

## PIAGET AND MODERNITY: CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CONSTITUTION OF SUBJECT

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**ABSTRACT.** Can one speak on autonomous subjectivity today? This article presents a completed research which aimed to analyze the project of modernity and the constitution of the subject. It was a theoretical / bibliographical research and its analysis was based on Piagetian ethical / moral psychology and on the effects of modernity and postmodernity on subjectivity. The results reported that modern society made possible the emergence of the autonomous subject, that is, a being that seeks to act according to its decisions the long as it experiences cooperative relationships, because only these allow the free exchange of perspectives and, therefore, the exercise of reciprocity. However, the current scenario has not been potentially unbalanced, to the point of hampering the establishment of cooperative relationships. At least it is what the social capitalist order tries to instill through the report of the ideology that everything is under its control. As a result, it may seem problematic to defend Piagetian's thesis about *the priori moral* – in one way or another, it will move towards genuine solidarity. This notion leads to the concept of dialectics, because his theory evidences the idea that every statement (assimilation) carries within itself the germ of its contradiction (accommodation). It is from this perspective that one can think the individual / society relationship and the construction of autonomy.

**Keywords:** Piaget; Jean William Fritz; modernity; subjectivity.

## PIAGET E MODERNIDADE: CONSIDERAÇÕES SOBRE A CONSTITUIÇÃO DO SUJEITO

**RESUMO.** Pode-se falar em subjetividade autônoma nos dias atuais? Este artigo apresenta uma pesquisa concluída, que teve como objetivo analisar o projeto da modernidade e a constituição do sujeito. Tratou-se de pesquisa teórica/bibliográfica, cuja análise apoiou-se na psicologia ético/moral piagetiana e em estudos sobre as consequências da modernidade e pós-modernidade na subjetividade. Os resultados informaram que a sociedade moderna possibilitou a emergência do sujeito autônomo, isto é, de um ser que busca agir de acordo com as suas decisões, contanto que vivencie relações de cooperação, pois apenas estas permitem a livre troca de perspectivas e, por conseguinte, o exercício da reciprocidade. O cenário atual, contudo, não tem sido potencialmente desequilibrador, a ponto de dificultar o

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estabelecimento de relações sociais desse tipo. Pelo menos, é o que a ordem social capitalista procura inculcar por meio da veiculação da ideologia de que tudo está sob o seu controle. Em decorrência, pode parecer problemática a defesa da tese piagetiana acerca do *a priori moral* – de uma maneira ou de outra, caminhar-se-á para a solidariedade genuína. Isso leva ao conceito de dialética, pois a sua teoria evidencia a ideia de que toda afirmação (assimilação) traz em si o germe da sua contradição (acomodação). E é nessa perspectiva que se se pode pensar a relação indivíduo/sociedade e a construção de autonomia.

**Palavras-chave:** Piaget; Jean William Fritz; modernidade; subjetividade.

## PIAGET Y MODERNIDAD: CONSIDERACIONES SOBRE LA CONSTITUCIÓN DEL SUJETO

**RESUMEN.** ¿Se puede hablar de subjetividad autónoma en los días actuales? En este artículo se presenta una investigación finalizada, cuyo objetivo fue el de analizar el proyecto de la modernidad y la constitución del sujeto. El estudio se basó en la investigación teórica/bibliográfica y el análisis se apoyó en la psicología ético/moral de Piaget y en los estudios sobre las consecuencias de la modernidad y posmodernidad en la subjetividad. Los resultados demostraron que la sociedad moderna posibilitó la emergencia del sujeto autónomo, es decir, un ser que busca actuar de acuerdo con sus decisiones, siempre que éste experimente relaciones de cooperación, pues sólo éstas permiten el libre intercambio de perspectivas y, por lo tanto, el ejercicio de la reciprocidad. El escenario actual, sin embargo, no ha sido potencialmente desequilibrador, hasta el punto de dificultar el establecimiento de las relaciones sociales de ese tipo. Por lo menos es lo que el orden social capitalista intenta inculcar por medio de la propagación de la ideología de que todo está bajo su control. En consecuencia, puede parecer problemática la defensa de la tesis piagetiana acerca del *a priori moral* – de una manera u otra, se dirigirá a la solidaridad genuína. Esto lleva al concepto de dialética, pues su teoría evidencia la idea de que toda afirmación (asimilación) trae en sí el germen de su contradicción (acomodación). Y es en esa perspectiva que se puede pensar la relación individuo/sociedad y la construcción de autonomía.

