Psycho-Criminology of Sectarian Reality

Loïck M. Villerbu

Abstract:
Universities or research laboratories rarely know how to equip themselves to study sectarian reality and offer diagnostic criteria from a criminological perspective. This is why too often it is not recognized that the victims of sectarian affiliations may have been under an influence, nor are they seen as the victims they really are, and they may find that sentencing in the criminal courts goes against them.[1] This influence upon them was not in the form of manipulation whose passive objects they may be or may have been—but because they themselves believed that they could give themselves meaning by (unwittingly) trusting criminal groups, whose foundation (sometimes in total good faith) is the scam. The work presented here attempts to show the construction of this sectarian fraud[2] and the Criminogenesis that it informs. This is not an essay in psycho-pathology on the psychological excesses of belief, although such may well exist.

We only have a small amount of relevant work on what could have been the first fruitful moments of the creation of such and such a group's sectarianism, a sectarianism that assumes all the opportune faces of fiction, of medicine, of care, of education, or of finance. Everything that calls itself and is named sect is not necessarily sectarian: for our purposes, what is criminogenic and criminal is sectarian.

A Framework of References

Speaking of a sect quite often leads to contrasting it with a church; the former then makes the latter out to be a sect that has succeeded in imposing itself to the point that the marginal dissidence that it might have constituted disappears in the name of assumed excellence. It is in a context of positive discrimination that equivalencies have been insisted upon and are often referred to as *New Religious Movements*. The problem is reduced to the problem of belief: each person has the right to believe what he wants. Studying sectarian reality from a criminological point of view does not mean studying a fact of belief but the concrete and criminal practices to which belief and its organization give rise.

The criminological context means that we are not fooled by the mere reference to beliefs, but consider from the outset what they elicit, impose, or solicit on the part of the adherent and social group.

Psychic disorder or social disorder is the pivot points of belief, not in what they are but in what they require as practices, conduct, and behaviors.

---

[1] In this sense, it is a matter of a phenomenon similar to the one potentially suffered by victims of sexual assault (sexual, psychological, moral) harassment, or conjugal violence. The denial of the earliest victims' speech had created mythomania (E. Dupré, *La mythomanie, étude psychologique et médico légale du mensonge et de la fabulation morbides* (Paris: Imprimerie J. Gainche, 1905), just as today, parental alienation syndrome runs the excessive risk of suggesting that the child is first of all manipulated by one of the parents and through resilience escapes by relying on his/her own resources.

[2] This is the follow-up to an initial work published in 2000. L.-M. Villerbu, C. Graziani, *Les dangers du lien sectaire* (Paris: PUF, 2000).

In other words, it is not belief as a body of knowledge that criminology will study, but the set of constraints in the name of which beliefs spread in coercive apparatuses under the cover of assumptions that encase the subject in a closed and terrorist system (life or death, life or the stock market), indifferent to law as well as to mental health.

The criminologist has nothing to say about the sect: it is a group fact, or religious sociology fact, a psychology-of-adherence-and-membership-fact, etc. It is its "sectarian" aspect that constitutes his object of study. By introducing a concrete project of belonging and not a study of a doctrinal corpus (whether written prophetically or not), the term essentially refers to practices of belief, practices linked to belief itself, and to its conditioning. These are the behaviors and their sources of inspiration (persons, milieux, ideologies, etc.) that will become the field[3] of criminological analysis. In other words, it is a matter of power-taking when one speaks of the sectarian,[4] hence the possible semantic derivatives like sectarianism. Sectarianism bespeaks the uniqueness of a point of view, associated with the prohibition against speaking or doing differently. Sectarianism can therefore also be found in a minority group as well as in a majority group and it will take the empirical objects at its disposal: the *assumed or revealed knowledge* in churches or schools of thought,[5,6] *money* in groups that manufacture goods, mafia movements, the *forces* in apparatuses of control, relations to *sex* in socio-psychological apparatuses that yield liberation through the body, the *territories* in identitarian claims where borders are abolished, etc. In all cases, there is a single aim: wherever there is a plurality of opinion and individual practices, to conceive of only one formal, totally idealized type in complete accordance with the elements of dogma.

The criminologist is more than a specialist of criminal law since the question of deviance is his/her field as well. His domain is first and foremost the domain of the psychological sciences and the social sciences. What constitutes the criminologist's object of study is the set of operations through which, in a context of implicit or explicit intimidations, strategies are put in place and practiced that will progressively close off all possibilities for a person (or a group) to continue their self-determination and in so doing to lose themselves by taking another non-critical personality, for the sake of which the personality itself becomes invasive.

If the criminologist has a social role and a scientific goal, it is to produce a diagnosis of these strategies by deconstructing them into so many anti-personal and counter-productive stratagems on the margins of norms and rights. To analyze a sectarian action not only means analyzing dissident activities but also taking into account the ways that dissidence contributes to the destruction/self-destruction of persons, goods, and collectivity.

