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The Symbolism of Violence:A Giro-Ricoeurian Reading of Frantz Fanon

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ABSTRACT: For centuries, history of nationshas shown that the recourse to violence has been the sine qua non condition for the establishment of peace, order, progress, expansions, and the like. Violence, no matter its form, is believed to be the means for peace, justice, or unity. On the contrary, this paper shows that violence calls for violence, for it is based on the mimetic desire, which is the principle of reciprocal violence. Basing on Frantz Fanon's description of violence as a liberating tool for decolonisation in Africa, the present reflections borrow theoretical tools from R.N. Girard and P. Ricoeur to show that violence hardly achieves permanent peace, justice, or unity in the human race. This is because its mechanism is rooted in desire for more-having, dominion, pride, cupidity, and arrogance leading to the negation of humanity in others. Any justification for violence constitutes an apparent meaning, which hides a more fundamental desire: the desire for more-being fuller being, that is to say, the plenitude of being. Its condition of possibility is not of material order. It is rather of moral order: the respect of human dignity.

*Keys:*violence, mimetic desire, philosophical hermeneutics, Girard, Ricoeur, symbolic language.

I.   INTRODUCTION

In his book,*The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon (1925 - 1961), a Martinique-born political philosopher and psychiatrist, proposed an anatomy of violence, which characterized colonialism and triggered the decolonization movement. Fanon was moved by the determination with which colonized peoples fought to terminate the brutality of colonists in Africa in general, and, in particular, in Algeria. This book gives some evidence that "colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking, a body endowed with reason. It is a naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence." (Fanon, 2004, p.23) This statement brings in the hypothesis that only violence can end violence for peace sake. Is the following ancient Romans' popular saying right: *Qui vispacem para bellum* (If you want peace, then get ready for war)? Is this an illustration of the Swahili adage which says, *dawaya moto ni moto* (the remedy for violence is another violence)? The first reading of *The Wretched of the Earth* drives to affirm that violence was *in illo tempore* the sine qua non condition for a successful decolonisation of Africa.

It is unfortunately true that violence has a therapeutic effect. History shows how wars put an end to military occupations and annexations. Conquerors were defeated mainly by use of violence. American military intervention in Germany-conquered Europe made possible the end of WWII. British and Spanish settlers of eighteenth century silenced Amerindians by the language of guns. The ex-Yugoslavia conflictwas solved by NATO's military force. In 1991, Americans and their allied restored order in Kuwait by using greater violence than Saddam Hussein's. Apartheid violence was uprooted by the stream of human blood caused by both the ANC fighters and the Whites-led South African government. Since the creation of the United Nations Organization, the world had come to opt for the nonviolent settlement of conflicts. However good is the intention of UNO, there are still so many examples showing the resort to violence in order to stop violence.

This paper intentionally escapes from the theme of colonization and its effects in history of both colonists and former colonized countries. It would rather invite to read the phenomenon of violence as a language. Hypothetically, in the history of nations as well as in that of individuals, violence is not always resorted to for its own sake. Very often, violence is used as an instrument deemed appropriate to convey coercively an intended message. In this sense, violence, be it physical, psychological, spiritual, or juridical, has a texture, whose meaning is not always clear. It has to be sought in the veins of nature and culture. Freud's psychoanalysis had sufficiently -but not completely- revealed the underlying blueprint of violence.

This paper would like to turn to Girard's mimetic theory and Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics in orderrespectively to understand the genetics of violence and decipher violence as a symbolic language inherent to human culture. The stepping-stone of these reflections is Fanon's description of violence and counter-

violence in the context of freedom fighters in the history of colonialism in Africa. Hence, our problem consists of showing how the mimetic desire-based violence is not a mere language but also a symbolic language that Ricoeur's hermeneutics can serve as both a leading and reading grid in the search for existential meaning.

In order to address this problem, this paper will unfold into four major parts. The first part will provide an outskirt of the notion of violence as presented by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The second part will present the mechanics of violence using Girard's theory of mimetic desire. The third will give a roundup of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics, prelude to the interpretation of violence as a symbolic language. Finally, thefourth part will interpretively suggest some philosophical reflections from the symbolic dimension of violence.

1. Violence in Fanon's literature

1.1 Colonisation – decolonisation: the spiral of violence

From the first line of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon has no doubt about the violent character of decolonisation. "Decolonisation, he says, is always a violent event." (Fanon, 2004, p.1) Decolonisation is not only a change of names. In his mind, it is a deep and radical tabula rasa. It is the process of uprooting a type of humankind and rooting another type (Fanon, 2004). Decolonisation is a violent reaction to the violence of colonisation. As such, it is a second wave of violence. It is marked by the confrontation between two antagonistic forces, namely the colonialist and the colonised and the brutal exclusion of the former by the latter. The first wave of violence took place, in Fanon's opinion, during colonisation process. It "was colored by violence and their [colonisers' and colonised peoples'] cohabitation -or rather the exploitation of the colonised by the coloniser- continued at the point of the bayonet and under canon fire." (Fanon, 2004, p.2)

Decolonisation is a process of restoring humanity, for through it the "'thing' colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation" (Fanon, 2004, p. 2). Fanon alleges that the second wave of violence, i.e. decolonisation, is the continuation of the first wave of violence, but this time with reversal strategy. Indeed, colonialism was the violence meant to affirm the nothingness of the colonised before the only humanity of the coloniser. Decolonisation, however, reverses the situation. It expresses the need to affirm, with similar strength, the humanity of the colonised and the 'animality' of the coloniser. That is why Fanon defines, describes, and at the same time sums up decolonisation by resorting to these well-known words: *The last shall be first*.