**Palabras clave:** Piaget; Jean William Fritz; modernidad; subjetividad.

### Introduction

Can one speak on currently autonomous subjectivity? At some point in history, can we talk in a space of determination of the subject himself? In this article, we offer subsidies that can contribute to answer, or at least, to discuss these issues.

In this regard, initially, we analyze the constitution of the subject in the 'pre-modernity', 'modernity', 'neo' and 'postmodernity time'. Then, we carry on about Piagetian's (1994) ethical / moral psychology and his notion of the subject. Lastly, we present considerations, by way of conclusion, in order to reflect on the possibility of talking about currently autonomous subjectivity. Our thesis - having as parameter studies on the morality of that

scholar - is that, despite the influence of capitalist economic relations, it is still possible to defend the notion of subjectivity and autonomy.

The intention in questioning this aspect has been arising from readings on modern project and the constitution of the subject. In these readings we find thinkers who advocate the death of the subject in 'post-modernity', that is, who identify the economic relations of the capitalist system or those which are governed primarily by supply and demand as the main obstacle to the construction of a space of determination of the subject himself.

Our professional practice, such as high school teachers, also collaborated with this intention. By exposing the literary work *Admirável mundo novo* (Huxley, 2007), we told students that the cited author wrote it due to have lived in an era catastrophic, when totalitarian regimes (Nazism, fascism and Stalinism) took office, resulting in wars and destructions. This, probably, made him uneasy from the psychological point of view; aspect that moved him to manifest in the cited work the fear of losing his freedom / individuality. Thus, we ask: Is it no longer would we be in post-industrial society, living similar conditions, from the specific point of view, to those described by Huxley (2007), that is, a society divided into castes, whose personal decision power does not exist?

Following, we present the content of the work. On occasion, we insist on reflection on the results of too much current individualism that ignores vital values to society, such as justice.

Another reason was the other literary work *Ensaio sobre a cegueira* (1995), by José Saramago (1922-2010), according to which it is clear that we live a crisis of moral and ethical values. In this regard, Bauman (1998), Costa (1988), Habermas (1990), La Taille (2009), Lipovetsky (2004), Rouanet (1987), Sennett (1978), among other scholars dedicated to today's analysis, made considerations.

Sennett (1978), for example, believes that people only care about their interests. Thus, they seek to reflect on one's own mental life, aiming to reveal the true feelings, 'forgetting' that they are socially produced, besides transforming their friends and family interaction as an end in itself.

In this line of thought, Carvalho (1989, p. 9) asserts that our world, crossed by the survival mentality, is "[...] a world without love, deoxygenating, terminal, unable to maintain the minimum socialization". According to Costa (1988), this mentality is a product of the culture of violence that, by pointing out every time the impotence and inability to change a established social framework, activates narcissistic mechanisms of MYSELF protection. It is observed, therefore, that adolescents (and adults) are increasingly interacting in an ephemeral way. We stress that this type of interaction permeates every kind of relationship (love, friendship, work and coexistence in general). Its nature is guided by the superficiality and brevity. Bauman (1998) defines it as liquid, and Piaget (1994) as heteronomous; therefore, at the mercy of the 'general cultural climate'<sup>3</sup>, because they have their behaviors guided by the rules and values socially established.

Another aspect that mobilized this study was due to works related to the 'death of subjectivity' nowadays. As you read them, we begin to ask ourselves: After all, at some point in history, was it possible to say, effectively, in a space of determination of the subject himself?

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<sup>3</sup> The general cultural climate is the ideological influence, which ultimately shape public opinion, carried by the media. Thus, it can only be expected that the individual reflects the dynamics of our general cultural climate, which is characterized for the effect of social control and the development and concentration of technology in a never before achieved level.

Finally, we justify our choice when we note that there is a shortcoming in relation to scientific studies focused on the analysis of the constitution of the subject, under the bias of the psychology of human morality and ethics, as a bibliographic survey in 2017, in the Dedalus, Scielo and Academic Google databases.

