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COV&R

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"BATTLING TO THE END" 1914-2014

The Escalation of Violence and Victimization
René Girard and Jean-Luc Marion

"Magedeburger Ehrenmal" by Ernst Barlach

COV&R Conference: July 21-24, 2014, at the Kardinal-Doepfner-Haus in Freising near Munich, Germany

100 years World War I

The memory of the outbreak of the First World War a hundred years ago raises far-reaching questions concerning the source and course of violent confrontation. This can be seen in recent publications about the subject such as: Christopher CLARK's *The Sleepwalkers* (2012), Ernst PIPER's *Nacht über Europa* (2013) and Herfried MÜNKLER's *Der große Krieg* (2013), among others. The nature and proportions of the First World War led some theoreticians to define it as a breach in human history and as the great seminal catastrophe of the 20th

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COV&R Object: "To explore, criticize, and develop the mimetic model of the relationship between violence and religion in the genesis and maintenance of culture. The Colloquium will be concerned with questions of both research and application. Scholars from various fields and diverse theoretical orientations will be encouraged to participate both in the conferences and the publications sponsored by the Colloquium, but the focus of activity will be the relevance of the mimetic model for the study of religion."

The *Bulletin* is also available online: **http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/bulletin/**

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Theological Origins of Modernity
Seminar Announcement
14th Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas

Please consider submitting an abstract up to 500 words for my seminar at the 2014 ISSEI Porto Conference: Images of Europe: Past, Present, Future Aug 4-8 2014 http://issei2014.com

The Theological Origins of Modernity http://issei2014.com/The_Theological_Origins.html
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Since Hans Blumenberg's Die Legitimität der Neuzeit (The Legitimacy of the Modern Age, English 1983) first appeared in 1966, a number of writers have revisited his claim that European modernity arose not from the overthrow but from breakdown of medieval Christendom. Blumenberg defended modern "self-assertion" against various "secularization" hypotheses and the notion that modernity is simply "indebted" to Christianity as its cultural "heritage." The picture is far more complicated than that. Modernity, he argued, was an escape from insoluble theological and philosophical failures of medieval orthodoxy, particularly its inability to overcome Gnosticism (the main rival against which it had defined itself). Willful rebels did not subvert medieval Christendom; rather, modernity arose (in the wake of its internal collapse) as an original way. Blumenberg's picture registered a broad starting point (implicitly or explicitly) for a number of critics (such as Anthony Levi, Charles Taylor, Marcel Gauchet, Michael Gillespie, Brad Gregory, René Girard, John Milbank, and Robert Pippin) who decline the invitations either to post-modernity (as in Nietzsche, Heidegger, or the post-structuralists) or to pre-modernity (such as Voegelin, Strauss, or MacIntyre). But as these writers sympathetic to modernity show, it is hardly immune from criticism. Though modernity conceives itself as a break with history and its own Christian past in particular, it has never been able to bring this break to accomplishment, or to extricate itself fully from its theological origins.

The theme of this panel is the origins of modernity from the antinomies of Western Christendom, yet its apparent inability to detach itself from them. (Its title is borrowed from Michael Gillespie's 2008 book of the same name.) These antinomies owed a great deal to a distinctively Western theology of grace going back to Augustine (though naturally the medieval crises had many other ramifications and aspects too, political, economic, psychological, and moral). By the high Middle Ages, Western Christendom had engendered burgeoning personal, cultural, and institutional crises it afforded little means to resolve. These centrally involved (but were by no means limited to) the theology of divine omnipotence, free will, predestination, and original sin. If Blumenberg and the others are right, modernity sprang from persistent conflicts this theology seemed to breed, especially after the medieval rediscovery of Greek philosophy. But neither has it been able to escape them.

This panel invites contributions on any aspect and from any point of view on this problematic, the contradictory role of Western Christianity (or the role of Christian contradictions) in the emergence of modernity—not the relative continuity suggested by "secularization" or "heritage," but a more complex and vexed relation, in which modernity is at once an alternative to theological and other impasses of medieval culture, yet bound to its Christian origins all the same, as to its generative source.

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century. Such an event calls for a wide-ranging analysis of the different aspects of the war itself, something that Herfried MÜNKLER carried out with unprecedented detail and rigor in his monumental book about the Great War. Never before had the relationship of attack to defense implied such an escalation towards the total deployment of antagonist forces on a global level. However, it is not only the trans-European character of the conflict or the brutality of trench warfare that raises significant questions about this singular event, but the transformative character and the dissemination of violence that can be located before and after the war itself: on the one hand, the Napoleonic and the Franco-Prussian wars in the 19th century; on the other hand, the Russian, Chinese and Spanish civil wars and the rise of totalitarianism in the 20th century. In this sense, the First World War can be seen as a crystallization point of what René GIRARD – against the Hegelian understanding of history – has called "the law of human relations": an escalation of violence even at the risk of total destruction.

René Girard

In his discussion with Benoît CHANTRE on the escalation of violence originally published under the title *Achever Clausewitz* (English translation *Battling to the End,* German translation *Im Angesicht der Apokalypse. Clausewitz zu Ende denken*), René GIRARD draws on the resources of mimetic theory to analyze the problematic of the "escalation to the extremes", or more specifically: the inability of politics to contain the reciprocal intensification of violence, the transformation in the nature of warfare from the 18th to the 20th century and the implications of the French-German conflict (from the Franco-Prussian war to the battle of Verdun) with regard to the new forms of worldwide violence in the 21st century. GIRARD's book *Battling to the End* offers as coordinates three axes of reflection which situate the thematic nucleus of this conference: sacrifice and the modalities of the sacred (from the "archaic" to the "corrupted" sacred); the nature and implications of warfare; and the transformation of violence on a global scale. These thematic questions articulate a complex field of research and pose challenging questions to GIRARD's sense of mimetic theory. Is Christian revelation the only possibility of identifying the ultimate injustice of sacrificial mechanisms, and, if so, is it doomed to failure by its very elimination of sacrifice as the means to temporary and partial pacification? Do we live in a world in which political institutions can no longer provide a counterweight to the disseminating and ever increasing violence perpetuated by humans? Does the Girardian use of the term "absolute war" apply to our contemporary reality, despite the decentered character of warfare after the collapse of states? These questions call for discourse among different disciplines – like philosophy, theology and anthropology, as well as political and social sciences – in order to shed light on the problematic of the escalation of violence and victimization. They also show the challenges of modern Western culture in reflecting upon the role of peace in educational contexts and how important Girard's mimetic insights into desire and rivalry are in this respect.

Jean-Luc Marion

GIRARD declares in his book the necessity of producing "a quite different kind of rationality" (*Battling to the End*, p. 2) in order to grasp the radical nature of violence. Accordingly, the conference will seek to compare the contribution of mimetic theory with the insights of other theories and disciplines. The phenomenology of "*donation*" developed by Jean-Luc MARION points to important aspects in this context. MARION's approach to the problem of evil and vengeance in *Prolegomena to Charity* runs parallel to several lines of the Girardian analysis of the scapegoat mechanism, not only in the relationship between aggression and victimization, but also in the role of charity as providing the only escape from a subjectivity imprisoned by the destructive mechanisms of rivalrous desire. In order to think beyond this "logic of evil", MARION seeks to develop what GIRARD declared a cultural desideratum: an alternative type of rationality. That is in the broad sense the purpose of MARION's "third reduction", a reduction no longer to the appearance of objectivity (HUSSERL) or to the beingness of being (HEIDEGGER), but to *donation* itself. The implications of this step beyond the purview of phenomenology lead *inter alia* to quite another view of sacrifice, related to the very coming-over that delivers the gift from any kind of con-

ditioning: sacrifice as something that does not require destruction, exchange or even contract, but a radical approach to the infinite – a line of thought prominent also in the works of Emmanuel LEVINAS and Jan PATOČKA.

Adrian Navigante

COV&R AT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

Program of the Annual Meeting November 22-25, 2014, San Diego, CA

COV&R will present two sessions at the 2014 AAR meeting in San Diego, CA. Exact days and times of sessions will be determined by the AAR this summer and will be announced in the fall Bulletin. Questions about COV&R sessions at the AAR may be directed to Martha REINEKE, coordinator of COV&R sessions at the AAR, martha.reineke@uni.edu.

The 2014 COV&R sessions offer an exciting opportunity to showcase recent scholarship on mimetic theory at a conference that attracts over 9,000 AAR members. The sessions will introduce mimetic theory to AAR members who previously may have been unfamiliar with the work of René GIRARD. Most important, the sessions will apprise attendees of the vitality of the field and of the varied ways in which scholars of mimetic theory are drawing on GIRARD's insights to illuminate and advance scholarship in theology and religion.

