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Rates for the annual issue of Contagion are: individuals $10.00; institutions $32. The editors invite submission of manuscripts dealing with the theory or practical application of the mimetic model in anthropology, economics, literature, philosophy, psychology, religion, sociology, and cultural studies. Essays should conform to the conventions of The Chicago Manual of Style and should not exceed a length of 7,500 words including notes and bibliography. Accepted manuscripts will require final submission on disk written with an IBM compatible program. Please address correspondence to Andrew McKenna, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Loyola University, Chicago, IL 60626. Tel: 773–508-2850; Fax: 773–508-2893; Email: amckenn@luc.edu.

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Cover illustration: Goya, *El sueño de la razon produce monstruos (Los Caprichos, #43)*

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Editor's Note

As has been past practice, the editors of ***Contagion*** *continue to select for referee process papers from the annual meetings of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion. The present volume contains some of the proceedings from the 2001 Colloquium in Antwerp on "Mimetic Theory and the History of Philosophy," as well as from the 2002 Colloquium at Purdue University on "Judaism, Christianity, and the Ancient world: Mimesis, Sacrifice, and Scripture." The volume also contains articles submitted directly to the journal for consideration. We continue to welcome manuscripts from authors in all academic disciplines and fields of professional activity which bear on René Girard's mimetic model of human behavior and cultural organization. Future volumes will also include a section for Notes and Comments, allowing for responses to previous essays and discussion of texts and issues relating to interests of the Colloquium.*

We wish again to express our thanks to Patricia Clemente, Administrative Secretary of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Loyola University Chicago, for her resourceful vigilance in seeing the journal through to its timely production.

THE ONTOLOGICAL OBSESSIONS OF RADICAL THOUGHT[1]

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> Rather than make an inventory of this hodgepodge of dead ideas, we should take as our starting point the passions that fueled it.
>
> François Furet (4)

> Any synthesis is incomplete which ends in an object or an abstract concept and not a living relationship between two individuals.
>
> René Girard (*Deceit* 178)

Karl Marx offers two observations which I take as the point of departure for a critique of the anti-liberal historicism in thinkers like Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Marx himself. The first is that the modern project of emancipation presupposes that "man is the supreme being for man," and the second is that modern equality gives rise to its own type of relations of *in*equality, indeed of "master and slave." I will not interpret these observations as Marx himself did, in economic terms. Instead, I use them as clues to uncover the kind of human relation implicit in but also hidden by the ontology of freedom on which radical historicism rests. By ontology of freedom, I mean the view that "being" is historical and grounded in radical freedom or contingency. For this theory, history is a process of creation ex nihilo, a power traditionally reserved for God. Such a theory is advanced in different forms by Heidegger, Nietzsche,

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[1] I thank the Earhart Foundation and the University of Tulsa for their support for the project of which this is a part. I also thank Jim Williams and Jake Howland their comments.

and Marx, as the key to a radical critique of bourgeois society. Thus the ontological obsessions of anti-bourgeois ire. I suggest that the fascination of the radical critique of bourgeois society with historical "being" reflects the transformation of human relations by "equality of conditions," in the sense of Alexis de Tocqueville, the French sociologist and student of the democratic soul.[2] As modern equality subverts the old orthodoxies, human beings tend to seek their gods in each other, as models of "freedom." And so there arises a "master-slave" psychology from the impact of equality, legitimized by romanticism and the modern cult of Eros. This, I suspect, is the effectual truth of freedom in Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Marx.[3]

René Girard offers a classic description of this psychology in his analysis of the modern novel, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, to which I am indebted throughout this paper. As regards that book, my general thesis—applicable not only to Marx but also to Heidegger and Nietzsche—may be stated as follows.[4] Girard's analysis of the literary characters Don Quixote, Julien Sorel, Emma Bovary, Raskolnikov, and others is in effect a devastating if indirect critique of modern radical thought, or the pursuit of radical freedom. Modern novels, he argues, tend to divide into two types: either "romantic" or "romanesque." The latter *reveal* the romantic illusions of the modern psyche, rather than merely *reflect* them like the former. "Romanesque" novelists such as Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and Proust are great because they uncover the human relations behind romantic passions and the theories that legitimate them. The "romanesque" novel is a Socratic labor of self-knowledge in which the author emancipates himself from his own past romantic illusions. In effect, it exposes the fictions associated with the modern novel itself. The "romantic" novel, to the contrary, abandons self-

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[2] By "equality of conditions" is meant the de-legitimation of accidents of birth such as aristocratic lineage (or today race, gender, or ethnicity) as limits on one's social ambition or destiny. It is equivalent to the rise of vocational choice.

[3] For a development of this theme in the context of early modern thought (Descartes to Hegel) as an indirect critique of the radical critics from Marx to Heidegger and after, see Stephen Gardner, *Myths of Freedom: Equality, Modern Thought, and Philosophical Radicalism*.

[4] Cesareo Bandera, in *The Sacred Game: The Role of the Sacred in the Genesis of Modern Literary Fiction*, also makes a "mimetic" critique of Marx, stressing his work as seeking to restore a sacrificial mythology as the bond of society, an attempt at the basis of totalitarianism (see his Appendix).

knowledge for the platonic pursuit of "authentic being."[5] It offers us "romantic heroes," models like Quixote's Amadis of Gaul—fictions endowed with the patina of reality by awakening our desires. This distinction can be applied to the cycle of radical thinkers. If the "romanesque" novel is genuinely philosophical because it debunks the "literary" illusions of modern desire, radical philosophy is to the contrary a kind of "romantic" literature, because it is enthralled by those illusions. Its seminal thinkers reenact the same passions as their opposite numbers in fiction, but in the "literary" framework of a dramatic theory of history. So radical thought is really a kind of "novel" in Girard's sense—a "romantic" novel. It feeds the passions with myths of freedom. Moreover, the thinker not only writes this novel, but scripts himself the central role within it, the hero of history.[6]

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[5] In Socrates, the primary stress in philosophy is on self-knowledge; with Plato, this morphs into the erotic pursuit of "being." Philosophy at its birth exhibits a tension between anthropology and metaphysics. In philosophical tradition, metaphysics quickly gained the upper hand, and the pursuit of self-knowledge is progressively subdued, if not banished altogether. In contemporary setting, self-knowledge is best pursued within the contexts of religion and literature. One can expect little from academic philosophy. Thus Socrates, the ancestral "god" of philosophy, is also its sacrificial victim. Girard's anthropology holds out the prospect of reversing this relation, making in effect a Socratic critique of Plato. This is only possible, it seems to me, if Socrates (as Kierkegaard put it—I owe the reference to Jacob Howland) is a Christian.

[6] Some characteristic statements:

> Where they are essential, thinking and writing poetry are a *world occurrence*, and this not only in the sense that something is happening within the world which has significance for the world, but also in the sense in which and through which the world arises anew in its actual origins and rules as world....Philosophy arises, when it arises, from a fundamental law of Being itself.

Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (58). Or:

> What distinguishes the higher human being from the lower is that the former see and hear immeasurably more, and see and hear thoughtfully–and precisely this distinguishes human beings from animals, and the higher animals from the lower....But [the higher human being] can never shake off a *delusion*: he fancies that he is a *spectator* and *listener* who has been placed before the great visual and acoustic spectacle that is life; he calls his own nature *contemplative* and overlooks that he himself is really the poet who keeps creating this life....We who think and feel at the same time are those who really continually *fashion* something that had not been there before: the whole eternally growing world of valuations, colors, accents, perspectives, scales, affirmations, and negations. This poem that we have invented is continually studied by the so-called practical human beings (our actors) who learn their roles and translate everything into flesh and actuality, into the everyday....Only we have created the world *that concerns man*!

Even so, it is possible to detect and elicit the "mimetic" structures of passion described so remarkably by Girard, in Nietzsche and, I argue here, especially in Marx. Marx thus reveals the secret genesis of radical thought; Nietzsche and Heidegger are, as it were, "Marxists" at heart—according to the spirit, needless to say, not the letter. In its inception in Marx, it is still possible to glimpse the human relations activating this cycle of thinkers. With his typically lucid naivete, Marx presents the grandest philosophical passions in their human incarnations, albeit in the garb of historical myth. These relations are progressively covered over again by subsequent thinkers, who launch ever more ambitious appeals to philosophical heroism. To borrow a phrase from romantic ontology where it seems most appropriate, these relations "withdraw into the ground"—that is, into the underground—until the properly human dimension disappears with hardly a trace. This occurs in Heidegger—a thinker who (for example) is political through and through, yet has hardly a word to say about politics as such. At that point, the human dimension can only be recovered biographically.

My critical intent is to reclaim philosophical anthropology against the anti-humanism that derives from Heidegger and some post-structuralists[7]. The latter practice an "ontological" approach to history, in which human relations are eclipsed by impersonal historical forces or structures. In the most extreme but also revealing form of this—Heidegger's—societies appear not as human realities but as epochal disclosures of "Being." "Man" is merely a platform for contingent dispensations of *Sein*, groundlessly released out of nothing. If Heidegger is any indication, historicism demolishes the Platonic notion of transcendental being (and with it the notion of a natural order) but scarcely dispenses with metaphysics altogether, the project of a general theory of "being."[8] In Heidegger as in

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Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (241-2). This echoes Friedrich Schlegel's aphorism in *Ideas* (#43; see also the aphorisms following) that the artist is to men what men are to beasts (*Friedrich Schlegel's* Lucinde *and the Fragments.* The last line, "Only we, etc.", clearly refers to philosopher-creators, who legislate for "the so-called practical human beings (our actors)."

[7] Anthropology as I use that term has to do with the ideological structure of human relations, how individuals see themselves in relation to each other. I derive it from a mostly French tradition of recent vintage that originates from a broadly Tocquevillean inspiration. It includes writers as diverse as Louis Dumont, René Girard, Vincent Descombes, and Marcel Gauchet. The analysis I offer here makes particular use of Girard's theory of "mimetic desire."

[8] Heidegger's notion of "Being," for all its emphasis on historicity, contingency, and the "ontological difference," continues the project of *metaphysica generalis*, a general ontology

Plato, the *telos* of philosophy is freedom, and freedom is conceived as an "authentic" relation to "being." But the "being" in question is now evinced historically and so (at least implicitly) as a social relation. It appears, that is, as an essential relation immanent to existence, for example, a "way of being." Or rather, I suggest, as an occult quality in human relations, a mystique of authenticity in those imagined to be models of freedom. Historicism, Heidegger's especially, is really a theory of incarnation, namely of "Being" in man. In his case, Being discloses itself in ethnicity, the way of being of a people, a destiny evoked for it by elect poets, thinkers, and leaders. It is, however, Marx who most fully exhibits ontology as an interpersonal relation. In his theory of alienation, personal rivalry take on metaphysical significance as a competition over the appropriation of "being" or "essential reality" (*Wesen*[9]). Its aim is an ontological patina connoting authentic freedom, a metaphysical charisma that makes one (so to say) a god among men. Marx's theory of the "fetishism of commodities" thus belies a fetishism of persons. In making him a prime target of his critique of "humanism," Heidegger misses that Marx is one of the first "ontologists" in his sense of the term, broadly speaking. And thus he obscures the extent to which his own "non-humanist" ontology presupposes human relations of the sort exemplified by Marx.

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or theory of Being. Contingencies, in the form of historical cultures or collectivities, are disclosures or ways of "Being." Radical historicism does not escape metaphysics but merely inverts all the tradition metaphysical values, displacing universality, necessity, and actuality, for example, with particularity, contingency, and possibility, or form with matter, or purpose with passion, soul with body. But it is still a general theory of being. Particular instances and events become the vehicles which reveal whole structures of being. This blocks any analysis of a culture or epoch in terms of its actual human *relations*—which after all is the sensible approach to discern its "meaning." See Vincent Descombes, *The Barometer of Modern Reason: On the Philosophies of Current Events*, for a criticism of Heidegger and others along these lines.

[9] The clearest use of "essentialist" language may be found in the *1844 Manuscripts*, in Karl Marx, *Early Writings*. Karl Marx, *Texte zu Methode und Praxis II: Pariser Manuskripte 1844*. Herausgegeben von Günter Hillman. References refer to the English and German respectively.

Wesen is not the only term used by Marx in an "essentialist" sense, nor is it always used in that sense (for it can also mean an entity). But it is the most typical. For Marx essence is an existential relation in which essence and existence are reciprocal and interchangeable. A thing's essence *is* its existence, revealed in relation to other existing things. The essence of one thing is objectified in the existence of another, and vice versa. The dual use of *Wesen*—to mean either an entity or an essence—lends itself to this ambiguity. See below, note 18.

One last prefatory comment. The common theme uniting radical critics of modern society is the rise of a tyrannical "social power" unique to modern democracy. It is as if "society" itself were an independent reality over and against its own members. In any case, the concept of "society" is distinctively modern. Not all communities are "societies"; a "society" is a particular type of communal order, of recent vintage. Supposedly, it is a free relation of autonomous persons, a collective product of individuals wills. So, for example, it is a contract, not a gift of gods or heroes. Paradoxically, though, this very liberty spawns a "social power" that seems to take on a monstrous life of its own. Alexis de Tocqueville first diagnosed this phenomenon in a moderate vein as the "soft" despotism of democracy, the leveling he saw in the centralized state and bureaucracy, and in the power of the majority and public opinion. We may also add the market and the mass media. Unlike the old types of communal power, it is expressly historical. It does not appear rooted in—or limited by—a sacred mythology or a religious origin, such as Greek nature or the Christian god. Instead, it dons an autonomous mechanism of its own, as the power of "society" itself over its individual members, a kind of quasi-divinity. The vehicles of this power, we suggest, are a series of new, uniquely modern, "ideological" myths, which originate in philosophy and culture as myths of "freedom," "critical reason," or "passion."

Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger also diagnose this novel social power, but in a radical vein. Thus Marx's "capital" and the "law of value"; Nietzsche's "herd instinct" of the "last man"; Heidegger's *das Man* and the non-human imperative of technology. All equate social power with a decay of authentic being or a loss of genuine freedom. For them it is a metaphysical phenomenon, a relation to being, not primarily a human relation. So for them the key to its redemption somehow lies with the creative philosopher or metaphysical poet, who alone (they think) may recall us to an original relation to freedom or being.[10] For such radical thinkers, the fate of history lies somehow in the hands of thinkers. They are the mediators of meaning in history. It is as if philosophy felt called to make good the collapse of the old mythologies and create a new order of

[10] Tocqueville's critique of democracy sees "soft" despotism as an inevitable consequence and danger of modern liberty or individualism, without denying the value or reality of the latter. Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, on the other hand, claim that modern liberty is false or illusory, in the name of an "authentic" historical freedom exemplified by the thinker, artist, or leader. Their critique of the "last man," *das Man*, the bourgeois, etc., points them in the direction of a hard despotism as the antidote to the leveling of soft despotism.

culture. It imagines history a bit dramatically as though it were a romantic novel in which it assumes the roles alternately of tragic victim and heroic savior. And so it gives the Platonic dream of the philosopher priest-king new life, evidently far beyond anything Plato had in mind. Yet contrary to intent, far from offering an antidote to modern social power, radical historicism (I argue) provided the most despotic aspects of modern democracy with mythologies of its own. Thus democratic despotism, as we know from the last century, has its "hard" forms as well. Radical thought did not undermine "bourgeois ideology" so much as bring its most questionable features to accomplishment, in romantic myths of freedom. In revolting against the soft despotism of bourgeois democracy, radical thought invented an apologia for a very hard despotism indeed. Any serious interpretation of the major figures of Continental thought must face this fact and seek to account for it.

Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Marx are testimony to the pride of the philosopher, if ever there was—and all the more so for being "anti-platonic." But by reading radical thought as a quixotic "novel" which ends tragically in reality, I am by no means denying their critical greatness–not at all. To the contrary, it is only when their own romantic ambitions are linked to the rise of modern social power that the revelatory force of their ideological and anthropological thought is most readily apparent.[11] This, eventually, is what I wish to show.

Now to our two Marxian observations. The first is Marx's statement near the end of the Introduction to the "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*." "The emancipation of Germany is only possible in practice if one adopts the point of view of that theory according to which man is the highest being for man."[12] Marx adopted the deification of man in the humanist theologian Ludwig Feuerbach's sense that religion, man's consciousness of God, is in reality man's "alienated" and unrecognized consciousness of himself. The essence of religion is Man himself, a truth all but revealed by Christianity in the Incarnation. For Feuerbach and evidently for Marx, the residence of divine being is the species, not the individual, whose limits are always exposed by comparison with

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[11] They are best read as anthropologists and theologians, I suggest, because they all take their point of departure from the "fact" that the sacred is a social function or category. This explains a fundamental ambiguity of their thought, alternating between debunking the sacred as social and sacralizing the social.

[12] *The Marx-Engels Reader* (65).

others[13]. Now this, I argue, is belied by Marx's own analysis of the capital-labor relation (not to mention by the history of Marxism in power), in which man's worship of man is realized, though scarcely in the way he imagined. Marx's deification of Man is driven by deification of the *capitalist*, who personifies the "social power" of "capital." Even in Feuerbach, an individual's consciousness of "species-being" (the divinity for him) depends on comparison of himself with others. Effectually, the latter are gods for him, transcending and revealing his limitations. Marx represents this relation *in concreto* in the capitalist. To his own mind, to be sure, the capitalist is a negative, inverted expression man's divinity for man, yet the divinity represented by the capitalist is still the indispensable condition of "human emancipation." Capital or rather the capitalist himself is a cipher of man's divinity, a living (if diabolical) symbol of human creation ex nihilo or radical freedom. Evidently, one cannot make a religion of Man except by deifying certain men, imagined to embody freedom or historical "being" more authentically than the rest.

These propositions not only hold good of Marx, but *mutatis mutandis* of Nietzsche and Heidegger as well. Heidegger certainly rejects any Promethean deification of Man; he still divinizes philosophers, poets, and political leaders as revealers of historical *Sein* in collective life. But the "originary" (revelatory) power he wishes to ascribe to poets, philosophers, and ethnic entities mirrors the "will to will" he sees perversely embodied in modern technology. Nietzsche's fantastic image of the philosopher as a creator of values, writing the script of history, intimates his envy of Wagner as a cultural revolutionary, an idolatrous rivalry he never outgrew.[14] To indicate the anthropological ground of this, let us recall the historical situation as seen by radical thinkers after Hegel. Since "God is dead," human beings must be "gods," that is, self-made or self-willed individuals. As mortal gods in an utterly humanized world devoid of transcendental order, they perceive in each other a claim to a complete and independent

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[13] In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach's version of this already implicitly contains the violent conflict Marx sensed. In Feuerbach, an individual encounters his own species—being—i.e. his divinity—in another individual. The latter is a kind of god to the first, revealing to him his limitations and thus awakening his desire. For Feuerbach, this is only benign; violence is always the effect of religion, which interferes with this relation. In effect, though, Marx deduces from it an inherent tendency to rivalry and conflict, which, however, he projects as an aberration onto capitalism.

[14] See René Girard, *To Double Business Bound* (61-83); and Helmut Kohler, *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation.*

humanity, that is, to radical freedom. This provokes and molds their ambitions in a distinctively modern way. But it is one thing to claim that human beings really are or ought to be gods because "God dies." That is the claim of Marx and Nietzsche, and it fuels the demand for radical equality—and for that matter, the equally modern demand for *in*equality. It is quite another thing to claim that modern man contracts a *desire* or psychic want to be a god, as a reflex of his relations to others. Instead of a spontaneous desire, the modern desire to be a god is a desire to be a god among men—that is, to be recognized as such. It is a reaction to a situation in which men see *each other* as gods—as rivals and competitors, as both models and obstacles—under conditions of modern equality. "Men become gods in the eyes of each other," as René Girard puts it. Modern divinization is a reflex of the exigencies of modern equality. Individuals desire to possess what they imagine others already have, an elusive quality of "freedom" or a power of authentic "being."

The second of Marx's observations is the view, expressed for example in the *Grundrisse*, that modern equality somehow functions to create relations of inequality, or master-slave relations:

> the money system is in fact the system of equality and freedom, and...the disturbances encounter[ed] in the further development of the system are disturbances inherent in it, are merely the realization of *equality and freedom*, which prove to be inequality and unfreedom.[15]

This is Marx's conviction that the liberal freedom and equality of "exchange relations" are ideological and illusory, "formal" rather than substantive. They are merely instrumental to mediate the inequalities that lie at the basis of the capitalist system. According to him, these lie outside the system of exchange in "relations of production," or unequal property relations. The real but merely "formal" equality of the market serves to conceal and facilitate these relations. Strictly, then, for Marx it is not equality itself which generates inequalities, as these derive from the antecedent sphere of production. Formal equality merely provides a medium in which these inequalities perpetuate and intensify themselves.

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[15] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*; Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (248-9/160). I have taken the liberty here and elsewhere to drop Marx's characteristic emphases where they seem excessive.