Considering these aspects, we analyze the project of modernity and the constitution of the subject. Secondly, we seek to answer the following questions: 1) Can we talk about autonomous subjectivity today? 2) At some point in history, could we talk about a space of determination of the subject himself? 3) What values have been prioritized by the 'post-industrial' societies as to lead to the collapse of the autonomous subjectivity?

It was our intention when answering them: a) to provide elements on moral values for the analysis of contemporary society; b) to contribute to the training of teachers, considering the contemporary discussion about individuality, the lack of ethics and values in a 'post-industrial' society.

This is a theoretical research or according to Gil (1987), a bibliographic one. This type of research has, as a source of analysis, material already prepared, such as books and scientific articles. Despite all the studies have a certain relationship with the bibliographic research, there are some, such as this, which is fully supported in bibliographic sources.

Thus, this type of research is dedicated to accurate existing theoretical foundations from the reinterpretation of theories, concepts, ideas, among others.

In addition, the theoretical research enables the reconstruction of reality explanatory conditions, although this does not imply an immediate intervention in society. This, however, does not diminish its importance, since that type of research is essential to the construction of intervention possibilities.

Thus, we promote an examination of elements related to ethics and moral psychology (Piaget, 1994; La Taille, 1992, 2002) and to the 'death of the subject' (Hall, 2014; Harvey, 2001; Lyotard, 1988; Simmel, 1973).

We are clear that the mentioned authors start from paradigms and concepts from different worlds. In summary, we would say that the psychological analysis of values is guided by rational / interactional dimension; while the loss of subjectivity, by critics of rationalism. It is not our intention here to take sides for one of these paradigms, but to analyze the current subjectivity, seeking to contribute to the understanding of the effects, on the subject, of the way of production in the 'late capitalism'<sup>4</sup>.

## The pre-modern subject

The pre-modern society (from V to XV century) was characterized by the political, economic, cultural and intellectual hegemony determined by the nobility and the Catholic Church. These dictated their truths, which were always accepted, in order to control and to support the practices and the community events.

Thus, the subjects of that time had positional identity. So even before birth, it was already established as a noble son should think and act, even if he would undertake in the opposite way when secluded. The novel *As relações perigosas* (Laclos, 2012) is emblematic in this respect. The characters acted in a way in court, however, in the alcove, they proceeded conversely, as having sex relations which were forbidden at the time. So, at that

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<sup>4</sup> 'Late capitalism' refers to capitalism subsequent to 1945, which includes, inter alia, the market expansion, the consumption, and consequently, the depletion of natural resources.

time, it did not make sense to conceive the existence of a subject who was a truth producer and master of his destiny.

In other words, one acted in accordance with the 'customs', thus men do not reflect and, consequently, did not change the course about their actions. As a result, they acted as established by tradition, responsible for perpetuating the way of acting and thinking, whose characteristics are summarized to the preservation of honor, respect for customs and symbol valuation. In *O nome da rosa*, Eco (1983) deals allegorically on the current thinking in the Middle Ages –from the Catholic Church. This, with the aim of keeping its domain, curbed the access to knowledge, considered property of few churchmen. In the work, a library served as a labyrinth and who reached its departure, that is, had contact with a certain work, he died - the central mystery of the narrative. We note, therefore, that the domain of knowledge was a source of power and domination.

## The modern subject

According to Hall (2014), historical facts (from XVI to XVIII century) contributed to the birth of the subject: the Protestant Reformation, which contributed to the delegitimization of the Catholic Church as a producer and promoter of truths and monitoring; the Renaissance, which turned out to bridge the man to the center of the universe; the scientific revolutions, they allowed the subject to inquire, to observe and to build new knowledge and, finally, the Enlightenment - philosophical movement sustained by the science and critical rationality defense.

As for modernity, Berman (1986, p. 7) shared his reflections on three moments and defined it as a set of experiences in relation to the time and to the space, to himself and to others, to the opportunities and to the daily risks. That's why he says that people in this period were moved

[...] at once by a will to change, to transform both themselves and their world and by a terror of disorientation and disintegration, of life falling apart. They all know the thrill and the dread of a world in which all that is solid melts into air.

On the first moment (sec. XVI-XVIII), Berman (1986) defines it as the beginning of modern experience, that is, the man's search to be the Lord of his existence. During this period, we observe the emergence of a sense of change, though it causes strangeness and it is not well understood. As a result, the man finds himself lost, because on the one hand, he is bound to tradition, whereas the other, he starts to be designed as a free subject.