Session I (AAR Date and Time TBA)

Theme: René Girard, Secular Modernity, and Politics

Our first session will focus on two recent publications by scholars whose work intersects with the topics of politics and modernity. Scott COWDELL's work *René Girard and Secular Modernity: Christ, Culture, and Crisis* will be the focus of one conversation. Grant KAPLAN of St. Louis University will offer a reflection on the book, and author Scott COWDELL, Charles Sturt University, will offer a response. The second half-session will offer persons in attendance an opportunity to engage *Resisting Violence and Victimization: Christian Faith and Solidarity in East Timor* by Joel HODGE. William CAVANAUGH, DePaul University, will offer comments reflecting on how insights from the book are being engaged broadly by scholars in the field, and Thomas RYBA, Purdue University / University of Notre Dame, will join CAVANAUGH in conversation to draw out links and insights that can create bridges to mimetic theory. Author Joel HODGE, Australian Catholic University, will offer a response.

About Scott Cowdell's book [a review follows in this Bulletin on p. 13]*:* Australian theologian Scott COWDELL provides the first systematic interpretation of René GIRARD on the twinned themes of secularity and modernity. Rather than repeating the more usual account of triumphant reason evident in declining religious belief and church affiliation, GIRARD offers a darker view of secular modernity. It is the progressive winding-back of religion, which he understands as the covertly violent basis of human order. So while religion *is* implicated in violence, as its cultured despisers insist, for GIRARD they entirely misunderstand the relationship. Religion emerges for GIRARD as a necessary evil, containing rivalry's potentially catastrophic escalation by the memory of primal cathartic violence. Rooted in the management of our unfocussed and unstable desiring, religion's targeted, culture-founding violence is encoded in prohibitions, myths, and rituals. Yet in the Judeo-Christian vision, religion transcends its origins. The victim-making engine of all religions and cultures is sabotaged by the Bible, according to GIRARD, setting history on a secularizing path towards modernity. This is NIETZSCHE's death of God properly understood: the collapse of religion's social function and the release of a dangerous instability that GIRARD charts up to the present. Biblical apocalyptic, as in Jesus' claim not to bring peace but a sword, is thus understood as a prediction of how human history will unfold without its customary religious protections. The only alternative, for GIRARD, is to follow Jesus' undermining of this whole religious mechanism, and his commitment to establishing human togetherness on a non-violent foundation. In our age of totalizing conflict, endemic civil war, and entrenched terrorism, René GIRARD emerges in COWDELL's clear and comprehensive treatment as a global prophet who demands our attention.

About Joel Hodge's book: The reality and nature of religious faith raises difficult questions for the modern world; questions that represent themselves when faith has grown under the most challenging circumstances. In East

Timor, widespread Christian faith emerged when suffering and violence were inflicted on the people by the state. This book seeks a deeper understanding of faith and violence, exploring how Christian faith and solidarity affected the hope and resistance of the East Timorese under Indonesian occupation in their response to state-sanctioned violence. Joel HODGE argues for an understanding of Christian faith as a relational phenomenon that provides personal and collective tools to resist violence. Grounded in the work of mimetic theorist René GIRARD, HODGE contends that the experience of victimization in East Timor led to an important identification with Jesus Christ as self-giving victim and formed a distinctive communal and ecclesial solidarity. The Catholic Church opened spaces of resistance and communion that allowed the Timorese to imagine and live beyond the violence and death perpetrated by the Indonesian regime. Presenting the East Timorese stories under occupation and GIRARD's insights in dialogue, this book offers fresh perspectives on the Christian Church's ecclesiology and mission.

Session II (AAR Date and Time TBA)

Theme: New Directions in Mimetic Theory

Our second session will feature the scholarship of David DAWSON and Brian COLLINS. The session will begin with a reflection by David DAWSON, University of Costa Rica, on Brian COLLINS' book: *The Head Beneath the Altar: Hindu Mythology and the Critique of Sacrifice.* Brian COLLINS, Ohio University, will offer a response. Audience discussion will round out the session.

We will move next to a panel discussion of David DAWSON's book: *Flesh Becomes Word: A Lexicography of the Scapegoat or, the History of an Idea*. Panelists include Matt PATTILLO The New School for Social Research; Robert SEGAL King's College, University of Aberdeen; and William JOHNSEN, Michigan State University. Panelists will consider ways in which the historical circumstances of the lexical formation of "the scapegoat" have rich implications for the making of the modern world as well as for modern theories of the scapegoat in a variety of fields and disciplines. David DAWSON, University of Costa Rica will offer a response.

About Brian Collins' session: This session will focus on ways in which certain Hindu myths expose the scapegoat mechanism at the root of culture and undermine the sacrificial system central to the worldview of Brahmins in ancient India, setting the stage for great sacrifice-rejecting systems like Buddhism. Because the texts discussed may be unfamiliar to many, handouts will be provided to cover unfamiliar names and major concepts and special attention will be paid to parallel narratives from the classical and biblical traditions like the stories of Abraham and Isaac, Oedipus and Orestes. This session will offer all attendees, including specialists in Hinduism and those who are largely unfamiliar with Hinduism, a wonderful opportunity to reflect with Brian COLLINS on his groundbreaking work, which is an unprecedented engagement of mimetic theory with one of the oldest of the world religions. COLLINS' application of mimetic theory has implications for mimetic theorists who have interests in GIRARD'S own exploration of Hinduism in GIRARD'S 2011 book, *Sacrifice*. It also may prompt Girardian scholars to consider anew the implications for mimetic theory of a robust engagement with an Asian religious tradition.

About David Dawson's session [see also book review in this Bulletin on p. 17]*:* The scapegoat has enjoyed a long and sundry history of scholarly uses during the last century from its inclusion as a ritual category in James FRAZER'S ethnological opus *The Golden Bough*, to its pivotal roles in projects as seemingly at odds as DERRIDA'S deconstruction of Western metaphysics and René GIRARD'S theory of cultural genesis. As designating the unwarrantedly blamed or punished, the scapegoat's importance to contemporary theories of violence, like its vernacular expression in dozens of languages, can be traced to the dissemination of a secular metaphor that first appears in English print during the 1600s. Though the word is itself coined by the translator William TYNDALE for his sixteenth century translation of *Leviticus* (where it names one of two sacrificial goats chosen by lot to escape with its life from the animal sacrifices prescribed for the Day of Atonement festival) it swiftly acquires a second, more popular signification. Where precisely does this meaning come from and what are the implications of its semantic crystallization in the dawn of the modern age? Accessing digital repositories of primary source material from the period in

question, DAWSON sets out on a groundbreaking search for the origin of the expression in such wide use today. He tracks the scapegoat from its beginnings in Mesopotamian ritual across centuries of typological interpretation and fluctuating reflection on the meaning of Jesus' death, to its first informal uses in the pornographic and plague literature of the 1600s. The study converges at last on the word's present meaning and usage as these take recognizable shape in the context of New English Quaker persecution and proto-feminist diatribe at the turn of the 17th century.

Business Meeting: **Please plan to stay for a brief business meeting at the conclusion of the second session. Bring your ideas for the 2015 COV&R sessions at the AAR, which will be held in Atlanta, GA.**

Martha Reineke

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

The theme of the COV&R 2014 Meeting in Freising, Germany, July 21-24, embeds our conversation in history, in the modern escalation of violence that marked the outbreak in 1914 of World War I, the so-called "war to end all wars" that has become, in fact, the war that has unleashed a spiraling series of conflicts. The present show-down in the Ukraine between Russia and the West eerily recalls the beginnings of two world wars. Does a violent history always repeat itself, imitate itself?

Marking the centennial anniversary, 1914-2014, the conference organizers—Walter SCHEIDLER and Wolfgang PALAVER, together with Richard SCHENK, Adrian NAVIGANTE, and Tobias HOLISCHKA—have drawn inspiration from René GIRARD's apocalyptic reading in *Battling to the End (Achever Clausewitz)* of modern European history, from the Franco-Prussian conflicts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through their twentieth-century afterlife. They have endeavored to bring GIRARD's thought in conversation with that of Herfried MÜNKLER, author of *The New Wars*, who will be a featured speaker at the conference.

Joining history with philosophy and probing the reciprocal relationships forged through the exchanges of gifts (between friends) and blows (between enemies), the organizers have also welcomed the distinguished philosopher Jean-Luc MARION to resume his conversation with Girard at COV&R 2014.

Approximately sixty proposals for papers and sessions have been received for COV&R 2014, and the meeting promises to be, as Richard SCHENK has written to me, "a major European event."

To celebrate the 90th birthday of René GIRARD on Christmas day, 2013, a special issue of the Polish journal, *Studia Gdańskie*[*], edited by Adam ROMEJKO, was dedicated to him. Wilhelm GUGGENBERGER and Wolfgang PALAVER edited a special 2013 issue of the *Journal of Religion and Violence* (Vol. 1, issue 2) dedicated to the topic of GIRARD's mimetic theory.

Phil ROSE informs me that René GIRARD will be receiving the 2014 Walter J. Ong Award for Career Achievement in Scholarship from the Media Ecology Association. The latter award, named after Walter ONG, S.J., conveniently points to St. Louis University, where ONG was a distinguished member of the faculty. COV&R 2015—the meeting at which we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of COV&R's foundation—will take place in St. Louis, thanks to Grant KAPLAN.