Fanon contends that decolonisation

> "reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives. For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists. This determination to have the last move up to the front, to have them clamber up (too quickly, say some) the famous echelons of an organized society, can only succeed by resorting to every means, including, of course, violence." (Fanon, 2004, p. 3)

From thence, it becomes possible to perceive that colonisation is violence and decolonisation is a violent counter-violence. In order to succeed, decolonisation has to use the language of colonisation: brutality. Fanon is convinced that decolonisation would not have borne fruit unless it had used violence of the calibre similar to the violence of the first wave. Violence was unavoidable. Colonisation and decolonisation have a circular configuration: it is violence for violence. It is a spiral of violence. For Fanon, the violent counter-violence was necessary. Its necessity is justified by the reality of the first wave of violence. The remedy of violence is nothing but violence. In fact, where is the genesis of this spiralled violence?

1.2 Genetic Manicheanism

Fanon finds the genesis of the spiralled violence in the dichotomy bearing the antagonism between coloniser's and colonised's sectors of life. The demarcation line between the two worlds is the police or the military, which are, by the way,symbol of violence. In other terms, that which separates two violent worlds is violence.Yet two types of violence separated by violence are not different at all. Thus, it is about undifferentiated violence.

Fanon alleges that between the two areas of life there is no intersection or overlapping (Fanon, 2004). Here is the description of the dichotomous areas of life making the casus belli be imminent.

The world of the coloniser	The world of the colonised
It is built to last.	It is a disreputable place and inhabited by disreputable people.
It is a world of lights and paved roads, on which, paradoxically, the coloniser walks with feet protected by solid boots.	It is a world with no place.
It is a world producing trashes, cans, and solid garbage.	It is a world wherein people are piled up one on top of the other.
It is a world of abundant food and drinks.	It is a world of hungry people, who do not have bread, shoes, lights, etc.
It is a world of whites, foreigners, and intellectual talks.	It is a world that crouches and cowers, a world of niggers who envy the coloniser's place, life, and

wife.

The colonial world is, in Fanon's analysis, a compartmentalised one. It is divided in two different species. It is a Manichaean world with on one hand the white, representing the pure, the clean and, on the other, the black, the evil. The colonised, asserts Fanon, is characterised by "not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values. In other words, absolute evil." (Fanon, 2004, p. 6)

The coloniser refers to the 'natives' in terms of features belonging to the kingdom of animals and plants: hordes, stink, gesticulation, etc. The coloniser uses debased vocabulary to refer to the 'native', notably 'hysterical masses', 'blank faces', 'the shapeless', 'obese bodies', , 'headless', 'tailless cohort', 'children who seem to belong to anyone' 'vegetating existence', etc. (Fanon, 2004). The cause of this spiral of violence, according to Fanon's descriptions, is in the coloniser's mentality of segregating, contrasting, and splitting humanity into two species, notably the pure and blessed species and the evil and wretched species. Yet no humans desire to be treated like wicked persons. Every human fancies to be valued. It results a natural attitude of envying that which looks worthy and getting it even *manu militari*. Finally, the wretched follows the footsteps of the blessed, using the same technique: violence.

1.3 The radioactivity of violence

In contact with the colonised, says Fanon, values become poisoned and infected. "This is why we should place DDT, which destroys parasites, carries off disease, on the same level as Christianity, which roots out heresy, natural impulses, and evil. The decline of yellow fever and the advances made by evangelizing form part of the same balance sheet" (Fanon. 2004, p. 7). The logical outcome of this Manicheanism is a sort of reductionism: the colonised is reduced from humanity to 'animality' (Fanon, 2004). For the colonised, the solution to this violence is to be moralist. This "means silencing the arrogance of the colonist, breaking his spiral of violence, in a word ejecting him out right from the picture." (Fanon, 2004, p. 9)

Soon the colonised perceives that the coloniser is made of flesh and bones. Consequently, the former does no longer fear anything and the latter feels insecure. The violence with which the coloniser destroyed the indigenous social order and lifestyle radiates and reaches the colonised who, fuelled by envy and appetite of restoration, initiates a new violence in the form of counter-violence of greater magnitude in order to blow up the colonial world, to dislocate, and erase it from the land of the colonised.

The dichotomising violence becomes contagious. It consumes both the author of violence and the intended victim of violence. Violence and violent counter-violence are nothing but nebula of violence that does not spare anyone. This 'radioactivity' of violence is intelligible in the sense that the first wave of violence (colonisation) was not a rational confrontation. It triggered a violent counter-violence (decolonisation) that is as brutal, ferocious, and barbaric as the first violence.

Wasit not possible to avoid the violent counter-violence by resorting to nonviolence? Fanon argues that nonviolence is a camouflage. It is a technique used by the coloniser, which consists of persuading the *assimilé*, the *évolué*, the *assimilado*, this colonial bourgeoisie that

> "their interests are identical to those of the colonialist bourgeoisie and it is therefore indispensable, a matter of urgency, to reach an agreement for the common good. Nonviolence is an attempt to settle the colonial problem around the negotiating table before the irreparable is done, before any bloodshed or regrettable act is committed." (Fanon, 2004, p. 23)

Nonviolence would profit not to the colonised, rather to the coloniser who created a middleman, the *évolué*. This is the type of colonised who, for the sake of safety and accommodation, has decided to assimilate the technique and weaponry of the coloniser: to accept his religion, to speak his language, to study his science. In one word, the *évolué* chooses to think the way the coloniser does.Had nonviolence been the best tool to settle down matters, the coloniser would have used it in the first place. That is why, in the mind of Fanon, nonviolence hides the will of the coloniser to perpetuate his brutality and ferocity by creating a traitor, who is nobody but the *évolué*.

II. Violence and the mimesis of desire

2.1 The theory of the mimesis of desire

In *La Violence et le Sacr*é (Girard, 1977) and *Des Choses CachéesDepuis la Fondation du Monde* (Girard, 1978), Girard proposes the hypothesis of scapegoatingmechanism to explain violence as the founding force of human order. Indeed, after researching on myths and customs of societies whose social organisations are deeply soaked into traditions, Girard came to highlight the role fulfilled by violence in them. Violence isreciprocalin thesesocieties. Girard says, « On ne peut pas exercer la violence sans la subir »(One cannot use violence without havingundergone it) (Girard, 1977, p. 339).Reciprocal violence is based on undifferentiated vengeance. This transcends space and time and can affect even generations to come. By the way, Girard puts face-to-face the power of undifferentiated violence and the modern judiciary system. Indeed, the judiciary system is the

machinery meant to contain the undifferentiated violence. Instead of letting everybody judge everybody, according to individuals' norms, the modern judiciary system monopolises vengeance and hands it to a unique competent authority.