Descartes (1996) - one of the main representatives of this period - when surrounded by issues about his way of life, despite having interacted with other cultures, begins to wonder about what he considered as truth. He concluded that he can doubt about everything, but less about himself, just as, if he questions himself, it is because he thinks; if he thinks, then it is because he exists. Therefore, the only thing we should judge true is the reason - the ability that is able to produce true knowledge. For this reason, the man started to have the possibility of option on its actions, which before was even questioned.

The second moment for Berman (1986) was characterized by the Enlightenment. He regards it as the golden moment of modernity, in which the subject is seen as the center from which flows the other entities.

Resulting from the French Revolution, the heyday of modernism, from our perspective, is marked by idiosyncrasy. Thus, it presents the possibility for man to overcome

his minority status (heteronomy), becoming autonomous and therefore subject of his own existence.

Nevertheless, anxieties and uncertainties still prevail. After all, the man was immersed in a time of profound economic, political and social transformations, finding himself as a producer of adjustments and also the victim of misunderstandings. For this reason, he will seek the truth in science and its referents, that is, through scientific knowledge, he will aim the separation between the 'world of certainties' and 'uncertainties', the world of 'primary qualities' and 'secondary ones'.

Thus, while the science, the technology, the institutions and the notion of an autonomous subject were strengthened, on the other hand, they began to build the following questions: Will be science the producer of certainties or ideologies? Would not be the science and technology in the service of the capitalist project of man maintenance in a state of ignorance / lack of culture (Rouanet), blindness (Saramago), minority (Kant), alienation (Marx), heteronomy (Piaget) as they were in the Middle Age? Would not be fiction this notion of autonomous subject?

One result is that reason and its correspondents principles began to be asked as truths generators. Giddens (1991), in this regard, said that modern reflexivity corrupts the reason when this is understood as a producer of genuine knowledge.

The pre-modernity, as we have noted, was driven by the tradition, which, according to Giddens (1991), oriented itself towards the past. This, in turn, is exacerbated influence for the present time. Tradition, therefore, is an internal element to the pre-modern social life that fuses the act to the time-space dimension, making them inseparable. Although the tradition is also related to the future, this is not seen as a segregated temporality of past and present. In such a condition, the submission to the destination is presupposed, what in no way depends on either the man's will or action. In this context, knowledge is synonymous of having the ability to reproduce these experiences transmitted traditionally.

The modernity, instead, means a break with the values of the 'Old Regime'. Thus, we have the following scenario: in the place of a harmonized community and directed by a control unit also guided by political and theological power, nation-states are born - conflicting, antagonistic and of cultural, political and economic domination, as well as contributors for the transformation of the modern social subject in an identity one.

Regarding the time-space relationship, it becomes problematic and perceived by the subject, enabling the temporal fragmentation and spatial closure. You see, then, that modernity has set a time for each activity. In respect of the space, it led to the construction of institutions specialized in various fields of knowledge (hospitals, schools and nursing homes). However, the new structures also aimed at the production and legitimation of the truth. Hence, the modern experts eventually replace the churchmen. Yet, in the modern era, the specialization is possible for the laity, and the dissemination of knowledge puts them at an advantage to be pre-modern.

As for the last moment, Berman (1986) states that social practices are amplified which move the whirlwind of modern life. In contrast, over time, the population was divided into 'fragments crowds' incompatible with each other, which shows its distance from the original modern design: the 'emancipatory reason' as a stable, immutable, fixed and globalizing unit. In this scenario, science is seen as exchange value, losing its emancipatory legitimacy (Habermas, 1990).

According to Hall (2014), in the mid-nineteenth century, with the increasing number of subjects who had judged deviant behavior, they began to be the studied object. This

aspect led to the construction of theories that confronted the *status quo* of the time - the reason concept as the only source of true knowledge. Marx and Engels (2014), as well as Freud (2012), may have been the greatest representatives of this questioning.

In relation to Marxism, for evidence that man is not only a producer of his story, stating that he is also a product of cultural and materials elements (result of the economic base). Freud (2012), in turn, with the invention of the unconscious system, claims that the subject acts, engendered by psychological processes. According to Hall (2014) and Berman (1986), these authors provided information in order to question the notion of the subject and his collapse as an autonomous being, guided by reason, as proposed by the Enlightenment.