Our common work in COV&R and through the broad network of Girardian associations and foundations (e.g., Imitatio, Raven Foundation, The Cornerstone Forum, Preaching Peace) continues to yield important scholarly work in a variety of fields. The second volume of *Violence, Desire, and the Sacred,* edited by Scott COWDELL, Chris FLEMING, and Joel HODGE, has appeared—a rich fruit of the Australian Girard Seminar. Two volumes edited by Vern Neufeld REDEKOP and Thomas RYBA—*René Girard and Creative Mimesis* and *René Girard and Creative Reconciliation*—have also recently appeared as a major contribution. At the invitation of Palgrave Press, Sheelah Treffle HIDDEN is at work with a team of Girardian colleagues to prepare *The Handbook of Mimetic Theory and Religion.* The Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture Series edited by William JOHNSEN at Michigan State University Press

[*] *The mentioned volume of Studia Gdańskie can be accessed at http://www.studiagdanskie.diecezja.gda.pl/pdf/sg_xxxii.pdf; its articles didn't find their way into the bibliography of this issue of the Bulletin but will be added to the next. At the end of each contribution it contains an English summary [Editor's Remark].*

continues to bring forth an extraordinary sequence of volumes, the most recent authored by René GIRARD, Cesáreo BANDERA, Brian COLLINS, Guiseppe FORNARI, and Sandor GOODHART.

The good work continues! I look forward to seeing many of you in Freising.

Ann W. Astell

MUSINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

A few months ago I sent off a manuscript that I hope will be published by the University of Notre Dame Press with the title *Apocalypse Deferred: Japan, Hiroshima, and Mimetic Theory*. Its contents are drawn from some of the papers given at the 2012 COV&R conference that was held in Tokyo. Due to editorial constraints (word limit, thematic unity, etc.) I could not include all the papers I would have liked to, still I am very happy with the collection and think that it represents, especially in those papers that explore Japanese culture from a mimetic viewpoint, its expansion into somewhat new territory. It represented to me a kind of last official act of the conference for which I was responsible.

These conferences each have a life of their own. They are conceived in the mind of some individual, who probably wonders if she is being prudent in trying to organize something like this (she is not). It gestates in conversations and emails as the person tries to form a coherent and yet capacious enough theme that will appeal as broadly as possible without being so abstract that it loses focus. The organizer tries to develop a coherent theme to draw out aspects of mimetic theory that are underdeveloped or overdeveloped in one direction. For example, last Martha REINEKE helped those of us who attended the *A Land between Two Rivers: Space, Place, and Mimetic Theory* to consider more carefully the environmental problems that threaten us. In the past some conferences have looked more closely at the political implications of mimetic theory, some at the religious implications, others at the literary. It is a testament to the breadth of René GIRARD's thought that all of these dimensions have to be included, if we want to do justice to his theory.

All of this conceptual work is nice balanced by the demands of concrete realty: where are people going to sleep, eat, and congregate. The details turn out to have a great deal to do with whether the people attending have a good experience or a trying one (or, quite possibly, a good trying experience). One learns how much one needs the help of others to bring this kind of thing to birth.

And then there is the aftermath.

Sometimes the result is a collection or proceedings, sometimes it is articles appearing in a variety of journals, especially *Contagion*. Other results are less tangible but perhaps more significant. Participants readjust their goals and visions through the experience of the conference. Older scholars learn from younger ones, younger ones test their ideas. Best practices get shared and so there is a 'multiplier effect.'

In July, after an absence of several years, we will gather in Europe, in Germany to be more exact, to consider some events from twentieth century in the light of GIRARD's last major work, *Achever Clauswitz* or *Battling to the End*. We will also have an opportunity to engage with one of the leading philosophers of our time, Jean-Luc MARION, as well as one of the great historians, Herfreid MÜNKLER. Father Richard SCHENK, Prof. Walter SCHWEIDLER, and Dr. Adrián NAVIGANTE have prepared a rich conference, with much material for our reflection.

I write all this in order to make an obvious point: the conference itself is not realized until we, the members of COV&R, actually participate in it. That is the goal of all the efforts and that is what makes it all worthwhile. In the crush and the rush of our daily lives, these meetings held in (for some) far-off lands can seem a kind of add-on or supplement and one level, I would not deny that. All of us have limited resources in terms of time and money and have to make considered choices. Still, the interaction that goes on at the Conference, beyond the formal sessions, presentations, and papers, has a value that is not easily calculable. A number of people who, for whatever reasons, had missed the conferences for a few years and then attended again, have made comments to me that run along the lines of: "I had forgotten just how much one gets out of these things" or "It just isn't good to go so long without this kind of thing." It seemed to me that they were expressing a sense that whatever sacrifice at-

tending might have required, was far outweighed by the good they had received.

Jeremiah Alberg

REPORTS ON CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Affiliation of Mimetic Theory for Emerging Scholars

In 2012, a group of young scholars of mimetic theory attended the Imitatio Summer School on Mimetic Theory in Leusden, the Netherlands. We had a wonderful, inspirational and educational fortnight together, learning from outstanding teachers who encouraged us to pursue our studies of the theory of Rene GIRARD—Sandy GOODHART, James ALISON, Paul DUMOUCHEL and Mark ANSPACH.

At the end of the Summer School, Thérèse ONDERDENWIJNGAARD (our organiser and host) gathered us together to discuss 'where to from here?'

We had a strong sense that the camaraderie and collegiality we had built should not simply fade away. Particularly, we wanted to be a part of the next generation of Girardian scholars, and to participate in COV&R. We decided to form an 'emerging scholars' group, and also to try and mount an online journal for work by such scholars who would appreciate peer feedback as they develop their ideas.

We proposed the formal incorporation of our group to the board of COV&R at the next meeting, at Iowa in 2013. The board were very warm, supportive and enthusiastic about our goal of nurturing the emerging scholars of COV&R, and voted to make us an official group within COV&R. We have taken the name AMES: the Affiliation of Mimetic Theory for Emerging Scholars, and we are working on our forthcoming journal 'Skandalon', and there is a great sense of excitement as we plan our activities for the coming years.

What is an 'emerging scholar'? We consider the definition to be broad and soft-edged, but in essence an emerging scholar is someone in the early years of their career. We are generally doctoral students or recent graduates, mostly young people so far, who are just starting our academic lives and are grateful to have a network of other like-minded people to share our ideas, give us peer feedback on our research, and make friends.

We encourage anyone who identifies as an 'emerging scholar' to contact us through the COV&R Facebook page for now—soon we hope to also have a page on the COV&R website—and we will keep COV&R members informed of our forthcoming activities.

Carly Osborne

BOOK REVIEWS

Bandera, Cesareo, *A Refuge of Lies: Reflections on Faith and Fiction.* East Lansing, MI: MSU Press, 2013 (viii, 156 pp.) ISBN: 978-1-60917-378-4. $19.95.

"What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" TERTULLIAN rhetorically inquired. This controversy has never abated, these days taking the form of a God/no God, science vs faith, fact vs fiction debate, around Darwinism. René GIRARD has expressed no interest in getting involved at this level, remarking blithely in *Evolution and Conversion*, "I do not see why God could not be compatible with science. If one believes in God, one also believes in objectivity. A traditional belief in God makes one a believer in the objectivity of the world." Still, Cesáreo BANDERA breathes new life into this conundrum when he engages literary and scriptural texts in a way that they elucidate each other. This he does by juxtaposing the faith of Abraham to the sacrificial logic of the Greeks, which he uncovers and spells out vividly in Homeric epic. He traces the confidence we enjoy in the ontological stability of the world to the faith of the biblical narrator voicing that of Abraham, of the prophets, of the Psalmist, who proclaim "The earth, O Lord is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statues. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments. The sum of your word is truth" (Ps 119:160). As BANDERA notes, the Psalmist "asks God for illumination, he wants to know the truth, he pleads for knowledge. It is not his truth, it is God's truth and he trusts God." In sum, he trusts in a world suffused the love of its creator.

Building on the insights of Eric AUERBACH's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, BANDERA contrasts the smooth, seamless style of narration we find in the *Iliad*, with its "famous narrative equilibrium in the midst of battle," to the blunt, roughshod

form of Biblical narrative, with its episodic gaps and discontinuities, and indifference to rhetorical ornament, which is such that "the invisible dimension of historical reality filters in, that a sense of depth and background is conveyed, a profound concern for essential truth beyond the empirical details is communicated at all levels." Unlike Homeric personae, these biblical characters have a history, no destiny or fate guides them, they are free, they can change, they're like us.

It is in this verisimilitude, and not in heroic tales, that we find the wellsprings of the modern realist fiction that has known such a fabulous career in the West since CERVANTES set out to test heroic paradigms against quotidian reality. BANDERA returns to *Don Quixote* throughout this book, extending and deepening the analyses he has performed in earlier works (*The Sacred Game, The Humble Story of Don Quixote;* see *COV&R Bulletin,* May 2007) by drawing NIETZSCHE into the orbit of the Don's madness. Just as romantics among us persist in identifying with the Don's antic mischief against a humdrum world of everyday reality, postmoderns revere NIETZSCHE's Will-to-Power perspectivism and his virulent mockery of "a one true world" without considering what is at stake for sanity and even survival. NIETZSCHE admired the Don and could not forgive CERVANTES for his deathbed conversion, where his return to sanity is expressed as a humble acceptance divine mercy, of forgiveness. NIETZSCHE's aim to "philosophize with a hammer" has a dramatic flair, but since virtually no one responded to his increasingly shrill taunts against the Bible, against WAGNER, it amounts to tilting at windmills. His declared veneration in his *Genealogy of Morals* for what he conceived as the master race of Athenians is a recipe for disaster, alike in this to the Don's immersion in medieval romance. According to CERVANTES, the Don, and we along with him, is well out of it. The desire of fiction is fueled by fictions of desire that we indulge in to our detriment.