Henceforth, vengeance is no more individual and inter-individuals, rather has it become public and controllable.The success of penal system is that it strikes the individual who is supposed to be stricken, the true wrongdoer, unlike, the undifferentiated vengeance affects anyone and anything related to the subject involved in violence. Girard labels the undifferentiated violence as the private vengeance and calls the one inflicted by the judiciary as the public or official vengeance. The private vengeance perpetuates violence whereas the public vengeance stops it, in spite of the fact that in both cases it is about violence.« Il n'y a pas de différence de principe entre la vengeance privée et la vengeance publique, mais il y a une différence énorme sur le plan social : la vengeance n'est plus vengée ; le processus est fini ; le danger d'escalade est écarté. »(Girard, 1977, p. 32)

The undifferentiated violence destroys the cultural order and peace. It breaks apart unity of the community and turns prohibitions and taboos, on which culture is built, into matter of individual opinion. This is the abolition of any difference. It is the loss of the principle, which would help differentiate good from evil and right from wrong.

Girard calls indeed violent indifference the violent loss of differences on which cultural values are based, the generalised nebulous movement that wraps the whole community consumed by the reciprocal violence, the vengeance with neither limit nor justification.Behind this crisis lies a cause. In Girard's opinion, it is 'the mimesis of desire' or 'mimetic desire'. Indeed, desire is pre-eminently imitative and, in Girard's theory, it leads to scapegoating or victimising mechanism. In his introduction to the book *Violence, Desire, and the Sacred, vol. 2 –René Girard and Sacrifice in Life, Love, and Literature*, Fleming affirms that Girard uses the mimetic desire theory to explain how culture and religion come into existence (Cowdell, 2014).

There is a difference between natural appetites or needs and desire. The former pertain to the bio-physiological component of living beings. They constitute the call of nature and can be met and satisfied. The latter, however, is amorphous and its satisfaction is elusive (Cowdell, 2014)

Quoting Girard, Fleming reports that, once the basic needs are satisfied, i.e. need for food, water, libido, shelter etc., human being is moved by intense desire. "The reason is that he desires being, something he himself lacks and which some other person seems to possess" (Fleming cited byCowdell, 2014, p.2). In Girard's opinion, desire is always mediated or modelled to us by other people, whose desires had been mediated to them. Desire is contagious. Everyone desires what everybody desires. Everyone would like to be like everybody. The mimetic desire reveals three elements: the subject, the object, and the disciple or imitator.

The subject is he who desires something. The object is that which is desired by the subject. The disciple imitates the model, which is the subject by desiring the same object. Hence, the disciple desires the object of the subject's desire. The subject reveals to the disciple that the object that he desires is desirable by him. Girard states : « le désir est essentiellement mimétique ; il se calque sur un désir modèle ; il élit le même objet que ce modèle. »(Girard, 1977, p. 205)

The model is the mediation. This mediation is not only external. Rather is it also and essentially internal mediation, for it is not only the desire to possess, to be like… It is the desire to be more than the model, to defeat the model and possibly to erase the model from the picture. The disciple desires 'the object-of-the-desire-of-the-subject'. From here, it becomes evident that the mimetic desire implies an attitude of possession or appropriation. The mimetic desire is appropriative before being conflictual. This conflict results from the fact that, noticing that the imitator tends towards the same object of desire, the subject covers it with his violence so much so that the acquisitive attitude opens up the door for mimetic rivalry. At the peak of the mimetic crisis, the object of desire disappears. The triangular configuration (subject – object – imitator) gives way to a bipolar configuration: there remain only the subject and the imitator bound by antagonism and rivalry.

The mimetic crisis shows the subject and the disciple, who were different, becoming identical. Their identity, affirms Gerard, finds its definition in the unity of desire, hatred, and strategy. They desire the same object and both hate each other so much so that they confuse themselves in a sort of violence identity. From inside, each antagonist perceives himself as different from the other. However, from outside they are identical. They are the doubles. They are the duplicates.(Girard, 1977)

Besides, Girard affirms that the mimetic desire has the property of becoming contagious in the sense that the more the number of antagonists the higher the level of imitation and the greater the number of people attracted by the mimetic violence. This inevitably leads to the generalised nebula of violence from which rises the tendency of having the whole community gathered around a unique individual. From thence, the mimesis of antagonism triggers a *defacto* alliance against a common enemy. Until no common enemy is spotted, the spiral of mimetic violence would consume endlessly the community.

In other words, the resolution of the antagonism depends upon the removal of the imitator, for the rival indicates to the subject the value of the desired object. With the suppression of one antagonist, the object loses its value,

unless another imitator rises to reveal the importance of the devalued object, and consequently, trigger again a conflict. The mimetic desire makes it possible a perpetual violence. (Girard, 1978)

2.2 Violence and scapegoating

In front of such a chaos marked by continuous rivalry that destroys the cultural order, thinks Girard, something has to happen in order to restore order. Girard allegesthat

> « toute communauté en proie à la violence ou accablée par quelque désastre auquel elle est incapable de remédier se jette volontiers dans une chasse aveugle au 'bouc émissaire'. Instinctivement, on cherche un remède immédiat et violent à la violence insupportable. Les hommes veulent se convaincre que leurs maux relèvent d'un responsable unique dont il sera facile de se débarrasser. » (Girard, 1977, p. 118)

In this way, thinks Girard, the community under violence will endeavour to stream the reciprocal violence into a direction, which may stop its progress by letting the violence of all against one succeed to the violence of everyone against everyone. That is to say, the community designates a victim that nobody will revenge. This is the mechanism of sacrifice or scapegoating, called also victimising mechanism.