Criminological analysis centered on sectarian strategies and their impact leads us to employ psycho-criminology: the study of enforcement practices. It will be said that these practices are developed as a defensive process in situations that have become unbearable or risk becoming so. They are an outcome and an imprisonment in another mental and social status, on the basis of an imagined benefit (whose nature is connected to power,

---

[3] An illustration of this can be found via the philosophies that inspire penal codes on the one hand and, on the other, penal practices. Codes and practices are supported by philosophies, ideologies, ethics, and deontology, and their excesses are associated with what could be the disappearance of a third, critical term recalling the relativity of any corpus and membership.

[4] P. Denis, J. Schaeffer (eds), *Sectes* (Paris: Editions SARP, 1999).

[5] Chouvier, *Les fanatiques* (Paris: O. Jacob, 2009).

[6] J. MacDougall, *Eros aux mille et un visages* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 291-302.

control, and the means to obtain them). That is as much the case for the guru as it is for the follower, but of course in different ways. These strategies and their writing are to be envisioned on the basis of resistance to vulnerabilities that touch upon all the determining structures of social and mental life.

Sectarian reality is here essentially considered in its criminogenic dimension. The practices of belief (*rituals and doctrines)* are said to be abused and abusive, that is to say: recuperated by dominating pressure that is assumed a priori to be gratifying. These practices misuse *a single persecutory reference,* subtracting themselves from the imperatives of a society of law*,* with the enticing security *of a self-engendered charismatic referent.*

This allows the follower to be defined as a seeker of meaning, founding a demand for change on a single question serving as passionate certainty: the origins anticipate the construction of a future. The story is written, the goal is to recover it in order to profit or benefit from it. The price to pay is only one step in accessing this return (hence the frequency of propositions involving metempsychosis, "controlled" departure, billions of years of life, etc.). This seeker is active and not passive to the extent that he is on a quest—a quest wherein, he is told (as happens in other contexts[7]), nothing is obtained without effort and participation. What these efforts and participation requirements will be clearly stems from the founding personalities [of the sect] but it would be presumptuous to claim that everything results from these.

Sectarian Overtures

If we can therefore speak of sectarian intimidation as a placing-under-the-influence, this is only so due to a benefit expected in return. If there is indeed manipulation, it is in the context of a conviction to be re-established. This supposes that the deceptiveness of the overture, the so-called sectarian deception, be analyzed from two angles: first of all as an abuse of confidence, an invaded intimacy, an invasive presence. This deceit is practiced by way of a criminal manipulation of a fact inherent in the human condition, the need to make sense, *in a practice of believing in… or believing that….* Sectarian intimidation is an instrumentalization and a manipulation of customs associated with a need to believe, and with its mental economy. On this view, it has long been accepted that followers must have suffered from mental problems, from the most benign to the most dramatic or even that they believed themselves capable of unequivocally diagnosing acute periods (depression, separation, etc. that is to say, always a deficient state) and blinding themselves to the active factors causing a renewal of being.[8]

Next, the abuse of confidence coincides with an abuse of authority that in order to maintain itself must engender a policing of thought, an internalized and sometimes organized policing, as a condition of access and survival, of ways of being, suspending all initiative, alienating the subject to an unavoidable and persecutory rule. Dependence can only be established through cunning: one thing is taken for another (confusion of thoughts, suspension of critical states) and the means used will be those appropriate to achieve this. The deception is based on the objective while the means to render oneself credible must participate in the most accepted conventions or anti-conventions. Unknowingly (this part is a necessary condition), the follower then enters a process that

---

[7] It is the same process that is at play in various sorts of financial scams.

[8] G. Bronner, *La Pensée extrême: Comment des hommes ordinaires deviennent des fanatiques* (Paris: Denoël, 2009).

most closely resembles the Stockholm syndrome in a tyrannical and despotic group space whose roles are learned. Too often it is the initial victim state that has been emphasized instead of considering how this could be the result of a sectarian history (in a terminal form) that is closer to ruin—mental, financial, social, and somatic ruin.

What is written about the follower is easily found in what is written about the guru. Because, generally, we only identify this after the fact; we take a terminal state to be an initial one and endow the person of the guru with initial mental troubles ranging from neurosis to perversion or to various so-called personality problems. The problem is that anyone and everyone can suffer from such problems without contributing to the development of a sectarian group. Let us consider, on the other hand, that if there were severe mental problems at the start, we have trouble seeing how this could have emerged from the group since it requires a minimum capacity to be marketable. There are facilitating and opportune experiences but they can only be grasped as attempts to escape existential impasses that in and of themselves are not of a pathological nature. It is therefore necessary to produce the hypothesis that the one identified as such is the result of a sectarian group dynamic which is as much the product of the sectarian group as it is the producer of the sectarian group. That being the case, the question of escalation can be endlessly raised from either angle about the members of a sectarian organization. This escalation is not just formal; it engages each person in his own desires linked to the fact of having or not having power and exerting it.