When, upon his arrest, Jesus rebuked his followers to "put up your sword. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword," he was not offering a tidbit of perennial, axiomatic wisdom for future anthologists; he was summarizing what GIRARD's mimetic theory tells us about violent reciprocity; he was repositioning Heraclitean *polemos*, "king and father of all," as a matter for urgent, practical consideration. For GIRARD, and BANDERA after him, it is Satan's work to fight violence with violence, to encourage its spread, which is why GIRARD has redefined him as the mimetic principle par excellence. It is because violence will out among those who attempt to use it for their own putative purposes, even to quell it, that culture has depended upon sacrifice to streamline and economize it, directing it away from the community towards its scapegoats. This is the "refuge of lies" that BANDERA deftly scrutinizes; it is a phrase drawn from Isaiah (28:14-19), by which the prophet excoriates his people for perpetuating a "covenant with death," the murderous fiction of its idolatrous practices: "The idolater sacralizes the violence he wants protection from." Beneath the shimmering surface of Heroic epic is a world that is rife with fear of what their gods can do to them anywhere, anytime, and sacrifices are regularly performed to propitiate them, keep them at a distance. The people who claim their descendance from Abraham are imbued with a hope of what their God will do for them if they abide by his law, which commands "mercy, not sacrifice," as many biblical passages proclaim. In this regard, the contrast between Jerusalem and Athens could not be more glaring, since it is reset not as faith and reason but faith and fear.

BANDERA engages fruitfully with Simone WEIL's famous essay on the *Iliad* as a "poème de la force" in order to uncover its sacrificial organization around the death of Patrocles, which anticipates that of Achilles himself, whose foil is not Hector, his mimetic double, but the grotesque Thersites, "the ugliest man who came beneath Ilion. He was bandy legged ... with shoulders stooped and drawn together over his chest ... his skull with wool grown sparsely upon it" (*Iliad* 2:216ff). Thersites is the "anti-Achilles, or if one prefers, the hidden side of Achilles, the hateful side of the hero-victim destined to die and to carry with him all the sacred pollution that has contaminated the group." It is in this repulsive figure that BANDERA recognizes the affliction of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh: "despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was

despised, and we esteemed him not" (Is 53.3). By contrast, we read, "If Thersites was an afflicted man, nobody around him saw his affliction least of all Homer. Homer was part of the crowd, he saw what the crowd saw." BANDERA rightly posits "sacrifice as the secret of the *Iliad*," where there could be no sympathy for this kind of loser, though he is of a kind in whom Israel was instructed to expect its redeemer.

It is especially around this notion of affliction, and Simone WEIL's luminous essay on it, that BANDERA pursues what he calls the "inner logic of Christian revelation." He draws our attention deeply into the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, where he shows that it is not the anticipation of physical suffering alone, or even chiefly, that marks this episode, but the foretaste of utter abandonment, of repudiation by the hostile crowd and by his beloved disciples alike. Jesus prays to the Father to be spared but "also prays that the Father's will be done, not his own." BANDERA refers us to Psalm 55:1-5 to conceive Christ's agony here: "fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me." Here Jesus is "infinitely alone," with all of fallen humanity in its victimizing fervor arrayed against him. BANDERA remarks percipiently that "at no other time is the humanity of Jesus so explicitly highlighted as at this moment":

> What we now see is the horrendous price that Christ must pay for rejecting Satan, for resisting the power of the human crowd from the beginning till the end. As he resists the satanic power of the crowd, he reveals the affliction of the victim because he is now in the place of the victim, the foundation of Satan's power. Therefore he is also at an infinite distance from God the Father. Satan's tempting power is now at its peak, because it is in direct proportion to the absence of God.

A desolation that is absolute penetrates to his soul like the point of a nail driven by a universal hammer, a trope evoked by WEIL, though without reference to Christ, in her description of "extreme affliction,"

> which means physical pain, distress of soul, and social degradation, all together, is the nail. The point of the nail is applied to the very center of the soul, and its head is the whole of necessity throughout all space and time.

Jesus' cry from the cross ("Eloi, Eloi...") of God's abandonment echoes this absolute dereliction, as WEIL has remarked elsewhere.

Thanks to BANDERA's robust analysis, we begin to see the telling symmetry that he does now bring out, between the faith of Abraham and the agony of Jesus. In Genesis, God tells his servant to take his only son ("whom you love") up to a mountain and kill him, and God rewards Abraham's unquestioning faith with the promise of a glorious posterity that will be a blessing to "all the nations of the earth." In the passion narrative, we find God's only and beloved son ("in whom I am well pleased") accepting an utterly ignominious death, bereft of all ritual trappings designed to disguise a lynching. The Father does not demand a sacrifice here, as the traditional doctrine of atonement avers, but He does wish to be known as the God of victims, as we find in Job, many Psalms, and the prophets; he does wish that his love be known as suffering that is borne for the sake of others ("for our iniquities," Is. 53:5), and to be identified with the victim in the utmost place of shame. Did the Gospel writers have the *akedah* in mind: an angel wards off the sacrifice of Isaac, angels console Jesus? Could they avoid the structural reversal of the pattern, the reversal of the sacrificial perspective, with Jesus now as the embodiment, the incarnation of the God of victims? In any event, his assent, his "fiat voluntas tua," echoes the prayer he taught to his disciples, but also the words of Mary at the Annunciation: "fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum," And both resonate with the "fiat lux" by which creation moves out from the void as an act of love, as the psalmist reminds us: "The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love" (Ps 119:64). BANDERA's summary of this episode specifies what is at the heart of biblical revelation:

> The Christian truth in its very essence is not an act of cognition, *it is a person*, or even more specifically, Reason, the Word, the Logos *made flesh*. It is only because the truth is a person, the Word incarnate, that it is also Love.

In Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, then, Creation, Incarnation, and Crucifixion are in total reverberation; ontology and epistemology, those heady words of our philosophical tradition, are realigned, reconciled in mimetic anthropology. Or, as BANDERA states it, "human reason and ultimate Truth are in accord with each other." That is a huge claim, and he makes it stick.

For all its brevity, this book is a *Summa* of sorts, chiefly the one directed "contra Gentiles,"

if we understand by that word what Saint Paul referred to as "the powers and principalities" relying on the sacrificial logic of the crowd and relict in their contagious addiction to violence. BANDERA's close readings and perspicuous argumentation build up to this resounding conclusion:

> ... so does mimetic theory require a reality that is both beyond the fictionalizing power of desire and yet fully desirable in itself, an object of desire whose desirable existence is not a projection of the intersubjective maneuverings of human desire, and can be, because of that, also fully rational. Yet the rationality, as well as the desirability, of such a transcendent object is rather special. It is, in fact, unique, and cannot be fully completely comprehended by human reason, precisely because there is nothing else to compare it with—there is nothing else that is inherently desirable. Thus we are led to posit an object of desire and of reason that transcends the limits of both. In other words, God.

This book does not provide anything like an ontological proof of God's existence, but an anthropological foundation for it. It is a profession of faith, but in no way a "sacrificium intellectus," since it exercises a faith in logical argument as much as in anything else. Still less is it a recourse to any version of "credo quia absurdum" (which TERTULLIAN, to his credit, never said), the only form of the absurd it evokes being the mindless because mimetic clash of iron on its path to human flesh. BANDERA addresses our critical intelligence at every step of his reasoning; he prods us to trust our best hopes as expressed in what the great texts of our religious and literary tradition have revealed to us about ourselves.

Andrew McKenna

Breitenfellner, Kirstin*: Wir Opfer. Warum der Sündenbock unsere Kultur bestimmt.* München: Diederichs-Verlag; 2013; 286 pp. 16, 99 €; ISBN: 978-3-424-35085-2

The author of this book is a journalist and writer and lives in Vienna. Through her book she wants to acquaint a larger audience with R. GIRARD's mimetic theory, and she wants to show how this theory can help to gain a better understanding and judgment of current processes in society. The book focuses on Germany and Austria but, because of its cultural leadership role, it also considers the U.S. Special interest is placed on the media—press, radio, TV, internet—and the peculiarity of their conduct. In the beginning BREITENFELLNER emphasizes the importance of the topic: again and again the term *Opfer* occurs in public debates, and its meaning is extremely vague, which is only partly due to the fact that the German *Opfer* can translate as *sacrifice* or as *victim*, it is also due to equivocalities in the reality itself. For that reason the German word *Opfer* will often remain untranslated in this review.