We have just seen how at the climax of the mimetic crisis emerges the necessity to appease violence. By way of sacrifice, one gets an outlet of violence to appease the crisis. Sacrifice or victimisation appears like a deceiving violence, a means to divert the violence that consumes the whole communitytowards a potential sacrificial victim. It becomes clear that through sacrifice, by the effusion of the blood of the sacrificial victim, one does not expiate anything; it is neither a question of guilt nor that of innocence. It is rather the question of stopping individual violence by committing a collective violence.Sacrifice is, in Girard's opinion, an operation of collective transfer that takes place at the expense of the victim that carries the internal tensions, the spites, the rivalries, all reciprocal desires of aggression within the community. (Girard, 1977)

It results that the role of sacrifice (according to Girard) is notably, to stop the reciprocal violence from spilling, to gather on a victim all germs of tensions, conflicts and to suppress them. Sacrificial violence or scapegoating re-establishes the social unity and peace. In this way, the reciprocal and destructive violence is transmuted into founding violence. Violence becomes a necessary evil. This passage from destructive violence to constructive violence is made possible by scapegoating. Sacrifice or scapegoating is also a form of violence, but a tricked violence, a pseudo-violence committed to appease the undifferentiated violence.

Violence therefore has a peculiar property: to destroy and to build; it is at the same time malevolent and benevolent.Scapegoating or sacrificial violence appeasesthe destructive violence and converts it into pacifying violence. That which gives sacrifice its efficacy is the violent unanimity it establishes against the scapegoat, the one that, by his blood, will magnetise the entire destructive violence and transform it into pacifying violence, founder of the social order.

In Girard's mind, violence has a founding dimension in the sense that it restores human order. In the myth of Oedipus, illustrates Girard, it is not, at the end of the day, about incest and murder of the father. These certainly constitute the emerging features, but the fundamental intention is 'to hit' the man who blocks the road (parricide) and 'to appropriate' oneself everything that belongs to the late father (the throne, the mother).In the first event, violence is obvious because it is physical. In the second event, however, it is about the acquisitive mimesis, which ends in mimetic rivalry. There is finally the identification of the violent as father and king (Oedipus King). Violence, in other words, valorises the objects of the violent. It is not because Laïos is father that he is violent; it is because he is violent that he passes for the father and the king. (Girard, 1977)

Whether it is about an animal victim or a human victim, the deep structure prevailing in the mind of those who sacrifice is the same. Everything evidences, contends Girard, that the first sacrifice was a murder. The victim's choice is relative. However, in a general manner, the criteria of victim designation can be infirmity, physical differences, social origin (for instance persons of slave descent), social status etc. In short, if the victim is not marginal then he is marginalised. Whatever the case, the victim is, to some extent, an element integrated in the community because he is presumed to have taken part in the mimetic crisis.

However, by the fact that he is chosen to assume undifferentiated violence, the victim stops being part of the community and becomes extraneous. Consequently, he stands over against the whole community. The setting-apart or marginalisation proves that the victim has become impure because in fact he has been charged of all impurities happening in the community. He becomes as contagious as the violence of which he carries the germs. Any contagious mimesis would cause a mimetic rivalry that can trigger the violence that everyone would like to get rid of.

Any sacrifice, affirms Girard, is generally preceded by a sacrificial preparation that consists in the setting of the victim. This highlights the idea that the preparatory ritual, which aims at conferring the scapegoat a different status, is a conjuncture and conspiracy of the community vis-à-vis a single individual or group of individuals.

The sacrificial victim is the means by which people move away from any sort of reciprocal violence. He finally embodies the unifying capacity of the violent and the peaceful, the pure and the impure. These are the components of the sacred. This is, the subject of a big fear and a big esteem. Yet the scapegoat embodies the

violence in these two versions: he is therefore as 'sacred' as the violence it assumes. For Girard, violence is sacred, for it is terrible and admired. It has a double face. Girard affirms that the scapegoat is put to death under the mode of monstrous face-off. It is therefore to the monstrous double that it is necessary to relate the character spectacularly or discreetly monstrous of all sacred creatures. The union of the malevolent and the benevolent, the absorption by a'superhuman' of the difference between the 'good' and the 'bad' violence constitutes the fundamental difference to which all other are subordinate. (Girard, 1977)

From the reading of the mimesis of desire and scapegoating, it follows that violence pertains to the language of equivocation: it destroys and builds; it separates and unites. It stimulates fear and admiration. This brings about the idea that the meaning of violence is not univocal. It is rather polysemous. This is the mark of a symbolic language. Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics offers the possibility of deciphering this symbolism in violence.

III. RICOEUR AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SYMBOL

3.1 The nature of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics

From the outset, Ricoeur is clear about the task he assigns to philosophy, which is hermeneutic. By "hermeneutics, he says, we shall always understand the theory of the rules that preside over an exegesis –that is, over the interpretation of a particular text, or of a group of signs that may be viewed as a text" (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 8). Yet to "interpret is to understand a double meaning" (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 8). Thus, the hermeneutics Ricoeur is dealing with focuses the intelligence of the double meaning: the clear meaning and the hidden meaning.

Interpretation, which is the subject matter of philosophical hermeneutics, is vital and important, for it constitutes the core of human traditions. In *The Conflict of Interpretation –Essays in Hermeneutics*, Ricoeur clarifies this connection between interpretation and human tradition. He says, "One interprets in order to make explicit, to extend, and so to keep alive the tradition itself, inside which one always remains. It is in this sense that the time of interpretation belongs in some way to the time of traditions" (2004, p. 27). Ricoeur comments that tradition remains a dead one without a continuous interpretation, on the ground that our legacy is not "a sealed package we pass from hand to hand, without ever opening, but rather a treasure from which we draw by the handful and which by this very act is replenished" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 27). Every human tradition remains alive thanks to interpretation. Hermeneutics keeps human patrimony alive.