Therefore, the guru is not always who we think it is; it is the situation of blindness we are in when we confuse penal responsibility and mental responsibility, psychological culpability, and juridical, ethical, and moral culpability, which leads us rather regularly to only perceive the faltering person as a monster or monstrous in his attempt to find a way out and build a separate world.

The guru will then be imagined as presence (whether charismatic or not); an invasive presence, in a logical and strategic way: "making himself father." This implies that ordinary and, up to now, learned relations might constantly be the object of a deconstruction. This group dynamic constructs specific power relations, ensuring the development of a one-way connection. It is surely there that we find those eternal sidekicks with multiple roles, leveraging and sacralizing the word of the guru: spokespersons and interpreters of decisions made and positions taken by the guru, whose gestures, postures, and stories need to stand midway between the true and the allegorical. Strategic sectarian rationality means *dividing* the adepts into so many tasks and routes to follow, *hierarchizing* them to guarantee ranks of subordination—the cement of every group—and in order to organize the *escalation* of which rivalry is the vector of a permanent overcoming. In fact, the other, the equal (the brother in the alliance) disappears and can only be hallucinated, idealized, whether in a positive or negative way; he is no longer someone!

The sectarian group is offered up and is imposed in relations of unending mirrors between guru (locus of all the power) and followers whose divergence from the norm comes to underline the salvific bitterness, a permanent narcissistic dissymmetry whose endless reflections will unendingly convey and elicit anguish from each person and the promise of days to come.

Leveraging his/her own presence	Hierarchizing the thresholds of proximity
Dividing up the followers	Forcing the escalation of merit and demerit

Table 1 : Logics of sectarian strategies

Sectarian reality is a reasoned construction, undermining the basic elements of social connection and mental life: it attacks the norms and constituents of social connection to realize a manipulation and a confiscation from it. Understanding this sectarian rationality will be easier when we better describe the different powers of societal regulations, and then the constitutive elements of social connection.

One objective here is to contribute to developing the diagnostics indices[9] of two experiential referents whose construction is progressive and sometimes simultaneous: the sectarian bond and then the sectarian undertaking.

The Sites of Sectarian Onset

1. The normative references of social regulation *versus* the deregulation of powers

All social life, by maintaining a capacity to live together, without being under an influence, acknowledges four foundational norms, each performing specific discriminations at their level of reality.[10] These normative pressures are the law, rules, habits, and ultimately customs. Referential constructs identify them in their difference: the code, the internal rule, habits, and the sacred. Like a grammar learned from spelling mistakes, these regulators are presented through deviation from them: the infraction is to the code what disobedience is to the internal rule: incivility toward decorum and disrespect toward the sacred. By giving rise to regulators, these organizing norms have singular operating modes: if the law is imposed, the internal rule can only be proposed; and whereas decorum is up for discussion, customs are invoked. The latter do not have a particular time because they are the origin of time. They justify their existence in eternity; they cannot be discussed insofar as they are the foundations of a world and its conception. These foundations are sometimes based on a book, and sometimes on an oral tradition; the book is revealed without intermediaries, and the tradition is legitimized by a potential mythology. Any explanation would be a tautology since this is about a world that is already there. Tradition, like the book, only assumes and leaves possible commentary that no historical or sociological datum can explain. Everything that is of the order of custom only assumes one mode of transmission, invocation. A social production follows: the fabrication of the believer and his/her corollary, his/her spiritual responsibility.

When it is a matter of Decorum whose customs are learned, through divergence from their foundation, in incivility, the modus operandi is immediately perceptible; if a custom is connected to a time, to a space, and to a given relational group, everything that is prescribed can only be discussed since it is resting on a consensual base. If the book or oral tradition are referents in customs, in decorum, then privileged books or types of cohabitation will be found that will be written in the form of etiquette, social habits, in the way to behave in such and such a situation. Given forms of proximity are constructed

---

[9] T. Lardeur and J.-P. Jougla, *Les sectes: Savoir les reconnaître, Comprendre leurs mécanismes, Les combattre efficacement, Aider les victimes* (Paris: Presses de la renaissance, 2004).

[10] L.-M. Villerbu et al. This is the follow-up to an investigation financed by the [French] Ministry of Education in 1994 on the topic of School Violence: etiology, clinical epidemiology, and its diagnosis [Violences Scolaires, étiologie, épidémiologie clinique et leur diagnostic] appearing in B. Charlot, J.C. Emin, *Violences à l'école: état des savoirs* (Paris: Colin, 1997).

amidst one's neighbors, and the objective is isolated: social solidarity in an exercise of moral responsibility.