In two introductory chapters, the readers are familiarized with GIRARD's theory of victimization and sacrifice—the foundation of culture in the scapegoat mechanism. An overview of the function of sacrifice for the world religions follows. In the Biblical tradition—in Judaism and Christianity—the criticism of violence becomes ever more pronounced. This, the author states, is a permanent civilizing achievement of Christianity despite its many relapses into scapegoat thinking. The meaning and forms of sacrifice in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are sketched briefly. These religions too substitute bloody human or animal sacrifice with the gift of objects, food, or flowers (p. 54). In the end the symbolic, i.e. inner sacrifice, ensues (p. 54). But every religion also experienced relapses to bloody violence.

The following six chapters explain the essential thesis of the book: *Opfer* has become a central category of public discourse in the past decades. Political debates are suffused with it as much as the self-conception of the individual. It is a key concept for the interpretation of current social processes and political activity. Yet, there are negative developments and abuses as well, which are described extensively. Despite this criticism, it may not be overlooked that the author in principle appreciates attention to victims and solidarity with them.

This attention to victims was initiated by a reflection of the holocaust. Because of its concentration on the present, the book especially focuses on the problems of this development. It relates Peter NOVICK's and Norman G. FINKELSTEIN's criticism that a "holocaust industry" takes advantage of the victims' suffering and abuses them for its own political or financial purposes, so as to draw dividends from the role of victim, so to speak. The thesis of the uniqueness of the holocaust is rejected because through it the victims of the holocaust become in a sense privileged. Other atrocious crimes of

the past century, like the Armenian genocide, the penal camps of communist Russia or China, are relegated to a less prominent place. Moreover, the claim of the uniqueness of the holocaust makes it an irrational mystery and its perpetrators inhuman monsters. But they were first and simultaneously inconspicuous, so-called normal people. The intellectual challenge lies in understanding how they could become the perpetrators of such crimes. This is a rational task and it has a moral impetus: the warning against self-content. The reader should beware of likewise becoming—directly or indirectly—a perpetrator. One may suppose that the possibility to *rationally* understand evil might have awakened the author's interest in mimetic theory.

In the past decades the basic meaning of *Opfer* has shifted: Until about 1945 it meant active engagement, self-surrender for something; today it accentuates passive suffering, the injustice that was or is done to people. Primary interest is not directed anymore to the perpetrators and their punishment but to the victims and their suffering, which demands compensation. This has consequences for penal law as well: it shifts from a law for offenders to a law for victims. In 1994 the term "victim" was introduced into Austria's penal code. As much as this development must be commended, it also has its problematic side: The fear to neglect a victim is now greater than the fear to punish an innocent person. The engagement for the victims easily becomes an aggressive fight against the real or purported offenders. Finally: Today everyone wants to be acknowledged as a victim, there is an actual competition as to who has suffered more. This is about prestige as well as about hard material gains. However, nobody wants to make sacrifices anymore.

The media play a central part in the current "hype of victims" (p. 252). They are ever prepared to takes sides with the victims, at the same time making them victims. Abuses and crimes are often uncovered by the media; that way they become advocates, saviors of victims. Yet, in that role they have their own vested interests of prestige and turnover. The victims have to succumb to that. That way the presumed saviors patronize victims, impose themselves on them and victimize them once again. The problematic role of the media is illustrated by three spectacular examples of criminal cases that scandalized the German-speaking public in the years 2006-2010: the famous TV weatherman Jörg Kachelmann was accused by a former girl-friend of having raped her (he was later acquitted); Natascha Kampusch was imprisoned for 8 years by her abductor until she managed to flee; Josef Fritzl had incarcerated one of his daughters for 24 years in the basement of his house and had fathered seven children with her. The conduct of the media changed back and forth between one-sided and indiscreet reporting and restraint, thus also changing between heightening the suffering of the victims or supporting them. Furthermore, prominent persons as well as common people are in continuous danger of becoming victims of the media. There are now support groups of people who were humiliated in casting shows on TV. The link between the media and victimization becomes especially pronounced with regard to terroristic and amok crimes. These crimes are committed in order to elicit media prominence—as publicity for political aims, as well as for private causes—even as attempts to become a star by committing a spectacular crime. To prevent this, the author recommends keeping the names of these offenders unpublished.

In the final section "What can we do?", some preliminary and incomplete resolutions (p. 259) are formulated: We ought to admit our own tendency to violence and learn to cope with it. In the education of children and youngsters we should be unequivocal. A tension between values that are suggested by the media and those that are taught in school should be avoided. The tendency to aggression that infests every human person should not be made a taboo. Young people should be led to an open and constructive engagement with this tendency, so that they will not resort to violence. The final advice: "We should heighten our awareness for processes of victimization, […] in a word: we should find a rational consensus about victims." (p. 267)

This book addresses so many topics that it would be easy to object and demand more precision here or there. However, that would not do justice to its concern. It wants to make us aware of the importance of *Opfer* for our current cultural self-perception. It determinedly argues that even the most horrific processes of victimization can be rationally explained. Mi-

metic theory is used as a means to such a rational analysis in order to understand an important part of public life, in its particular form in Germany and Austria, and to deal with it in a responsible way. The book invites its readers to self-critical reflection upon their own temptations. It therefore places the ethical relevance of mimetic theory in the foreground. That is certainly also an important concern of GIRARD's. However, GIRARD's warning of the dangers of the modern dismantling of the scapegoat mechanism does not play a role in this book. With this dismantling the hitherto most effective means to minimize violence has been lost, and as a consequence we face the danger of humanity's self-destruction. The relevance that GIRARD's thinking has for a philosophy or theology of history is not taken up.

However, the author should not be criticized for this limitation. Her concern is not a systematic anthropological, philosophical or even theological clarification of *Opfer*, as already her overview of the history of religions in chapter 2 shows. There she says that the bloody human and animal sacrifices are substituted by the giving of gifts, and finally by "inner sacrifices". This expression is not explained any further; it seems to mean that the outward sacrifice of bloody or un-bloody gifts is gradually substituted with one's own ethical engagement. We should fight against the exploitation and thus victimization of others and at the same time we should strive toward sacrifice as gift. This, however, has two dimensions: ethical engagement for others and the gift of outward objects as signs of an inner attitude. Apart from the ethical, the symbolic-communicative dimension of sacrifice should not be neglected.

Bernhard Dieckmann (Marburg), translation N. Wandinger

Cowdell, Scott: *René Girard and Secular Modernity. Christ, Culture, and Crisis*
Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013. (259 pp.)
ISBN-10: 0268023743, $ 27.97

Scott COWDELL has written another one of those fine books that give readers a comprehensive and still deep-going overview of the mimetic theory. In addition to that, he clearly works out the contribution GIRARD made with his theory to understanding secular modernity and the problems and challenges humanity faces today. I cannot think of an important author who has written on GIRARD who is not taken into account in this book. Moreover COWDELL links the theory with other important thinkers of our time, stating where he thinks mimetic theory is superior in making sense of the phenomena they deal with or in providing a simpler and therefore systematically stronger account. In the course of this, COWDELL proves his excellent grasp of these thinkers, of our times, and of course of GIRARD's theory. With sovereign ease he courses through GIRARD's huge oeuvre, joining together what belongs together, explaining one insufficiently clear sentence with another one from a different publication. Special attentiveness is warranted when COWDELL, for the most part humbly hidden at the end of one of the numerous endnotes, offers his own observation or explanation of something. It always gives additional elucidation and enriches the reader greatly.

The book consists of an introduction, five titled chapters and a conclusion, the notes and references unfortunately given at the end (covering 38 pages), an extensive bibliography (17 pages) and a combined index of persons and keywords (16 pages).

The Introduction (p. 1-15) provides basic information on René GIRARD, gives a preliminary view on secular modernity, thus delineating what the book really is about, and also previews the particular use that mimetic theory might provide for understanding modernity.

Chapter 1, "Mimesis, Modernity, and Madness" (p. 17-56), lays the ground by elaborating on the significance of mimesis in human development and behavior. COWDELL shows how insights from novelistic literature brought GIRARD to understand the role of mimesis. He goes on to explore the benefits of interdividual psychology in comparison to Freudian depth psychology, which still is Platonic in hypostasizing the unconscious and not realizing the importance of interdividual processes. At the same time COWDELL sees that GIRARD and even OUGOURLIAN have underemphasized the role of "the family of origin" (35). He shows, however, how this can easily be built into a psychology based on mimetic theory, thus "completing" Freud. He also shows how this psychology explains some of modernity's central elements. In

conclusion of this chapter, COWDELL attends to the results of the most recent research on developmental psychology and the discovery of mirror neurons, which provide links between GIRARD's insights gained from literature and its observation of the human condition and from natural science.

The next step follows in chapter 2, "Violence, the Sacred Canopy" (p. 57-82): COWDELL provides a synthesis of GIRARD's ideas on hominization, the onset of human culture, and the pivotal role the scapegoat mechanism plays in keeping primitive humanity from self-destruction by unfettered mimetic rivalry and ensuing violence. Thus he develops GIRARD's view on archaic religion as *the* human means to stabilize society and to enable it to advance further—however at the cost of innocent victims. Religion has therefore an important socio-political function at its roots, it is neither an invention nor a superfluous luxury, it is the very means that helped humanity survive. In passing, COWDELL also relates Eric GANS's somewhat different account and argues in favor of GIRARD's. He then follows the reasons for secular modernity's inability to grasp this insight and shows humanity's path from mythology to modernity as dependent on a revelatory event within that history and its subsequently unfolding influence.

