us express the weak identity? We believe that the answer is negative, because Lesniewski's mereology is not aimed at weakening the identity transmitted by transitivity, and in any case a cancellation of it, rather it outlines a successive integration and upward for the identity of part in the more inclusive whole. True, it is

possible to consider the idea of mereological supervenience, the idea that a whole manages to persist through the supervenience of a series of collections of parts organized in a certain way: „principles of diachronic unity state that a persisting whole of a certain sort supervenes upon a series of collections of parts arranged in certain ways”.³⁰ But the „... mereological supervenience is no sure guide to diachronic identity”.³¹

Would Brentano's holology be more useful? Husserl appreciated the work of Brentano – *Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis* (On the Origin of moral knowledge) (1889) – is a brilliant one and encouraged him towards a formal axiology.³² Brentano's merit is to have initiated the study of values in terms of part-whole relationship. He distinguishes between sum-whole and product-whole (the latter is called "organic whole" by Moore). For sum-whole is valid law that value is equal to the sum of all its parts, and for product-whole law then the entire amount may differ from the sum of parts. The difference between the two types of wholes is due to connections which link the parties. For sum-whole, these connections are not important, but for product-whole relationships are vital, because the entire value is given precisely by them. Finally, sum-wholes could be considered a "borderline case of organic whole: in this sense, the sum-wholes would be some stiff organic wholes, without interactions between the parties".³³

For the sum-wholes the following three axioms are important:

$$1. G > G + B > B$$

(In words: a whole "good" is preferably to a sum of "good" and "bad", a sum which, in turn, is preferred to a whole "bad"; G is the symbol for "good", B is symbol for "bad", ">" expressed a preference, and "+" expresses the sum). With the indication that the axiom is valid if all G's are interpreted as positive and all B's as negative values.

$$2. G_1 + G_2 > G_1 \text{ (or } G_2)$$

(That is, a whole good – as the sum of G₁ and G₂ – is better than its parts taken separately).

$$3. G_1 > G_2 \wedge \neg \text{pt}(G_2, G_1) \rightarrow \exists G_3 \\ (G_3 \equiv G_2 \wedge \text{pt}(G_3, G_1))$$

(A whole G₁ value is preferable to another whole value G₂, G₂ is not part of G₁, which implies that there is a third whole of G₃ value, equivalent to G₂, and G₃ is part of G₁). This sentence is very strong, points out Roberto Poli, because it tells us "that two wholes in value are comparable in the concerning of the amount of value *only if* these wholes are composed of *the same type of values*".³⁴ It means, in the simplest situation, that G₂ and G₃ are cases of the same species of value.

Let's see the main thesis about organic wholes. As already noted, in their case the relationship between whole and parts changes, their connection is essential. In addition, we have here a framework with three categories: good (G), bad (B) and indifferent (I). Among the most important axioms one can notice:

- (1) $G1 \cdot G2 > G1 + G2$ ($G1$ compound with $G2$ is more than their sum);
- (2) $G1 \cdot I > G1 + I$ ($G1$ compound with I is more than their sum);
- (3) $B1 + B2 > B1 \cdot B2$ (the sum of two bad things is preferable of their compound);
- (4) $B + I > B \cdot I$ (the sum of a bad thing with one indifferent is preferable of their compound).

It's difficult to say whether these axioms are sufficient. Important is the fact that the value of these organic wholes is not exhausted in the value of their parts.³⁵ Can this holological perspective help us more to understand the weak identity? At first glance it would seem so, because, at least with the organic whole, we are witnessing a series of nuances. Accordingly, the compound of whole value may increase the value, one can even cancel or allow switching to other whole. Whole-sum does not help us, because the third axiom claims to have the same type values, and the solution proposed by Vattimo has contrary values (violence – non-violence, hatred – love). But even with organic wholes we do not move forward too much, because in the transitions that occur one can not quite clear grasp the mechanism of identity.