Disobedience to internal rule refers to its organizing norm, the rule. For a rule to be internal, it is appropriate to see the emanation of it from a specific group that has organized a means of production in view of a transformable object. A group or an institution, an enterprise, constructs its performances on the basis of an agreement in a time that abides by the times of its production. It is in this context that the rule, in making itself institutional, offers a charter for a project facilitator from whom a certain form of excellence is expected. Moral responsibility and deontology are the unavoidable accessories of such a normative register. It is easy to conceive that contracts are created here, at least in an enterprise that each is free to leave or not, and thereby guarantees are demanded. Becoming a project actor has no other meaning.

Still, in contrast, the remarks that can be made about referring to the law presume many other statutes! By positing the infraction as the identification of a deviation from the norm, the law and to its writing, the code, the time constitute an obligatory reference here. It is also and correlatively the case for times, spaces, and territories. Times, because every code is modifiable according to the datable and referenced norms and values of an era. Law is not retroactive except to self-destruct to the extent that it has a commitment to the word and the promise of a broader community, in a time founded on alliance as well as its limits. In this way this temporality is quite different from the temporality perceived in the relation of Customs to the Sacred. In this sense the law is imposed and its codes are not up for discussion, except for their application in whatever concrete case. The commentaries of laws and their codes only have a distant proximity with exegetical commentaries. Here a law is imposed while elsewhere a custom is invoked: the object is no longer the same. In place of the spiritual responsibility of reference, the sacred, legal responsibility (penal, civil, etc.) is substituted, which is also different from the moral responsibilities attached to a project of production or to a form of vicinity or inter-vicinity. The citizen is born.

The sectarian propensity to co-opt the norm will attempt to reduce the set of organizing norms to only two, and for two different reasons. To make itself recognized externally as an autonomous identity, there will be demand for a particular status, benefiting from codes and internal dispositions, of an organization in a *defense of secrecy* system. The rule would act as a law: every project facilitator becomes a believer in perspectives. As for the second reason—in this case intended for followers—customs are claimed as the law *par excellence*; in place of the law's democratic foundation a text is substituted whose sacredness is not up for discussion. The law by its codes is necessarily metrical, the customs, by the sacred character of their references, engage an a priori intimacy with a transcendental deity whose only guarantor/guarantee is fidelity. And, along with it, an absolute loyalty to the group insists on moral responsibility grasped at the same time (hence the confusion) as spiritual responsibility. The law of the greatest number no longer counts; it would only evaluate the world from elsewhere to set (or set again) [the follower] willingly or by force on a road whose itinerary of truth is absolute.

Referents Organizing norms	Regulators Referential constructions	Gaps and definitions	Modi operandi	Axiological constructions	Axiological productions
Law	Code	Infraction	Imposed	Civic education	Citizen legal responsibility
Rule	Internal Regulation	Disobedience	Proposed	Charter	Project facilitator morale responsibility; excellence
Decorum	Customs	Incivility	Discussed	Etiquette	Neighbor Moral responsibility, solidarity
Customs	Sacred	Disrespect	Invoked	References to the book or oral tradition	Believer. Spiritual responsibility fidelity and loyalty

Table 2: Regulative structures of forces and alterity

2. Structural elements of social connection *versus* implosion of social connection: the two sectarian presumptions

Social connection is distinguished from a gregarious bond in the development of identitary constructs. The capacity to recognize oneself as existing (oneself like another and not confused with another) is connected to an entire history. This story borrows from nearby milieux or environments the norms and values through which each person will find himself different and similar. The implementation of a self is compounded with founding axes: gender and genealogy, inscription in a sexuated reference on the one hand, and the inscription in a reference of strata on the other. It is these two referents that are going to be the object of sectarian attacks.

Socio-ethnological, anthropological, or psycho-pathological observations account for the indices of a gendered construction. If there are only two anatomical sexes, there are three genders made apparent by psychological development or pathology, and by identitarian uncertainties. Individuation is preceded by a phase in which there is no self/other distinction and consequently no animate/inanimate distinction. A phase of omnipotence, animism, or transitivism gives rise to an initial differentiation, provided one is capable of doing so (autism, for example, displays some difficulties reaching this, and hallucinatory states display its regression).

A second accession is grafted onto this: the accession to sexual differences and to what that means in identificatory terms. Being a boy/being a girl and the bearable differences that means and implies. There, scientific literature identifies an operation that some do not manage to come through and denotes it with the term castration complex. Its impossible surmounting is the production of behaviors called fetishistic and an imagination or fantasies that all seek to deny the implacable reality raised to the status of truth. It is, as in the preceding phase, an ever-unstable acquisition.

What constitutes the third gender is not the gender of angels or hermaphrodites but the production of an irremediable exile in the approach to another reality. The masculine refers to norms other than the feminine. There are different modes of jouissance (and the sexuality invented there directly refers to it): men will now be excluded from the house of women and vice versa. To the point of discovering that it will never be possible to put oneself in the place of the other gender. That is an adolescent discovery, unstable as well as uncertain. The worst-case scenarios and the make-believe remain.