Unlike his predecessors (Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer), Ricoeur is convinced that meaning is symbolic. He justifies this conviction with three reasons. First, symbol is a kind of universal mediation of the mind between "ourselves and the real; the symbolic, above all, indicates the non-immediacy of our apprehension of reality. The use of the term in mathematics, linguistics, and the history of religion seems to confirm that 'symbolic' has this species of universality" (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 10). Second, symbol is the appropriate tool to express the various ways we perceive reality. Humans apprehend reality by means of symbols: language, science, art, religion, etc. "The task of a philosophy of symbolic forms, asserts Ricoeur, is to arbitrate the claims of absoluteness of each of these symbolic functions and the many antinomies of culture that result from those claims" (Ricoeur, 1970, pp. 10-11). At last, Ricoeur thinks that 'symbol' expresses "the mutation undergone by a theory of categories –space, time, numbers, etc.- when it escapes the limits of a mere epistemology and moves from a critique of reason to a critique of culture." (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 11)

Ricoeur defines a symbol as "a double meaning linguistic expression that requires an interpretation [which is] a work of understanding that aims at deciphering" (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 9). Symbols call necessarily for interpretation because of their nature. They are carried within another sign, which is latent. Let us discover the nature of symbol in order to grasp how it confers to Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics a peculiar character.

3.2 The concept of symbol in Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics

A symbol is a sign, but any sign is not a symbol. Ricoeur argues that a symbol

> "is a sign in this, that like every sign it intends something beyond and stands for this something. But not every sign is a symbol. Symbol conceals in its intention a double intentionality. There is, first, the primary or literal intentionality, which, like any meaningful intentionality, implies the triumph of the conventional sign over the natural sign (…) But upon this first intentionality is built a second intentionality (…)" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 286).

A sign indicates clearly. It says what it means and it means what it says. It bears in itself its semantic charge. It does not need any interpretation whatsoever. Ricoeur clarifies,

> "In every sign a sensory vehicle is the bearer of a signifying function that makes it stand for something else. But I will not say that I interpret the sensory sign when I understand what it says. Interpretation has to do with a more complicated intentional structure: a first meaning is set up which intends something, but this object in turn refers to something else which is intended only through the first object." (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 12)

In Ricoeur's opinion, what makes a sign be similar to symbol is a double structural and intentional duality. On one hand, there is the duality made of the sensory sign and the signification it carries (signifier - signified) and, on the other hand, there is the duality made of the sensory and the signification, altogether intending to the

object designated. At the end of the day, when we say that a word has a meaning or signifies, we refer to the structural and intentional duality. (Ricoeur, 1970)

Unlike, symbol is a sign with different duality or with higher degree of duality, to keep Ricoeur's terminology.
> "In a symbol a duality is added to and superimposed upon the duality of sensory sign and signification as a relation of meaning to meaning; it presupposes signs that already have a primary, literal, manifest meaning. Hence, I deliberately restrict the notion of symbol to double- or multiple-meaning expressions whose semantic texture is correlative to the work of interpretation that explicates their second or multiple meanings." (Ricoeur, 1970, pp. 12-13)

By multiple meaning Ricoeur designates "a certain meaning effect, according to which one expression, of variable dimensions, while signifying one thing at the same time signifies another thing without ceasing to signify the first" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 62). Contrasting the technical signs, which are perfectly transparent, for they say what they mean, Ricoeur comments that hermeneutical symbols "are opaque: the first, literal, patent meaning analogically intends *a second meaning which is not given otherwise than in the first*" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 287). Taking the example of symbolism of evil (Ricoeur, 1967), at the end of the analysis, Ricoeur correlates an analogy between spot and stain, deviation and sin, burden and fault. Hence, the analogy is between the physical and the existential. (Ricoeur, 1970). Technically, the symbol is "constituted from semantic perspective such that it provides a meaning by means of a meaning. In it a primary, literal, worldly, often physical meaning refers back to figurative, spiritual, often existential, ontological meaning which is in no way given outside this indirect designation." (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 28)

If signs imply a relation 'of meaning to thing', symbols however imply an architecture of meaning, a relation of meaning-to-meaning. This architecture of meaning or this "texture is what makes interpretation possible, although the texture itself is made evident only through the actual movement of interpretation." (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 18)

It follows that the work of hermeneutics is the restoration of meaning, recollection of meaning hidden in another meaning. Ricoeur's hermeneutics is iconoclastic in the sense that it is the process of breaking out the literal meaning in order to reach the symbolic meaning bound in it. "This hermeneutics, says Ricoeur, is not an explication of an object, but a tearing off masks, an interpretation that reduces disguises" (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 30). The tearing of the mask consists in disclosing the way a symbol "is bound to the literal meaning, itself bound by the symbolic meaning residing in it." (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 31)

3.2 Hermeneutics of symbols and philosophical reflections

From what has been presented above, rises a problem: if philosophy is a reflection, explicit in nature, how can it mingle with the symbolic, which is ambiguous, implicit and hidden, so to speak? How can reflection, of philosophical fashion, be articulated upon the hermeneutics of symbols (Ricoeur, 2004)? Ricoeur answers: "The symbol gives rise to thought" (Ricoeur, 1967, p. 348). Ricoeur calls this aphorism a maxim. It reveals two converging hermeneutical moments: that of donation of sense through symbol and the initiative of deciphering. By saying that symbol gives rise to thought, Ricoeur stresses these two moments. First, that in the presence of a symbol, the philosopher does not impose a meaning. The meaning is provided by the symbol itself. Then, the role of the philosopher is to think from the meaning offered by the symbol. "This maxim that I find so appealing, clarifies Ricœur, says two things. The symbol gives: I do not posit the meaning, the symbol gives it; but what it gives is something for thought, something to think about" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 285). Ricoeur argues that everything has already been said enigmatically and yet there arises the necessity of saying it over again this time in the reflective fashion (Ricoeur, 2004). The symbol "gives because it is a primary intentionality that gives the second meaning" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 287) that reflection has to disclose.