That is why we propose a third solution, one of *holomery* that, as far as I know, has been attempted only by Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica.³⁶ The holomery is an alternative to mereology and holology, since it includes those exceptional parts which succeed in reaching the power of the whole. So it is not primarily or only by a road ascending from the parts to whole (as the mereology proceedings), nor one descending from whole to parts (holology), but a double perspective, both from whole to parts, and conversely, given that the part obtains the power of whole (the holomer) or carries the whole. Thus comes the very "freedom" for the parts, they can multiply without limit, as it happens in the fission process. In fact, even fission is an example of weak identity operation. Before dividing, the nucleus undergoes several successive deformations, the identity is weakened with each deformation. And the result of the division will consist of two or more fragments of comparable masses. This result suggests that identity is transmitted in a very weak form and sometimes is unrecognizable. It is true, the process of fission involves, logically, a paradox: if we denote with a the nucleus before division, and with b and c fragments after splitting the nucleus, different fragments from each other, then we have the paradoxical situation that $a = b$, $a = c$, but $b \neq c$. This means that, in fact, it is not the identity, but a certain continuity, fission can be symmetric, or asymmetric.

What happens in the spirit world? For Constantin Noica, the parties resulting from "fission" of primary unit may be equivalent but not necessarily equipotent, and thus the symmetry is canceled. A holomer has a different potential than the other variety, precisely because it is an exceptional singularity, it rises up to the power, to the potential of the whole. Noica's identity would not be so logical, not substantial (for persistence), but rather *value*, a symbolic sense, as it happens in the cultural and spiritual area, when a particular language (as holomer) is able to express the whole of logos (the part is identical with the whole, as symbolic value). We believe that this scheme of thought fits also for Vattimo's conception. With the establishment of Christianity, the religious violence enters a process of spiritual fission. After this process, in addition to the result of awareness of the innocence of the victim, we have excellent results (an holomer) the establishment of the new value of *love*. But this holomer passes from a whole (the value of sacrificial violence) to another whole entirely different, namely the value of love.

But the paradox of fission always sends us to a general problem: how things persist? Plausible answer seems to be that of a weak identity, an identity degraded, altered (*les objets persistent en perdurant*), as states Contin. Temporal parts persist through degradation, by altering them, but then there is not a strict preservation of identity, but *the unit* of object on the temporal axis. With modern secularization process, like a moment within of Christianity, as proposes Vattimo, the identity of Christian nucleus is very much weakened, but remains a certain continuity.

We will now detail how can the weakness of spiritual-values identity be explained logically. If we consider the direction of the whole $\rightarrow$ part analysis, in the model proposed by Noica subsists an *unilateral identity* in the sense that, in the register of spiritual values, the whole goes all in part (the logos, for exemple, goes all, without diminishing, in a language; the sacrificial religious violence goes completely in Christianity, even if the victim is aware of his innocence). In other words, in the relationship whole $\rightarrow$ part, the identity works in full, keeping the properties of reflexivity, symmetry and transitivity:

reflexivity: $(\forall x) (\forall y) ((Rxy \vee Ryx) \rightarrow Rxx)$;

symmetry: $(\forall x) (\forall y) (Rxy \rightarrow Ryx)$;

transitivity: $(\forall x) (\forall y) (\forall z) ((Rxy \wedge Ryz) \rightarrow Rxz)$.

When we are in the direction of analysis part $\rightarrow$ whole, things change very much, because here dominates the relationship of *unilateral contradiction*. That is the part which results from the deformation of whole (like deformation of the nucleus in the process of fission), will be a contrary of previous whole. This part will be a new whole of value. Vattimo just so says when he notes that with the value of love we go into another whole, which is one opposite to traditional religious violence. This unilateral contradiction (one-sided because it works only

from the direction of the part to the previous whole, and not conversely) will then require the following logical properties:

Irreflexivity : $(\forall x) (\forall y) ((Rxy \vee Ryx) \rightarrow \neg Rxx)$;

Asymmetry : $(\forall x) (\forall y) (Rxy \rightarrow \neg Ryx)$;

Intransitivity : $(\forall x) (\forall y) (\forall z) ((Rxy \wedge Ryz) \rightarrow \neg Rxz)$.