The sectarian presumption will unceasingly build its truth on a series of reifications: reification of a role in the state of nature or even circumventing an assumed role to denature it. Naturalization or denaturalization will be legitimated by the norm of sectarian self-engendering: the norm that assigns an ahistorical role to each position. Quite removed from affirming a natural difference between gender, or even status/role continuity, the sectarian attack in its ultimate idealism destroys the experience acquired by the division of animate/inanimate and transforms every Other into an entity obeying the law of original dogma. Hence the peculiar, enduring, affective disaffection that makes relations with convinced believers strange.

As far as relations of ascendance/descendence are concerned, the same scientific literature on kinship and parenthood orders constructs on three axes. The analyses deal with the verticality of an origin (time immemorial) or with the horizontality of belonging (in space with family boundaries). For the first we designate the genealogical fact whose principle is the principle of non-reversibility; no one can be his own father; there is no self-engendering. The traces of history are instituted in paradigmatic figurations whose totem (the claimed ancestor) is the guarantee, as an astrological sign might be elsewhere. The son makes the father by inscribing him as son of...

The second is double. It accounts for the generational relation; the one that identifies *the son or the daughter of...* This sort of generational construct is simultaneously learned in the prohibition of its confusion (the incest prohibition, its transgression, and the criteria of its transgression) and the recourse to the reference of minimum age of consent or alliance. It is discovered in the intra-fraternal by the recognition of a common inherited (nuclear family) or found (adoptive family) filiation. The only possible alliance and consummation of the latter (sexuality) is outside the family. The identified brother creates in rapid succession the half-brother and the non-brother, and partially opens the boundaries of familial spaces.

The sectarian presumption involving the complex relation of ascendance/descendence will consist of introducing genealogical forms that will be totally discretionary, only emerging from the possibilities of the Book or of oral Tradition and its upkeep. A story is always taken for the reality to come. The obligation to conform to this is assiduously policed, and deviations are always objects of punishment and repressive positions.

GENDER	Animate/inanimate	Boy/girl	Masculine/feminine
GENEALOGY	*Inter*generational	*Intra*generational	*Intra*fraternal

Table 3: the axes of construction of social connection on which
the sectarian presumption will be based.

3. The invention of a world in the throes of madness: Utopia, Ustratia, Uchronia.

From the Greek *eu* (well and good), an existential composition is sketched and affirmed in the order of time*s*, spaces, and relations. This composition is obtained through stratagems whose singular characters are worth describing.

- Reduction: Each person is no longer anything except a part of the One, the founder; every relation is asymmetrical and without recourse. Only the One knows.

- Every division is impossible to imagine and each instance of apartness is the figuration of a betrayal.

- There are as many relations as escalations to the extent that each member can only want more presence for self, more founder.

- Hierarchization. Powers give rise to ranks that are inherited/assumed and never confirmed once and for all. The ranks occupied come with the benefits of physical proximity with the One.

Thus for a world euphemized in self-engendered spaces, each person's differences are only real in a relation to the different powers created and whose function is maintaining an abstract of reality outside the time of the world. Enigma and therefore mysteries are at the foundation of these euphemizations and their upkeep through intimidation or endless partying. It is in this sense that the normative foundations of a sectarian influence can be identified.

The guru is not the one who is the most visible.

This will to proceed to the analysis of the guru through the social productions that he has managed to realize is doubly ambiguous.

First of all because we only have the terminal states of it. Setting off from behavioral actuality to read personality traits there means denying a personality's history and naturalizing it. To say that the social production that a sectarian group consists of is the reflection of the psychological characteristics of its founder denies the effects of distortion that have been engendered, the modes of access, or the devices that have permitted the observation. Anything else is to determine the characteristics of a sectarian group, but to misconstrue the risks that have been taken. If it is possible to profile some of the ways that sectarian groups function, through the study of the effects of their normativity, it is impossible to predict something other than the elements of vulnerability that will be its own in the confrontation of opportune situations.

Next, it is illusory to consider the guru the master of the sectarian group; consequently he, too, is constructed by the group and the latter's demands. In this sense he himself must constantly strive toward overcoming for the upkeep of the founding enigma like constituted territories.

Can one then go back upstream from the characteristics of sectarian influence to the one that produces this influence? There is no doubt that one person comes to found a sectarian group on the basis of a personal problem to be resolved, in an ideological context of resistance to what constitutes authority. The sectarianizing group will be the vehicle for this: it must be admitted that this will also inflect dogma and its modes of application. The founding figure is then forced to strengthen an *avatar*, a charismatic personality taking its possibilities, sometimes extreme, to their limits. It is the relation to this screen or this avatar that performs the calculations and manipulations of the one who leads the sectarian group. That is to say, the moment when dissidence takes the lead in a fight *for life* with methods that will break all resistance—wherever this resistance may be, and with the extreme methods that that produces: by removing all humanity from the other, from the stranger. This is what legitimizes and justifies all the artifices and props of power.

