

The Word Finder Thesaurus that comes with my word processor (for the record, editing software called *Nota Bene*, a practically unknown but unique instrument for people writing reams of 'text') provides the usual associations with the word 'school': academy, university and college. However, it also catalogues a much longer list of negative associations: band, cabal, clan, clique, coterie, cult, faction, gang, mob, sect and tribe. Although these last words may not immediately spring to mind in a scholarly context, they become increasingly relevant as soon as one critically examines academic practices.

An earlier version of this editorial was called 'On masters and slaves'. It argued that for all the individuality and originality on which we pride ourselves, many people in most academic fields seem to want to slavishly follow one or two Masters or Gurus, whom they admire and revere rather uncritically. However, someone correctly pointed out that the 'slave' metaphor was hardly appropriate, since slaves are by definition people who are enslaved, and not those who willingly follow their Masters, as is so often true in academia.

So, keeping the 'Master' metaphor, the notion of 'School', and especially its negative associations, seems more appropriate to describe what was on my mind: the fact that, even in discourse studies, scholars (yes, people who originally were teachers in 'schools') organize by school, clique, cult or sect, and seldom by issue or problem. They do so, and are taught (or often forced) to do so right from the time they prepare their doctoral degrees, when supervisors tell them what to read and what not to read, what scholarly work is interesting and what is not. I have met many bright PhD candidates in many countries who are desperate about being unable to make such a choice. For instance, in Latin America, young discourse analysts worry whether they should do 'French' discourse analysis (as many of their teachers did), or maybe follow the 'North-Americans' or the 'British', rather than doing their own Latin-American thing.

This is how one becomes a post-modernist, or a conversation analyst, or a discourse ethnographer, or a sociolinguist, or a discourse grammarian, or a critical discourse analyst, among many other schools, directions, cliques or persuasions.

There is nothing wrong with specialization. Serious scholarly work always demands detailed analysis of just a few aspects of a serious theoretical or empirical issue. And yes, of course, also in academia there is good and bad research. Surely, no one can claim to thoroughly know all domains of discourse analysis, let alone the neighbouring disciplines. A broad orientation almost always implies superficiality and being superficial demeans academic research.

However, necessary specialization and detailed analysis of some phenomena is one thing, but founding more or less exclusive schools with their own Masters, entering sects with their own pundits and their own sacred symbols and catechisms of the True Belief, is something entirely different—especially when it is not uncommon that such scholars simply learn to ignore the rest of the people in the field or discipline. They may only read and quote their buddies, and nothing much else, and in the cosiness and familiarity of their own school, with its own style, norms, methods and aims, they feel really at home, and not threatened by alternative ways of thinking and analysing.

So in linguistics one may be a generativist or a functionalist and, from experience,

I know such people don't talk to each other (sometimes literally so). And among the functionalists one either follows Master X or Master Y, both of whom think the other Master does extremely poor functional analysis. And closer to home, in the study of text and talk, one simply cannot combine, according to our Masters, something like conversation analysis and the formal semantics of coherence, or (as I argued before in another editorial) something cognitive and something social. And as soon as one does something social and wants to talk about macro things like power and institutions, then one may be accused of functionalism, and never be taken seriously by micro-oriented phenomenologists—or vice versa.

One sees such arbitrary divisions more clearly in fields where one enters as a stranger. Where small factions are engaged in Mortal Combat, the ingenu(e) wonders why these people don't work together on some serious issue, each contributing insights according to their own expertise. Thus, as a frequent visitor to cognitive and social psychology, I have always been surprised by the tight divisions between different orientations. Thus, many current social psychologists may learn about mental schemata from their cognitive colleagues, but they ignore the sociologists and anthropologists who might teach them a thing or two about the 'social' in social psychology. Similarly, the cognitive psychologists will seldom read a book in social psychology, let alone refer to it, although it seems obvious that the mind is as socially constituted as the social actors that have one.

In addition to that insularity, we also find the usual academic nationalism I previously warned against—the fact that most scholars, especially from Big Countries (such as the USA) will almost exclusively read and refer only to work from their own country, and ignore what is being done abroad. One often wonders why they have to learn a second or third language in the first place. Of course, this is less the case for those Schools whose Masters happen to be Foreign (e.g. French) in the first place.

Many more examples come to mind, but the point should be clear, for discourse analysis as well. Instead of advocating fruitless integration where none seems realistic, the least one can do is to make sure that we know what the others do, and how our colleagues from the other side of the corridor, or in another country, deal with specific issues. We should begin to forget about paradigms and start to learn to think in terms of problems, and the often joint and multidisciplinary ways of studying them. Maybe we have a fascinating new method or theoretical concept, but only boring academic 'problems, whilst others have an intriguing social problem but no instruments to deal with it, or vice versa.

Maybe even more important than in our research, such a non-exclusionary spirit of academic cooperation should appear in our teaching. Instead of forming students within one paradigm, or teaching our field as a collection of schools and directions, we may focus on the discipline as a series of interesting problems that can be analysed in many ways, and whose solution almost certainly requires serious teamwork across several boundaries. The real Master's teaching should always be: Don't follow *me!*

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