Here we are in a situation as interesting as can be. The holomery allows the transmission of identity on the direction from whole $\rightarrow$ part, and at the same time, a rejection of the old whole on the relationship part $\rightarrow$ whole, an explicitly rejection by the potential of new part which to rise to the power of a new whole. The new whole of value will keep a much weakened identity in relation to the old whole, and at the limit may even cancel that identity. The value of Christian love is a such holomer, which requires a different whole of value than the old whole of religious violence, the identity of violence in the Christian religion must weaken gradually, in Vattimo's vision.

It is necessary now to look at the process as a whole, simultaneously on the relationship whole $\rightarrow$ part and on the relationship part $\rightarrow$ whole. As I said, the logics of partition did not have relations of inclusion, but compenetrations. The parties and the wholes all interact by compenetrations and by potential difference. The old nucleus compenetrates the new parts, and the part which becomes holomer obtains the potential for a new whole. In this process the identity weakens progressively on the temporal axis, because the mediation from the process of compenetrations between the wholes and the parties along religious value tradition does not allow survival of unmodifiable objects. „One cannot ignore – says Vattimo³⁷ – the fact that the sacred texts which mark our religious experience are handed down to us by a tradition, by which I mean also that its mediation does not allow them to survive as unmodifiable objects...”. The weak identity is a hermeneutics identity, and a clear contribution of Vattimo³⁸ to the understanding of this problem is precisely the subtle analysis of the concept of "re-coming", of "re-return" (*Rückkehr*), which may not mean a return to metaphysics or any ecclesiastical doctrine: „the conspicuous thing about Vattimo's contribution is his particular concern with the problem of return < *Rückkehr* > . Clearly 'return' cannot mean a return to metaphysics or to any sort of ecclesiastical doctrine”.

But what happens in the process of establishing of the weak identity in a logical perspective? Taken as a whole, the unilateral manifestation of identity together with the unilateral manifestation of contradiction tells us that the process of compenetrations must combine the reflexivity of whole value with the irreflexivity of part value, the symmetry from the old whole with the asymmetry from the part value which becomes holomer, the transitivity of whole with the intransitivity of new part. These compenetrations lead us then to other logical properties:

non-reflexivity: $(\forall x) (\exists y) ((Rxy \vee Ryx) \wedge \neg Rxx)$;

non-symmetry: $(\forall x) (\exists y) (Rxy \wedge \neg Ryx)$;

non-transitivity: $(\exists x) (\exists y) (\exists z) ((Rxy \wedge Ryz) \wedge \neg Rxz)$.

These could be the logical properties of weak identity, respectively of the holomer of love, as it appears first as a part (in the affirmation of Christianity), but a part with the potential of whole, valued as such when the Christianity successfully imposes itself in history. At the limit, the whole value of love should be able to exceed the whole value of traditional religious violence. Perhaps this message of Vattimo's theorizing is too optimistic, as assessed by Girard, but he seems to be in the logic of the Christian religion.

Notes:

¹René Girard, *Violența și sacrul*, Translated by Sorin Antohi (Bucuresti: Editura Nemira, 1995).

²René Girard, *Violența și sacrul*, 7.

³René Girard, *Violența și sacrul*, 11.

⁴René Girard, *Violența și sacrul*, 14.

⁵Pierpaolo Antonello, "Introducere", in vol. René Girard and Gianni Vattimo, *Adevăr sau credință slabă? Convorbiri despre creștinism și relativism*, Translated by Cornelia Dumitru (Bucuresti: Editura Curtea Veche, 2009), 8.

⁶René Girard and Gianni Vattimo, *Adevăr sau credință slabă? Convorbiri despre creștinism și relativism*, Translated by Cornelia Dumitru (Bucuresti: Editura Curtea Veche, 2009), 26.