This parenthood between symbol and reflection does not imply reductionism attitude, that symbol is thought and thought is symbol. Methodologically speaking, symbol differs from philosophy. Symbol and reflection seem to be antithetic and Ricœur explains this point in three steps. Firstly, symbol expresses itself through particular language and culture. This implies the fact that instead of founding the philosophical reflection on the universal, we run the risk of exalting the singularity, subjectivity, and culturalism. Secondly, philosophy, in the strict sense, attempts to explain the reality in an explicit manner whereas symbol conceals it; hence symbolism alters the nature of philosophical discourse by introducing the double sense, characteristic of symbolic discourse. Thirdly, the interpretation of symbol seems to dry up the richness of the double sense. (Ricoeur, 1970)

Nonetheless, Ricoeur's maxim expresses some intrinsic epistemological relationship. Indeed, philosophy resorts to symbol in the sense that the equivocal character of symbol reveals a fundamental richness of meaning constituting the resource of thought: this is what Ricœur means by the 'giving of the symbol'. Symbol constitutes the raw material on which philosophical thought turns in its thinking activity.
> "In positing itself, concludes Ricoeur, reflection understands its own inability to transcend the vain and empty abstraction of the *I think* and the necessity to recover itself by deciphering its own signs lost in the world of culture. Thus reflection realizes it does not begin as science; in order to

operate it must take to itself the opaque, contingent, and equivocal signs scattered in the cultures in which our language is rooted" (Ricoeur: 1970, p. 47).

On the other hand, symbol, containing perennial truths, needs reflection to bring to human consciousness the existential values disseminated in the world and culture. Symbols call for philosophical reflection, they "are the dawn of reflection" (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 39). Philosophical reflection needs symbol as much as symbol needs philosophical reflection.

Ricoeur clarifies that thinking from symbol, reflective philosophy, to remain faithful to Ricoeur's linguistic categories, is a mediated one, different from intuitive philosophy whose prototype is *cogito, sum*. The *I think, I am* is a philosophy of immediacy. It remains as abstract as the *sum cogitans.* Reflection is not the direct grasping of the self. Reflection is rather the grasping of the Ego through artefacts. In Ricoeur's opinion,

> "reflection is the effort to recapture the Ego of the Ego Cogito in the mirror of its objects, its woks, its acts. […] The first truth –*I am, I think*- […] has to be 'mediated' by ideas, actions, works, institutions, and monuments that objectify it. It is in these objects, in the widest sense of the word, that the Ego must lose and find itself." (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 43)

By thinking from symbol, the philosopher attempts to recover and re-appropriate his existence, which was disseminated in the objects of the world. This leads to the conclusion that the world and culture contain symbolically the meaning of human existence.

From there it becomes imperious to sketch out the dialectical configuration of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics. Indeed, the hermeneutics of symbol is dialectical in nature, for it has two poles. On one side, there is the archaeology of meaning in the sense that the meaning is dispossessed from the Ego and displaced in artefacts. Hermeneutics has the task of digging out the meaning of human existence that is lost in the world and cultures expressed in symbols. The philosopher has the methodological duty of adopting the behaviour that he does not possess the meaning. He has to look for it in the object of the world. Interpretation begins with the archaeology of meaning.

On the other hand, there is the teleology of meaning: reflection restores or collects the existential values from symbolic concealment and present them as figures of the future. In this sense, Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics is bi-vectorial: it has both the regressive vector and the progressive vector, as he says, "It seems to me that the concept of an archeology of the subject remains very abstract so long as it has not been set in a relationship of dialectical opposition to the complementary concept of teleology. In order to have an *archê* a subject must have a *telos*." (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 459)

IV.   A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION
4.1 The mimetic desireblueprint in colonisation – decolonisation violence
In *Discourse on colonialism*, AiméCésaire (2005, p. 222), talking about what he calls 'western lie', asks the question to know what "fundamentally, is colonialism? To agree on what it is not, neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor the desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor the attempt to extend the rule of law." This negative descriptive definition of colonialism, in Césaire's opinion, expresses the wrong justification of the first wave of violence or colonisation. It was a way of looking for a scapegoat, for European civilisation was dying, as Césaire (2005, p. 222) depicted it, saying that,

> "A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization (…) The fact is that the so-called European civilization –'Western' civilization- as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that Europe is unable to justify itself either before the bar of 'reason' or before the bar of 'conscience."

That is likely why Fanon considers colonialism as having nothing rational, "colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking" (Fanon, 2004, p. 23). Definitely, Césaire (2005, p. 226) held the equation "colonization = 'thingification'." Colonisation was a premeditated violence through which European nations had to attempt solving their internal problem by denying humanity in peoples to be colonised. In that way, it was a conspiracy for victimisation process or scapegoating.

During the Modern Period, some philosophers contributed with their authority erudition to thatpremeditation of victimisation. Eze (2005) highlights two philosophers as an illustration: Hume and Hegel. Eze(2005, p. 214) quotes David Hume,

> "I opt to support the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient GERMANS, the present TARTARS, have still something eminent about them … Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen… if nature had not made original distinction betwixt these breeds of men."

Speaking of Hegel, Eze shows how colonisation was, in Hegel's mind, a way a civilised society had to solve rationally economic problems. Eze (2005, p. 216) quotes Hegel saying thatpoverty and the need for market compel the European society "to push beyond its own limits and seek markets and so its necessary means of subsistence, in other lands which are either deficient in the foods it overproduced, or else generally backward in industry." In this way, the economic logic (rational solution of economic problems) proper to 'mature' society is to rush to the sea. Hegel, cited by Eze (2005, p. 216), concludes, "All great peoples … press onward to the sea" to conquer lands and solve their own problems. This can be considered as the philosophical rationale of scapegoating in the form of colonialism.