This leads up to chapter 3, "Scripture and Secularization" (p. 83-115). COWDELL develops GIRARD's insights into the Biblical uncovering of the scapegoat-mechanism and finally its disempowerment by the passion and resurrection of Christ. He follows GIRARD's argument with the help of Girardian theologians, among them James ALISON and Raymund SCHWAGER (who, however, was not Austrian (p. 91), but Swiss, although he held a professorship in Austria), with utmost precision, on the way also dealing with counterarguments and refuting them. Thus, Biblical revelation and Christianity in particular put an end to the functionality of the scapegoat-mechanism and thus they unlink the divine from human violence: "GIRARD understands this desacralizing process, unleashed by the Gospels, as the truest meaning of Western culture's much-vaunted 'death of God,' but this death refers to the old gods of sacrifice rather than the Christian God who has nothing to do with them." (105) This, however, is not a straightforward process and soon a sacrificial Christianity fell into the same traps. Still, the effect of its message wore on and thus secular modernity could develop. In its attention to victims lies Christianity's uniqueness, which was realized by NIETZSCHE, who opted against it and became its opponent. The massive ideologies of the twentieth century, each in their own way, embodied a rejection of the care for victims but despite ever greater number of victims, they failed. Today a more neo-pagan than truly atheist "mentality seeks to outflank Christianity on the left by borrowing the Bible's concern for victims, then insisting on its own moral superiority, making much of Christianity's many historical failures" (114). GIRARD, however, links this to the Biblical figure of the Antichrist, who "'boasts of bringing […] the peace and tolerance that Christianity promised but has failed to deliver. Actually, what the radicalization of contemporary victimology produces is a return to all sorts of pagan practices: abortion, euthanasia, sexual indifferentiation, Roman circus games galore […]'" (114 quoting GIRARD, *I see Satan fall like lighting*, 181). However, if Christianity has done away with the stabilizing scapegoat mechanism, and if modernity is characterized by a rise in internal mimesis, why hasn't the purported consequence, the self-destruction of humanity happened yet?

This is answered in chapter 4, "Modern Institutions and Violence" (p. 117-141). COWDELL relates GIRARD's analysis of modern institutions as providing for modern civilizations what the scapegoat mechanism did for archaic ones. For an explanation he recurs on the Pauline notion of the "katechon", basically meaning a dose of limited violence that is used to restrain the cataclysmic, apocalyptic violence that would ensue otherwise. For the abolition of the sacrificial sacred without a reordering of mimetic desire along the model Christ himself gave humanity would result in apocalyptic violence unless it is held at bay by katechontic means. COWDELL deals with a variety of modern phenomena that, according to GIRARD, can all be understood as such means: judicial institutions, enhanced technological capabilities, and capitalist market society, also the civil religion imbuing many modern states. Special attention is awarded to capitalist market economy, for it clearly functions on an unleashing of

mimetic desire, which it keeps, at the same time, from becoming violent by providing unnecessary – though coveted – products to ever more people. Moreover "late capitalist culture isolates […] units of aspirational scarcity and preoccupies them with meeting their own mimetic needs, thus ensuring indifference to others and especially to 'losers' in the global economy" (126). This book went to the press before Pope FRANCIS took office but his harsh critique of the ongoing capitalist system finds larger theoretical grounding in theses passages. COWDELL compares the over-competitive U.S.-society with more egalitarian but still Western countries in Scandinavia to find that the latter "are less plagued by the dysfunction that comes from angry self-assertion and desperate self-medication" (128). However, he also takes careful note that GIRARD does not stand for a simple equation of the global market and its victimization with archaic sacrificial rituals. These modern phenomena are more complex. Still other particularities of modern times are referred to in this context: anorexia as an illness typical for modernity, abortion on demand, and finally the criminal justice system, where he emphasizes: "Capital punishment is also largely a racial matter in America, […]. GIRARD agrees: 'Capital punishment is […] ritual murder, […]'" (140, quoting *Evolution and Conversion*, 73).

In the last thematic chapter, "War, Terror, Apocalypse" (p. 143-167), COWDELL works on the great overall picture, now also systematically drawing on GIRARD's latest monograph *Battling to the End*, in which he developed the theme of apocalypse more elaborately. From earlier writings it is already clear that for GIRARD the apocalypse is not divine violence but human violence unleashed as a consequence of an incomplete Christian transformation of the world: the violent inhibitors of all-out violence to the extreme have mostly been done away with, yet a non-violent mimesis of Christ has not materialized. GIRARD develops this idea further from Clausewitz's *Vom Kriege*. COWDELL follows GIRARD's analysis of this idea through his book and other recent publications, this time especially interviews. It is noticeable that both GIRARD and COWDELL seem to be seeking here more than in previous chapters, conveying less certainty and more restraint. This is particularly clear with respect to political Islam and Islamist terrorism. While GIRARD on the one hand diagnoses a certain problem in Islam when it comes to the question of violence—because Islam lacks "the struggle with sacred violence that [… is] uncover[ed] in the Bible and most clearly in Jesus' passion (which is declared blasphemous by Islam)" (152)—he acknowledges on the other hand that Islam as such is not the problem but "radical Islamic terrorism" (160), which is a "political-religious hybrid of terroristic form" (152). The theory of a clash of civilizations is rejected as too simple and overlooking many important features of these conflicts, among them the mimetic model-obstacle fascination that Western culture exerts on Islamist terrorists, as can be illustrated by the movements of the 9/11-terrorists before their deed. Moreover, COWDELL points to Dale EICKELMAN's contention that "the real clash of civilizations is not the West versus a homogenous other but between rival carriers of tradition in Islam's own sphere" (155). To me this seems a thought worth pursuing more. Could it be, after all, that the struggle is really between inimical exponents of Islam fighting over the development of their own religion with the Western secular world as a model-obstacle in the background, and that as a consequence Western victims in this struggle, as painful and horrible as they are, are just 'collateral damage' of sorts? In any case, these conflicts should be seen as a kind of global civil war, COWDELL agrees with GIRARD, and therefore they exhibit the instability of a world order that is defined by undifferentiation and unmitigated mimetic desire, a consequence of the failure of Christianity to bring about full conversion, however a failure foreseen by Christianity itself, therefore its apocalyptic writings.

In his concluding chapter, COWDELL sums up that indeed "the seeds of secular modernity are to be found in the Bible and in the ministry of Jesus" (169) and goes on to discuss the possibilities to avoid catastrophe that still exist. Here the completion of the incomplete conversion of humanity is the determining factor. COWDELL describes GIRARD's own conversion then attends to main elements of such a conversion process—for conversion is not to be understood as a sudden and momentary event. It requires spiritual discipline and exercise. COW-

DELL rediscovers traditional Christian practices as important safeguards against "mimetic entrapment" (175): "monogamous marriage as a counterpractice to the contemporary Western culture of hypermimetic sexual deregulation" (175), contemplative prayer, which the author has himself discovered in a new way as leading out of mimetic dependence into calm and good mimesis, and finally the option of a monastic life as a way to avoid mimetic imprisonment – as seen by A. MARR. Another very important step is the renunciation of violence in all circumstances, which, however, according to GIRARD, is not to be confused with pacifism. This requires some explanation. The kingdom of God for GIRARD is "to give up disputes when mimetic rivalry is beginning to take over, to help victims, and to refuse all violence" (177). COWDELL then reminds his readers that GIRARD is not a pacifist, because he even mused over the possibility that France could have averted WW II by preemptively invading the Rhineland in 1936 and he thinks there can be a just war against terrorism. For GIRARD pacifism "can be the mirror double of oppression, allowing it to flourish" (177). Thus, GIRARD still deems the katechon function of limited military violence necessary and rejects its abandonment. In a rather long note (p. 222, note 42), COWDELL analyzes GIRARD's position, asking whether he means to say that limited but decisive action would be a recipe to avoid the escalation to extremes that comes with defensive violence, as GIRARD made the—to me very outlandish—statement that "the attacker wants peace but the defender wants war" (*Battling to the End,* 16). COWDELL disagrees with the stance on limited violence and asks whether the master, GIRARD, could not learn from his disciple, Walter WINK, "in his unsentimental, pragmatic embrace of strategic nonviolence based on a historically informed awareness of its genuine power to bring change in the world of Realpolitik" (178). This being a review, I am now overstepping the boundaries of a reviewer to say that I beg to disagree with both GIRARD and COWDELL. With GIRARD because I do not think preemptive action is a good idea: it opens the floodgates for all kinds of military adventures because the *fear of* another's attack suffices to justify one's own action. It would be a kind of Stand Your Ground Statute for world politics. Therefore, I think that defensive action alone is admissible and that indeed it is the aggressor who does not want peace. On the other hand, I think that Biblical nonviolence, even as employed strategically, is a matter of personal decision: A person can decide for him/herself to walk this way, thereby taking the risk of his/her own destruction, as Jesus did. However, martyrdom cannot be commanded. Therefore a government cannot make this decision for its citizens. Thus I agree with GIRARD that limited violence is sometimes necessary and the lesser evil, though it should not be preemptive but defensive. Maybe the moment to prevent WW II was not in 1936 but in 1938 when Hitler annexed Austria and later part of Czechoslovakia and appeasement failed.