Nevertheless, Marx's observation suggests a fundamental truth, if not exactly in the way he understood it. Even for him, liberal equality cannot be merely a legal formality disguising economic inequalities; it is also a psychic relation to which his own demand for emancipation owes its appeal. The very manner in which he dismisses bourgeois equality as a pious fraud confirms the extent to which he assumes it. The inequality that scandalizes him is a reflex of equality itself. Relations in equality may well congeal into a kind of master-slave relation, not so much in terms of property, to be sure, but in terms of psychology. Equality creates a new situation psychically, in which human beings become the measure of value for each other. Marx's own theory affords us an illuminating instance of this.

For Marx, these two observations express antithetical facts. Realization of man as the supreme being for man presupposes abolition of the capitalist world of formal equality and actual inequality. But if equality itself crystallizes in moral relations of "master and slave," then we may see in man's worship of man not a prescription of a utopia to be realized by revolutionizing the existing world, but a description of what exists already. Worship of money and worship of man are at bottom the same. This is confirmed rather than contradicted by Marx's critique of capitalism; it assumes the validity of its own mythic pretensions as a *causa sui*. It is really a theology in which the capitalist "personifies" capital, an "alien power" lording it over modern society like a capricious deity. Nor is capital merely a golden calf. At the heart of this ideological "inversion," there lies Marx's belief that the "self-valorizing" power of capital instantiates the power of self-creation, a freedom he even equates (in the *1844 Manuscripts*) with "spontaneous generation." The social power the capitalist wields through his money is (in "alienated" form) the divine human power spontaneously to endow existence with "value" or "essential being." Capital is a promissory note of human freedom and divinity.

What underwrites this conception is a certain experience, a negative one, of equality. Marx's "alienated man" is the modern individual who, under conditions of equality, confronts another individual as his rival, a hostile or indifferent possessor of a power, freedom, or quality of being that he himself feels robbed of, and wishes to be. He is gripped by a metaphysical jealousy fixated on the "being" of another. His feeling of nothingness is a reflex of his belief in the true "being" he imagines in the other, as if the other were an exemplar of freedom or the power spontaneously to create his own meaning or value. The underlying premise of this relation

is the perception of equality. At the same time, this rival and competitor is regarded as someone who has illegitimately expropriated his essential power, and thus does not truly possess it as his own; he is an imposter or impersonator. The denial of the authenticity of the bourgeois individual or the capitalist is an index of how deeply he is believed to represent true freedom. The whole attitude towards the capitalist evinces a profound ambivalencethe kind of ambivalence characteristic of jealousy. Marx elevates this rivalry to the level of historical myth in the antagonism of the bourgeois and the worker. He seeks to recreate sacred myth as History. What confers on this social relation its epic quality, however, is the metaphysical mystique inscribed in the structure of modern relations as Marx sees them. Though captive to this ontological charisma, Marx still sees it as a social relation and thus virtually reveals, without realizing it, its anthropological roots in the structure of democratic desire. Thus we may see how ontology at least in its radical, romantic species is an ideological crystallization of the passion of equality. The eros hidden in romantic passion originates in the rivalries of democratic man. In literature, this is perhaps best exemplified by the vexed character of Stendhal's great novel of romantic ambition, Julien Sorel.[16] Embroiled in endless rivalries, Sorel is obsessively fascinated by the social "betters" he pretends to despise. The great radical thinkers of the last two centuries are the Julien Sorels of modern thought. In Marx, this origin is still open, transparent, and unapologetic. It is driven underground again by subsequent historicism, though, which hence requires the repudiation of Marxian "humanism."

To see this consider Marx's analysis of alienation in the *1844 Manuscripts*, supplemented by extrapolations from later work. In the *Manuscripts*, Marx presents alienation in a sequence of modalities. First, man is alienated from the object of his labor, then from the living labor process, from the species or society as a whole, and finally from other individuals. The sequence begins with man's relation to nature and concludes with alienation as a relation of individuals, of worker and capitalist. This reflects Marx's "materialist" conviction that the ultimate ground of alienation lies in man's relation to nature, not in man's relation to others of his kind. In Marx—as in traditional metaphysics generally—man's relation to nature precedes and determines all human institutions and relations. For him, of course, this relation is expressed in labor. Because it resides in production, man's relation to nature, or rather nature itself, is

[16] See in particular the account of Sorel in René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel.*

changing and historical.[17] Here Marx departs from classical metaphysics, for which nature is in essence unchanging. But though the transcendent is immanentized–being is now equated with material or contingent nature rather than with nature as eternal form–man's relation to nature (rather than the relation of human beings to each other) remains the dominant matrix of philosophical intelligibility. Human relations are to be understood in terms of man's relation to nature. The historicity of nature structures man's relation to man. Human relations have no indigenous structures of their own, irreducible to nature. Though "expressed" in human relations, alienation is fundamentally a fact of man's metabolism with nature.[18]

Marx's own account, though, suggests a reversal of this order. "Reification"—human relations expressed as relations of things—reflects an alienation spontaneously issuing from human relations on their own account. Even as he describes it, alienation is always experienced as the freedom *of another* as if it were an obstacle, standing between a self and his own freedom. His own analysis intimates, moreover, that this is a structure of passion or desire itself, aggravated under conditions of equality, as we shall show. Thus (we argue) it is more reasonable to see the modern alienation from nature as a consequence of an alienation from other human beings on the interpersonal level of passion or desire. Alienation, moreover, is based precisely on the identification of individuals with each other. The pride of the philosopher is so scandalized by this, though, it projects the source of its condition onto something or someone else.

Marx construes the basic form of alienation in terms of "inverse proportionality": "the misery of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and volume of his production" (*Early Writings/Texte* 322/51). "The devaluation of the human world grows in direct proportion to the increase in the value of the world of things."

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[17] For the historicity of nature, see the critique of Feuerbach in *The German Ideology* (61-64). It is the historicity of nature itself—not "history" over "nature"—which constitutes historicism in the radical sense. It is an *ontology* of history in terms of man's contingent relation to material nature. Historicism appeals to this modern view of nature to efface its difference from history, without ceasing to make man's relation to nature the determining structure of history.

[18] This view of the priority of nature in and to human relations is typically modern. It is the "economic ideology" (in Louis Dumont's phrase) that, ironically, reappears (in an aesthetic form—if not as aesthetics itself) in romantic thought. See Louis Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology*. As Vincent Descombes suggests, this is the common ground of for the ideological affinity of Marxists and Heideggerians (not to mention other romantics.

> [T]he greater this product, the less is he [the worker] himself. The externalization of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside* him, independently of him and alien to him, and begins to confront him as an autonomous power; that the life which he has bestowed on the object confronts him as hostile and alien. (*Early Writings/Texte* 323-4/53)

Inverse proportionality is central to Marx's thought. Not only does he model "materialist" law on Newtonian gravity (a law of inverse proportion). He also invests it with a metaphysical value through the Hegelian "logic of reflection," in which "essence" is a relation of "existence," and "opposites" are "reflected" in each other. Inverse relation is at the heart of the "law of value" in *Capital* and of "ideology" as a "*camera obscura*" in *The German Ideology*. But its original, generative form is a personal relation, described as "alienation" in the *1844 Manuscripts*. It is not just a metaphysical relation (as in Hegel) but a human one—but a human relation exuding a metaphysical mystique.[19]

In this capacity, inverse relation condenses three different dimensions in Marx's analysis. First, it expresses an "abstract" alienation between the

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[19] The transformation of essence into an immanent relation of existence is above all the work of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, in the Doctrine of Essence. For him, it is not a personal relation but a logical or conceptual one. Even in Hegel, though, it has its analogues in human relations, such as his famous account of "master and slave." It is Feuerbach (and then Marx) who explicitly translates the existence in question into human existence and thus "essence" into an interpersonal relation (see below). Nature or being is revealed in man's relation to man. See, for example, *The Essence of Christianity*.

Key to this immanentization of essence is Feuerbach's relativization of subject and predicate as interchangeable. Despite his materialism he rejects nominalism, postulating that a thing's sensuous existence *is* its essence (and vice versa). The difference between realism and nominalism disappears in the modern notion of relativity, a relativity that Feuerbach grasps as a relation of persons. Thus a person experience his *essence* objectified for him the *existence* of another and his relation to it. In his own way, Feuerbach repeats what he accuses Hegel of, namely of making the individual a "predicate of his predicate," a reflection of his objectified self. The essence of something is revealed only in and through other things, i.e., only in relation. In man, this becomes explicit. Or, as Feuerbach puts it, nature becomes conscious of itself in man. So man is a genuine "species-*being*"—not just a species—because his species-*essence* is an express object for him in others of his kind. An individual thus encounters his own divinity in another individual. By the same token, man conditions the revelation of nature as such. Feuerbach's humanism is thus ontology as well as theology. Human being becomes the linchpin of being per se, the site of its revelation.

isolated individual and the social power of capital as a whole–alienation from society *tout court*. Second, it embodies this abstract alienation concretely in a relation of distinct individuals, the worker and the capitalist. The worker's product confronts him as an autonomous power, another living being, in the figure of the capitalist. Marx typically portrays the capitalist as a mere "personification" of capital, a power to which he is as much subject in his own way as the worker. It would be impossible to conceive, though, how capital dominates the worker if not as a living will opposed to him. As he puts it in the *1844 Manuscripts*, "If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, and if it confronts him as an alien power, this is only possible because it belongs to a *man other than the worker*" (*Early Writings/Texte* 330/59). Marx, then, construes personal rivalry as an alienation from capitalist economy as a whole, but this rather intellectual sort of alienation is only brought to a focus in a bitter interpersonal antagonism, in which one individual sees another as an insidious obstacle to his own being. Speaking about proletarians in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx says

> Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois state: they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overlooker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, the more hateful and the more embittering it is. (Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* 59)

It is not just the faceless tyranny of political economy that demeans the worker, but the capitalist himself. It is the personal quality in which he experiences what Marx called the "loss of one's reality," the humiliating presence of the other.

Here one may observe, especially in the context of his later writings, that if Marx depersonalizes rivalries as class rivalries, he nevertheless personifies classes as if they were self-interested individuals engaged in personal rivalry. This is an ideological refraction of a personal rivalry which still shines through Marx's image of impersonal social forces. Marx wants to make rivalry a function of an inequitable distribution of wealth or

property, based on man's productive relation to nature.[20] Accordingly, rivalry originates in the division of labor and of society into classes necessitated by scarcity. It is not rivalry that invests property with social value, beyond the necessities of social reproduction. Rather, it is property, supposedly necessitated by scarcity, that sparks rivalry. Obstacles to human desires are merely contingent factors of nature destined to be removed by human ingenuity. Marx denies that the obstacle is constitutive of desire itself as a relation of competing wills, or that desire creates its own scarcity. He denies, that is, any inherent tendency on the part of individuals to become obstacles to each other, based on the nature of desire as a social relation, or that this tendency is exacerbated or reproduced with laboratory purity by modern equality. This, however, is what his own analysis suggests.

The third dimension in inverse relation in alienation is a relation of "being" or "essential reality" and existence. "[T]his realization [*Verwirklichung*] of labour appears as a loss of reality [*Entwirklichung*]" (*Early Writings/Texte* 324/52). "[T]he more value he creates, the more worthless he becomes [*Verwertung/Entwertung*]" (*Early Writings/Texte* 325/52). "So much does objectification appear as loss of the object [*Verlust des Gegenstandes*]...." (*Early Writings/Texte* 324/52). On the most general level, alienation is a metaphysical relation of existence and essence, in which the essence of one thing is "negatively reflected" (in Hegel's phrase) in the existence of another. This is perhaps the most striking feature of all. Far from being a mere self-justification or ideological disguise for revolutionary animus, the "metaphysics" of alienation is an indispensable clue to its structure. The capitalist does not deprive the worker merely of the means of life or employment; he deprives him of an intangible quality, the "vital expression" (*Lebensäusserung*) of his being. Marx portrays a social relation as an ontological one, a contest over the dispensation of essence, a very personal rivalry crystallized into a desire for "being" or authentic "reality." The issue here is not primarily the distribution of wealth as it is of the distribution of a quality of originary being according to a law

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[20] For him it is a function not of desire itself but merely of the scarcity of objects of desire. Scarcity is originally natural and later (under capitalism) socially induced. Once desire is liberated from *all* constraints posed by nature or society–by the productivity made possible by modern industry and technology–it will also shed its excessive characteristics, avarice, concupiscence, vindictiveness, etc.. The excesses of desire which make human beings competitors and enemies are solely a reflection of class divisions. Emancipated desire will spontaneously promote social harmony.

of "inverse proportion" between two individuals. One individual confronts his own "essence" or "being" in another individual who has expropriated it from him. The latter at once exemplifies his true self and robs him of it.

At once deified and demonized, the bourgeois, the capitalist, appears as possessing or personifying an "essential power" or "reality" that properly belongs to the proletarian or intellectual. Money invests its owner with the false magic of "self-valorization" (*Selbstverwertung*), an alienated simulacrum of authentic self-creation or self-activity Marx identifies with emancipated labor. Alienation is not poverty of riches, but poverty of essence, a jealous obsession with the "being" of the capitalist as if he exuded an extraordinary superhuman power. The real bone of contention in class war is not so much property, wealth, or things, but an elusive mystique of being they incarnate as "capital." Marx is, one may say, ontologically obsessed with an essential reality he accuses not just bourgeois society, but the bourgeois personally, of robbing "Man," that is, the worker or revolutionary intellectual.

In this, Marx is paradigmatic for the radical critique of modernity as a whole. No doubt it suggests his affinity with later thinkers like Heidegger or Sartre, who also felt ontologically deprived. Nietzsche, Sartre, and Heidegger share Marx's visceral hatred of bourgeois modernity, his obsession with the ontological decrepitude of modern life. This reflects what is, perhaps, the quintessentially modern experience—the feeling of the denial of recognition. Radical thought—and this is what makes it radical—turns this experience into a metaphysics. It assumes an ontological quality intimated not so much through its presence as its absence, yet one always made manifest as the being or freedom of *someone else*. What Marx calls "alienation" is a felt paucity of reality. But the key to this is that a person experiences "the loss of his self [*Verlust seiner selbst*]" as if it "belongs to another" (*Early Writings/Texte* 327/55). The ontological mood of deprivation of being is palpably manifest in another who intimates true being or freedom as an inaccessible reality, an "alien power" towering over him from an unreachable height. This being seems all the more remote and inaccessible the nearer it is. In fact it is the insufferable presence of *the other*, an intolerable reminder of one's own nothingness.

To be sure, Marx argues that the primary fact of estrangement is the domination of all, worker and capitalist alike, by the inhuman power of capital:

> Estrangement appears not only in the fact that the means of *my* life belong to *another* and that *my* desire is the inaccessible possession of *another*, but also in the fact that all things are *other* than themselves, that my activity is *other* than itself, and that finally–and this goes for the capitalists too–an *inhuman* power rules over everything. (*Early Writings/Texte*, 366/95)

Marx here refers to the power of money to "invert" and alienate all value relations by its power of substitution. Through money everything becomes substitutable for everything else; we have Hegel's *verkehrte Welt*, where each thing spontaneously turns into its opposite. Money makes the ugly beautiful and dullness scintillate. It has the power to confer on anything or anyone the sparkle of desirability, the magic of allure. The inverted world, though, is not just a parallel universe (as it seems in Hegel) that hovers over the real world like a platonic dream. It is the ideological structure of real of the world itself. And so it becomes objective for an individual only through his relation to another individual. And this seems especially revealing, the point at which one may reverse Marx. The inverse relation of essence and existence, of man to his "essential powers" or "reality," appears only in the form of a human relation, one, moreover, in which "my desire is the inaccessible possession of another."

On this hypothesis, alienation seems founded in what René Girard calls a mimesis of desires, the fact that one's desire, evidently the defining content of one's being, is determined by imitation of the desires of others. The ideal of a desire or passion all my own is precisely "mimetic desire." Let us explain this as follows. The defining freedom of the modern world is freedom of choice, but the very first choice modern man makes is to give up choice in order to desire according to the desire of another. Where else is there a model of desire? Under conditions of modernity or equality, a natural order or transcendent model is absent. Supposedly, what confers validity on choice is the freedom with which it is made—that it is "mine"—its "spontaneity." My desire ought to evince my autonomy or freedom, because, as Kant tells us, this is my dignity. But since modernity admits no objects desirable by nature nor a neutral paradigm of desire to follow, in the event one chooses by "doubling." One takes someone else's desire as a model. Desire becomes fixated on the imagined "being" of the other, as if his passions were a pure self-expression, a revelation of freedom. Girard's original paradigm is Don Quixote, whose first choice is the voluntary surrender of choice in order to choose according to the desires of another he finds in fiction and romance. In Julien Sorel, this

external mediation is made over into an internal mediation, a relation of two living individuals who imitate each other. The script that Quixote finds in literature is now written by society and palpably manifest in its celebrities. Modern man is constitutionally quixotic; he desires "by the book." Or, as Girard puts it, modern desire is "metaphysical desire." At best only a few can be truly original; more commonly, modern desire recoils with horror at its powerlessness to invent for itself an object. So it models itself on someone else as though he were the paradigm of spontaneity. Modern mimesis is thus infected by an "ontological sickness," a fascination with the being of others as if they possessed the secret of freedom. Hence also the volatility of modern desire, its tendency to intensification and conflict, and finally, its arbitrary nature, independent of the objects that afford it a pretext.

If this is so, then, as Girard's theory suggests, revolutionary desire is really a copy of the desire of the figure it seeks to overthrow. And it is revolutionary precisely because it is a copy, one that must needs be disguised as originality. Imitation in equality becomes fixated on the "being" of the model as if that were an exhibition of the pure spontaneity of desire or the miraculous power of "self-valorization." But since the appearance of imitation is a humiliation of one's dignity, imitation takes the form of negativity, denial, contrariety. It must demonstrate its difference at all costs, and the fraudulence of what it opposes. The other must be portrayed as a falsification of the passion it alone authentically represents. His very presence is an offense, an insult, a slur. The force of this mimesis is all the greater, the more it is denied and concealed from itself. The violence of revolutionary passion is a measure of its fascination with what it seeks to destroy.

Under the bourgeoisie, then, an individual's own being, his passion, inevitably belongs to someone else. The Marxian self encounters his being, even his own desire, as the property of another self. The property in question, though, is not so much the legal kind that Marx thinks, but a metaphysical property emanating from the rival. To Marx, it appears as if only claims over property made the worker and the capitalist rivals. But there is clearly something more than just this going on, even in his own account. It is rivalry that confers on property the metaphysical mystique it clearly has for him. Democratic desire *is* alienation. The alienated self *is* a desire for the self of *another* whose desire appears spontaneous or self-willed, an authentic passion in contrast to the first. Girard's mimesis of desires is concealed in Marx's stress on property, yet it is just this stress on

the acquisitive nature of desire that (in contrast, say, to Hegel's version of the master-slave relation) intimates the presence of mimesis. Marx's alienated man suffers his own desire as someone else's property, a desire, therefore, which he can only desire. And so he desperately thirsts for his own desire, a passion that would exhibit his self as his own expressive individuality. This suggests, though, that the alienation Marx ascribes to capitalism is an extension of his own anthropology, if we look to the human relation beneath the ontological cloak. His anthropology is the logical or rather ideological quintessence of capitalism, the purest and most potent form of the passions of equality. And if that is so, then the romantic vision of man as a "species-being," i.e., in which an individual's passion is mediated for him by another's, is not the antidote to social alienation, but its formula. Romantic anthropology reflects the psychic situation of modern man who, under conditions of equality, lives only by comparison of himself with others, having lost all capacity for "natural" or "traditional" standards. What is extraordinary in Marx's account of alienation is the clarity he brings to the human relation on which it rests, seemingly in direct proportion to the naivete with which he abandons himself to it. Marx's thought is most revealing where it is most uncritical.

Let us return to Marx's proletarian in order to pursue the logic of this relation to its end. Since his own desire is incarnated for him in the figure of another who has stolen it from him, he must reclaim it, even if that demands destruction of the bourgeois who offends him.

> You must, therefore, confess that by "individual" you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, the swept out of the way, and made impossible.(*The Communist Manifesto* 69-70).

A man experiences his own self as the self of another, whom he hopelessly desires to be; his own individuality mysteriously confronts him as another individual, a double who shadows him with a feeling of nothingness. "I am nothing, but I should be everything"(*Early Writings* 254), he—Marx—says to himself with revolutionary daring. So he strips this so-called "individual" of his being by exposing him as a mere mask of social forces, the "personification of a category." Before he can be removed, the bourgeois who obstructs bohemian ambition must be reduced to what Foucault might call a "social construct." "The capitalist is merely capital personified and functions in the productive process solely as the agent of capital" (*The*

Marx-Engels Reader 440). And the social class that he personifies must be tarred as the Manichean embodiment of evil in history.