However, scholars in the field, as Habermas (1990), consider that, even so, the modern design has not been overcome. Lyotard (1988), by contrast, considers it obsolete. In defending this position, despite agreeing with the Marxist and Freudian criticism, he questions the science as a producer of truths and explanatory models based on grand narratives, as the behaviorist, the Freudian and the Marxist.

## The postmodern subject

Lyotard (1988) characterizes postmodernity as a movement arising from the death of totalizing narratives, from the critique to the notion of progress, to the project and shape idea among other aspects. Instead, the recurrence, the random, the antinarrative and antiform notions arise (Harvey, 2001). So, the subject who breaks out in the Enlightenment - individual (free, rational, historical, teleological); social (he is recognized in the public and private sphere); urban (metropolitan); fixed and stable - is seen in the post-modern as discontinuous, fragmented, composed of several identities which may even be mutually contradictory.

Simmel (1973), in this regard, explains that the metropolis - postmodern environment - is responsible for this psychological situation, because in it the consciousness and intelligence predominate, developed to ensure the protection of the subject against external threats. You see, then, that the metropolitan man acts guided by reason rather than affection. Thus, the individuality and the value given to the objects are reduced to economic, and man is uplifted based on his assets capable of valuation.

We add that this attitude results from the amount and speed of received information, which alternate with the internal stimuli, resulting in the consuming of the last reserves of energy of the subject. For Simmel (1973), the inability to respond with enthusiasm and depth to new sensations comes from this situation. Under La Taille (2009) and Bauman (1998) ideas, the people of the metropolis behave like tourists, that is, they see, they learn and change the subject. "Look and leave. Do not set" (La Taille, 2009, p. 30).

Harvey (2001, p. 46) still sets the new environment as bonding of heterogeneous spaces, for what it is sought for "[...] plural organic and strategies [...]", rather than a "[...] functional zoning and different activities". Thus, to maintain self-preservation, the individual acts from the social point of view so negatively as personally, that is, he has a vision and a nihilistic disposition; seeking, ultimately, for individual solutions to social problems. From this perspective, Simmel (1973) points out that, if the metropolitan subject reacts with the energy demanded by the relationships provided in the interim, it will fatigue his psyche. So, what is seen as insensitivity is merely the necessary for the maintenance of socialization.

In addition, due to this precisely indifference and to the preservation of the little energy that one has left, the metropolitan man is free from prejudice and worries about the little

things. But this metropolitan feel that everything is all right comes to its opposite, since the person, anywhere, feels so lonely and lost as in the crowd of the metropolis. Saramago (1995) was emblematic in this respect by stating that in this space we live immersed in a kind of blindness –the white - or guided by shadows. In this sense, the pursuit of the subject by ‘experiencing’ - a fact that makes up the modern sense - is replaced by living.

Let me explain. In a moment of transience, ephemerality, in which Marx and Engels (2014, p. 37) stated that "[...] all that is solid melts into air [...]", the modern subject search forexperiencing in order to strengthen the modern practices, seeking to make them certainties. We judge as typical the conclusions of Baudelaire (1996) on the obligation of the modern artist. For him, it was necessary to find the perpetual amid rampant occurrences that generated ephemerality and uncertainties.

In the post-modern, in turn, the transience is supported bythe subjectand designed as a syntagma. So, a new method is not more a focus, but changes in the nature of scienceare stated. According to Lyotard (1988), this new context, which is intended post-industrial, rejects the meta-narratives by judging them metaphysical theories. Thus, the ontogeny declines, which leads to the crisis of modernity aspects (reason, subject, completeness, truth, progress). Thus, we go to find new references such as: efficiency, power increased and performances optimization.

According to Hall (2014), in such a context, the figure of an alienated, anonymous and isolated subject arises. Along the same lines, Harvey (2001) argues that even the term alienation can be used in the present context. To understand an alienated being, it is required to stem from a view of personal identity - the reverse of the proposed in post-industrial times.

Kafka (2001) conceptualized this matter as to say that thesubject is metamorphosed, transformed into a disgusting insect, with impressive adaptability. As a cockroach, he lives in the sewage systems, in danger of death only when hegoes to the surface in search of food, because - when discovered –he does not know where to go.