The Berlin Conference, held between 1884 and 1885, was nothing but the historical effort to settle down European economical rivalries in Africa and establish the balance of power. It was a kind of conspiracy of European nations.These nations were used to annexing each other's' territories violently and violently seeking for political hegemony. The Berlin Conference tended to identify a common victim onto whom it was easier to put 'all sins of Israel': barbaric people, having backward industry, virgin minds, incapable of responding actively to the call of reason and God to transform nature, etc.

The 1884-85 Berlin Conference is the best illustration of the scapegoating mechanism. Paraphrasing Girard, Palaver (2013, p. 299) says that violence is originally an internal problem. "The rivalries within the groups are channelled by means of the scapegoat mechanism into violence against an external enemy, which leads to friend / enemy relations between groups. From the perspective of the mimetic theory, all warfare and political enmity arise from the scapegoat mechanism." At the Berlin Conference, European powers were united against one victim: the colonised that was charged of lots of impurity, impunity, savagery, a-religion, a-history, primitive mentality, etc.

One of the proof that colonialism was a tricked violence is that it was based on desire. Yet desire is the principle of rivalries. The Berlin Conference actors were the doubles, for they desired the object of each other's desire. That is the essence of the so-called the Scramble for Africa: who should take the areas surrounding the Congo basin? The French, the Portuguese, the British, or the Germans who had already secured the Togoland and Cameroon? (Boahen, 2000)

The Berlin conference, among other reasons (economic theory, social Darwinism, psychological justification, evangelisation mission, etc.), sought to control the balance of power. Hinsley, quoted by Uzoigwe (2000, p. 24) stresses

> "Europe's need for peace and stability at home is the primary cause of the partition. According to him [Hinskey], the decisive date for the shift towards an extra-European age –an age of imperialism- was 1878. From that year, at the Congress of Berlin, Russian and British rivalries in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire brought the nations of Europe to the very verge of conflagration."

On the other hand, the second wave of violence (decolonisation) was also the outcome of the mimesis of desire. When one refers to the genetic Manichaeism, it is possible to remember that in Fanon's literature the colonised desired to be like the colonist, i.e. to possess what his coloniser possessed. In order to achieve this goal, the colonised imitates the coloniser in every aspect, including the method used by the colonist, which is violence. Decolonisation process was a nebula of violence whose antagonists (the colonised and the coloniser) were nothing but the monstrous doubles.

Decolonisation, as violence begotten by the mimetic desire, is another form of scapegoating. The colonised, indeed, charged the colonist with all evil deeds: exploitation, fake civilisation and evangelisation mission, looting, killings, raping, etc. In short, the European colonist was charged of cultural genocide. That is why the colonised people had to associate both physically (armed resistance) and ideologically -pan-Africanism movement and the creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU),now known as African Union (AU)- and brutally boot out the victimised colonist, hoping for better tomorrow (after reaching out the object of the desire of the colonist).

That violence of all colonised people against one victimised colonist squares perfectly with the theory that desire is mimetic and contagious, and it underscores any form of violence. Palaver (2013, p. 308), confirming the foundation of warfare on scapegoating, notices that, "all forms of interpersonal violence and hostility [wars and xenophobia] begin in the most elementary human relationship", that is the mimetic desire leading to scapegoating.

It goes without saying that the African post-independence era was marked by internal politically motivated conflicts that dictatorial single-party regimes tried to contain temporarily. That era was marked by internal conflicts, notably the exploitation of Africans by Africans. This is another proof that appropriative desire is conducive to violence. Political assassinations and coups d'Etat were a normal modus operandi that time. What is this if not scapegoating? Political leaders were spotted as causes of post-independence national crises.

Nowadays, in the name of democracy -an institutional scapegoating- the tricked violence is still operational. There are internal ethnic conflicts here and there (Libya, Algeria, DR Congo, Rwanda, etc.), balkanisation / secessions (Sudan - South Sudan, Ethiopia - Tigray, French speaking Cameroon – English speaking Cameroon,

etc.), political instability (Uganda, Tunisia, Sudan, etc.), border disputes (Ethiopia and Eritrea), Xenophobia (South Africa), and jihadism (Nigeria, Mali, Somalia, Mozambique, etc.). Such forms of violence, underscored by mimetic desire that leads to scapegoating, made Mazrui ask the question to know who benefited from violent counter-violence. He answers saying, "The most difficult moral category to assess is one in which armed struggle against imperialism turns out to be more advantageous to the imperial power than to the freedom fighters." (Mazrui, 2004, p. 474)

In the light of the mimetic desire theory, violent counter-violence was as wrong as the first wave of violence, for both were tricked violence in the form of scapegoating, based on, if not the same, but similar desire. Thereseems to bea more fundamental and hidden form of desire. This paper calls upon a specific and peculiar methodology that will make it possible to unfold the meaning of this hidden blueprint. Philosophical hermeneutics, probably among so many other methods, can be of great utility.

4.2 Symbolism in violence

Reading violence -be it in its first or second wave- as a symbolic language, is to picture it first as a language and then as a double meaning language. As a language, violence involves the encoding – decoding process with a meaning to convey. Let me pick randomly some instances. Palestinians – Israeli violence is obviously about land: who came first? In addition, behind this Chronology-oriented question lays a correlated question: who is the genuine descent of Abraham, Moses, David, etc.? Each side claims to cling to the land handed down by its ancestors. It is about land. It is said that the Mau Mau war in Kenya was about, among other explanations, the resistance against land spoliation. The old type of movies known as 'western films' used to depict violence western settlers used against Amerindian natives who were fiercely attached to their native lands. We read nowadays in the news that the American commercial giant Amazon has obtained from South African government the licence to occupy the land that Khoisan people are attached to.

History has shown that the appropriative desire is the overriding form of desires that leads to violent conflicts. However, conflicts terminated to violence are not necessarily about land, rather they are around land. Land seems to be the apparent means, for you seize one's land, you get power (be it economic, political, religious, and like)over the natives.