> A particular social sphere must be regarded as the notorious crime of the whole society, so that emancipation from the sphere appears as a general emancipation for one class to be the liberating class *par excellence*, it is necessary that another class be openly the oppressing class.(*The Marx-Engels Reader* 63)

As the individual is reduced to his class, the class is invested with the sinister intentions of an individual. With this, the ontological demonization of the other is complete, and de-humanized, he can be liquidated in good conscience. It is perfectly logical, if not obligatory, that such an act be executed in the name of justice, humanity, and freedom. It is equally logical that Marxism's greatest imitators should dispense with that justification and brazenly proclaim the aim of extermination as an end in itself.

Marx has provided an inspired ideological justification for the most common of passions, not to say of crimes. But if that were all we saw, we would partly miss the point. The alienation Marx ascribes to capitalism is the human reality of the romantic passion which appears to him as the emancipation from capitalism. Alienation is "emancipated" desire—desire liberated from nature, tradition, and hierarchy, and volatilized by equality. Marx's proposed solution to conflict is itself the source of it. He seeks to free us of the slavery of desire by creating a world where we desire freely. The achievement of this "solution" could only repeat and intensify that conflict. Democratic desire demands a "permanent revolution." And nothing so clearly intimates its personal character as its ontological self-justifications. All the same, Marx's romantic metaphysics lays bare the structure of rivalry, because it illuminates (albeit naively) the metaphysical fetishes generated by rivalry and desire themselves. Ontology is not just an ideological facade for base passions; it is an essential feature of passion itself, its "intentional structure," particularly under conditions of equality. Fixated on the "being" of the rival, it conjures up the fantastic stature of the latter as though it were a divine malignancy. It is a presence felt as an absence or a deprivation in the figure of a rival, both a model and a competitor who must be defeated. That fact that the historical "being" here is humanized and super-humanized is not a violation of this logic but a consequence of it. By suppressing anthropology, radical ontology condemns itself to repeat the cycles of negativity, until it finally consumes itself.

Let us sum up. Radical thought hunts for scapegoats and sacrificial victims on whom can be placed exclusive blame for what ails society, and in its quest "ontology" serves it well. As a logic of demonization, its classical targets are capitalism, technology, Christianity, and today America, Europe, the West. But behind these ideological abstractions there always stand human targets. And these are the usual suspects: the middle class, the rich, the Jewish. Justice as radical thought proclaims it is invidiously dialectical. It identifies the particular with the universal and the universal with the particular. It realizes "universal" justice by deciding who is authentically human (or superhuman) and who is not. It equates justice with groups and their historic birthrights as bearers of "essential" being. And it excludes the portion of humanity imagined to be the obstacle to its destiny. The latter it identifies with inhuman, non-human, or impersonal historical forces. This is accomplished by reducing politics to metaphysics, ethics to ontology, justice to historicity. (So it is it is not altogether true that historicist ontology leaves no place for ethics, since it *is* an ethics, though a perverse one.[21]) Marx denies that the proletarian is as capable of evil as the bourgeois, because evil is not something the bourgeois does, but something he *is*. In the metaphysics of radical thought, moral judgement and ontological judgement are one and the same. Individuals are not responsible for themselves, but incarnations of an "essence," a "way of being," a *Gattungswesen* or social category. Or rather, they are made personally responsible for the crime imputed to the category as a whole. And that, in the last analysis, is the crime of simply existing.

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[21] The debate about whether there is or is not a "place" for ethics in Heidegger's ontology thus rests on a simple misapprehension. It both is an ethics and supersedes ethics. It by no means follows that Heidegger's thought is not an ethics or a politics simply because it never deigns to speak about these things in indigenously human terms. To the contrary, the problem with Heidegger's thought is not that it is a-political but that it is so utterly political, in a virtually mythic sense. There is no appeal beyond the ethnic dispensations of being.

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ON THE RATIONALITY OF SACRIFICE[1]

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I came to be interested in John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*—an active interest which led me to become the publisher of the French version of that book—in part for the following, apparently anecdotal reason:

1) On the one hand, as early as the first lines of his book, Rawls makes it clear that his major target is the critique of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is the defendant, charged with vindicating sacrifice. As everyone knows, "justice does not allow that the *sacrifices* imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many (...) it denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others (*Theory* 3-4; my emphasis).

2) On the other hand, although the term "sacrifice" pops up again and again throughout the book, you may look up the index: it doesn't figure there. "Sacrifice" is not granted the dignity of a concept.

I found that shocking and my curiosity was aroused. My own research is driven by a few anthropological convictions (see Dupuy, *Le Sacrifice et l'envie*). I am going to list them here, for the sake of clarity and honesty, without trying to vindicate them. The arguments I am going to present do not depend in the least on whether these convictions are valid or not; they should be assessed on their own merits.

a) All non-modern social and cultural institutions are rooted in the sacred.

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[1] I should like to thank John Rawls and the late Robert Nozick for their remarks on earlier versions of this paper.

b) Of the three dimensions of the sacred: myths, rituals, and prohibitions, the most fundamental is the ritual.

c) The most primitive and fundamental ritual form is sacrifice.

d) Sacrifice is the reenactment by the social group of a primordial event which took place spontaneously: a process of collective victimage which resulted in the murder of a member of the community. This elimination of a victim reestablished peace and order. There lies the origin of the sacred. The victim is taken to be the cause or the active principle both of the violent crisis and its violent resolution. It unites within itself opposite predicates: it is at the same time infinitely good and infinitely evil. It can only be of a divine nature.

e) Christ's death on the cross is just one more occurrence of the primordial event. As far as *facts* are concerned, there is no difference between primitive religions and Christianity. The difference lies in *interpretation*. For the first time in the history of humankind, the story is told from the victim's viewpoint, not the persecutors.' The story (the Gospel) takes side with the victim and proclaims its innocence. When, in our modern languages, we say that the victim was *scapegoated*, we just say as much.

f) Modern institutions embody a tension between two contradictory drives. On the one hand, the drive to resort to more of the same: the drive to scapegoating. On the other, the anti-sacrificial drive set in motion by the Christian Revelation.

In totality or only partially, these points have been made by several anthropological traditions, in particular the French sociological school, with the works of Fustel de Coulanges, Durkheim and Mauss; and the British anthropological school, with Frazer and Robertson-Smith. Freud and the Belgo-British anthropologist Hocart gave them a new momentum and, more recently, René Girard has produced an impressive synthesis.[2] As is well known, Nietzsche's philosophy relies on point e), for which the author of *The Gay Science* ("there are no facts, only interpretations") felt justified in bringing a radical indictment against Christianity, taken to be the morality of the slaves.

In this light, Kantianism appears to be a secularized form of Christianity. The question I want to raise is: to what extent is this true of Rawlsianism?

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[2] See, in particular, his *Violence and the Sacred*, and also *The Scapegoat*.

It might be retorted: these references to anthropology are irrelevant to modern political philosophy, and, at any rate, the word "sacrifice" has now acquired a meaning altogether disconnected from its alleged religious roots. I do not think the burden of the proof is on my side, all the more so since, as we are going to observe, most authors who participate in the debate about the rationality of sacrifice choose their examples within a very limited range, whose importance for anthropology is crucial: the scapegoating mechanism.

1. A few sacrificial case studies.

Consider the fictional (and fictitious) situation imagined by William Styron in his novel *Sophie's Choice*. It has the same structure as the story made up by Bernard Williams in his indictment of utilitarianism ("Jim's choice" in "A Critique"). The Nazi officer orders Sophie to choose which of her two children will be sent to the gas chamber, the other one then being saved. Should she refuse to choose, both of them would die. What is it rational and/or moral for Sophie to do, if that terminology can be used at all in such a nightmarish context? It seems that utilitarianism (and, more generally, consequentialism) would have it that Sophie abide by the Nazi's command and choose to sacrifice one of her children: at least the other one will live. In this light, utilitarian ethics would appear to be guilty of justifying a sacrificial choice which most of us find appalling.

Take now the fairly different structure imagined by Robert Nozick. "Utilitarianism doesn't, it is said, properly take rights and their non-violation into account; it instead leaves them a derivative status. Many of the counterexample cases to utilitarianism fit under this objection; for example, punishing an innocent man to save a neighborhood from a vengeful rampage (...) A mob rampaging through a part of town killing and burning *will* violate the rights of those living there. Therefore, someone might try to justify his punishing another *he* knows to be innocent of a crime that enraged a mob, on the grounds that punishing this innocent person would help to avoid even greater violations of rights by others, and so would lead to a minimum weighted score for rights violations in the society."[3] It will be noted, in passing, that Nozick avoids carefully giving

[3] R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* 28-29. Reminder: Rawl's two principles of justice read as follows: "First Principle: "Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all." Second Principle: "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both

this structure its true, original name: *Caiaphas's choice*—probably the paradigmatic case, if one is to accept the anthropological tenets stated at the beginning. Caiaphas, addressing the Chief Priests and the Pharisees, says in effect: "You know nothing whatever; you do not use your judgment; it is more to your interest that one man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should be destroyed" (John 11. 49-50).

It is my contention that it would be extremely unfair to charge utilitarianism alone with that crime—if, indeed, vindicating sacrifice *is* a crime. Our whole conception of rationality is a party to it. Most analytical moral philosophers, I guess, along with normative economists, consider the Pareto principle, known also as the principle of efficiency, to be a self-evident axiom which any consistent moral doctrine should adopt. If a transformation, virtual or actual, makes some people better off without making the others worse off, how could anyone complain about it? In my following remarks, I shall call the Pareto principle the principle of unanimity. Returning to Sophie's and Caiaphas's choices, it is easy to understand that it is not only utilitarianism that concludes in favor of the rationality of sacrifice in those cases, but more fundamentally the principle of unanimity and, as a consequence, all criteria compatible with it. And this is so because of a feature that these sacrificial situations share. Whether the victim is sacrificed or not, its physical well-being remains the same: it is killed or eliminated all the same. As far as *facts* are concerned, the victim's fate does not depend on whether it is sacrificed or not (the child Sophie chooses to be sent to the gas chamber would have died all the same had she

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(a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged [that is to so-called difference principle], and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under all conditions of fair equality of opportunity" (*Theory* 302). What may be most original about these principles are the rules specifying their priority: the first takes precedence over the second, and within the second, the clause concerning the fairness of equality of opportunity has priority over the difference principle. Moreover, these priorities take the form that logicians call the lexicographical or lexical order—that is the ordering of words in a dictionary (also called leximin), maybe the anti-sacrificial too par excellence. The words having the different first letters are listed in the order of the first letters, no matter what the other letters in the words may be. The first letter of a word, then, is lexically first in relation to the others, in the sense that if we replace this letter by another one that comes later in the alphabet, a choice of other letters could possibly compensate for the change. There is no possible substitution, and it is as if the order of the first letter had an infinite weight. Yet at the same time, the order of the other letters has a positive weight, for it two words begin with the same letter, then the following letters decide the word's place in the dictionary. A lexical order manages to give all of the elements of a totality a positive role, without making them all substitutable for each other. Now, the very basis of the sacrificial principles is the substitutability of the elements within the totality.

refused to choose; Jesus is part of the Jewish nation: were he not to be sacrificed he would perish all the same). What makes the victim's fate a sacrifice, then, is not its death: it is the *meaning* thereof. The sacrificial victim dies *in order* for the others *to* live on.

To put it in more philosophical terms: the concept of sacrifice, here, is not defined *counterfactually*. If the victim were not sacrificed, her level of well-being would remain the same. The sacrifice has to do with the *actual causal* connection between her level of well-being (she is put to death, or expelled, or her rights are denied) and the others'. When she is sacrificed, the others are saved, or safe. And someone, possibly the victim herself, *intentionally* activated that causal connection in order to achieve a higher end, such as the maximization of the welfare of the community (or the satisfaction of some divinity's needs).

Let me precisely call a *unanimity-sacrificial situation* any social context such as Sophie's or Caiaphas's choices in which the principle of unanimity suffices to conclude in favor of the rationality of sacrifice. Inasmuch as Rawls's principles of justice are by their very form compatible with the principle of unanimity—which Rawls holds to be the case—it seems appropriate to assert the following: If they could be abstracted or extruded from the theory of justice in which they are embedded, and applied to a unanimity-sacrificial situation, Rawls's principles of justice, by their very form, would favor the sacrificial choice.

It is important to make two technical remarks at this stage:

First, when I contend that Rawls's principles of justice are compatible with the principle of unanimity (or efficiency), I am not referring only to the difference principle. This should be made perfectly clear, since it is only in reference to the latter that Rawls asserts explicitly this compatibility (*Theory* 79). If I were actually referring to the difference principle in order to support my contention that the principles of justice favor the sacrificial choice in a unanimity-sacrificial situation such as Sophie's or Caiaphas's choices, one might immediately object that I am missing a fundamental tenet of the theory of justice, namely, that the difference principle is hierarchically and "lexicographically" ranked lower than the principles on equal liberties and equal opportunities; in other terms, one might object that welfare, even the welfare of the worst-off, cannot be paid for in terms of unequal liberties. However, please note that in the sacrificial situations I have been considering, there is no such trade-off between basic liberties and economic and social gains. All the values at stake in the choice

situation belong to the same category: fundamental liberties, lives, etc. Those are the values governed by the first principle of justice.

Now, in its broader version, the first principle takes on the same form as the difference principle: that of a lexical ordering between the individuals ranked according to the way they fare on the values in question. For instance, *Theory* states: "All social values—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage. Injustice, then, is simply inequalities that are not to the benefit of all" (62); and, later we read, "...liberty can be restricted only for the sake of liberty...a less than equal liberty must be acceptable to those citizens with the lesser liberty" (250).

From these statements, one is justified in inferring that the first principle has the form of a *leximin* ordering, like the difference principle, and therefore is compatible with the principle of unanimity.

However—and this is my second technical remark—it could be argued that it is still an open question whether or not Rawls's principles are actually compatible with the Pareto condition. It should be noted first that for my contention to be true—namely, that these principles favor the sacrificial choice in a unanimity-sacrificial situation—they have to be compatible with the Pareto condition *in its stronger version*. It is sufficient that *some* people are made better off by a given transformation, the others' lots remaining the same, for this stronger principle to approve of that transformation. Now a large number of authors have interpreted the difference principle in a way that renders it incompatible with the strong Pareto condition. Thus, Nozick: "With regard to envy, the difference principle, applied to the choice between either A having 10 and B having 5, or A having 8 and B having 5, would favor the latter. Thus, despite Rawls's view, the difference principle is inefficient in that it sometimes will favor a status quo against a Pareto-better but more unequal distribution (*Anarchy* 229).

It is because these commentators interpret the difference principle in this way that they feel justified in accusing it of being a mere expression of envy. It is my contention that this interpretation is unwarranted and should be dismissed. It contradicts the maxim Rawls hammers home all the time: injustice is inequalities that are not to *everyone's* advantage—everyone, that is the better-off as well as the others. The difference principle, then, favors a transformation that betters the condition of the better-off without

bettering—nor damaging—the condition of the worse-off. The same applies to the first principle in its broader version.

Nozick might reply: "Rawls's maxim that injustice is inequalities that are not to everyone's advantage, leaves open the possibility that "everyone" means everyone, and "advantage" does not mean merely "non-disadvantage" but in fact means advantage, that is improvement. In this case the difference principle would favor (8, 5) over (10, 5).[4] However, this results from a confusion between a constraint on inequalities and a constraint on a social transformation. If Rawls's maxim did apply to a social *transformation*, it would rule out any transformation that did not meet the weak Pareto criterion. It would then favor (10, 5) over (10, 6), which is clearly absurd. Nozick may well want to restrict his interpretation of Rawls's maxim to those transformations that *increase* the degree of inequalities. But then, (8, 8, 5) would be preferred to, say, (16, 8, 6), which is no less absurd.

If we now take "inequalities that are not to everyone's advantage" to mean *inequalities* that are not to everyone's advantage, it becomes clear that Leximin is the form of Rawls's principles of justice. Suppose 5 is the maximum the worse-off can get, and the better-off can get as much as 10. It is appropriate to say, then, that the *inequality* corresponding to (8, 5) is less "to everyone's advantage" than the inequality corresponding to (10, 5)—since the worse-off are, in either state, treated more favorably than they would in any other state, and the better-off are treated in the former less favorably than they could, given this constraint.

I deemed it necessary to make all of these points in order to uphold my contention that the *form* of Rawls's principles of justice is favorable to the sacrificial choice in sacrificial situations, which may have sound somewhat provocative, since the *Theory of Justice* itself may be read as a powerful anti-sacrificial scheme.

2. Rawls and utilitarianism on sacrifice.

I want now to generalize the previous point and defend the following thesis. The most important cases of social transformations which it is legitimate to dub "sacrificial" are such that both the utilitarian principle and Rawls's principles vindicate them. This is so because the weakest normative principle that justifies them is weaker than both the utilitarian principle and Rawls's principles.

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[4] Robert Nozick, personal communication.

If this is correct, and if we are opposed to sacrifice, it follows that by and large, utilitarianism doesn't fare worse than Rawls's principles of justice as to the vindication of sacrifice.

This is shocking. Isn't one of the major accusations leveled at utilitarianism the fact that it may allow for serious infractions of liberty for the sake of greater benefits for others? When, on the first page of his book, Rawls contends that "each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override," with what is he contrasting his conception of justice, if not with utilitarian ethics? What if we showed that whenever utilitarianism justifies sacrifice, Rawls's principles are likely to do the same?

A remark, first, which cannot serve as a demonstration, to be sure, but which is puzzling nevertheless. Whenever an author belonging to the analytical tradition has to exemplify the assertion that utilitarianism favors sacrifice, he or she seems compelled to resort to a single class of instances, a class that happens to be a sub-class of the class of unanimity-sacrificial situations: the scapegoating mechanism. We saw an example of that in Nozick and it would be tedious to quote from other philosophers, such as Sandel, Larmore, Williams, etc. Normative economists are no exception to the rule. Thus, E. J. Mishan: "There is much that might increase total utility, or that might realize Pareto improvements, that is nonetheless quite unacceptable to civilized societies and can, therefore, become no part of their agenda. However much the aggregate utility enjoyed by a hysterical mob in kicking a man into insensibility exceeds the disutility of the victim, society would feel justified in intervening" (971).

Is it inevitable for the critics of utilitarianism to appeal almost uniquely to the scapegoating mechanism? Logical analysis in itself does not impose such limitation. The fact that utilitarianism is likely to favor the sacrifice of some for a greater good shared by others results, we are told, from two major factors. First, it is a teleological doctrine that gives priority to the advancement of some independently defined overall social good over the right. Secondly, since it defines that overall good as an aggregate in which the various individual conceptions of the good are melted, as it were, it does not take seriously the "plurality and distinctiveness of individuals" (Rawls); it does not sufficiently respect the fact that each one "is a separate person, that his is the only life he has" (Nozick). From these two characteristics, it seems to follow that the ills caused to some may be made right by a greater good enjoyed by others. However, the task of the critics of utilitarianism is not yet complete. They still have to exhibit contexts in

which someone's being seriously wronged brings about a greater good for others. And this is where the weight of our cultural heritage, I submit, overrides the constraints of sheer logical analysis.

Of course you can appeal as much as you like to fantastic, exotic, odd or queer psychologies, for example that of a sadist fiend. You can postulate, as the fancy takes you, that my sleeping on my stomach, or my eating frogs and snails, causes such intolerable pain to a great number of people around the world as to justify, from a utilitarian stance, the violation of my inalienable rights to sleep and eat as I like. I must sadly confide that it is the frequent recourse to examples of this kind that is too often responsible for the fact that what we call "Anglo-Saxon" moral and political philosophy is not taken as seriously as it should by "continental" philosophers. On the other hand, the latter may have too tragic and heavy a sense of history, and lack a certain sense of humor.

Let me put it this way: we are more readily satisfied with sociological, historical or anthropological accounts than with psychological ones.

Let me then restate my question as follows. Can the critics of utilitarianism come up with a plausible and non-trivial social context in which, from a utilitarian stance, a serious loss for some would be made right by a greater good for others—apart from a unanimity-sacrificial situation?

One might argue as follows. Let us consider a situation in which the interests of different individuals are not in agreement and any choice of action will benefit some at the expense of others. Suppose that in the name of a certain conception of the social good an action is taken that is held to further the general welfare. One might be tempted to say that the decision to carry it out entails the sacrifice of those who are opposed to it. According to this interpretation, the mere fact of positing an overall social good would amount to sacrificing victims on the altar of the general will.

However, this line of reasoning is hardly acceptable. At that rate, anyone could complain that she is sacrificed in any social state that maximizes a given social welfare function, be it utilitarian or not. She would just have to point to the state that maximizes her *own* utility function or her *own* interest, taking it as a benchmark. For instance, Rawls's difference principle could be said to sacrifice the interests of all but the worst-off (a critique that has actually been leveled at Rawls by his right-wing or libertarian opponents). Any definition of sacrifice in *counterfactual* terms ("I, a rich person, would be better off if the income tax system were proportional rather than progressive; therefore I am entitled to declare myself a sacrifi-

cial victim") is bound to wash its meaning out. That is why it is so important to emphasize that no such counterfactual characterization of sacrifice applies to the religious or anthropological roots of the notion.