As for the information, it is revealed as the source of its own legitimacy. But the role of science becomes to summarize, to organize, to retain and to spread the information. In this regard, Lyotard (1988) assured that the industrial revolution showed that without money there is no technology or science. Postmodernity, in turn, showed that without scientific and technical knowledge there is no wealth. Furthermore, he reinforces the notion that the economic and political competition in the post-industrial countries is given by the amount of knowledge produced and circulated as a commodity.

Let us retain: ‘postmodernity’ is integrated into the ‘late capitalism’. This stage is characterized, besides the production of surplus value – from capitalism it self –by the time-space compression. In other words, the spatiotemporal dispersion breaks boundaries and ultimately make it possible to obtain more profit.

Add to that: as Jameson (1997, p. 120), the identity is constructed by unifying the past and the future in relation to the present, as well as sentences are architected. These are unable to meet the time frames in question, which also does with the psychic life. Thus, the experience is reduced to a "[...] series of pure present unrelated to time [...]", making them unique temporal elements to be considered.

It is observedthe immediacy as one of the molders aspects of consciousness. In this respect, we consider symbolic the virtual applications that enable geolocation in a tiny time, as Lyotard (1988) defines the postmodern scene as cybernetic,computerized and basically informative.



In short: if before the control of nature and the pursuit of truth were aimed in order to obtain happiness, what is demanded today is performance. For this, the requirement is to find the error and to fix it. The knowledge is thus no longer self-referential, generating a fusion of the subject, continuous time and open space.

### **Piaget and the autonomy of the individual**

Piaget is a vehement defender of the notion of the subject, as noted, among other works, in the *O juízo moral na criança* (Piaget, 1994). In this, the emeritus thinker defined morality as a set of rules aimed at social harmony, meaning that the acquisition of moral values is essential to life in society. In order to corroborate his thesis, he began studies on moral Psychogenesis through the 'rules of the game'. He did this because this activity is interindividual whose respect for its effectiveness is the product of mutual agreements and involves moral values (fairness and honesty).

The method employed interrogation on the origin of the rules – what is the origin of them, who invented them (children or laid down by parents and grown-ups in general) and if they could be modified. Regarding practice, he asked the subjects to teach him to play with the argument that had forgotten how to.

The results showed three ways to relate to the rules of the game: anomy, heteronomy and autonomy. Clearly, these relationship modes are dependent on the interaction of the individual with the environment. If it does not occur or the offered stimuli are few or are not significant to the subject itself, this process does not occur.

Moreover, we can not overlook the power of affections in this process, as stated by Piaget himself (1973, p. 37-38):

In all behavior, the motivations and the energetic dynamism comes from affection, while the techniques and the adjustment of the means form the cognitive aspect. There is never purely intellectual action (multiple feelings involved in solving a mathematical problem, interests, values, [...]) as well as there are no acts that are purely affective (love presupposes understanding).

That said, the results showed that, firstly, children interact with the rules of the games in an anomie way. This form of relationship (from birth to the age of 5/6 years<sup>5</sup>) is characterized by the period of absence of morality. Nevertheless, the child begins to judge the regularity friendly - essential for the subsequent conduct towards the respect for the rules.

Following, Piaget (1994) noted that children, aged among 6 and 9/10 years old, showed different conducts towards such rules. During this period - called heteronomy, equivalent to minority to Kant (2005), - the subjects expressed interest in participating in collective and ruled activities. However, they still do it in an egocentric way - playing alongside other children, but not with or against them. They do so because they believe that the rules have been made long ago by Sirs / God and, therefore, it is impossible to change, even if those involved in the game agree to change the rules because they see this situation in a similar way to physical laws.

We could say that there is not the presence of a subjectivity or a subject yet. Ultimately, these children are comparable to pre-modern subjects.

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<sup>5</sup> Clearly, it is the average of chronological age. As Piaget stressed, age depends on the interaction of the subject with the environment, as well as the quality of the offered stimuli.

In the autonomy stage (from 9/10 years old), the subjects have opposite characteristics to the previous period. Now, respect and comply with the rules, besides that respect be the product of mutual agreements, they start to behave either like legislators or, at least, they show the competence to be so. We make this statement because the construction of a way to act is not enough to proceed in a consonant manner, as the habit, the exercise, the interaction are indispensable requirements.

From this, the aforementioned scholar began to question whether, with regard to the duties, the subjects would relate that way too. Because of this, he made further studies.