But let me return to COWDELL's book, which he ends by drawing attention to the problem of whether there is an ecclesiology inspired by GIRARD's ideas. While on the one hand, GIRARD himself does not develop such a notion, he lately placed great importance on the role of the papacy because after losing the political and even military power it had in past centuries, it can now function as a model of peaceful mimesis. There are, however, ideas from Girard-inspired theologians who viewing the church community as the community of those who follow Jesus and form a new community of people who have experienced their mimetic entanglement but have converted and now constitute a "nontribal tribe" (181), a phrase coined with reference to J. ALISON.

To sum up: This book is a valuable read that gives an excellent overview over mimetic theory, both of GIRARD's very own ideas and of what other scholars have added to them, and links this with an analysis of modernity that helps to understand much of its particularities. The wealth of research and learning that went into it can hardly be overestimated. It is also very readable, presenting its insights in an accessible and well-ordered manner. When it comes to dealing with present-day problems of terrorism and the analysis of Islam's role in it, it clearly reflects GIRARD's own ambiguity and tries to provide an interpretation of his sometimes disparate statements that makes them understandable. Yet it shows also that the power of elucidation is stronger for phenomena with which we are not involved ourselves anymore: the past is easier to decipher than the present

or—for that matter—the future. There was, however, one disappointment for me which has nothing at all to do with the content of the book: it was the digital version of it. On request of Scott COWDELL, the publisher sent me a link to a digital version. After some effort, I could download and open this on one device, but found it difficult to open it on other devices, I could not find out how to highlight passages or make comments in the digital version. So, basically this version was rather useless for me. My suggestion to the publisher: either provide useful digital versions or just stay with print.

Nikolaus Wandinger

Dawson, David. *Flesh Becomes Word: A Lexicography of the Scapegoat or, the History of an Idea.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013. 200 + xix pp. US $16.15; ISBN-13: 978-1611860634.

This book frames itself by a simple question: How did the English word "scapegoat," a sixteenth century translation for the famous goat of Leviticus 16 in TYNDALE'S Bible, arrive at its contemporary meaning? The modern scapegoat shares little resemblance to the Hebrew animal in the Levitical instructions for the Day of Atonement, in which one goat is designated to escape into the desert "bearing away" the sins of the people, while the other is designated for a holocaust. Only the latter was harmed in any way in the Mosaic text. There is no suggestion that either is being punished, or that the scapegoat is sacrificed or that either goat is somehow vicariously guilty. Projected guilt or surrogate punishment seem entirely absent from the original ritual of the *Az'azel* described in Torah, who merely serves to transport them away. Only the history of the word over a millennium and a half fuse the two goats into one, so to say, as a surrogate victim onto whom is deflected punishment due to others because he assumes (either involuntarily, as a scapegoat, or voluntarily, as in the case of Christ) their guilt. Somehow it is the goat that got away that became the metaphorical spring of the modern scapegoat, not the goat actually immolated. For the modern scapegoat means just that—an innocent victim lit upon arbitrarily to pay for the sins of others who collectively blame him. (For that matter, "sacrificial victim" often means that too in contemporary vernacular—the scapegoat.) How did the "scapegoat" become a substitute to atone for others? This question, though, could be limited to Christian theology. Rather, how did scapegoat come to imply a judgment, of the victim as innocent, arbitrarily made to suffer for others, and of his persecutors, usually a crowd, as guilty? How did sacrifice come to mean the guilty blaming of the hapless victim of a righteous crowd so that it might escape judgment itself?

David DAWSON finds in René GIRARD's theory of sacrifice a key to this problem. GIRARD has been criticized for confusing the Hebrew scapegoat with the Greek *pharmakos*, a far more obvious case of vicarious punishment in which unlucky souls are periodically used to "cleanse" a city, by expulsion or immolation. But it is the scapegoat in our era that forges this confusion; the question is, why and how? GIRARD applies the modern term backwards to explain not just the sacrificial origins of culture but the scapegoating origins of sacrifice. What comes to light last in historical time is first in evolutionary time, according to GIRARD.

DAWSON argues that the history of the word can now be traced with a much higher degree of precision than even the venerable OED, thanks to digital technology—and it seems to support GIRARD's claim. Remarkably, today's meaning can be traced back to a critical turning point in the history of Western Christianity—the Protestant Reformation, in which Calvin and some English Puritans used the Levitical image not just in analogy to Christ (that typology went back to the Patristic Fathers) but in the full measure of sacrificial substitution. Until then, substitution did not really enter or enter fully into the Christian typologies of the Levitical goats, even when their vicarious role was assumed. The full idea of substitution demands identification with guilt and victimization in punishment. The divine scapegoat must be made to *pay in full* for the human guilt assumed by him *by divine volition*. Protestant salvation is sacrificial in an explicitly substitutive sense, even to the point that Christ in his innocence suffers all the spiritual and physical forlornness of hell as the divine proxy for human beings. And he must do so in order to propitiate the wrath of his Father. Protestantism first invests the scapegoat with a significance it now has, a victim who pays the price for the guilt of others

as if he were guilty. It concentrates the entire exchange involved in Christ's intercession for us to a transaction within the divine itself, in which not just the devil but human beings too are just passive onlookers to a business conducted entirely between the Son and the Father. This is archaic religion distilled at the heart of Christianity, but also Christianity making transparent the economics of divine propitiation. To be sure, Christ is a voluntary victim, whereas the scapegoat is a hapless one. But Christ's voluntary sacrifice is what does the system in. Calvinism balances precariously at the tipping point, reaching backward to invest Christ with the significance of *archaic* sacrifice (in the sense of the *pharmakos*), while also pointing forward to the complete *de-mythologizing* of sacrificial substitution, through the revelation of substitution itself. The transparency of substitution makes it impossible to sustain. The assimilation of Christ to archaic sacrifice demolishes it by transposing it into modern scapegoating.

DAWSON shows the theological trajectory of the 16th and 17th centuries converging with an anthropological one in the 19th and 20th, from James FRAZER (who first established scapegoat rituals as a dedicated theme in the *Golden Bough*) to GIRARD, who identifies scapegoating (modern sense) with the origins of sacrifice (primitive sense, in *Violence and the Sacred*). The two directionalities unstably held in balance in early Protestant Christology (the archaic and the de-mythologizing) are separated in anthropology, as FRAZER'S is developed and deconstructed by and into GIRARD's. GIRARD's approach is a corrective extension of FRAZER'S much-criticized positivism, his simplistic Enlightenment reaction to the supposed irrationality of primitive ritual, which he simplifies to a mythical confusion of material and immaterial burdens and transference. GIRARD claims to reveal the functionality of sacrificial ritual, its rationale if not rationality, while condemning it even more mercilessly than FRAZER. FRAZER reduces the immorality of sacrifice to the cognitive idiocy of primitives, but GIRARD reduces their cognitive idiocy to their sacrificial guilt, the lynchings hidden behind the rituals that gave birth to the religious disguises on GIRARD's model. Turning early Protestant theology on its head, GIRARD suggests Christ does exactly the opposite of what CALVIN claimed. Rather than being the last, greatest, simplest, and truest substitute victim to expiate human guilt, he is the one who reveals and demolishes the mechanism of substitution as such, by agreeing to *play the role*. He allows himself to be used this way, for the sake of unmasking it. GIRARD thus completes what Calvinism began, inverting Christ as a substitute victim like no other into Christ as the demolition of substitution *tout court*. In order to fulfill his role, he has to reveal it as such, laying down the predicate of modern de-mythologization.

This story records the collapse, the "process of symbolic implosion," of classical ("sacrificial") Christianity, from the Patristics down to GIRARD himself. That is the central interest of this book: It gives one of the most detailed renderings to date of GIRARD's claim that "classical Christianity" (Catholic and Protestant) is "sacrificial Christianity," a contradictory mix of sacrificial with anti-sacrificial motifs that gradually works itself out through a kind of self-demolition and self-transformation, the teleological *a priori* of which is GIRARD's own revelation of revelation (and liberal democratic modernity). DAWSON'S lexicography covers the phases of "sacrificial Christianity," in four epochal stages: the first millennium soteriology of *Christus Victor* of JUSTIN Martyr; St. ANSELM'S 11th century revision, giving rise to the penitential system of the Medieval period; the Protestant Reformation, particularly Calvinist; and finally the Enlightenment. This works out an accelerating sacrificial logic that seems unique to, and fatal for, Christianity in all its classical forms, and whose disintegration is modernity.