However, Rawls himself provides an answer to our question. I am referring to the case of religious (and, derivatively, philosophical, moral, political or racial) prejudice and persecution which proves to be of paramount importance for a correct understanding of *A Theory of Justice*. Since the publication of his book, Rawls has made it very clear that a major purpose of his theory is "to spell out the implications of the principle of [religious] toleration" such as arose historically after the Reformation and the subsequent wars of religion. From then on, citizens of democratic nations have been aware of the impossibility of organizing social cooperation as before, through a public agreement on a single and common definition of the good. The political problem has become that of achieving social unity "in a society marked by deep divisions between opposing and incommensurable conceptions of the good" (Rawls, "Justice as Fairness" 22). It is out of the question for its solution to depend on a general moral, philosophical, let alone religious conception, for the latter would be but one of the many coexisting in society.[5]

"Justice as Fairness," and the absolute priority it gives to the principle of equal liberty of conscience, is the solution, according to Rawls. Now, even if he does not state this explicitly, it does not seem untrue to his thought to say that the principle of utility is to a traditional, religious, intolerant society as justice as fairness is to the "public culture of a constitutional democracy." The former may vindicate intolerance whereas the latter embodies the spirit of toleration. For in a society regulated by a single conception of the good, those who do not adhere to it may have their liberty repressed for the majority's sake.

On what ground is utilitarianism supposed to make this right? Apparently we are not dealing with a unanimity-sacrificial situation as I defined it. For the latter requires that the well-being of those who are sacrificed would have been the same had they not been sacrificed (a necessary condition for the strong Pareto condition to apply). This condition obviously is not met in the present context, for in one case the minority is the victim of intolerance, and in the other it benefits from the liberty of conscience.

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[5] In his *Political Liberalism*, Rawls fleshes out the broad implications of pluralism and respect for others' conception of the good for his theory of justice.

Nothing can be added to this evidence as long as one is content with a psychological account. Thus, one could suppose that the majority's psychology is such that they feel uncomfortable or upset with the others' not sharing their beliefs. However, as I said, we must go beyond this stage.

Anthropology teaches us that there is a strong connection between unanimity and the religious mind. You can think of Durkheim's contention that the ideas of divinity, society and totality are one and the same: the sacred corresponds to the reification of society in its entirety. You can think of the thesis advocated by the tradition of thinkers I mentioned at the beginning, namely that sacrificial ritual is the original keystone of religious society: one of the main features of sacrifice as a ritual is that it gathers the whole community around a center, the sacrificial altar. You can think of the secularized versions of this: Rousseau's conception of democracy as requiring the direct participation of all, without any exception whatever; or the Moscow and Prague trials whose craving for unanimity was so strong as to require the defendants' self-criticism.

In all of those social contexts, social order depends critically on the attainment of unanimity. Short of this, social chaos breaks out. Let us take the standpoint of a utilitarian judge: in the sacrificial case, the rights of the sacrificial victims are violated, but order is maintained; in the non-sacrificial case, the unanimity condition is not met, chaos takes over, and the rights of all become a dead letter. The condition for a unanimity-sacrificial situation to obtain is satisfied. By itself, the principle of unanimity concludes in favor of the rationality of sacrifice.

It can be objected that this reasoning is contingent upon a false belief: namely that a breach of unanimity causes the disruption of the social order. (In his discussion of the limitations imposed on liberty of conscience by the common interest in public order and security, Rawls insists strongly on the necessity of assessing correctly the likelihood of damage to public order: see *Theory* 213-16). But in a religious or quasi-religious setting, "false" beliefs may actually turn out to be true by the simple fact that when people act on them, they become true. The sacred is the realm of self-fulfilling prophecies. If men believe that the social order will collapse if they cease to feed their gods with victims, that will certainly be the case.

If the foregoing is correct, it seems that the major social contexts in which the principle of utility favors the sacrifice of the fundamental rights of some for the sake of society as a whole are such that the principle of unanimity alone permits to reach the same conclusion. Insofar as they are compatible with the latter, Rawls's principles of justice do just the same.

Before broaching the next and last step of my argument, I want to do justice to an obvious objection. What if the sacrificial victim does not belong to the social group we are considering? Then, if the potential victim were not sacrificed, it would not be the case that her lot would remain the same. From an anthropological standpoint, the possibility of this configuration should be held with some suspicion. It is precisely one of the deluding effects of the scapegoating mechanism to make the victim appear external or alien to the group (after all, her sacralization through sacrifice accomplishes just that). The persecutors' interpretation is that she was eliminated because she was different, whereas the truth is that her difference stems from the fact that she was singled out for elimination. From a logical point of view, however, that possibility cannot be ruled out.

Consider the following fancy story. N people are dying because one of their vital organs has turned dysfunctional. Each of them might be saved if only they could benefit from a transplant: a heart for one, a lung for another, a liver for the last. The question is: should we put Alter to death, Alter being a young and healthy fellow, and give his heart, lungs, liver, etc. to the dying ones?[6]

Obviously, the sacrificial and non-sacrificial cases are no longer Pareto-comparable. However, a concept introduced by Serge-Christophe Kolm can be brought to bear on this situation: fundamental dominance (105). A state "fundamentally dominates" another state if and only if there are permutations of the payoffs distributions that result in the first state Pareto-dominating the second. One verifies immediately, in the situation at hand, that although the sacrificial case does not Pareto-dominate the non-sacrificial case, the former fundamentally-dominates the latter.

Fundamental dominance does not have the same self-evidence as the principle of unanimity since it is stronger than the latter. However, it is very much in keeping with Rawls's principles of justice, inasmuch as their form is that of Leximin. Indeed, fundamental dominance as a partial ordering is compatible with Leximin as a total ordering: whenever the former says something, the latter concurs. It is likewise compatible with the principle of utility.

Leximin and fundamental dominance are identity-neutral (as is the principle of utility): they are indifferent to the identity of persons. The only

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[6] This example has appeared many times in the ethics literature, in writings of Judith Thomson, Francis Kamm, John Ferejohn, etc. I should like to thank Robert Nozick for pointing that out to me.

thing both principles care about is how payoffs are distributed across populations. It is true that Leximin sides with the potential victim. However, who is the victim? It is not a person with a name, as in: "You are Peter." It is an anonymous position in a structure. When it takes the form of Leximin, the secularization of the Christian drive to side with the victim is inevitably corrupted. This is ultimately, I submit, the reason why Rawls's principles of justice end up by their very form justifying sacrifice in the whole category of sacrificial situations I have examined.

The fact that most of the important cases of sacrificial choices are amenable to strong-Pareto improvements does not entail that every strong-Pareto improvement is necessarily sacrificial, and thereby runs counter to our deep-seated anti-sacrificial bias. A fire is destroying an apartment building. I, a fireman, can, given the limitation of my resources, rescue ten people out of the fifteen whose lives are threatened. Should I refrain to do so on the ground that the other five would then be "sacrificed" to the others or to the whole community? Here the strong Pareto optimal choices are obviously the rational, efficient and just ones, and no "sacrificial" element seems to be involved

However, a strong-Pareto improvement can easily become the locus of a sacrificial choice. Recall that what makes a victim a sacrificial one is not its physical state, it is the *meaning* ascribed to this state. Is the victim to die in order for the others to live on? Suppose I am about to rescue this woman when she says to me: "Go and save my son, his life is more dear to me than my own." The meaning of her death will have dramatically changed. If sacrifice, rather than self-sacrifice, is inimical to us, we may be tempted to try and eliminate as far as possible all meaning from the decision-making process. The "modern," logical solution, it seems, would be here the recourse to chance—until we realize that most primitive sacrificial rituals, as well as Christ's passion, had, as one of their key elements, the drawing of lots. The difference, though, is that in a religious setting, there is no "chance event" (etymologically speaking, the cast of a dice) without meaning.

What I have been trying to do, so far, is to drive a wedge between the spirit of the theory of justice, which is anti-sacrificial, and the letter, or rather the form of its principles, which is such as to justify sacrifice in a whole class of sacrificial situations. However, this inner contradiction, as I see it, should not be blamed on Rawls's incoherence. The sacrificial element in the principles of justice results from their meeting a basic constraint of rationality. Insofar as the theory purports to be, not only

reasonable, but also *rational*, its compatibility with such a minimum principle of rationality as the principle of unanimity, or even fundamental dominance, appears to be an indispensable requirement.

3. There is no reflective equilibrium about the rationality of sacrifice.

On the one hand, justice as fairness purports to be a political conception of justice suitable for a public culture shaped by the principle of toleration, which is the anti-sacrificial principle *par excellence*; on the other, the principles to which it leads favor, by their very form, sacrifice after the fashion of utilitarianism in most of the important cases of sacrificial situations. The apparent contradiction dissolves when one realizes that Rawls's principles of justice do not apply, and are not meant to apply, to sacrificial situations.

Some may think it would have saved me much toil if I had started with this proposition. But things are more intricate than they seem *prima facie*.

It might be said that Rawls's principles of justice are not meant to be principles which we appeal to in determining whether an *action* is just or not, since they are meant only to apply to the basic social and political institutions of a society. Now sacrificial choices concern actions, not the design of institutional arrangements. However, this distinction between action and institution becomes invalid if we take the anthropological standpoint that has been ours throughout this essay, and take account of the well-documented fact that at the origin of most, if not all social institutions, we find a sacrificial choice made in a sacrificial situation, such as Caiaphas's choice.

The true reason why Rawls's principles of justice do *not* apply to sacrificial situations is that they belong to the *ideal* conception of justice (or "ideal theory"). They are meant to regulate a well-ordered and even perfectly just society "under favorable circumstances" (*Theory* 351). Apparently a sacrificial situation is altogether alien to this description.

The method of comparison between the principle of utility and Rawls's principles of justice may then seem extremely unfair. Utilitarianism is accused of favoring sacrifice in contexts that are excluded from the scope of Justice as Fairness—and in which, were this exclusion to be revoked, the latter wouldn't fare differently from the former. All this on the ground that, contrary to Justice as Fairness, utilitarianism purports to be of universal application.

It is too easy for utilitarians to counter-attack by using the same kind of strategy as Justice as Fairness. A possibility is Harsanyi's decision to

exclude all "antisocial preferences" from the utilitarian calculus (56). Another possibility is to restrict the scope of utilitarianism to that permitted and defined by the original position and the features of a well-ordered society and/or the public culture of a democratic society. Anything resembling a sacrificial situation will be automatically ruled out.

My aim is not to criticize the idea of Justice as Fairness, but to understand and circumscribe its meaning. I submit the following.

A caricatured presentation of the foregoing would be to say: Rawls's principles of justice are meant to apply to a society already governed by the very same principles of justice. However, as Paul Ricoeur has shown ("Le cercle de la démonstration), this circularity is not vicious: it is both inevitable and productive. The aim is not one of foundation but of disclosure. The philosopher's task is to organize the basic ideas and principles already implicitly existing in our considered judgments and convictions about justice and injustice into a coherent conception. Hence the concept of "reflective equilibrium."

Seen in this light, the great merit of Rawls's *Theory of Justice* is to reveal that the ethos of "democratic societies" rests on an exclusion: the exclusion of those sacrificial situations which the *Theory* precisely excludes from its field of application. What the *Theory* excludes from its field of application is in fact constitutive of the *Theory*. The latter tells us at least as much by what it rejects as by what it affirms.

To put this another way: a fundamental result of *A Theory of Justice* is *not* that Rawls's principles should be preferred to the principle of utility. The main effect brought about by the *Theory*, its staging of the original position, the veil of ignorance, etc., is *not* that it leads the parties to rank the principle of toleration above the principle of sacrifice. It is that it makes the latter inconceivable, impossible. It excludes it altogether.

Let us take the example of the scapegoating mechanism, the paradigmatic case of all sacrificial situations. For it to function and be productive, the following conditions must be met, among others:

- The individuals must fall prey to violent and contagious passions—envy, jealousy, hatred, spite, etc.—so that they attribute all the evils of the community to one individual whose elimination restores peace and order.
- The individuals must be unaware of what is actually going on, they must believe in the guilt of the victim. If someone is to manipulate the mechanism, he must see that which remains concealed from the others: the innocence and arbitrariness of the victim.

• If the story of what happened is to be told, it must be from the vantage point of the persecutors, not from the victim's.

On each one of these three points, the setting of the original position makes it impossible for these conditions to be met:

• The people know that they live in a well-ordered and just society, that they have a sense of justice, all of which results in the confining of disruptive passions to a harmless level.

• The publicity condition deprives the scapegoating mechanism of any efficiency whatsoever.

• The original position is entirely devised to give the worst-off—i. e., the potential victims—a privileged position.

When Rawls resorts to the concept of reflective equilibrium, there are two possibilities he does not envisage: multiplicity and non-existence. As far as sacrifice is concerned (the major stake in the Rawls versus utilitarianism debate), I submit that there is *no* fixed point. What we have instead, in our deep-seated convictions as well as in the *Theory*, is an unresolved tension between two opposite drives. One is sacrificial: it is reflected in the *Theory* by the form taken by the principles. The other is anti-sacrificial: it is made manifest in the spirit and the goals of the *Theory*.

Quite unwittingly, the *Theory* reflects our moral predicament, as expressed by Thomas Nagel: "the world can present us with situations in which there is no honorable or moral course for a human being to take, no course free of guilt and responsibility for evil" ("War and Massacre). This is, I guess, what the Christians mean when they invoke the existence of an original sin.

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RANSOM'S *GOD WITHOUT THUNDER*: REMYTHOLOGIZING VIOLENCE AND POETICIZING THE SACRED

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From tree-lined Vanderbilt University of 1930 Nashville, the modernist poet and critic John Crowe Ransom longed to hear in his imagination the God who thundered fiercely in ancient Greece, Rome, and Israel. The God of sacrifice who in Homer's *Iliad*, "his thunder striking terror," received libations from the warring armies (230). The God of jealousy who in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* "drove the sleepless thunderbolt, / plunged the fire spurting shaft/ down" on Typhon for defying heaven with his violence (46). The God of vengeance who in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* sent "blinding / Thunder [to shake] Olympus, and Pelim / Thrust down by heaven's bolt crashed over Ossa" when the giants piled mountain upon mountain to reach Jove's throne (35). The God of violence who in Psalm 78: 48 delivered the cattle of the obstinate Egyptians "to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts" or who in 1 Samuel 7:10 "thundered with great thunder" to smite the Philistines. In *God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy* Ransom attacked the modern heresy that deprived the deity of such awful might and summoned Americans to live under a new myth of sacred violence.

If Ransom listened with the ears of the Methodist faith in which he had been raised, he might have heard how the god of old was muted at the university where he studied and later taught. Ten years before Ransom was born, Methodist-sponsored Vanderbilt had eliminated the lectureship of naturalist Alexander Winchell because his *Pre-Adamites* had challenged the Creation story in Genesis. But in 1914, when Ransom returned to his alma

mater to begin more than two decades of teaching there, the Methodists ended their affiliation with Vanderbilt because of a dispute about church governance of the university (Bailey 9-10, 31-4). When the Scopes Trial caused a furor in 1925, Ransom was invited by Vanderbilt to condemn the Fundamentalists to the southeast in Dayton. He refused–not because he sided with the anti-Darwinists but because he believed that the tyranny of science was threatening the poetic foundation of religion (Quinlan 40, n. 3). Ransom's thunderless plight was virtually imagined by H.L. Mencken, one of the most stinging critics of the creationists, when in 1922 he penned a tongue-in-cheek lament for the passing of the ancient deities. "Where is the graveyard of dead gods? What lingering mourner waters their mounds? There was a time when Jupiter was the king of the gods, and any man who doubted his puissance was *ipso facto* a barbarian and an ignoramus," Mencken mock-elegized in "Memorial Service." "But where in all the world is there a man who worships Jupiter today?" (95). *God Without Thunder* provides the answer to Mencken's archly lugubrious question: it is John Crowe Ransom. Grieving the demise of the deity of yore, Ransom's treatise on the religious imagination heralds a one-man revival of Jupiter Tonans.

Ransom believes that the god of antiquity has been muffled by the spirit of scientific abstraction that reigns not just in Tennessee but across all of America.[7] He traces this modern cult of the mind beyond the current efforts of religion to seek a rapprochement with biology and physics; beyond the science-driven Prometheus of Shelley, the rationalism of the Protestant Reformation, and the inquiry of Copernicus; beyond the errors of early Christianity, to a kind of primal sin. Humans have used their intelligence first to set themselves above nature, then to order the world according to their ways, and finally to exploit all of creation for their use. Demystified by science, thunder has become not the mighty weapon of the ancient God who tolerated no rivals but only the noise of heated and expanding air.

Ransom views science as having such ultimacy that it exercises a mimetic function: it provides Girardian models for desire. "Science directs us to amuse ourselves, between desires," Ransom writes, "*by simulating*

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[7] Louis Rubin reads Ransom's "Armageddon" as a poetic companion piece to *God Without Thunder*, for it tells how divine wrath has been compromised amid the suavities of the modern world. At the apocalyptic battle of the poem's title, a militant Christ meets a charming anti-Christ and makes a truce during which he is seduced by the gentlemanly ways of his worldly foe ("John Ransom's Cruell Battle" 166-67; *Wary Fugitives* 37-38).

and putting through another desire process"(GWT 172). Science recognizes that humans really desire the mastery of the godhead, but since it cannot provide such transcendence, science offers surrogate satisfaction through technology. Industry applies the discoveries of science to the pursuit of desire and develops contrivances of ever increasing speed and efficiency that make humans feel as if they are approximating divine control over nature. Advertising stokes the desire to consume the goods of industry that mediate the godhead. As Ransom explains, "Science instructs us very carefully in what we ought to want, indicating always the things that it knows how to furnish" (*GWT* 177). Science ultimately provides not just the means to but a mirror image of the divinity. Modeled after the inquiring human mind, the Lord becomes "the modern scientist glorified and apotheosized" who works for good according to nature's laws (*GWT* 20). In the familiar Girardian process by which the imitator is transformed into the imitated (*Deceit* 99-100), this intelligent and amenable deity becomes the paradigm for its creators to copy. Since humans are gifted with divine reason, they should explore the world and work for the communal welfare, "secured of God's favor and finding no propriety in burnt offering and sacrifice" (*GWT* 20).

Although Ransom does not expound a detailed theory of mimetic desire like Girard's, *God Without Thunder* understands the ambition that leads humans to imitate and appropriate divinity. Indeed, "Giants for Gods," Ransom's earlier title for the book, suggests that the modern rivalry is as ancient as the revolt of the Titans. Ransom might have found a more exact analogue in a legend that he does not even mention *in God Without Thunder.* The myth of Salmoneus in Book VI of the *Aeneid* gives what Ransom in *The New Criticism* calls "texture," the local and particular image, to the "structure" of his fundamental argument against thundering pretenders to divinity. When Aeneas travels to the underworld, he beholds Salmoneus being punished for mimicking the lightning and thunder of Olympian Jove. The king of Elis had once driven through his city in triumph, clanging his bronze chariot, flinging torches, and demanding divine honors. The story may have originated in some rite of sympathetic magic (Hamilton 298), which, as Jean-Michel Oughourlian explains, derives its power from mimetic desire. Although Salmoneus, like the sorcerer, perhaps only sought to reproduce through ritual what he wanted to produce in nature (Oughourlian 32-42), Virgil views the mediation as hubristic: "A madman, to simulate thunder and inimitable lightning" (120). In seeking to imitate Jove by imitating his thunder, Salmoneus was the double who became a

rival. The king did not just want to be like god but to be the king himself of all the gods. And in a fitting punishment "The Almighty Father twirl-twisted his weapon through dense clouds" (Virgil 120). Mimetic desire ricocheted upon itself. The veritable lord of heaven felled the pretender-god by hurling the very thunderbolt his earthly rival sought to copy. *God Without Thunder* seeks to deliver a similar reproof to an age of would-be gods, whose science is only a more sophisticated form of the king's mock-fulminations. Although Ransom seeks to rebuke and reform, he does not write in the thunder that Melville famously ascribed to Hawthorne's sublime negations (Letter of 16 April 1851) but in what his introductory "A Letter" describes as "the cold and not very fastidious terms of an Occidental logic" (*GWT* x). Through this carefully analytical indictment of scientific rationalism, Ransom hopes to reason the modern world into living once again under an ancient and irrational deity.