But before presenting the results, we reported that he only continued in his research on that issue, because the entry into the moral universe is by purchasing duties imposed by parents, such as not lying. Moreover, the imposition of these duties is only possible when the subject interests to participate in collective activities.

By establishing conversations with children about theft, lying, and clumsiness, he concluded that there is a heteronomy stage, translated by moral realism, which is characterized as follows: 1st) every action will be considered good if it is in accordance with the rules or with what adults say; 2nd) the duties are taken literally; 3rd) the disrespect to the duties is judged in terms of its external appearance. This happens because of the moral rules are not built by the subject; the conception of moral duty should be seen as obedience to the established beyond the ignorance of the reasons that led to the creation of these rules.

In autonomy occurs the overcoming of this realism. As a result, the duties become the product of agreements among the subjects and no more obedience to what was set.

Continuing his studies, Piaget (1994) investigated the notion of justice. We agree with La Taille (1992) when he said that Piaget did it for several reasons: 1) in relation to duty, he basically analyzed the moral heteronomy, that is, the one that is observed (not requiring reflection) - justice, by contrast, demand the thinking, the analysis of the situation, because only then the subject will be able to make a fair decision; 2) it is the moral notion more rational and easy of being investigated; 3) it is more or less independent of adult influences to develop - it is almost always at the expense and not because of the adult who imposes to the consciousness the notions of fair / unfair, only making necessary the mutual respect and solidarity among children; 4) it is the virtue that brings together the others (involves ideas relating to balance and reciprocity).

In a similar way to those interrogations made about the duties, Piaget (1994, p. 160) asked the children aspects which on the following basis: "Do the punishments that are given to children are always very fair, or so, is there a less fair of other?". The results again showed that children, before the autonomy, relate heteronomically, that is, they confuse justice with law and with what the authorities say, based on the idea that every crime will be punished by the immanent or retributive justice. In the autonomy, in turn, occurs the separation among justice, law and authority. The idea here is that every act must be assessed and sanctioned by reciprocity means.

With these surveys, Piaget (1994) ended his studies on morality expressing his thoughts on the determinants of moral development.

First, we reported that interpersonal relationships produce various psychological effects. And, as we said, they are not just products of society as a whole, nor the individual as an isolated unit.

Grouped into two types of relationship, the coercion ones are asymmetrical, impositive, that is, one of the poles imposes to the other his thinking, his criteria and his truths. This is because the rules are given in advance and, therefore, they are not rebuilt by

the subjects. Thus, in this kind of relationship, there is no reciprocity. Often maintained by tradition, it reinforces the egocentrism, since it hinders to put oneself in another's place. Imagine the consequences: the subject has his thoughts as the truth, which, in turn, were internalized by tradition imposed greatly by the Church; thus, he does not consider the other's thoughts. The subject, as a result, ends up believing, but does not know the reasons for this. Regarding morality, this type of relationship leads to unilateral respect for the laws and / or authorities, besides a distorted assimilation on the reasons of being of various rules, deriving the moral heteronomy, which provides a model to be followed.

The cooperation relationships are symmetrical, therefore, guided by reciprocity. They ask mutual agreements among the subjects, because the rules are not given *a priori*. We stress that only with the cooperation, the intellectual / moral development can occur. In this sense, it is required decentration - a process that can lead to mutual respect and to autonomy.

In short, "[...] in the heteronomy, the duty determines the good (it is good what is according with the learned rules), in the autonomy, the good determines the duty (one must act in a certain way because it is good)" (La Taille, 1992, p. 60).

We clarify that this act does not mean doing the same, but take into consideration the other, even when one disagrees with him (it is to coordinate points of views). Thus, the cooperative relationships provide a method, as "[...] good is not defined in advance, but may rise or renew every cooperation experience" (La Taille, 1992, p. 61).

Thus, the contemporary individual is heteronomous. For Kant (1785/2005), it means that he does not act morally, since his action does not support himself in the categorical imperative. For Piaget, in contrast, he is moral; however, his speech and practice are guided by the heteronomy, what means to be governed by others. In this sense, almost all people do not have a subjectivity, or it could not be understood as autonomous. Anyway, this does not prevent the Piaget's theory of the construction of subjectivity or that there are autonomous people, although rare. Therefore, Piaget (1932/1994) comes close to the idea that we are living 'neomodern' times.