DAWSON'S narrative of the scapegoat as English word, metaphor, and idea doesn't actually work to confirm key Girardian theses, though it shares GIRARD's passion against substitute victimization. For GIRARD, scapegoating is the origin of sacrifice, sacrifice the origin of culture and institutions, and Christ the definitive revealer of those facts, in a revelation that works itself out with the slow but irresistible demolition of sacrifice and its inventions, or "religion." On this theory, it is not so much GIRARD who reveals the revelation of the Gospels but the Gospels that first reveal the theory of GIRARD. GIRARD sums this up by claiming that it is not the rise of the scientific enlighten-

ment that enables us to recognize scapegoating, but the other way around—the seeing-through of crowd psychology that enables science to arise. Though there is no explicit nod to this except at the very end, DAWSON'S story (Girardian though it is) really vindicates scientific enlightenment against Christianity, leaving not much of the latter standing. Once atonement is gone, what is the point of Christianity as a religion? The most interesting part of the book, reconstructing the vicissitudes of Christ's atonement in various configurations of sacrificial economy, demolishes any idea of atonement at all, if that seems inconceivable apart from some idea of substitution. Western Christianity entails the "symbolic implosion" of sacrifice, not because the Passion undoes it, but because the Atonement works out the logic of sacrifice itself to its last penny in the sacrificial economy, until it finally bankrupts itself in Calvinism. As Reformed soteriology reduced sacrificial exchange to the purest logic of its absurdity, Puritan fanatics who founded the Bay Colony produced some of the clearest modern "texts of persecution," so blatantly scapegoating that they all but reveal it for what it is. This self-annihilation of sacrificial atonement does not seem to disturb DAWSON. But it does suggest that it is not so much Christ's death that undoes sacrifice, or the revelation of scapegoating that constitutes the condition for the possibility of modern science, as the fact that Christianity itself is so metaphysically sacrificial it collapses in upon itself. On DAWSON'S terms, GIRARD brings the Enlightenment to its conclusion, possibly supporting Bruce CHILTON'S criticism that GIRARD's theory makes ancient sacrifice pay for modern scapegoating. This story also suggests (versus both GIRARD and DAWSON) that it is neither science nor the Passion (alone) that reveal scapegoating, but modern politics, with its democratic and media-driven public since the Reformation.

Stephen L. Gardner

Holmes, Robert F.: *The Ethics of Nonviolence.* Edited by Predrag Cicovacki. New York, N.Y.: Bloomsbury Academic 2013. (256 pp.) ISBN-10: 1623568056 ; paperback $ 32.42

This volume continues 16 articles of the Professor emeritus of Philosophy Robert L. HOLMES, who taught at the University of Rochester. At least in Europe HOLMES is hardly known, I think. His analytic philosophical approach is partly agnostic, partly influenced by concepts of Eastern spirituality. The collected articles around the topic of violence and nonviolence were published between 1966 and 2012 except two which are published for the first time in this book. In addition to that a short interview with the author and a systematizing introduction written by the editor, Predrag CICOVACKI, is provided. The editor also placed a short but nevertheless precise summary in front of each article, which is really helpful for a selective reading of the book.

In short the book collects different aspects of a philosophical foundation of an ethics of principled nonviolence resembling the ancient ethics of virtue arguing for nonviolence as a way of life not merely as a pragmatic option. "Principled nonviolence ... is not simply a tactic or tool, to be dispensed with if it does not work. Living nonviolently, or being a nonviolent person, may be the principal objective." (116) In this context HOLMES discusses theoretical and practical objections against an ethics of nonviolence in a very concise and distinct way. For the most part he does this in a quite fair way which I think is caused by his conviction that an ethics of nonviolence has to be taught in a nonviolent mode as is argued in the last essay of the book titled "My (Non-) Teaching Philosophy". This mode includes modesty and the insight that philosophy is more than knowledge. Thus HOLMES states that "expertise in philosophical ethics should be viewed with rather more humility than one often finds among ... applied ethicists" (58) because competence and professional training is no guarantee at all of moral wisdom.

Generally HOLMES is critical against the mainstream of Western philosophical approaches in ethics because "they (1) neglect the nonrational aspects of ethical evaluations and choices; (2) ignore the social, political and cultural factors influencing our choices and behavior: and (3) leave unchallenged the basic structure of society." (p. 1) As a scholar of social ethics who feels committed to a dramatic approach inspired by the ideas of René GIRARD and Raymund SCHWAGER I do have some liking for this estimation. It is quite the same with regard to HOLMES' preference to an ethics of vir-

tue in contrast to an ethics of mere conduct. It is also really important to challenge basic structures of our society, which has become a globalized one—Holmes does this—dealing with structures of a new world order, with the nation state and its army and with dominant market economy for example. What he finds most objectionable about these structures is that "they keep relying on violence, although the historical lesson we should all have learned is that such extensive use of violence simply does not work." (2) In particular from a Girardian point of view it is not only possible but necessary to agree with HOLMES who considers all these structures to be violent means in fact. But from the Girardian point of view one has to add that these violent means are taming violence none the less. If the characterization of HOLMES that CICOVACKI presents in his introduction is correct (the editor seems to be less balanced than the author himself) and HOLMES actually is an anarchist, I have to criticize the approach in this regard. Even if the criticized structures are but lesser evils, they are not unnecessary, at least as long as we are not all really nonviolent or as long as we are "not Christian enough" as GIRARD would express it. Thus it remains a task of ethics not only to criticize structures and to try to get rid of them but also to reform or improve them. The dissent I try to outline is rooted in HOLMES' concept of man, I guess. The editor of the book writes: "One of Holmes' fundamental philosophical convictions and the key to his ethics of nonviolence is the refusal to accept the view of the fallen—selfish and violent—nature of humanity." (4-5) In theological terms this means to neglect original sin. This concept according to HOLMES leads to the assumption that every human being is guilty which he deems identical with the assumption that no-one is guilty. The difference between good and evil disappears (cf. 96-97). The last argument in the book we find in the context of an examination of NIEBUHR'S political realism, which is harshly criticized by HOLMES. Undoubtedly we should not reduce human beings to violent egoists but to me it is a question of epistemological realism to acknowledge the dark impulses influencing human behavior which are more than ignorance or mistakes and they are not completely at the disposal of our free will. HOLMES tends to play down the problem of evil, I think, when he pleads for empirical badness deriving from false beliefs, misconceptions, ignorance and fear (cf. 210) for the most part. From that follows that there may be a lot of badness in our world but only little evil, if any.

Closely connected with this is another point. HOLMES makes a relatively harsh distinction or even separation between individual habits and social structures in the article "War, Power, and Nonviolence", in which he argues that in their personal lives all people value friendship, peace and happiness while governmental institutions come down on the side of military means and structures to reach their aims and solve their problems. Even if established structures may force us to behave in a specific way and may hamper the realization of alternatives, we have to answer the question: What's the origin of these destructive structures, if no seeds of evil are to be found in individuals. Here again I think the Girardian approach of mimetic desire and its ambiguities could help to come to a less dialectical explanation.

These aspects notwithstanding—which are not trivial, of course—I'd like to recommend this book as a quite inspiring and really important source of ideas and arguments concerning the ethical debate about non-violence. I do fully agree with HOLMES' position that by military means positive objectives are inaccessible for the most part. The problem is that we "have misidentified power with the capacity to cause destruction" (146). Further on, Holmes stresses quite legitimately that nonviolent systems have to be prepared and developed in the long term, which means as many people as possible have to be convinced to commit themselves to means of nonviolence, which is a question of education. If sound training of nonviolence were possible to the same extent as military training is usual, nonviolence could prove to be a really powerful strategy. "A people who have sought security in arms alone are defenseless once their military forces have been defeated. They are a conquered people. A people committed to nonviolence may be deprived of their government, their liberties, their material wealth. But they cannot be conquered." (147) Not all of the essays deal with ethics of nonviolence in that direct way. There are for example relatively abstract theoretical analytical discussions of con-

sequentialism or political realism. Other articles talk about the economic concept of corporate responsibility, the new world order or the moral philosophy of John DEWEY. But these also contribute to a comprehensive concept of nonviolence as way of life. Closer to that crucial issue are the essays about the just-war-theory and its origins in AUGUSTINE, and about the using of the term terror in particular with regard to the concept of the war against terror.

It is beyond doubt that one can learn a lot from this book, concerning a theory of nonviolence but also concerning the practice of clear argumentation and the depiction of difficult questions. The articles are written in a fluent language that sometimes veils the complexity of the arguments. And not least this book provides pearls of wisdom like the following sentences which for me belong to the most important of the whole volume: "Violence is for the morally infallible. Nonviolence is for those who recognize their own limitations and the possibility that others, with whom they are in disagreement, have hold of certain parts of the truth, and are willing to put forth the effort to uncover and cultivate that truth in the interests of nonviolent conciliation." (197)

Wilhelm Guggenberger

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We invite you to send books and articles dealing with René Girard and Mimetic Theory to Dietmar.Regensburger@uibk.ac.at (digital format and references) or to Girard-Documentation, c/o Dr. Dietmar Regensburger, University of Innsbruck, Karl-Rahner-Platz 1, A-6020 Innsbruck / Austria (print copies).

The *Bibliography of Literature on the Mimetic Theory* (Vol. I–XXXVI) is Online available at:
http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/girard/mimetic_theory.html

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