Sectarian deception is not the fact of taking oneself (this would only be a mythomaniacal fable or delirium) to be someone but to make believe that the proposed solution is the best for everyone; that there will be life and survival for the greatest number of the elect. The deception is constructed with all the tricks proper to it and can be at best defined with two generic terms: deception and sacrifice. These methods of...will be deployed in two constructs: the sectarian bond, that is to say the progressive development of thought distortion and sectarian labor, the affirmation of belonging to a group apart.

Sectarian bond. It is a bond *without reciprocity*, for an expectation defined once and for all. The absence of reciprocity makes the absence of contribution, despite appearances (for example money, time, work, etc.): to give, there must be the possibility to consider

the one whom we hold up as different from ourself; here, the other, the one who receives, is taken to be the container of every other. Consequently, it can only be a matter of a restitution. The proof would again lie in how there is no counter-offering in this group. The one who receives does not give in return; he promises what he will not be able to give. Granted, he can offer better times, but only as one advances a sum of money for subsequent reimbursement. In contrast, the debt is magnified in the ideality of a mutualization on the grounds that everything must contribute to the same progress. This mutualization is inscribed in a wider coercive project.

A fourfold intimidation control, always under cover of rituality, is exerted over existential parameters.[11]

Control of Bodies:

- Feeding is justified on the basis of an active cosmogony. What would constitute a diet and regimen as part of a medical prescription is given here as the fact of following or obeying a world order. Whether in ascesis (restriction) or consumption, there is the choice of some foods and the rejection of others, the composition of foods. Feeding cannot be done for pleasure but to attain (or nourish!) a superior state of consciousness, another lucidity; and the result is also the pursuit of least resistance.

- Sexuality, forbidden or reduced follows the same objectives. It cannot be a sexuality with a chosen partner; that would be deviation. It can only be participation in another order of the world: an energetic resource that becomes impoverished or is to be fed, a link between cosmological entities. Chastity and lewdness are brought together and required for the same reasons.

Every relation to the body is a dramatic corporality to the extent that it imposes the need to deal with it. On this basis, in taking power sectarian dogma can only enslave: it is the technique of the constrained body. Purification is punishment. The body and what comes from it can only be the object of control to the extent that it is always susceptible to speaking for itself, to having autonomous needs.

Control of Interpersonal Relations

To the extent that the sectarian group personifies its creator, all individuality is a vehicle for menace. What would be duality is deviationism. All outside relation is indicative of a plot to the extent that it can put in the balance attachments of fidelity or loyalty. Every relation is coded in its principle; the force of the rule of life is to constantly maintain the presence of an authority whose jouissance cannot be contested. Every relation is first of all a relation in a hierarchy of belongings. Distance and proximity with the founder are the object of a permanent vigilance and followers will sometimes self-identify with the rank or the stratum that they occupy. Let us also note the control over relations by means of fetishistic objects supposedly effective in rebuffing potential and/or supernatural invaders.[12]

---

[11] Works and articles containing adherent testimony display on this topic remarkable convergence in the variety of residential sectarian spaces. F. Roncaglia, *Mandarom, une victime témoigne*. (ed. TF1, Grands témoins, 1995). I. Sebagh, *L'adepte. Tous dans l'enfer d'une secte* (Geneva: Le comptoir des éditions, 1996). J. Miscavige Hill, L. Pulitzer, *Rescapée de la scientologie* (Kero 2013) [J. Miscavige Hill, Lisa Pulitzer, *Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape* (New York: Morrow, 2013)]. J.R. Lewis, *The Order of the Solar Temple: The Temple of Death* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013).

[12] In the same sense, one will notice the ease with which certain sectarian movements appeal to the law and to rights in order to escape from the accusations levelled against them. Thus in Paris, 2005

Control of time.

Time is regulated according to the time of foundation and consequently requires the development of calendars. But, beyond this aspect, a proper temporal dynamic will see to its inscription in the time of another world order: prophetic times, messianic times, times of the end of the world; millenarianisms mix with the techniques of controlling awareness of time and duration. Natural cycles and apocalypses, times of return. So many temporalities that have their vulnerabilities and are risk factors. It is the search for opportune, precipitating (natural) moments, the cosmic catastrophe, or the conviction of a return elsewhere (suicides and celestial transportation of bodies), or the organization of (armed) resistance.

Control of spaces.

There are no sectarian groups without the creation of a totally private territory (fear of outside observation or of surveillance by third-parties) or one fashioned in the image of an invented world. The territory is a resistance to dispersion. This space is in its invention similar to created time: coded—not from a functional point of view, but organized as a demonstration of a higher power. The control of spaces or of modes of habitation is done according to plans: the map takes precedence over natural space. Sectarian geopolitics is constructed on an imaginary geography, the geography of the book and/or of tradition. From there, the search for inviolable, withdrawn, surrounded sites that sometimes rise into quasi-cathedrals and sometimes erase all visibility as far as possible. Invisible and active in resistance.