Since science desires to steal the divine thunder by cultivating the unrestricted powers of human intelligence, Ransom's *Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy* counters such heterodoxy by making a neo-archaic cult out of its opposite. His apologia follows a strategy that Girard notes in the poetics of Proust: "A childhood deprived of the sacred succeeds in resurrecting myths which have been dead for centuries; it revivifies the most lifeless symbols" (*Deceit* 80). Missing the divine bolts amid the deification of science, Ransom performs a bold act of mimetic opposition and revives an outdated God to replace the abstract and agreeable lord of the latter-day. "Gods are not Gods except when they are treated as Gods," he argues, "and myths do not work in human civilization except when they are dogmas, tolerably hard, and exceedingly jealous of their rivals" (*GWT* 97). Ransom's new myth of the severe and supreme Thunderer reimagines sacred violence as an alternative to the religion of reason that uses up the earth. His solution to the potential ferocity of science and the current impotence of the sacred is to remove the violence from human use and project it onto god. Ransom thus repeats the moment that Girard envisions as occurring at the foundation of religion–with one fundamental exception that will be discussed later. He beholds a world in crisis due to the tyranny of human abstraction, and he consecrates this disorder so that humans might live modestly under a chastening god. "Furthermore, the God needs to be fully equipped with his thunderbolts: a philosophical religion will not forget its realism and fail to make testimony to its Jupiter Tonans," he proclaims. "Without this provision no religion will have much of a life. This fact is proved today: the softer and more benevolent the representations of the

God of Christendom, the more he is neglected, the less need of him the believers find they have....A certain severity therefore attaches to religions which are full and expressive" (*GWT* 86-7).

Like Girard, Ransom views this conception of the sacred as having a social origin. The gods are "legislated into official existence." He asserts, "The most creative act that a society can perform is to sanction a myth and set up a religion" (*GWT* 84, 90). In calling for a God with thunder, Ransom at times sounds as if he were trying to re-establish the religion that had been long sanctioned by southern society. The son and grandson of Methodist ministers seems to be hearkening back to the family faith which he earlier rejected and to the Calvinist lord of the south, for these traditions inculcated a lowliness that Ransom saw lost amid the arrogance of rationalism.[8] Andrew Lytle recalls that his fellow Tennessean grew up in a "chastened society," where the loss of the War was interpreted as God's rebuke to his sinful people. "Out of this grew a great questioning of the heart and a genuine humility before the fact of defeat," Lytle writes (181). Yet even before the war, this powerful lord of violence presided over the frontier that, according to W. J. Cash, was so formative for southern culture. Cash describes the revivalism of nineteenth-century southerners as "A faith, not of liturgy and prayer book, but of primitive frenzy and the blood sacrifice–often of fits and jerks and barks. The God demanded was an anthropomorphic God–the Jehovah of the Old Testament [....] A passionate, whimsical tyrant, to be trembled before, but whose favor was the sweeter for that"(56). Drawing on this popular tradition of sacred violence, Ransom consecrates Jupiter anew as a violent reaction to the god without violence in liberal Protestantism.

Ransom details three attributes of this Thunderer, all of which Girard has identified as belonging to sacred violence. Much as sacred violence is "transcendent" and "superhuman" (*Violence* 134, 135), Ransom's god is mysterious—unseen, unknown, and unnamed. It has all the otherness of the primitive divinity that emerged when humans renounced the bloodshed of

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[8] Ransom echoes Calvinist theology when he objects to the modern dismissal of predestination. He believes that the doctrine of election emphasizes the mystery of God, who is not bound to make salvation correlate with human ethical achievement (*GWT* 152-53). After *God Without Thunder* was published, Ransom resumed attending the Methodist church for a time and even taught a Sunday school class. However, when some students objected because Ransom did not recite the Apostles' Creed, he gave up such religious commitments and returned to his usual practice of spending Sunday at home or on the golf course (Young, *Gentlemen* 271-72).

communal slaughter and projected it onto what was more than human. Much as sacred violence seems to have an appetite for more violence (*Violence* 266), Ransom's god desires the sheer wastefulness of sacrifice. Ransom values the "old religion" because worshipers brought God "sacrifices which were poured out upon the ground or consumed on the fire of the altar" (*GWT* 34). Unlike the modern industrial world that values saving time, producing more goods, and consuming them for personal advantage, the old religionists did not cling greedily to their works and days but wasted them in tithes and on Sabbaths. The ancients were impractical, improvident, and unscientific, and Ransom wants to imitate them in a religion of awe. Finally, much as sacred violence can be a force for order and disorder, creation as well as destruction, Ransom's unpredictable deity is not just benevolent but brings good as well as evil. The two faces of Ransom's sky god have been aptly described by Girard: "There is a Zeus who hurls the thunderbolts," he observes, "and a Zeus 'as sweet as honey'" (*Violence* 251).

Ransom's ambivalent Thunderer offers citizens of the scientific age a reproof and a promise. First, if believers live under a thunder-wielding God, their impulse to dominate the universe might be restrained. The Thunderer is Ransom's myth as prophylaxis. God can be violent so that humans can be nonviolent. Proper deference to such a deity restores a humbling sense of human frailty and insufficiency to God's vaunting competitors. Second, if devotees tremble under the power that shakes the sky, they may regain a honey-sweet appreciation for the world once diminished by science. Ransom objects that science "never cares to notice the detail which is contingent, outside of expectation and prediction, irrelevant to the pattern, and distracting" (*GWT* 209). It develops generalizations by focusing on what is common and repeated, but in only looking at similarities, it overlooks distinctiveness. Science thus makes no room for what Ransom considers the aesthetic attitude—the contemplation of the object as an object in all of its beloved particularity and extravagant individuality. Ransom believes that once the scientific age hears again God's thunder and confesses that humans are part of creation rather than its overlord, they may be free to delight in the world for its sheer singularity. They may even be free enough to write a poem. Like all art, poetry is inspired by such freshened attention and actually helps to promote the same kind of primary

encounters with creation. It revives the world once lost to the abstract age of a god without thunder.[9]

If Ransom's Thunderer underwrites his poetry, the inspiration is appropriate because this god is itself the ultimate poem of a poet. Ransom does not actually place any faith in the reality of the god that booms through the sky of his imagination. As Kieran Quinlan has shown (3-13), the skeptical Ransom had separated himself from his Methodist heritage over two decades before he wrote *God Without Thunder.* His reading in higher criticism of the Bible as well as in pragmatism and empiricism focused his attention away from the supernatural and metaphysical world and onto the life here and at hand. In *God Without Thunder* Ransom frankly confesses that religious myths are "unhistorical and unscientific" but that "their unhistorical and unscientific character is not their vice but their excellence" (55). Ransom's mythic god is an otherworldly fiction that he very pragmatically uses to recover a heightened awareness of this world. Wayne Knoll suggests that such an aesthetic faith may be self-canceling: "The Fundamentalist might well retort that Ransom's God is Himself without thunder, since both His thunder and His existence are fictive, are willed into being" (121). However, what is more important in *God Without Thunder* than the actuality of the deity is the religious attitude of the worshiper. To imitate Ransom is not to believe that God has any certain and independent existence but only to live respectfully as if God had thunder.

Although Ransom's belief in religion as a necessary illusion echoes the work of I. A. Richards, Hans Vaihinger, and Ernest Cassirer (Campbell 3-11), his closest American counterpart is his contemporary in poetry, Wallace Stevens, for whom "that final belief / Must be in fiction" ("Asides on the Oboe," *Collected Poems* 250).[10] Stevens' speaker in "Sunday Morning," for example, renounces traditional religion and places faith in a secular heaven that will be revealed by imaginative engagement with the world. "The sky will be much friendlier then than now" (*Collected Poems* 68) when divinity is internalized to become a point of view for regarding the earth. The celebrants at the end of the poem revel in a terrestrial Eden because their intensified perception of life makes them ecstatically embrace

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[9] Despite Ransom's emphasis on the phenomenal world, his own poetry often shows what John Edward Hardy describes as "an oddly abstractionist tendency." The images "are chosen, ordered, or arranged according to an abstract dialectic" (267).

[10] Wallace Stevens praises the precision and density of Ransom's verse when he writes that the southern poet makes "a legend" of Tennessee (*Opus Posthumous* 259).

the world's transitory beauty. Like Stevens, Ransom makes a religion out of an aesthetic attitude. However, he finds this poetic alternative to faith not by exalting but by chastening humanity. Whereas Stevens' speaker in "Sunday Morning" is disturbed by "The holy hush of ancient sacrifice" and dismisses "Jove in the clouds" (*Collected Poems* 67) as representing a too aloof and awesome form of religion, Ransom's humbled creatures find the world newly green because they live under a Jove who keeps their eyes earthbound.

If Ransom views Zeus and sacrifice as only tropes in a religion of poetry, isn't it entirely harmless to herald a renaissance of sacred violence? maybe even a valuable way to recover the world from being ignored and abused? Or is there a danger that, behind the poetic artifice and the awe it provokes, something will be sacrificed? As was mentioned earlier, Ransom repeats Girard's creation of the sacred but with one exception, and that omission is crucial. For what he excepts is the primordial act of exception, the murder at the beginning of the world. Since myths, according to Girard, are stories that conceal this primal and communal slaughter (*Scapegoat* 24-44), it is not surprising that Ransom's revival of the Thunderer is marked by efforts to exclude the victim and occlude the violence.[11] Commenting on the myth in which Zeus slaughters the Titans who have cannibalized the young Dionysus, Girard wonders, "Should we recognize the God of victims in Zeus? Of course not. Like all the Greek gods, Zeus is a god of vengeance and violence" (*Job* 146). Ransom's Zeus redivivus hardly seems to have any more compassion or clemency. In fact, far from being sympathetic to outcasts, the Olympian actually casts out, presiding over Ransom's work through a series of intellectual and social expulsions.

Ransom's logic works toward settling conflicts through exclusion. Since Robert Penn Warren's 1935 "John Crowe Ransom: A Study in Irony," critics have frequently viewed Ransom's work as dramatizing the modern dissociation of sensibility made famous by T. S. Eliot. *God Without Thunder*, for example, sets reason against religion, science against aestheticism, abstraction against concreteness, and lust against love. However, as Michael Kreyling observes, Ransom's polemic does not simply juxtapose opposites but resolves the polarity by choosing one term and suppressing the other (12). Ransom's poetry displays a similar tendency toward stabilizing the tension that it first sets in motion. Although

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[11] Richard Golsan's *René Girard and Myth* provides a thorough discussion of myth and mimetic theory; see especially 61-84.

Ransom's verse opposes flesh and spirit, passion and honor, sensibility and sense, Miller Williams notes that it concludes with "a sense of resolution, of exhaustion, loss of charge" (26).[12] Both Girard and Derrida, as Andrew McKenna has demonstrated, view such antithesis and elimination as basic to western thought. Exemplifying it anew, Ransom makes of his prose and his highly formalized poetry rituals of violence that model the opposition and expulsion for a whole generation of southern intellectuals.

Ransom's intellectual exclusions take on physical form when they are carried into communal life. Although *God Without Thunder* analyzes how science has become the twentieth-century god, the argument is oddly impersonal–unfelt and unfleshed—for it tends to ignore Girard's inter-dividual relationship and to focus on relationships with the natural world. Ransom does not recognize how the modern glorification of the mind gets transformed into social practice, how the spirit of abstraction may lead to the collective use of violence against violence. For a writer so sensitive to the "world's body," as he titled his 1938 work of criticism, he does not testify to the broken body of the victim. Rather, Ransom's worship of a poeticized Thunderer consecrates what Girard has identified as the surrogate victimage mechanism. Discussing a Venda myth in which a community sacrifices the more inquisitive of Python's rivalrous wives, Girard notes similarities between this South African story and the legends about how Semele and Psyche were made to suffer for their curiosity about sacred matters. He finds it significant that in the Greek myths the gods punish the erring women, but in the Venda myth a crowd drives the wife to her death. "Olympian mythology, as a rule, has been cleansed of its most sinister features [...]," he observes. "The Venda myth still preserves *the crucial collective action for which the thunder of Zeus is really a metaphor*" (" A Venda Myth Analyzed" 177, italics mine). Wallace Stevens may have imagined "the thunder became men, / Ten thousand, men hewn and tumbling, / Mobs of ten thousand, clashing together, / This way and that" (*Collected Poems*, "Thunder by the Musician" 220), but Girard knows that the opposite is true: "men" became the thunder. The clash of primal conflict was echoed in the crash from on high. In longing for a God with thunder, Ransom is longing for nothing but the heavenly reverberation of collective violence.

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[12] Louis Rubin suggests this same resolution of tensions in Ransom's poetry when he describes it as "a communique from the battlefield (...) which also announces the peace settlement" (*Wary Fugitives* 99).

Ransom's neglect of the victim and cult of the Thunderer looms large in the way he regards the Bible in *God Without Thunder*. He reinterprets scripture so that what gets excluded is what, according to Sandor Goodhart, has been sacrificed by readers throughout the ages: the anti-sacrificial spirit of scripture. If the god of scientific humanism is devoid of thunder, the Thunder of Ransom is devoid of the biblical God that Girard discloses in *Things Hidden From the Foundation of the World.* Ransom overlooks and sometimes completely inverts the way that the God of scripture shows concern for victims because he desires to promote human submissiveness before the God who thunders. The Bible inculcates this servility through a history of negative examples. Ransom views Adam and Eve, the parents of all later abstract scientists, as the first to challenge the sky-god through desiring the knowledge that will separate them from the natural world. Although the Scopes Trial may have put the historicity of Adam and Eve on trial, Ransom sympathizes with creationists because he believes that Genesis better serves his violent myth than does Darwin. If humans were understood as fashioned directly by the Creator, they may be more willing to display the appropriate reverence before creation. Ransom sees the humbling lesson of Adam and Eve as continually being lost on their descendants. The "acquisitive, imperialistic, 'mighty' men" who were doomed by the Flood (*GWT* 123), Lot who chose the cities of the plains, and David who ordered a census—all continued the primal sin of seeking a complex life of ambitious design rather than simple subsistence in harmony with nature and God.

Ransom considers the Book of Job the "purest single work of theology" (*GWT* 49) in Jewish Scripture because it gives majestic voice to the God who thunders. Job's friends, like the scientific and benevolent world that Ransom condemns, speak from a belief in an intelligible and moral order, and so they do not understand God as victimizer. Viewing God as purely good and eminently sensible, they conclude that Job is only being punished because he is sinful. But the lord who orates in the whirlwind is a mighty, mysterious, and utterly amoral divinity, who transgresses all categories that humans construct to contain the godhead. Like a forerunner of the whole southern stoic tradition, Job can do nothing but bear the burden of such a divine onslaught. Ransom dismisses the coda because it compromises this steely vision. When the God of the epilogue blesses the penitent Job and multiplies his fortune, the once-unfathomable divinity betrays the narrative proper and succumbs to the human desire for a rational and ethical over-

lord. Ransom rejects such a comforting God in favor of uncompromising sacred violence.

Whereas Ransom views Job as the victim of God's unpredictability, Girard describes Job in the subtitle of his book as "the victim of his people." First admired, then reviled by his community, he is made the scapegoat in a near-ritual of lynching that is conducted by pseudo-friends who are really his persecutors. Ransom may have been impressed by the sublime god of the tempest that finally rebukes Job, but Girard rejects this thundering voice as fraudulent, "the God of persecution recycled into an ecological and providential God" (*Job* 143). Ransom views Job's highest achievement as his willingness to stand silently and submissively before this victimizer, but Girard admires Job because he declares his innocence as a victim and envisions a God who supports victims after death (*Job* 133, 140-41). Like Ransom, Girard finds the epilogue disturbing, but the difference in their interpretations summarizes the contrast between a religion of sacred violence and a faith in divine nonviolence. Whereas Ransom rejects the conclusion because God now appears too benign, Girard objects to it because the apparent benevolence still conceals the God of the whirlwind.

For Ransom, the God of Job, of the Old Testament, is "awful, unpredictable, unappeasable, and his works issue frequently in human suffering" (*GWT* 53). Whereas Girard understands Jesus as continuing Job's exposure of sacred violence (*Job* 161-63), Ransom views Jesus as serving this thundering Lord. Jesus embodies the highest ideals of humanity, according to Ransom, yet he does not set himself equal to God. Like Girard, Ransom emphasizes how Jesus avoids rivalry with the Father. He models, for Ransom, the limits of human modeling, the humbled acceptance of another as master. Inspired by this deference, Ransom proposes, "we should emulate not Adam but Christ" who refuses to worship satanic reason and chooses instead submission to God (*GWT* 142). Although *God Without Thunder* interprets Jesus in terms of what Girard would recognize as mimetic desire, Ransom attributes to him only a negative significance. Jesus is exemplary because he does not claim the divine status that Ransom faults his scientific age for seeking. However, Ransom finds problematic the two qualities that figure so prominently in Girard's understanding of Jesus as victim: his love and his identity as logos.

Whereas Girard views Jesus as living out the non-violent love of the Father (*Things* 215-20), Ransom realizes that to emphasize divine compassion is to leave God bereft of thunder. It can produce a God who

takes the side of victims, who even becomes a victim, who models the care for victims that followers should practice. To preserve his violent and amoral deity, Ransom maintains that Jesus' insistence on loving one's enemies was not meant to supersede Jesus' other command to love God absolutely or the first four of the Ten Commandments that focus on the worship owed to the Almighty. However, Jesus' followers turned his second great commandment into a "perfectly secular prescription" and minimized the severe responsibilities of the law in Exodus (*GWT* 146). Such a revision, according to Ransom, softened the stern Jesus, encouraged Christians to unite for the betterment of society, and ultimately remade the violent God into nothing more than a glorified philanthropist.[13]

Just as Ransom views Jesus as being misunderstood in emphasizing love, he claims that Jesus was misinterpreted in being identified with the logos. Ransom objects that Greeks and Hellenized Jews transformed Jesus into "the Reason which governs the universe so far as the universe is amenable to science" (*GWT* 155). Having become the fundamental principle of intelligibility, Jesus provides the license for the abstracting minds of the modern age to know the world. He ultimately becomes no different from Satan, the "Spirit of Secular Science" (*GWT* 140) that Ransom identifies as tempting Adam in the garden. If humans believe in this all-pervasive divine reason, they undermine the very foundation of Ransom's Thunderer, for the more that the universe can be known, the more that its god may be stripped of power and mystery. Ransom's vision of the Christian logos as the patron of scientific inquiry remakes Jesus into what Girard describes as the logos of violence rather than the logos of love. Girard critiques precisely the error that Ransom demonstrates: confusing the logos of Greek philosophy with the logos of the gospels (*Things* 270-73). Girard's Jesus is the logos not because he is the rule of order, the axiom of expulsion, but because he is the unwanted one, the excluded one, the victim. Since Ransom's empyrean has no room for a God who not only rejects violence but responds to it with love, he imagines a kind of anti-logos. In *God Without Thunder* Jesus does not embody the divine concern for victims but the rationale for violating the world.

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[13] Commenting on the American impulse to Service, Ransom slights this particularly "feminine" ambition to help the marginalized: "It has special application to the apparently stagnant sections of mankind, it busies itself with the heathen Chinee [sic], with the Roman Catholic Mexican, with the 'lower' classes in our own society" ("Reconstructed" 10).

Ransom imagines the Holy Ghost as the very opposite of the love and logos that he criticizes in the cult of Jesus. Whereas a misplaced emphasis on love corrupted Christianity so that it was reduced to benevolent sentimentality, Ransom's Spirit is non-human, even inhumane, because it forcefully expresses the excess and multiplicity of the world. And whereas a misinterpretation of Jesus as logos caused Christianity to reveal the world as subject to logic, Ransom's Holy Ghost expresses the intractable dynamism in creation that cannot be quantified or categorized. The Spirit in *God Without Thunder* presides wherever the world has freed itself from scientific abstraction, but Ransom insists that this genius is not the Spirit of Truth, for such a title connects it with the detested logocentric order (*GWT* 308). Unlike the Girardian defender to whom Job appeals in chapters 16 and 19, unlike the Paraclete sent by Jesus (*Job* 154), the Spirit of Thunder does not testify to the most deeply hidden truth. Ransom's daemon reveals the world in all its fullness, but it does not reveal the victim.

Although Ransom's poetry draws on the diction, images, and situations from the Bible (Knight 28-30), it complements *God Without Thunder* in the way it steadfastly refrains from joining the biblical exposure of the scapegoat. Such revelation might at first be expected because dead bodies fill Ransom's verse with loss upon loss. To read his *Selected Poems* is to compile a John Crowe Ransom necrology: the mourned children of "Dead Boy" and "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter," the storm-slaughtered flowers of "Miriam Tazewell," the haunted couple of "Spectral Lovers," the unloved flesh of "Emily Hardcastle, Spinster," the fever- and chill-wracked woman of "Here Lies a Lady," the severed remains of "Painted Head" and "Judith of Bethulia," the hacked body of "Captain Carpenter," the desire-driven phantom of "Hilda," the bee-stung rooster of "Janet Waking," the memorialized semi-lovers of "The Equilibrists," the leaves that are grieved as if lost children in "Of Margaret." All of these corpses and ghosts justify Isabel MacCaffrey's claim that Ransom's prime focus is "the war of death against life" (212), yet the source of this depredation is personal or cosmic but never communal. Ransom's rather bloodless figures suffer from their own yearning for abstraction because they do not yet live under a god of thunder who might keep them in keen touch with this corporal world. Or his all-too-mortal folk die their inevitable and sometimes untimely deaths because they already live under an unpredictable lord and inscrutable universe. However, they are never victimized because they live in a society that structures itself around killing one of its own.