Land-oriented violence, let me call it 'topographical violence', is like a sign. In fact, it is a sign, for it indicates clearly its meaning: desire for occupation, with all subsequent actions. In the context of this reflection, the topographical violence is made visible through Eurocentrism (European imperialism) and Eurocide (the extermination of any colonist clinging to African soil). Both Eurocentrism and Eurocide are the signified of violence, which is the signifying, just to repeat De Saussure's terminology. They rest on the same pylon: negation of humanity. The actors of both Eurocentrism and Eurocide, paradoxically, use antagonistically similar rationale to orchestrate violence, as one can see in the following precis.

EUROCENTRISM	EUROCIDE
Expansionism	Unjustified presumed European supremacy
Economic logic	Spoliation and exploitation
Religious imperialism	Brutal erasure of tradition-based religious beliefs
Philanthropic-oriented civilisation missions	Eradication of authentic life style

These appear to be the clear justification of violence and violent counter violence. They constitute the aspects of the primary meaning of violence. Eurocentric violence tends to deny humanity in the African person. On the other hand, the African, through violence, tends to deny the humanity of the European. Colonisation and decolonisation, at the end of the day, are a reciprocal negation of humanity. It is the negation of human beings by human beings through self-centrism. The colonist was obsessed to affirm his humanity in front of a presumed barbaric, uncivilised, a-religious, and a-historic being endowed with a *mentalité primitive* (to repeat Levy-Bruhl's terminology). On the other hand, the colonised, in front of what seems to beEuropean brutal savagery, wanted to claim his humanity because the type of violence used by the colonistwas inhumane, a proof that this latter is not a human being who could deserve human consideration and regards. This concurs with what Fanon said from the outset: decolonisation is "simply the substitution of one 'species' of humanity by another." (Fanon, 2004, p. 1)

Beneath this topographical violence, triggered by the mimetic desire -which produces the monstrous doubles in the form of Eurocentrism-Eurocide-, lays a more fundamental desire, stronger, however more silent (that is why probably it is overlooked) than the acquisitive desire. This is the desire for fuller being.

Indeed, antagonists in violence experience originally a 'nothingness', a want in their ontological intimacy. Humans deceive themselves when they think that the ontological vacuum can be filled up merely with the materiality of the world, the establishment of balance of power, political standoff, military alliances, imposition of one's religious faith, etc. The economic, political, military, or religious dimensions might be necessary conditions to the achievement of plenitude of being. However, they are not the sufficient reason for the completeness of 'humanity' in humankind. The materiality of the world, with everything it implies, such as

finances, political economy, management of *res publica*, and the like, can attract people together but cannot unite them, because of the consequential violence of the mimesis of desire.Indeed, on one hand, the European lust pushed some Western nations to go to Africa and appropriate lands. Then they collided against one another and decided to settle down their conflicts under the umbrella of The Berlin Conference, hoping that this event would make their unity. Later on, in order to punish Germans, the Allied came to fight against the latter and chase them from Africa, regardless of the agreement reached in the above-mentioned conference. Where is the expected unity?

On the other hand, booting out the European invaders gave the Africans the hope to re-appropriate their heritage and come to continental and national unity. Yet the post-independence institutional instability in Africa, I have mentioned some instances earlier, is not the proof of the expected unity. Julius KambarageNyerere, Tom Mboya, Muhamar Gadhafi, just to mention few, stood behind the concept of the 'United States of Africa'. Unfortunately, that concept has remained chimerical, mainly because of deep divisions not only among African nations, but also within particular African nations. How can African unity be achieved with internally divided member-States? Ethiopia, which hosts the headquarters of the African Union, is itself puzzled by Tigray separatists. It is just an example. This evidences that the materiality of the world is not the sufficient condition for the achievement of the desire for fuller being.

Money, for instance, is useful. Its value, however, is not what it enables to have, says a popular adage, and rather is it what it enables to be. The sine qua non condition for the ontological fulfilment is not of material order. It is on the contrary of moral order. Animals experience the same desires as humans: hunger, thirst, mating, cold, and so do humans. Yet the decisive demarcation line is that humans are capable of human acts performed in conformity with upright reason and moral conscience. The 'animality' of men is in their natural desire for 'more-having', creating the worst forms of evil: arrogance, cupidity, and pride (Dillon-Malone, 1989). Kenneth Kaunda, quoted by Dillon-Malone (1989, p. 25), asserts that "The source of all evil, all wars, all injustice lies within us (…) The real enemy has occupied not the top of our minds in vain imaginings but the bottom of our hearts in devilish pride."

The humanity of men is rooted in the consciousness of their fundamental identity in nature and in dignity. These values will make humans to achieve themselves as human beings. The fundamental desire for fuller being is possible only when we consider each other, not merely as instruments to reinforce one's economy, political ambitions, or imperialism, but also and at the same time as end, like one of Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative states.

V. Conclusion

Violence, no matter its form, seems to be originated in the human desire marked by arrogance, cupidity, and pride. It is the destructive dimension, which has occupied the bottom of human hearts. Mimetic desire is conducive to reciprocal and endless violence. This constitutes a symbolic language. As such, it has a double meaning structure, namely a primary meaning, which is clear and apparent, and a secondary meaning, which is hidden.Violence clear meaning relates to the negation of humanity in those who are involved in mimetic desire-caused violence. Economic imperatives, political hegemonies, military alliances, philanthropic missions, religious motivations, imperialism, land spoliation, exploitation of the powerless by the powerful, etc. are not more than the code used to convey that clear meaning. However, this clear meaning is bound by a hidden meaning: the fundamental desire for more being, for human plenitude. It is the desire for fuller being. Violence rests on the desire for more having and self-centrism. This desire reveals the ontological want defining human finitude. The positive awareness of this finitude constitutes already a step towards the moral condition for the progressive achievement of fuller being, whose cornerstone is the unconditional recognition of the fundamental identity of all human beings in nature and dignity.

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