Sectarian Work: the Conversion

One can speak of the sectarian undertaking as one speaks of amorous work or of the work of mourning: a mental labor of recomposition. The emphasis placed on the word *work* indicates that it is about operating procedures, not aleatory at all, organizing itself around strategies for taking power. The implementation of the sectarian bond opened the way to this deeper work of *recomposition* (R-NTI): *negation* (of norms and existing values), *transgression* (affirmation of positive effects of this negation)–*inversion* (realization in ordinary life of the transgression that has a value in the realm of initiation and definitive belonging). The transgression is not only made possible, it becomes an obligation and the trace of belonging, like an indelible tattoo. It is done on the foundations of the social bond, hence its profoundly destructive effects.

- Work on the reference to genealogy. All material and immaterial heritage, like the exercising of parenthood is in itself a form of perversion, underpinned by incestuous relations. Patrimonial goods are "bad, doubtful" and to be set aside to liberate oneself from an original debt.

(AFP) "The Paris Court of First Instance [Le tribunal de grande instance (TGI)], ruled against a group of attorneys and several plaintiffs who wished to see the dissolution of Unadfi, specializing in information on sects, and sentenced them to pay damages, it was learned Wednesday at the TGI. An association of attorneys linked to the organization Cap for Freedom of Conscience ['Cap pour la liberté de conscience'] summoned the National Union of Associations of Family and Individual Defense to demand its dissolution, accusing it of being 'thought police.'"

In such a framework, woman is, more than man, the rival of the founder. She is *par excellence* the person who escapes control. She is necessarily in an ambivalent position, partner or mother, cloistered in a maternal role, or bound for covert prostitution. Idealized, she is unattainable except through and in a code specially invented and written in a Book. The same goes for the child, who is to be formatted (Angelization of the child or a priori perversion) or the man (whatever the attributed status) who could be an adversary; his being reduced to disciple or woman is part of the initiatory itinerary. Two solutions are possible: destruction of the familial bond as the conditions of access, or constraints to be imposed on the family (Moon's obsession with and fetishization of the couple, obsession with and fetishization of the group, or the partner-swapping in ISO ZEN or AAO, etc.). In every case, what is demanded is a (reifying) return to a fictive state of nature, invented for the needs of dogma. Status is less important than the functional role to be played in a mode of "time immemorial" that organizes its return.

- Work on gender. Genealogy was put in the service of dogma; the brother had disappeared, the confusion of generations replaced the prohibition on daughter–father, mother–son incest, and the daughter/mother like the father/son were forgetful of all kinship ties to become something "consumable": generational confusion. Gender in its three constructs (animate/inanimate, son/daughter, masculine/feminine) will regress to only one of them: a forcing of limits of the animate/inanimate relation symmetrical to the deification of the enterprise carried out by the guru.

On the one hand, this will be the negation of the ordinary limits of life and death. It will be realized in two ways: first, through a regulation of the principle of vital fluids, the regulation of exchanges of blood, of medication (forbidden infusions, prohibition on salt in food, medical inventions, imaginary and always secret pharmacopeias, etc.). Second, through proximity to dangerous animals, or situations of high-risk to life, etc.). Protection is guaranteed by proximity to "the first elect" or objects that belong or formerly belonged to the latter. *Predestination and proximity. Mother Nature.* In one and the same sense, the daily organization of work that allows no remuneration that might be understood as suggesting some sort of autonomy.

And on the other hand, self-mutilating behavior, debasing mutilations (for example, castration, various amputations) and, potentially, "transportation" by assisted suicide. Giving death does not mean taking life but offering a solution or even making the non-believer disappear, who, as such, is devoid of rights.

- What is the future of these sorts of constructs given the experience of the current situation?

Two responses are given by the study of sectarian groups that have been led to their total or partial ruin: death or a perpetual change in successive metamorphoses; the proliferation of a policing of mores and the attempt to regulate or judicialize rigidly all deviations from standards and gaps identified in a book or following an invoked tradition. That implies painting over everyday reality in order to avoid being the object of judicial actions (kidnapping, sequestration, etc.).

Sectarian work has constructed a closed world. This world keeps secret its ruin or the destruction of the outsider. Its peculiarities can be described with many diagnostic symptoms.

1- Enclosure and breaking away from the world of the non-elect or the common world. This enclosing is both internal and external. The external and internal boundaries are reinforced. The borders engender their own persecution. It the plot that prevails in the realm of relations. The outside is the locus of all the destruction to come.