This omission of the victim becomes even more noticeable in Ransom's few explicitly southern poems. Ransom wrote virtually all of his poetry between 1916 and 1927, a time before he rediscovered his homeland, not so much as a locale in itself but as a locus for his agrarian myth.[14] Ransom's own region is thus largely absent from his verse, or perhaps it is present in the way that violence always leaves behind haunting traces in texts that seek to suppress it. Louis Rubin suggests that the brutality which erupts in Ransom's otherwise civilized and sophisticated poetry reflects the turbulent transition between the old and new souths. ("John Ransom's Cruell Battle" 165-66). It seems that blood will out every time, even though it may be in a kind of poetic ghost writing. Yet if Ransom's dead are the displaced casualties of social upheaval, the bodies are so devoid of historical context that they become little more than specters of a completely disembodied region. When Ransom's poetry occasionally brings the south out of such shadows, even the shades of these dead seem to vanish. The disappearance is particularly strange and striking because Ransom's south was notorious for its victimization. For example, the *New York Sun* from November 9, 1931, a year after *God Without Thunder* was published, reported that since 1889, a year after Ransom was born, there were 3,603 lynchings in the United States, most of them in the south. 465 were in Georgia, 464 in Mississippi, 364 in Texas, and 349 in Louisiana (Ginzburg 194), yet Ransom's occasional poems about his homeland are silent about its recent or historic violence. There is simply no moment in Ransom's verse like the recognition of the victim in "The Swimmers" by his student at Vanderbilt, Allen Tate. Tate's speaker remembers how as a child in Kentucky he witnessed a posse with twelve horses arriving too late to stop the lynching of a black man: "eleven same / Jesus-Christers unmembered and unmade, / Whose Corpse had died again in dirty shame" (133).

Ransom's "Old Mansion" keeps its secrets about the victimization of the old order by moving from history to myth. Acutely conscious of history, the speaker of the poem seeks entrance into a grand but dilapidated southern manor. He desires some "crumbs of wisdom" (*Selected Poems* 45) or "crumbs of legend" in Ransom's 1924 version of the poem (qtd. in Buffington 143). Despite his antiquarian bent the speaker wants not so much historical knowledge as mythical sustenance. His preference is

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[14] Michael O'Brien (117-35) and Daniel Joseph Singal (203-19) show how Ransom's brief and wavering commitment to the south reflected his own personal and aesthetic needs rather than a larger interest in the social and historical region.

familiar in Ransom. In *God Without Thunder* Ransom objects to history because, like science, it loses the individuality of an event as it moves from gathering facts to composing generalizations about them (56-58). Ransom hopes that the imaginative language of myth may better preserve this overlooked distinctiveness, yet Girard's work suggests that myth actually omits whatever does not fit into its transcendent version of history. What it excludes, most of all, is the primal and paradigmatic scene of victimization. The historically-minded speaker in "Old Mansions" pursues the myth of the south despite the fact that he too is excluded. The would-be visitor is denied admission to the great house because its elderly chatelaine is ill. Her refusal is conveyed "By one even more wrappered and lean and dark / Than that warped concierge and imperturbable vassal / Who had bid me begone from her master's Gothic park" (*Selected Poems* 45). Although the loyal retainers are relics from the neo-feudalism of the old south, the poem emphasizes not the ongoing exclusion of slavery but the ostracism of the speaker. Unlike young Thomas Sutpen after knocking on the front door of the manor that mediates the entire culture of the Old South in *Absalom, Absalom,* the would-be visitor is offered not even a backdoor entry into the regional legend. The denial only exacerbates desire. At the end of the poem, the elegiac speaker returns to "some unseemlier world," still sensing the superiority of the culture from which he has been barred (*Selected Poems* 45). He does not realize that he may actually be fortunate in being left outside. Although the manor is meant to localize a once stable and solemn ordering of life, it also houses the fundamental decay in the south of the ages.

"Antique Harvesters" provides a portal into the mythical southern past and its glorified violence that was blocked in "Old Mansion." It celebrates Ransom's belief in *God Without Thunder* that the best way to foster close and appreciative contact with nature is to cultivate the southern agrarian tradition. Although the fields in the poem produce a meager return, the band of youths and veterans heroically serve the homeland by continuing the time-honored tradition of tending to the land itself. Their harvesting typifies the work that, according to *God Without Thunder*, was not just a means to an end but a leisurely and pleasurable end in itself. Richard Gray interprets the poem as showing that agriculture "brings the ceremonious and the mundane levels of experience together by transforming ordinary life into significant ritual" (62-3). Yet just as "Antique Harvesters" is ritualizing the farm workers, the rite falters. First, the speaker, who presides like a hierophant over the gathering of men and corn, is told that one area

of the field may be particularly fruitful because heroes "drenched it with their blood" (*Selected Poems* 70). The fertility seems to celebrate the Civil War past, honor the present labor, and rally the young to future service of the south. However, the blessing on the land is only earned by violence, and that violence erupts a second time in the poem when a fox pursued by horsemen rushes across the fields and distracts the speaker for an entire stanza.

Like the harvest, the antique hunt is meant to be another example of formalizing life spent in intimate contact with the burnished landscape. Nevertheless, it leaves in its wake disturbing questions about how much idealizing agrarianism costs in unrecognized violence. The poem tries to absorb the pursued fox into its commemoration and consecration of the past. It qualifies the prey as a "lovely ritualist" and even imagines that the animal in flight offers "his unearthly ghost to quarry" (*Selected Poems* 71). However, the sacralization provides scant safety to an animal that could be soon trapped by the hounds, and the gesture toward transcendence only reveals the violence that the poem obscures. Rituals, as Girard has argued, re-enact the primal scapegoating; hunts, in particular, developed out of seeking in the animal world a sacrificial substitute for the original victim (*Things* 19-23, 73). Although Ransom wants to hallow the fox as a participant in a liturgy of the hunt, the prey of the hounds and riders points to the sacrifice behind the ceremony. Like the soldiers whose deaths may yet fructify the field, this celebration of the past's harvest grows out of bloodshed.

Since "Antique Harvesters" wants to gild this violence with agrarian myth, it does not mention the surrogate victimage behind the ancient regime. Slavery was an ongoing sacrificial institution that made possible the social and economic life of the nineteenth-century south. However, Ransom's nostalgic poem cannot edit out every trace of this violent exclusion in spite of itself. A brief parenthesis at its beginning places the action conspicuously on the banks of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The locale is intended to offer a panoramic view of the south and its past to which contemporaries should rededicate themselves. However, if borders, as Gloria Anzaldúa writes, "are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*" (25), the lines of demarcation also mark a heterogeneous zone of contradiction and confluence. Looking to the south, where Confederate soldiers defended slavery with the blood that fertilizes the poem's field, the ambivalent border also looks away from the

south and to the north, where slaves—sometimes pursued like the fox, yet in no lovely ritual—sought freedom.

Those slaves do not appear in Ransom's noble evocation of how a modern south might yet reap the harvest of its past. And when Ransom finally mentions slavery in *God Without Thunder*, a reference purified of any connection with the south, it is as an example of how farm labor can be corrupted "under certain monstrous conditions" (194). The note of censure is compromised by its echo in "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," Ransom's contribution to the Agrarian manifesto *I'll Take My Stand*, published in the same year as *God Without Thunder*. Although Ransom acknowledges that slavery is "monstrous enough in theory," he adds that in the south it was usually "humane in practice; and it is impossible to believe that its abolition alone could have effected any great revolution in society" ("Reconstructed" 14). Ransom may condemn slavery in the abstract, but in the south, in the particular locale and moment that he values above every abstraction, he is more tolerant. He romanticizes the past and hides the south's fundamental form of victimization.

Ransom's own theories about interpreting literature would never sanction a reading of "Antique Harvesters" that exposes the violence behind its old-time agrarian patina. Like his poetry, Ransom's New Critical essays obscure such expulsions. Emphasizing the work of literature as an objective text for formalist study, they tend to divert attention from the social, historical, and political context. However, such aestheticism and detachment from temporality simply uphold the social, historical, and political context. Ransom thus perpetuates the exclusions that he does not challenge. Critics of Ransom's work have noted different forms of this tendency to expel. Katherine Hemple Prown, for example, faults the sexism in Ransom's poetry and prose. She argues that his anxiety about female flesh, glorification of the male intellect over the female body, and tendency to turn women into art objects for the contemplation of men foster the gender bias of the Old South (25-37). Mab Segrest charges Ransom and his fellow Agrarians with racism. She claims that their benign view of slavery, preference for the status quo over change to correct racial inequalities, and tendency to separate art from life make them the literary descendants of the nineteenth-century white master class (116-7). And Segrest suggests how such victimization may have continued in the literary world that Ransom and his disciples dominated for decades as critics, editors, and reviewers:

> By defining the poem as just an object on a page, the New Critics do not have to account for which poems get to the page and which don't, and then which pages get printed and by whom; or whose books are burned; or what writers were killed, or would-be writers; whose spirits were denied and destroyed by the dominant culture. (112)

Although Ransom's fictive revival of archaic religion was meant as a strategy to recover the world from science, such critics expose the practical consequence of imaginatively cultivating a god of sacred violence. What the Thunder says to Ransom is not to give, sympathize, and control, as Eliot hears at the end of *The Waste Land*, but to deprive, marginalize, and dominate.

Whereas Girard demythologizes, revealing the human violence hidden by myth, Ransom remythologizes, reviving the myth that hides the human violence. *God Without Thunder* is silent about such victimization, yet the very myths about the god of thunder might have directed Ransom toward the expulsions that he ignores. In *The Scapegoat* Girard recalls how the infant Zeus is saved from being devoured by Kronos when his mother hides the child among the Curetes (70-71). These warriors form a defensive circle around the godling and clang their weapons to conceal the infant's crying. Girard proposes that this menacing yet protective scene, this ring of ambivalent sacred violence, may have originated in an even earlier scenario that has been purged of its bloodshed. The exposed outcast, the threatening weapons, the clattery crowd–all may point to a story in which the child Zeus was actually slain by the Curetes who now guard him. Girard's reading of the myth takes Ransom's noisy sky god who throws bolts at all his rivals back to a time when he was a crying baby in need of even noisier protection, and then it audaciously goes even further—beyond the falsifying haven of myth to speculate on the infancy of the sacred, the moment when the divinity grew out of collective violence. Unable to accept the wailing victim, Ransom places his faith in the rumble, blast, and crash of a fictitious victimizer. Girard reveals what Ransom's *God Without Thunder* cannot fathom: before the communal killing, every violent god was without thunder.

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"MURTHER, BY A SPECIOUS NAME": *ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL*'S POETICS OF SACRIFICIAL SURROGACY

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During the late 1670's and early '80s, English political satirists participated in the endeavors of the rival factions, Dissenter or Whig and Royalist or Tory, to effect judicial violence. While juries condemned and the hangman executed Catholics as traitors during the Popish Plot persecution, John Oldham suggests in the "Prologue' to his *Satires upon the Jesuits* that he writes to stoke the mass hatred fueling the slayings (2: 19-22). Such animosity powered this initial Dissenter effort to exclude Charles II's Catholic brother, James Stuart, Duke of York, from the throne, and left more than two hundred dead.[1] And Dryden's vituperative response to the striking of a medal to celebrate the grand jury's dismissal of high treason charges against Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *The Medall* (pointedly subtitled *A Satire against Sedition*) seems to have a clear purpose of inciting Royalists to redouble their efforts to dispatch the opposition leader to the gallows.[2] Judicial slayings of this kind are perhaps not surprising in these years of crisis and fear. Dissenters like Oldham believed that English Catholics plotted to assassinate Charles, put James on the throne, martyr Protestants with the help of foreign Catholic armies, and destroy both the Protestant faith and English culture itself; Royalists, on the other hand, saw as ever-looming Dissenter insurrection and another catastrophic civil war to take away their property, power, and perhaps the

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[1] For studies of the Plot in this political context, see Miller 169-82; Jones 197-217; Greaves 5-32; and Kenyon's complete volume.

[2] Harth studies *The Medall* as an example of Tory propaganda against the Whigs and supportive of Royal efforts to deliver the earl to the gallows (161-9).

life of the king.[3] During the bloodshed ushering in the two party system, the fatal goals of satirists seem quite realistic—and indeed may have been so. The judicial persecution of Catholics consumed victims until the fervor that Oldham labors to feed burnt out; and, in November 1682, eight months after The Medall found its first audience, Shaftesbury, accused by the crown of new treasons, went into hiding soon to flee England in mortal terror of successful Royalist prosecution.

The greatest political satire of this turbulent period, *Absalom and Achitophel*, responds directly to the recent efforts of Charles's beloved, eldest natural son, the Protestant James Scott, Duke of Monmouth—now "Fir'd with near possession of a Crown " (684)—to displace York in the line of succession. The satire revolves around a depiction of Monmouth's "War in Masquerade," his recent tour through the west of England to gauge and gain support (682-725). Despite the fact that the satire clearly posits the threat of national catastrophe, it hardly seems at first as intent upon the death of this target as either *The Medall* or Oldham's *Satires* seem of theirs. But, to be sure, it is, although Dryden—committed firstly to York and secondly to king[4]—carefully conceals both his methods and his intentions against Charles's son. For the purpose of leading his audience to imitate his attack and carry it from the printed page into the world of action and the courts, he conceives a poetics of sacrifice that screens his hostilities toward Monmouth from the eyes of the very persons he undertakes to mobilized. By appropriating for his satire the cultural phenomenon defined by René Girard as the "scapegoat" or "sacrificial mechanism,"[5] Dryden arouses and

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[3] According to Kenyon, in late 1678, the Commons' inflammatory speeches and addresses to the king gave the impression in the House of Lords that the members of the Commons "seemed intent on fighting the Civil Wars all over again" (129).

[4] For a fuller discussion of Dryden's commitment to York, see McFadden 91, 111-202; Winn 243-75; and Erskine-Hill 22-5. Daly argues that *Mac Flecknoe*, written some three years before the beginning of the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81, is an oblique but sustained attack upon Monmouth, a result of the laureate's concerns about the king's bestowals of power upon Monmouth and the possibility of the bastard's eventual succession (655-76).
For another discussion that focuses upon Dryden's targeting of Monmouth in *Absalom and Achitophel*, see McFadden 227-64. McFadden argues that a main purpose of the satire is to persuade Charles to be firm with his misled son.

[5] Girard employs the terms pervasively. He seems to prefer the term "scapegoat mechanism" for discussion focused mainly on psychology and sociology, as in *The Scapegoat*. He uses the term "sacrificial mechanism" in works more extensively studying the liturgical human sacrifice of primitive cultures, such as *Violence and the Sacred* and *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*. The very title of this last work indicates the concealed nature of scapegoating from those effecting it.

directs audience enmity toward the young duke and suggests his scapegoating and sacrifice to end cultural upheaval, threats to the Royal Stuarts, and the gathering possibilities of civil war.

Before focusing on the satire itself, I wish briefly to outline the cultural mechanism, defined by Girard, which Dryden appropriates for his satire. This social phenomenon exits in all societies at all times, but cultural development and secularization create "distortions" or displacements to conceal it from comprehension. A sense of cultural crisis typically engages the sacrificial or scapegoat mechanism as the means by which societies endeavor both to purge evils and found purified dispensations. During a "sacrificial crisis," social order decomposes and the communities, generally unaware of their scapegoating, end disorder and internal violence by turning all violence toward scapegoats. The attackers act mimetically: one individual bonds with another in sympathetic imitation. As a group, they accuse their scapegoats of violating the community's most sacred taboos, those crimes that seem to assail social foundations and order. Usually sexual or violent, scapegoat crimes include plots against persons most forbidden to attack, such as fathers or kings. Although such accusations hide scapegoating behind presumed justice and morality, selection is chiefly determined not by the victims' forbidden actions, but by their differences from the average or norm, their "extreme" or "scapegoat characteristics." Their differences suggest threats to hierarchal categories and thus stability. The traits, however, are not limited to the repellent; scapegoat characteristics like beauty and charisma are often enviable or desirable. In archaic rituals of immolation, where the mechanism is subject to few distortions, slayers regularly regard scapegoat signs as defining divinity and invest their victims with deity (Girard 1986, 12-23).

Royalty is perhaps the most salient scapegoat sign. Regal status, power, and privilege to violate taboos both reaffirm godly identity and justify sacrificial homicide. The most significant workings of the sacrificial mechanism in seventeenth-century England centered on the ritual slaying of Charles I, an act never far from the consciousnesses of English subjects during the Restoration period. Justified as punishment for the king's murders, tyranny, treason, and causing of the civil wars, the regicide inaugurated the dispensation of the Puritans. Defenders of kingly power, however, argued that the resemblance between royalty and deity made regicide the worst type of murder, a deicide of sorts. Shortly after the Stuart Restoration, factions united and, following the example of Royalists during

the Interregnum,[6] accepted Charles I's beheading as a godly sacrifice. In 1660, the Convention Parliament in contrition declared the anniversary of the ritual slaying, January 30, a day of repentance, much like Good Friday. From the pulpit "preachers drew elaborate parallels between Christ's sufferings and those of the Royal Martyr...in the interest of sanctifying the memory of Charles I" (Harth 11).

Contrition, at least at first, also extended like deification to Charles II, the deliverer of the nation from riots in the streets and the unstable, rapidly changing government leadership during the final years of the Interregnum. The order the Restoration brought, as Charles and his council had defined it shortly before his return from exile both in a letter to Speaker of the House of Commons and in the Declaration of Breda, was the work of Providence, the hand of God in history. May 29, to celebrate thanksgiving for the return of Charles and order, joined January 30 on the ecclesiastical calendar, a kind of Stuart Easter. Both days were "packed with sermons extolling the sanctity of the Stuarts" (Claydon 216). Dryden participated in the general acclaim by contributing *Astraea Redux* and *To His Sacred Majesty* to the many panegyrics which both present Charles I and his son as divine and reinforce the genre's conventional equation of monarch and deity.[7] By the late 1670's, however, political turmoil and the threat of civil war again gripped the nation. Crises centered on Exclusion and, as they had on the threshold of the civil wars, on popery and arbitrary government. Restoration Royalists yet stressed the godly qualities of kingship, as Dryden does repeatedly in *Absalom and Achitophel.* Further, the threat of the gallows, belief in divine-right monarchy, the enduring though threadbare belief in the king's infallibility, and other ideologies suggestive of royal divinity, generally forced the king's adversaries to attack surrogates. Such surrogacy results from a long, historical process of kings using their powers to deflect communal violence from themselves, but in the end, it had not saved Charles I, and now threats were ever mounting against his

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[6] The most prominent example of such Royalist presentations of Charles is the book, *Eikon Basilike: The Pourtraicture of His Sacred Majestie in His Solitudes and Sufferings*, in circulation before Charles went to the block and published in many editions after. Wilcher studies this and other depictions by Royalist writers shortly before and after the regicide which liken the king's suffering and execution to Christ's passion (266-86).

[7] The genre was relatively new to England. Rowland notes its first English appearance at the beginning of the century (22).

regal sons.[8] Dryden forges *Absalom and Achitophel* into an instrument to redirect blame from the Royalist camp and fix it not upon an ally of the king or York, but those represented by the satire's title names, Monmouth and Shaftesbury, respectively. This essay's main focus is not upon Shaftesbury, however, whose targeting by Dryden (the subject of much critical discussion) is direct, but upon Monmouth, whose targeting demands greater deception. In this satire, Dryden not only points blame at the Royal Bastard, but also suggests the primary aptness of Monmouth for sacrifice. Monmouth, Dryden argues, is the sacrifice who will end the nation's scapegoat crisis and threats both to the Stuart brothers and of catastrophic civil war.

In this most complex of satires, Dryden employs intricate strategies to effect his attack on the king's son. He begins with bids to broaden its support beyond Monmouth's confirmed enemies, committed Yorkists, like himself. In his epistolary prologue, "To the Reader," he addresses the politically uncommitted group whom he calls "the moderate sort." This is the general audience he wishes to proselytize. He praises its members as sensible, prudent, and judicious and impersonates himself as fair, moral, and cool-headed, a man who has judiciously chosen whom to oppose and whom to support. Here Dryden adopts "the name and language of moderation" in order to incline this segment of his audience to the position he calls "the better side" (McKeon 18-19),[9] a ruse that he will continue

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[8] See Girard 1987, 51-7, for a study of this process of surrogacy. Girard concludes that sacrifice of a deity-like creature was itself the reason for the creation of kingship.