## Final considerations

We can state, having as a parameter Piaget (1994), that the pre-modern subject was heteronomous, that is governed by rules dictated by the Catholic Church. He thought they were imposed by God. In this sense, they do not conceive themselves as legislators.

Another aspect is that they had driven a rigid and unquestioned respect from the rules. It can be inferred that they did not understand their sense as a regulator of interpersonal relationships by designing them in a similar way to physical laws. Thus, for more than they act in a certain way, even opposed to the *status quo* in use, they thought that things would always happen in the same way. For this reason, in relation to moral duties, pre-modern subjects believed that every act was good if it was according to the 'customs'. In addition, the rules were understood without considering the intention, and the moral norms were not re-elaborated. Consequently, the design was conceived as due observance to the established.

As for justice, the subject confused it with the law and with the established by the nobility / Church. The central notion was this: every crime should be punished through the application of immanent or retributive justice.

Modernity, on the other hand, allowed the emergence of the autonomous subject thought by Piaget (1994). As such, the subject acts according to his decisions based on reason and reciprocity. Hence, La Taille (1992, p. 113, authors emphasis) states that the individual frees himself from tradition and the intellectual autonomy becomes fruit of the reason powers in which belief replaces the demonstration. The moral autonomy is also the

[...] fruit of the reason, which to the dogma opposed the rational justification. Therefore, the Piagetian 'hero' is one that can say 'no' when the rest of society, possible hostage of traditions, says 'yes', as long as that 'no' is the result of that active intellectual *démarche* not just a result of a naive spirit of contradiction.

However, as stated, to the development of this subject, it is necessary that the individual may have the opportunity to enjoy social relations of cooperation. The coercion relations dull the development, stealing of children and adults the opportunity to emancipate themselves intellectually, morally and emotionally. Only social relations that enable the free exchange of points of views allow autonomy. That is why Piagetian philosophy is ... militant: defending democracy against all forms of authoritarianism (La Taille, 1992, p. 113).

It is seen that, for Piaget's theory, the notion of autonomous subject is a reality. Nevertheless, he only exists if the organism interacts with a mean that allows his construction. In this sense, Piaget would probably agree with us about the death and the no-building of the autonomous subject these days.

On the other hand, if we are correct, it will become problematic the thesis defended by himself about the *a priori* moral.

Please be advised that we are not referring to the Kantian's *a priori*, that is, a set of categories, forms or pure intuitions, universal and necessary, prior to any experience. Piaget (1994, p. 238), when referring to his epistemology, said that "[...] such concepts could only be *a priori* [...]", if we understand by *a priori* not naturally an innate idea, but a norm for which the reason has to tend, as it will refine itself.

In other words:

In fact, reciprocity imposes itself to the practical reason, as the logical principles impose morally to the theoretical reason. But from a psychological point of view, that is in fact and not in law, a norm *a priori* only has existence in the form of balance: it is the ideal balance for which tend the phenomena, and the whole question remains in knowing, given the facts, why its form is like this and no different. This last problem, which is from reflective order, but when the real and the spiritual becomes co-extensive. Waiting for this moment, let us confine ourselves to the psychological analysis, understanding that the experimental explanation of the reciprocal notion could not contradict anything in the *a priori* aspect of this same notion. From this point of view, the notion of equality or distributive justice has, unquestionably, individual or biological roots, necessary conditions but 'not' enough of its development (Piaget, 1994, p. 238, emphasis added).

That is why he refers to balancing (a functional invariant)<sup>6</sup> to denote the process of constant development due to the balance-unbalance, adjustment-maladjustment, organization-disorganization.

Nevertheless, the economic and social capitalist order tries to report the ideology that everything is under its control. This idea is, as Habermas (1990), questionable. After all, the

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<sup>6</sup> Functional invariants refer to functions that are from biological origin, aiming to lead the subject to the organization and to the adaptation on his environment. This means that every organism when is unbalanced, search for assimilating and accommodating itself to the reality. Such mechanisms are triggered involuntarily by the organism when it is out of balance, aimed at building knowledge and, consequently, the establishment of new state of balancing.

psychological development is a reality, especially the ethical / moral that leads to the production of autonomous subjectivities (although rare). Otherwise, we are forced to admit that all the Piagetian building, based on balancing – according to the statement given by Popper (1975) - is overcome.

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