- The overriding focus on the microbe in the internal realm: whether it is lurking in the food or explodes in suspicions of internal bad intentions. On the one hand, permanent

suspicion of plots against legitimacy, a calling into question of the healthiness of non-prescribed relations where such things are so many self-productions of attempts to place oneself outside the common realm of men. On the other hand, hyperawareness of the degradation of the world: deaf hostility from all quarters and everything is disintegrating. This, in turn, is used as a means of repression: hygiene and cleanliness that are beyond obsessive with means that are hardly adequate.

2- Any search for autonomy is a sign of giving up and the latter is an indicator of a lack of faith. Informing is advocated as the supreme weapon, purification as a requisite to prevent the contamination of the human environment.

3- Unleashed utopia. The internal reinforcement of obligations requires fortifying what remains dynamic (hypostasized Energy). This reinforcement will take place in extreme behaviors of hypercontrol (in an ascetic, juridicist, or obsessive mode of planning) or permanent (orgiastic and ordalic) agitation.

4- The world is reduced to two dimensions, into dependency, hence a single language, hence social phobias. A critical dimension disappears and the figure of the other becomes projective: it is and becomes the non-acceptable in itself, is rendered apparent, petrified, in and by the other.

5-Ineluctable tribulations: we have seen vagrancy and the search for margins in *a high and dry* place. The truth is jealous, distrustfulness, suspicious, and always fears being stolen. A territory is elected as axis of the world and plays the role of "survival island", along with the possible provision of "survival kits." We know about the attempts to give oneself a sheltered space (a boat in non-territorial waters, or farther away, in inhabited spaces, in places that allow the permanent representation of the axis of the world,[13] everything that goes vertical and assures the link between the worlds up high and the worlds down below. It is known what attempts are going to fail, to find in the most hostile of jungles or in a bunkerized *space* a remission from the attacks that have been endured. Faith does not imply surrender; it is a game of life and death. Killing/suicide are alternatives with the same end. What appears to outside observation as a sacrifice is not one. It is a programmed rebirth.

The other version of the programmed end is rebirth in another form; where the sectarian group was able to give itself something to see in a straightforward way, this contributes to its dispersal and its dilution in screen space, the mailbox of its survival.

Prospects

Is there a real difference between sectarian groups and the groups defined today as "terrorists"?[14] Nothing is less sure. Granted, the conquest of territories (with the destructive and selective practices that that assumes) where faith can rest, a book, a tradition, in an invariable reading, does not take the same armed routes in most cases.

---

[13] T. Huguenin, *Le 54ᵉ* (Paris: Laffont, 1996 [2001]).

[14] With all the ambiguity borne by this term to the point that by extension one might have written that one could always be someone else's terrorist whenever terror was used; a moment and ultimate vector of recognition. But other studies have also been able to articulate the difference between resistance and terrorism on the basis of a different analysis of destructiveness. G. Rabinovitch *De la destructivité humaine* (Paris: PUF, 2009); E. Fromm, *La passion de détruire. Anatomie de la destructivité humaine.* (Paris: Laffont, 1996 [2001]) [*Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Holt McDougal, 1973). M. Trévidic *Terroristes. Les 7 piliers de la déraison.* (Paris: J.C. Flattes, 2013). Karl Laemmermann, *Anders Behring Breivik: Terroriste norvégien d'extrême droite* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012).

Events virtually all over the world linked to the reconquest of a territory in the name of a faith follow, however, all the same roads and errors.[15] The essential differences lie in the declination of objects (money, sex, corpus of knowledge, territory, faith, etc.), of powers and the removal of the latter. And the same goes for mafia groups: in these examples it is a single movement of dispersion, individualization, instability of assemblages that can be observed.

For lack of truly criminological perspectives, numerous studies remain in the closed and fragmented spaces of disciplinary learning or in offices, classified as defense secrets. The same goes—as indeed it does—congruently, for all those social objects that remain as orphaned knowledge because the means are lacking for them to be constructed into a totally separate, complex discipline that might synergize researchers and practitioners.

The challenge of this diagnostic knowledge is fundamental. From both the point of view of prevention and the creation of supportive units when the time comes for departure from these criminal groups, the support provided to departing members of criminogenic sects poses as many problems as someone leaving any criminality behind.[16] Without a network policy symmetrical with the deadly envelope of the preceding group, escapes remain gravely traumatic and unstable.

About the Author
Loïck M. Villerbu is a Professor Emeritus at Université Rennes 2 and Paris VII. He works in the Institute of Criminology and Humanities, Interdisciplinary Center for analysis of human and social processes. (*Institut de Criminologie et Sciences Humaines, Centre interdisciplinaire d'analyse des processus humains et sociaux)*.

---

[15] M. Pignot, *L'enfant soldat, XIX—XXI siècle* (Paris: Colin, 2012). In particular, E. Medeiros "De la terreur à l'illumination," 139-159.
[16] P. Mbanzoulou *Insertion et désistance des personnes placées sous main de justice. Savoirs et pratiques*. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012).