The 1641 execution of Charles's advisor Viscount Strafford stands as a prominent example of regal surrogacy on the threshold of the civil wars. According to Bowle, Strafford was "accused not only of exercising arbitrary power, but of responsibility for the King's failure in the Second Bishop's War," although he at first resisted the king's war plans against Scotland and only gave support after the war was underway (181). Despite the failure of the prosecution to prove his high treason, the House of Commons had him beheaded nevertheless. Archbishop Laud, another kingly surrogate seized after the 1640 war, was also executed without a trial verdict of guilty. His execution, however, was five years later, in 1645. The accusation against him stated that he attempted to subvert the laws, introduce arbitrary government, had "traitorously and wickedly endeavored to reconcile the Church of England with the Church of Rome," and started the war (187). It is worth noting also that early in 1642, according to historians (e.g., Morrill 295-8), Parliamentary leaders, faced with charging the king with treason, sincerely regarded the king's incendiary actions as the result of his evil councillors and effected constitutional reforms to take away his freedom to choose them for himself.

[9] Like McKeon, Zwicker exposes Dryden's moderation as a ploy. Zwicker argues that the laureate presents the extreme position of "anointed absolutism" in "a rhetoric that proclaims

through the poetry itself. He flatters and creates his persona in order to coax current moderates into losing their moderation without recognizing their loss. They are to follow the model offered by the "moderate" persona—the same persona through which Dryden will not only attack Shaftesbury, but, in the most urbane and controlled numbers, accuse Monmouth of scapegoat crimes, stress his scapegoat characteristics, and suggest immoderate, murderous action against him.

In the introductory section of the poem, Dryden contrasts the so-called moderates with "[t]he Bad," the English generally, represented by the Jews of ancient Israel. They comprise a "Headstrong, Moody, Murmuring race" (45), mad in their periodic dissatisfaction with heads of state (57-66). Now, they need only a "Form'd Design" to unite them to rebel and "ruin him they could create" (65), the king. This ruining reminds the audience of an anointed sovereign's slaying in 1649, when Englishmen believed, as they do now, that they, like God, had power to change their rulers. His moderates, however, the satirist declares, are "free from [the] stain" of causing the civil wars and the regicide:

> The sober part of *Israel*, free from stain,
> Well knew the value of a peacefull raign:
> And, looking backward with a wise afraight,
> Saw Seames and wounds, dishonest to the sight;
> In contemplation of whose ugly Scars,
> They Curst the memory of Civil Wars. (69-74)

Here Dryden suggests that this upright, sober audience, both to maintain its sobriety, wisdom, and moral purity, and to save England from the wounds of another civil war, must oppose forces challenging the Royal Stuarts. The contrast between Royalist adversaries, labeled as recklessly "Headstrong," and this audience accents the presumably well-practiced virtues to be proven by joining the faction signified by the satirist's persona.

But, as Philip Harth and George McFadden argue, Dryden also designs to influence the most powerful member of his audience, the king. Harth stresses that the first purpose of the satire is to convince Charles to put aside his policy of apparent toleration and forgiveness, his "fatall Mercy," and act aggressively toward his enemies, especially Shaftesbury (Harth 98-101). Similarly, McFadden contends that the satire seeks to spur Charles to

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balance and moderation" (1984, 103).

end his twenty years of vacillation and indulgence of his foes (236). Although, as Dryden observes, this policy had served Charles well in the past and avoided civil war (77-8), the king had clearly begun to modify it. As Dryden composed the satire in 1681, Shaftesbury, arrested for high treason and sent to the Tower by the crown, awaited the decision of a grand jury (although Whig sheriffs had impaneled it with Shaftesbury sympathizers).[10] Charles's alteration of policy toward Monmouth, however, seems more complex, more compromised. Despite stripping Monmouth of his offices and pensions, the king yet extended his "fatall Mercy" toward his rebellious son. Although Monmouth was twice arrested shortly after his western tour, the crown issued no formal charges and he quickly obtained release (Greaves 111-2). Dryden tells his sovereign (and the rest of his audience) the reason: Charles loves too much. He is a father who both "woud not or...coud not see" (36) the faults of his bastard and thus justifies his son's most vicious crimes:

> Some warm excess, which the Law forbore,
> Were construd [by Charles] Youth that purg'd by boyling o'r:
> And *Amnon*'s Murther, by a specious Name,
> Was call'd a Just Revenge for injur'd Fame. (37-40)

This tolerance, the effect, says the poet, of love, Dryden finesses to end. And the king's laureate employs much finesse indeed to argue to the king himself deadly action against his beloved son. As the poem works to advances the causes of the crown and York, it presents a model of scapegoating both for Charles and for "the moderate sort" to follow. The satire is designed to provoke mimetic violence.

Nevertheless (or perhaps necessarily), Dryden's most apparent target is not the would-be usurper, Monmouth, but Monmouth's most powerful ally, Shaftesbury. *The Medall*, published four months later, shares with *Absalom and Achitophel* efforts to win support for Shaftesbury's continued prosecution. In both, Dryden portrays the earl as a contemporary Satan whose diabolical evil justifies all Royalist attempts to destroy him,[11]

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[10] Greaves notes that "the prosecution had eight witness to support its contention that Shaftesbury had conspired to depose and execute Charles and to alter the government" (38).

[11] Harth disproves the thesis that Dryden wrote the satire to influence the judgment of the London grand jury against Shaftesbury: the jury, he points out, was composed of the earl's followers (98-102). McFadden notes similar facts and concludes, "Dryden's poem was a means for taking the King's case to the nation—and to the King too, lest he relapse" into

although the courtly, judicious voice controls his depiction in *Absalom and Achitophel*. Dryden puts the only vicious words concerning the earl in Achitophel's mouth, and they testify to Shaftesbury's treason. Here, their ridicule and invective portray Shaftesbury as inciting the young duke to take the essential place in a revolution and seize the crown (230-301, 376-476). Historians, however, note that Shaftesbury did not in fact incite Monmouth's claims, as Charles and other prominent Royalists seem to have known.[12] Yet we may be reasonably sure that the king and his nearest supporters would applaud this fabrication. It deceives uncommitted readers as it justifies Royalist resolve to send Shaftesbury to the hangman. It presents Shaftesbury as an Oldham-like voice without restraint, an instigator of violence, and draws attention away from Dryden as instigator-satirist. Perhaps more significantly, however, Achitophel's speech has the added function of accusing Monmouth. Concealed beneath it, Dryden approaches the duke's ostensibly invincible position as the king's son, for Absalom's acceptance of Achitophel's articulated treasons publishes them also as his own.

And the allegory itself adds to the list. The apparently rational voice of the tolerant historiographer intimates the nature of Monmouth's endeavor for kingship through the Second Book of Samuel's violent narrative of rape, murder, treason, and armed rebellion to overthrow God's chosen monarch. Although Dryden's tone never betrays animosity toward the duke, the biblical narrative lashes out in constant allusion from beneath the high polish of Dryden's couplets. It reminds the reader that the revolt of the

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vacillation (233). *Absalom and Achitophel*'s homicidal intentions against Shaftesbury, while not fixed to this specific grand jury judgment, are, like those that later motivated *The Medall*, aimed toward possible future occasion.

[12] Jones concludes that Shaftesbury, although exploiting Monmouth's popularity, "did not commit himself to accepting Monmouth's tenuous claims to the throne" (211). The historian states that Charles and James blamed a less prominent figure, Sir Thomas Armstrong, for leading Monmouth astray; according to Jones, they had Armstrong kidnapped from Leiden, his place of refuge, brought back to London, and ritualistically slain without trail (223-4). Although it would perhaps be an overstatement to characterize Greaves's presentation of Monmouth's plots to displace York as independent Shaftesbury's influence, Greaves's account makes clear that they were fellow plotters heading separate cells and that the earl did not control the duke's conspiracies. Often, perhaps usually, the king's son seems to have had the final word on their actions. Shortly after his western tour, for example, Monmouth, according to court testimony that Greave judges as probably reliable, vetoed Shaftesbury's plans of armed rebellion because the duke judged them ill-timed (112). Further, Shaftesbury decided to flee England only after becoming "upset by the plans of the Monmouth group to reduce the scale of the insurrection and distrustful of their resolve" (126).

Biblical Absalom ended according to divine will with the usurper's slaying. It both places Monmouth at the vortex of a parricidal rebellion and suggests his death in order to avoid another catastrophic civil war.

Dryden suggests one result of this rebellion, if it succeeds, through the imagery of Achitophel's speech. Here Dryden employs the conventional figure of the body politic as the king's body to have Shaftesbury insinuate Charles's ritual murder. Through Achitophel, the earl's words intimate the king's execution in a manner more primitive, more humiliating and excruciatingly painful than the mere beheading of the Royal Martyr. Achitophel describes plans to leave the king "naked...to public scorn" (400) to suggest the stripping of a criminal upon the scaffold, the disgraceful removal of the signs of social identity that regularly preceded execution of condemned traitors. Dryden images the plotted transference of power from the king and God to the people, Shaftesbury, and Monmouth as "kingly power...ebbing out... / Drawn to the dregs of a Democracy" (226-27). The depiction implies the ebbing loss of power as the loss of life. It suggests the drawing of wine from a cask and the drawing of tides by the moon; but it also adumbrates the ebbing of blood from the kingly body. Achitophel's portrayal of the king's total loss of power similarly resounds:

> The thrifty Sanhedrin shall keep him poor:
> And every Sheckle which he can receive,
> Shall cost a Limb of his Prerogative.
> To ply him with new Plots, shall be my care,
> Or plunge him deep in some Expensive War;
> Which when his Treasure can no more Supply,
> He must, with the Remains of Kingship, buy. (390-96)

Here, Charles's kingship is his corporeal being. The verbs not related directly to finance, the alliteratively linked "ply" and "plunge," suggest violence to his person. "To ply" means both "to assail with blows and missiles" and "to work, as with an instrument." Further, Achitophel draws the "Limb[s]." The "Remains" that the king must finally lose denote more than "remainder": they denote the corpse and its members. The imagery hints at a traitor's execution, the victim disgracefully pelted, stripped, plied by the hangman's knife and ax, quartered, and disposed. In archaic times, communities distributed the body parts of the sacrifice throughout the natural world to ensure regeneration. In some cultures, their distribution established relative hierarchical positions to signify cultural rebirth (Lincoln 41-64). In seventeenth-century England, they were affixed above

the four city gates to confirm the might of those who controlled the law.[13] Here, Charles's "Remains" will be in the rebels' power to distribute. Even as he puts the words in Shaftesbury's mouth, Dryden tells the king that his son threatens to create his own dispensation from Charles's bloody "Remains."[14]

The horrific execution of traitors that Achitophel's imagery reflects was reserved for commoners. Yet it was only by command of the king himself, against the dictate of Parliament and protests of prominent Whigs, that Lord Stafford, Charles's ally and friend, did not perish with other Popish Plot victims by this most torturous means: rather, he was beheaded only.[15] The imagery of ritual murder suggests the violent menace posed by Shaftesbury and Monmouth; it also warns the king that he, unlike Stafford or Charles I, might suffer this excruciatingly painful and entirely humiliating death, the founding sacrifice of his son's reign. Dissenter forces prosecuted victims of the Popish Plot for "compassing" or imagining the king's death;[16] the metaphoric nature of Dryden's suggestions shields him from such accusations of treason. He thus reminds the king that Monmouth indeed exploits the "Lunacy" of restive crowds and Parliament "[t]o Murther Monarchs for Imagin'd crimes" (790).

Although neither Achitophel nor Absalom defines these "Imagin'd crimes," Dryden's famous opening sentence pipes upon a frequent Whig accusation:

> In pious times, e'r Priest-craft did begin,
> Before *Polygamy* was made a sin;
> When man, on many, multiply'd his kind,
> E'r one to one was, cursedly, confind:
> When Nature prompted, and no law deny'd
> Promiscuous use of Concubine and Bride;

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[13] Foucault exhaustively studies this theme in relation to the French monarchy and its evolution in modern western Europe. Hentig studies the evolution of execution from sacrificial rituals. Traditional execution procedures, such as those alluded to in Achitophel's speech, had come down from archaic sacrificial rites with remarkably little change (42-5, 98-101, 191-6).

[14] Although the satire makes such suggestions, historians agree on the absence of convincing evidence that Monmouth either nurtured any ambition beyond succession to the throne or engaged in plots against the king's life.

[15] See the note to *Absalom and Achitophel,* 282n.

[16] Kenyon discusses this in relation to one of the first victims of the Plot, William Staley (98-9).

> Then, *Israel*'s Monarch, after Heaven's own heart,
> His vigorous warmth did, variously, impart
> To Wives and Slaves: and, wide as his Command,
> Scatter'd his Maker's Image through the Land. (1-10)

Dryden ignores Dissenter accusations based upon Charles's policy (for example, that he sought to secure absolutism and promote Catholicism) and deals instead with less rational arguments, the Puritan adaptations of a primal justification for scapegoat murder: the king's violation of sexual taboos. Yet Dryden's focus may not be merely an effort to redirect attention from the most rational anti-Royalist arguments. It also reflects Dryden's recognition of the danger such scapegoat accusations pose if not dismissed: their ability to stir visceral responses. The laureate's amused tolerance of Charles's promiscuity both suggests its irrelevance and intones the absurdity of holding the monarch to standards of tradesmen and apprentices. The joke that Charles fathers an impossible number of children in all classes and parishes, as "wide as his Command," implies the irrational hyperbole of the accusers. Its twinge of sacrilege and blasphemy further ridicules them. As malicious enthusiasts blanch at the depiction of the Maker in this context, those urbane, amused, more rational persons share the pleasures of breaching a moral stricture and of fleering at the spoilsports, Bible-thumpers, and fanatics who seek to condemn the king. Nevertheless, Dryden's witty comment that the king's actions are "after Heaven's own heart" offers the serious argument that the monarch's promiscuity is privileged by God and therefore above the hubristic pronouncements of his enemies. Moreover, this masculine parody of the traditional figure of Charity among her many children suggests that Charles's generosity finds outlet in his "vigorous warmth," his bounteous, overflowing love. To be sure, the very existence of the joke argues the king's charity: Charles suffers a laugh at his expense, uttered by a mere hireling. Furthermore, it conditions royal tolerance as Dryden prepares to argue for the death of the kings beloved son.

The witty description also initiates Dryden's strategy of sacrificial surrogacy. He implies that those guilty of the primal crime of ingratitude bear the blame for the current crisis. Their ingratitude manifests itself in the factionalism destabilizing the nation. Ingratitude applies first to those whose hands already bear Stuart blood, forgiven "Common-wealths-men," the Dissenters, mentioned in the prologue, and the practitioners of "Priest-craft," pointed at in the first line. Later, Dryden tells us unequivocally that

some of the "Pardon'd Rebels," like Shaftesbury, have been made "Kinsmen to the Throne," but violate their debts of gratitude in treasonous confederacies (140-51). Priests, Dissenters, and their leaders concoct imagined crimes in order to condemn Charles as they did his father. Dryden next administers poison in jest to Queen Catherine: her ingratitude causes the king's promiscuity. Michal, her allegorical figure, whose primal crime is compounded by her barrenness, "[a] Soyl ungratefull to the Tiller's care" (12), compels Charles to find others to bear him children. This shifting of blame for the king's promiscuity, however, prefaces its transference onto the satire's primary surrogate scapegoat, that promiscuity's issue, Charles's bastard son.

The first cause of scapegoating those who violate sexual taboos is, according to Girard, their blurring of the distinctions that found and order society. This blurring, however, seems implicit in the very existence of children born outside the marital family unit. It defines them: bastards so undermine this cultural keystone. Their exclusion from rights of inheritance seems both to reinforce the strength of the unit and minimize their threat to it. Such exclusionary sanctions also maintain hierarchal and class distinctions. Further, in Dryden's time, "laws of inheritance brought in the most ponderable of all considerations, the system of wealth in inherited property (including former church property) that was the basis or aristocratic society" (McFadden 182). In the light of such considerations, we may better observe Dryden's intentions as he turns from the queen's bearing Charles no children:

> Not so the rest [of the kings sexual partners]; for several
> Mothers bore
> To Godlike David, several Sons before.
> But since like slaves his bed they did ascend,
> No True Succession could their seed attend. (13-6)

Only "True Succession," legal inheritance of the throne, will not imperil the basic cultural order of high and low, of aristocrat and commoner. The throne stands at the apex of the social structure. Monmouth's bid to ascend to kingship menaces hierarchal categories from bottom to top.

Dryden introduces Charles's son with allusions to the generous king granting all of his desires and placing him high within the aristocracy. As the satirist refers to the marriage arranged by Charles to bring his bastard estates and title (34), he reminds his audience of these bestowals. The elevation not only suggests Monmouth debt of gratitude, however, but also

that his lofty place threatens vertical distinctions. He occupies a position without natural entitlement. Further, he is amorphous, the offspring of a common woman, now a duke named James Scott but born with two other surnames, Fitzroy and Crofts, now a bastard vying to displace a rightful heir for kingship. He cannot assume a settled place, cannot be seen without blurring boundaries. Now, in defiance of father and the law, in conflict with his uncle, he threatens to destroy the entire culture, order and all, in another civil war, another turning of the world upside down.

God created the order that the king defends, and his power, intimates Dryden, stops at a certain point before it. If God wished Monmouth to reign, declares David, "He woud have given his Soul another turn" (964), and the power of the king abides this limit. Through Absalom, Monmouth himself recognizes that divine law bars him from the crown: "Heaven's Decree," he states, destines it for the "Worthier Head" either of James Stuart or of Charles's "Lawfull Issue" (346-52). Both Charles and his son agree that, according to God's law, birth outside marriage determines Monmouth as unworthy. Nevertheless, the bastard seeks the throne. Charles's duty to support divine dispensations includes prohibiting his son's kingship and protecting his realm from the dangers Monmouth poses to its entire structure, a structure to be held in place by the "True Succession" of James Stuart.

Yet the laureate seems to give Monmouth his due. The duke possesses much that is regal and divine. Dryden introduces Monmouth as the most beautiful and brave of Charles's sons (17-8). But beauty and bravery are Stuart traits. Monmouth mirrors the beauty of his father in his youth (32). His bravery seems transmitted in his Stuart blood, and Dryden associates it with Monmouth's father, who returned heroically from exile (262-5), and with his courageous uncle, James (356-7). As with his other Stuart bestowals, the ingrate son defiles these gifts. Denied the throne through divine will, he exploits his "manly beauty" and bravery-won fame in an effort to grasp the "Imperial sway" (21-3). "Too full of Angells Metal in his Frame" (310), the "Angells Metal" in the base born son is an overplus which allows him to shake the pillars of the state, challenge the royal Stuarts, and undermine divine dispensations and order. Moreover, this vitiation of Stuart virtues would lead to the gravest of crimes—the murder of kin, of father, and, if not of a god, of an anointed monarch near to divinity. Dryden emphasizes Monmouth's base birth not only to stress this scapegoat sign and unworthiness for the throne, but also to stir latent responses to the bastard's other signs, those less consciously recognized by rational persons

as determining scapegoat selection: his beauty, royalty, bravery, and fame. Here Dryden begins to transform the Royal Bastard from the attractive rival for succession into a monstrous double of the godlike king.[17]

Monmouth's godly traits parody his father's godliness. Prior to David's reappearance at the end of the satire, most of the depictions of Charles's godliness pointedly occur in Achitophel's speech. Charles's propensity to forgive, his "Mildness," charity, and generosity help convince Monmouth to rebel (381-86). In this speech, Dryden also presents Shaftesbury as aggrandizing Monmouth not only as the king's cheated "heir," but also as a god, the "*Saviour*," the "second *Moses*," a Christ after the fall. The duke later courts this identification. It was known that, on his western tour, he touched to cure the king's evil, presuming to have this miraculous power attributed to the true monarch. Dryden depicts him stepping before the populace as their "*Saviour*" and "*Messiah*," inciting idolatry (735-37).[18] The duke rallies the people to deify him as their "young *Messiah*" (728) and "Guardian God" (735), and they do so. When he promises to restore their "lost Estate" (perhaps the less powerful monarchy on the eve of the civil wars) he suggests his imitation not only of Charles's delivery of the nation, but also of Christ's promised restoration of Jerusalem. As the "second Moses," he "like the Sun, the promis'd land survays" (732). Unlike either his father or Christ, however, Monmouth cannot in fact bring concord, but quite the reverse: rebellion, chaos, and civil war. And in his attempts to appropriate divinity, he commits yet another scapegoat crime, blasphemy.

Dryden contrasts of the sexual behaviors of Monmouth and Charles to further expose the son as a monstrous parody of the father. The king's promiscuity is a divinely sanctioned prerogative. His "vigorous warmth" indicates his strong propensity to love, to charity. But Monmouth's sexual actions define him as lawless and corrupt. His is a violent usurpation of privilege implied by "*Amnon's* Murther." As the most cogent interpretations aver, this homicide alludes to Monmouth's slaying of a beadle in a brothel (e.g., Thomas 160-1).[19] It seems the apparent result of the duke's fevered

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[17] Girard puts forth the concept of the "monstrous double" in *Violence and the Sacred*, 160-9.

[18] Harris notes that at least one piece of Whig propaganda asserted the Monmouth's touch cured someone of the king's evil (117). Zwicker studies the manner in which Dryden uses typology in such instances to emphasize that Monmouth is a false Messiah (1972, 90-5).