⁷René Girard and Gianni Vattimo, 30.

⁸René Girard and Gianni Vattimo, 31.

⁹Gianni Vattimo, *Gândirea slabă*, (Constanța: Editura Pontica, 1998), 23.

¹⁰Jason Royce Lindsey, "Vattimo's Renunciation of Violence", in *Ethic Theory Moral Prac*, Springer, Published online 26 November 2011.

¹¹Gianni Vattimo, "The Trace of the Trace", in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (eds.), *Religion*, (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1998), 79.

¹²René Girard and Gianni Vattimo, 39.

¹³René Girard, *Violența și sacrul*, 337.

¹⁴René Girard, *Violența și sacrul*, 337.

¹⁵René Girard, *Violența și sacrul*, 349.

¹⁶See also James Ladyman, "Ontological, Epistemological, and Methodological Positions", in Theo A. F. Kuipers (ed.), *General Philosophy of Science*, (Elsevier BV, 2007), 312.

¹⁷Ioan Biriș, "Identitatea hermeneutică: de la Lucian Blaga la Constantin Noica », in *Meridian Blaga*, 10, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 2010). See also Ioan Biriș, "On the Logic of Religious Terms", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol. 8, Issue 22 (2009): 53-62.

- ¹⁸ J. M. Bochenski, *Formale Logik*, Dritte Auflage, (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 1970), 107. See also Florea Lucaci, "The Aristotelian Spirit and the Cultural Moulding of the Christian World", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol. 4, Issue 12 (2005): 124-132.
- ¹⁹ Jean-Yves Béziau, "Mystérieuse Identité", in *Le même et l'autre. Identité et différence*, Actes du XXXI^{ème} Congrès International de l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française (A.S.P.L.F.), (Budapest: 2006), 159.
- ²⁰ Lucian Blaga, *Opere*, vol. 8, *Trilogia cunoaşterii*, (Bucureşti: Editura Minerva, 1983).
- ²¹ D. D. Roşca, *Existenţa tragică*, (Bucureşti: Fundaţia pentru literatură şi artă Regele Carol II, 1934), 63.
- ²² Alain Badiou, *Logiques des mondes*, (Paris: Seuil, 2006), 170.
- ²³ Gheorghe Enescu, *Logica simbolică*, (Bucureşti: Editura ştiinţifică, 1971), 167.
- ²⁴ Alain Badiou, 170.
- ²⁵ Alain Badiou, 174.
- ²⁶ Filipe Drapeau Contim, *Qu'est-ce que l'identité*, (Paris :Vrin, 2010), 10-11.
- ²⁷ Filipe Drapeau Contim, 14.
- ²⁸ Roberto Poli, *Între speranţă şi responsabilitate*, Translated by Cornelia Dumitru (Bucureşti: Editura Curtea Veche, 2009), 216.
- ²⁹ We treated these issues in detail in Ioan Biriş, *Totalitate, sistem, holon*, ediţia a doua, (Timişoara: Editura Universităţii de Vest, 2007) (especially chapter „Aspecte logice ale totalităţilor”).
- ³⁰ Dean W. Zimmerman, "Criteria of identity and the „Identity Mystics”, in *Erkenntnis*, 48 (1998): 284.
- ³¹ Nikolaus Wandering, „Masses of stuff and Identity“, in *Erkenntnis*, 48 (1998): 306.
- ³² Roberto Poli, 203 and next, whose ideas are summarized in this paragraph.
- ³³ Roberto Poli, 208.
- ³⁴ Roberto Poli, 217.
- ³⁵ Roberto Poli, 230.
- ³⁶ Constantin Noica, *Scrisori despre logica lui Hermes*, (Bucureşti: Editura Cartea Românească, 1986).
- ³⁷ Gianni Vattimo, "The Trace of the Trace", in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (eds.), *Religion*, 88.
- ³⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Dialogues in Capri", in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (eds.), *Religion*, 207.

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