[19] The murder had a history of prompting satirical responses. See, for example, the two anonymous examples grouped in *Poems on Affairs of State*, I: 172-6: "On the Three Dukes Killing the Beadle on Sunday Morning, Feb. 16th, 1671," and "Upon the Beadle." The

loss of self-control at the frustration of his desires and the dutiful attempt by the law officer to thwart assault, rape, or worse crime. The beadle embodies the forces of order. Charles's love may lead him to read the murder as "warm excess" similar to his own, but Dryden suggests that Monmouth's is vicious, murderous heat that destroys rather than creates, the complete perversion of his father's "vigorous warmth." The bastard degrades the king's godliness and *caritas*, evident in Charles's acts of mercy, generosity, and even in his fatherly indulgence, into a blasphemous parody.

Dryden creates the monstrous double not only for his wider audience, who may transfer hostilities about Royal promiscuity to Monmouth, but also for the king himself. It creates for Charles an avenue of projection and suggests that Monmouth's scapegoating will purge both himself and his kingdom. Both for king and for subject, Monmouth's death will end the scapegoat crisis now shaking the nation to its bedrock.

But Monmouth's unlawful heat also bears a relationship to Puritan or Dissenter fervor. Three decades earlier, led by their hot zeal, Puritans rebelled, subverted godly dispensations, and killed a king; now their fervor arouses them to repeat their crimes (Winn 355). The Dissenters, like Monmouth, receive Charles's generous pardon then again defy God-given law as they seek to murder the godlike father of the English nation.[20] Monmouth embodies their vicious heat and perhaps all of their crimes against the king and cultural order. Further, the restive crowds, like Monmouth, self-aggrandize. As Charles states, the populace believes that it may "[m]ake Heirs for Monarcks, and for God decree" (758). Scapegoats bear the corruptions of community; the duke's grandiose desire to take the throne, like his heat, distills the vices of the people. His death promises to purge them.

Like the scapegoat whose sacrifice renews the culture, Monmouth both receives the identity of a god and violates taboos to justify his extinction.

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satires' headnote associates this event with "*Amnon*'s murther." That there were three dukes involved in the murder, as the former title suggests, is not established: the king's pardon extended only to Monmouth and Christopher Monck, Duke of Albermarle, who accompanied Monmouth to the brothel.

[20] Charles employs this description of the king as father of the people in his closing speech (949). The theme is pervasive in Dryden's public poems of the 1660's. McKeon studies it extensively in *Annus Mirabilis* (49-56). Historians suggest that the identification of king as the father of the nation was part of Royalist apologetic long before the Exclusion Crisis (e.g., Harris 1993, 58). For a discussion of the use of the king's presentation as father of the people by the Stuarts and their supporters, see Downie 9-30.

For those who seek or need a kingly victim, he is the monstrous double of his father. His father's sexual privilege is divinely sanctioned; in Monmouth, it is crime that leads to murder and destruction of law. His father partakes of the divine; Monmouth blasphemously claims divinity and leads the crowds to his idolatrous worship. Further, as illegitimate, he not only embodies his father's promiscuity but also transforms Stuart godliness into vices that distill the crimes of the English people. He unites behind him the disparate forces of treason into a formidable monster, a "Hydra," that reflects his own monstrosity. Now that Monmouth, the beautiful, brave, son of the king, invested with divinity, guilty of many scapegoat crimes, is a pharmakos who absorbs the vices both of king and the of people he leads, Dryden is ready to assert more forcefully that his sacrifice—not the sacrifice of either threatened Royal Stuart, especially that of the sovereign he addresses—will end the crisis of succession, and bring about cultural regeneration, a "Series of new time."

George deF. Lord was first to point out that the poem's structure fulfills the primal religious paradigm defined by Mircea Eliade as that of the eternal return, concluding with a new temporal cycle, a "Series of new time" (156-90). But no one comments on this religious theme's intimacy with sacrifice. The eternal return in the sense of the emergence of a new incarnation or god bringing forth a new world of rebirth and harmony is predicated upon the sacrificial slaying. In his discussion of foundation rituals, Eliade, although not exploring the violence generative of a founding myth, states that the slaying repeats "the sacrifice that took place at the time of the foundation of the world" (20). Dryden offers the fictive cultural harmony fostered by Monmouth's hypothetical death as fulfilling the final phase in the sacrificial pattern. He sets this closure against the opposing hypothetical ending inaugurated by the ritualized murder of the king. Dryden presents Monmouth—the murderer, the treasonous parricide, the beautiful, brave youth of royal blood aggrandized with deity both by the crowds and by himself—as a sacrifice if the Whig series of new time is to be frustrated and the Tory series realized.

But in what manner does Dryden present this "Series"? As a prelude to Charles's reappearance, Dryden sings the king's allies (817-913). A transitional verse paragraph brings this panegyric into the present as a "small faithful Band / Of Worthies" warn the king of Shaftesbury's plotting hatred and Monmouth's menace (914-32). Panegyric amplification, however, does not disintegrate as the focus shifts from the "Worthies" to Charles. It continues through the last line of the satire. Now Dryden sings the actions not

of the king who denies Monmouth's viciousness, but of the monarch who accepts both his allies' warnings and his dutiful laureate's advice. The panegyric convention of advising the monarch[21] cloaks Dryden's imposing posture as he comes nearest to stating his bloody solution both to the nation's crises and to Monmouth's deadly threats.

Panegyrics such as Dryden's own *Astraea Redux* and *To His Sacred Majesty* present the monarch as a god who dispels forces of disorder and evil, whose reign gloriously inaugurates national harmony. Yet the conditional nature of *Absalom and Achitophel*'s denouement withholds approbation from the monarch even as Dryden utters it. The song of praise can only be realized with Charles's heroic sacrifice of the son who challenges the divine dispensation of national order. The vision of the Royalist future is an element of conditional panegyric, an alternative to the Whig future of royal defeat and murder. Consistent both with panegyric and with political satire, the provisional ending also serves a propagandistic function. It seeks to win support from its audience for a Stuart policy not yet effected—a policy culminating in the death of the charismatic usurper and promising the peaceful succession of York.

It is in the conditional context of the panegyric that the sacrificial pattern culminates. To conclude the paradigm of the eternal return, a new embodiment of the slain or expelled god appears with the new age as his train. Thus, after Monmouth, the Whig god, is satirized and sacrificially offered, the king emerges with greater divine powers to foster a new era of public concord. As the sacrificial mechanism subsumes instrumental aspects of panegyric, it entices the undecided audience by hinting admission into a sanctified fellowship, strengthens Royalist bonding at the expense of Monmouth, and offers the king and his allies old and new the vision of national harmony that will result from the duke's death.

Dryden also exploits the pattern of displaced sacrifice and rebirth within the rhetoric of the mighty king's speech (939-1025). It echoes the rhythm of sacrifice and cultural regeneration structuring the satire. Like the entire denouement, it flourishes the king's would-be greatness and is itself panegyric. It supports the glorious conclusion and amplifies the concluding sense of time reborn.

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[21] Much of Rowland's *Faint Praise and Civil Leer* focuses upon this panegyric convention. Rowland also gives much attention to the permeability of the generic walls between satire and panegyric.

Charles first rejects his role as a scapegoat bearing the crowd's accusations and abuse:

> Those heap'd Affronts that haughty Subjects bring,
> Are burthens for a Camel, not a King. . . . (951-2)

Resolved no longer to forgive Monmouth, he alludes to his son's "Frame," too weak to hold royal angel's metal (962), his crimes, and his sanctification by the people (974). He calls Monmouth "The Peoples Brave" (967); a synonym of assassin (Thomas 75), "Brave" perhaps acknowledges his son's murderous intention. The king's greater godlihood emerges in his wrathful justice: he determines that Monmouth, who indeed plots treason, will perish for it:

> If my Young *Samson* will pretend a Call
> To shake the Column [of the nation], let him share the Fall...(955-6)

Charles's sense of justice does not negate his caritas; love tempers his wrath, and he gives his bastard the immediate chance to "repent and live" (967). Although unlikely, Monmouth yet may sincerely repent his many treasons and win the king's mercy. But most significantly, the envisioned king accepts the primal justifications for Monmouth's sacrifice. Charles rejects the crowd's other scapegoats, his "Friends" like the executed Lord Stafford, and defines crowd members as persecutors:

> No groundless Clamours shall my Friends remove,
> Nor Crowds have power to Punish e're they Prove....(996-7)

But now, after heeding Dryden's counsel and resolving that his son, if unrepentant, must justly perish, Charles has the strength to draw "the Sword of Justice" (1002) and end these affronts. The action, however, is not designed to destroy the crowd's scapegoating, but to channel it toward isolated members. With this sword he will "make Examples" from among the mob (1001), or select additional scapegoats to absorb collective guilt. Although the king's words suggest the arbitrariness of this choice, he soon speaks of "[t]hose dire Artificers of Death" (1011), a probable allusion both to the orchestrators and to suborned witnesses of the Popish Plot persecution. Here, too, we find Shaftesbury, who directed the Plot toward the exclusion of James, and Monmouth, whose kingship depended upon this exclusion. Thus the king transfers and concentrates the scapegoat crisis

from the nation at large into the community of his enemies. Facing the "Sword of Justice" and isolated from the mob, the perjurers in panic will turn violently on one another and their leaders, the "Artificers of Death":

> By their own arts 'tis Righteously decreed,
> Those dire Artificers of Death shall bleed.
> Against themselves their Witnesses will Swear,
> Till Viper-like their Mother Plot they tear:
> And suck for Nutriment that bloody gore
> Which was their Principle of Life before.
> Their *Belial* with their *Belzebub* will fight;
> Thus on my Foes, my Foes shall do me Right:
> Nor doubt th' event....(1010-8)

Bolstered by imagery of such primal violence as cannibalism and matricide, the king's speech suggests that the witnesses' attempts to save themselves by impeaching their cohorts and leaders will culminate in the "bloody gore" of executions. The reborn monarch foresees that the "Factious crowds" will unite to spend "[i]n their first Onset, all their Brutal Rage" (1019) upon these victims. Their leaders, no longer represented by Absalom and Achitophel but by the satanic "*Belial*" and "*Belzebub*," will also attack each other. Here the sovereign turns the murderous urges of his adversaries against Whig scapegoats. His wrathful might rains disaster upon them, not nature believed to respond to angry, supernatural commands. It is when the crowds thus "stand all Breathless," focused on these victims rather than on the godlike king, that Charles states that he might marshal his forces, "urge the fight," and overcome them (1022-3). He will thus reestablish the harmony of the stable hierarchical order held in place by kingship and law:

> For Lawfull Pow'r is still Superior found,
> When long driven back, at length it stands the ground. (1024-5)

Sacrificial death now in effect satisfied by kingly resolution and prophesy, the Christian God intervenes and gives consent. The speech concluded, the "new Series of time began," and the entire culture is thus harmoniously reborn around the resurrected king:

> Once more Godlike *David* is Restor'd,
> And willing Nations knew their Lawfull Lord. (1030-1)

The provisional ending suggests that after the sacrifice of his unrepentant son, Charles will emerge cleansed of the sins which Dryden at the beginning could only confront by amusingly claiming kingly privilege. Lord goes so far as to suggest that the resurrected king is more than God's image on earth; it is Charles, not God, who is omnipotent (186-90)—or who would be sung as omnipotent if he consents to Dryden's urgings. The power to punish that appears in his speech merges with his power to forgive and presents Charles not so much as the God of David, as Lord suggests, but, from beneath the panegyric amplification, as the earthly reflection of the God of Paul. The rake of the beginning, deemed powerless through uncheck charity, threatened by Whig leaders and his son, will be thus transformed into a powerful sovereign—if he abides by his laureate's bloody advice. The reborn king can expect songs of praise rather than murder at the hands of his bastard. The conclusion sings to the Christian audience of the sacred nature of his majesty and drives that audience toward the center of the revitalized Royalist community. There Charles securely wears his crown and doles out Mercy and Justice as the true representative and worthy viceroy of God.

Since *Absalom and Achitophel* has fatal goals, Dryden creates poetics that exploit the sacrificial mechanism. Both because he seeks to broaden support for his scapegoating and because he includes in his receptive audience the king himself, the satirist develops strategies of deception: he uses a moderate persona to inspire imitation by his audience, including the king; he attacks in a controlled, urbane tone that allows no vituperativeness toward Monmouth; he employs the Shaftesburian representative, Achitophel, to define Monmouth's treason; and stresses Monmouth's base birth, his scapegoat crimes, and monstrous reflection of his father. Indeed, Dryden exploits the scapegoat mechanism to offer Monmouth as a sacrifice to end all threats to the nation and the Royal Stuarts. *Absalom and Achitophel* seeks to arouse mimetic violence that will end apparently on the scaffold. In terms conditionally panegyric, the laureate creates the final phase of scapegoating's dynamics, the unity of the sacrificers in a revitalized culture. He draws his audience toward the king and suggests to Charles that his unchallenged power and the security of the nation will be again "Restor'd" if he would, like the Father of all, sacrifice his beloved son.

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ICONOCLASM IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

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A central problem for any monotheistic religion is distinguishing worship of the one true God from idolatry in all its forms. René Girard's pioneering interpretation of the Judeo-Christian scriptures clarifies this distinction by recourse to an ethical conception of the sacrificial: False religion or idolatry is essentially sacrificial, while the Judeo-Christian tradition opposes the sacrificial in all its myriad forms. As Girard explains, the Passion narrative makes clear that the sacrificial or scapegoat victim, Christ, is innocent. The violence inflicted upon Christ is human, not divine. The Gospels thus reveal the violence that hides behind the sacred. Religious practices that further sacrificial violence are idolatrous, worshiping violence in the guise of the sacred.[1]

The ethical simplicity of the Girardian distinction between true faith and idolatry is complicated, however, by the issue of representation. According to the Old Testament, the one true God cannot be represented by images or figures of any kind, while idols typically take figural form. From a biblical perspective, therefore, the question of form is central to an understanding of idolatry.

The Old Testament ban on images has never been investigated from a Girardian perspective. In this essay I apply Rene Girard's anthropological insights to the subject of iconoclasm in the Old and New Testaments. More specifically I address the second command-ment, the famous ban on "graven images," and the problem of representing God. From the per-

[1] For a fuller treatment of Girard's interpretation of Christianity in relation to the sacrificial, see his *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World.*

spective of Girard's "fundamental anthropology" there are two basic issues in this regard. The first is the ethical function of the ban on images; how does the second commandment function ethically to preserve the human community in the Bible? Second, is the ban on images sacrificial as understood in Girardian terms? Or is it anti-sacrificial and therefore ethically progressive?

The second commandment reads: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" (KJV, Exod. 20.4-5). At first glance, this commandment might appear as an expression of the most primitive form of religious taboo. A specific cultural activity is arbitrarily forbidden under threat of punishment. The taboo on images, unlike the law against murder for example, has no obvious moral dimension. Images of any kind must be violently expelled—sacrificed, as it were—for no immediate reason. According to the second commandment, any attempt to represent God or his creation by images is a profane violation of his "jealous" nature; the second commandment therefore often finds expression in the violent destruction of so-called idolatrous images. Acts of iconoclasm directed against the images of foreign gods are quite common in the Old Testament.

Nevertheless, I argue here that the second commandment is in practical terms ethically progressive and anti-sacrificial. It actually questions and undermines the whole sacred-profane dichotomy. Indeed, the ban on images is ultimately a secularizing influence crucial for the development of modernity.

I also address the Christian acceptance of divine images, which has often been understood as a reversal of the Judaic ban on figural representations. In the interpretation of iconoclasm that I am proposing here, however, the image of Christ on the cross can be seen as a logical development of the second commandment rather than its contradiction.

I. The second commandment in context

In the Old Testament, the giving of the second commandment is associated with the Exodus from Egypt and the Hebrew rejection of Egyptian religion and culture. In Herbert Schneidau's book *Sacred Discontent*, he argues persuasively that Hebrew monotheism is first of all a reaction against pagan polytheism. Schneidau writes, "The Judeo-Christian tradition defines itself as opposed to a pagan world which it sees

as essentially mythological" (12). Further, "The Hebrews habitually defined themselves negatively, by their differences from their neighbors" (51). Schneidau explains:

> We find in the Bible a great ban of silence or execration on such themes as relations with animals, magical powers, matriarchal divinities or societies, autochthony, and metamorphoses.
>
> For the Hebrews, the whole complex of mythological ideas could be seen by looking toward Egypt, the country of bitter memories of slavery, for the showpiece of ancient culture was also the land that most tenaciously preserved the tradition of the mythological continuum, especially in the form of animal worship. (62-63)

The very idea of the "one true God" (and thus, Israel's religious identity) is founded on a sense of difference, a defiant rejection of Egyptian polytheism, including its mythic and priestly apparatus. According to William Foxwell Albright, "it is clear that the religion of Israel revolted against virtually every external aspect of Egyptian religion, including the complex and grotesque iconography, the dominion of daily life in the Nineteenth Dynasty by magic, the materialistic absorption in preparing for a selfish existence in the hereafter" (270). In ethical and political terms, the Mosaic revelation is a declaration of independence from the dominant Ancient Near Eastern religions of Egypt, Canaan, and others. Schneidau elaborates on the consequences of this radical break:

> When the Hebrews broke with the traditions of their hated Egyptian overlords, they sundered the cosmic continuum. But they felt more liberation than loss, for there is a parallel between the Exodus from slavery and the breakaway from myth. Harmony with nature entails bondage as well as security: we may remember Frankfort's remark that mythical thought is bound to the "scope of the concrete." (22).
>
> In rejecting Egypt, with its high culture and animal-headed gods, the Hebrews chose freedom, at a cost recognized in the "murmuring" traditions of Exodus and the following books, in which the hungry fugitives yearn to return to the cooked food of Egypt. But Moses the prophet refused to go back to the gods of culture and nature, giving allegiance instead to a mysterious power who

> entered the world at will but was never bound to any of its forms, be they ever so mighty. (64)

While agreeing with Schneidau's interpretation, I also acknowledge the many real connections that scholars have found between Hebrew religion and Ancient Near Eastern religions.[2] Yet without denying those connections, we must recognize the radicality of Hebrew monotheism and its real differences from the polytheistic myths of the ancient Egyptians. "Yahwism was essentially aniconic and...material representations were foreign to its spirit from the beginning" (Albright 266).

The second commandment functions ethically to facilitate this independence movement, represented in the Old Testament by the rebellion and exodus of the Hebrew slave population in Egypt. A so-called jealous God serves to guard the distinctive Hebrew or Jewish identity that has endured right through modern times. The ancient Hebrews gambled on an oppositional strategy to the pagan traditions that surrounded them, rather than a conciliatory or assimilative strategy.

The rejection of pagan religions found expression not only in a refusal of what Schneidau calls "the mythological consciousness" (50), but also in the rejection of pagan sacrificial practices:

> Though long a part of their cult, [sacrifice] seems to have been offensive to zealous Yahwists: Yahweh could not be made into a fertility/fatality god. Amos, Isaiah, and later prophets attacked the rituals openly: Amos portrays Yahweh saying "I hate and despise your feasts, I take no pleasure in your solemn festivals.... I reject your oblations, and refuse to look at your sacrifices of fattened cattle" [Amos 5:21-22]. Isaiah is even more eloquent: "What are your endless sacrifices to me?" says Yahweh. "I am sick of holocausts of rams and the fat of calves. The blood of bulls and goats revolts me....Bring me your worthless offerings no more. The smoke of them fills me with disgust....Your hands are covered in blood, wash, make yourselves clean" [Isa. 1.11-18]. (231)

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[2] See for example William Foxwell Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity*. Albright presents a balanced perspective that acknowledges the large debts of Hebrew religion to the Ancient Near Eastern religions, while also recognizing the originality of the Hebrews.

An invisible God has certain practical advantages to a people in transit, in exile, or surrounded and besieged, as Israel was throughout biblical history. Associating the ban against images with the Hebrews' period of semi-nomadic wandering, Joseph Guttman writes, "The purpose of the law forbidding images seems to have been to assure loyalty to the invisible Yahweh and to keep the nomads from creating idols or adopting the idols of the many sedentary cultures with which they came in contact during their desert sojourn" (3). The second commandment liberates the Hebrews from the necessity of any material images or figures of God. The absolute transcendence of their God represents the freedom of Hebrew worship from the any particular sacred place or temple, and the whole material apparatus of a priestly religion such as the ancient Egyptian.[3] In comparison to other Near Eastern deities, the Hebrew God was "unlocalizable and alone; he had no original cult centers and no role in pantheons of syncretized deities" (Schneidau 134).

In ethical terms, therefore, monotheism is clearly functional for the Hebrew people, but how does it affect the relations to neighboring states? One might argue that the claim to one God and one God only is totalizing and conflictual, contributing to the holy wars which continue to this day. Monotheism, after all, is quite different from henotheism (i.e., "belief in or worship of one god without denying the existence of others"),[4] from which it may have developed. But the Jews were never in a position to enforce conformity to their religion. Hebrew religion developed as the religion of a minority struggling primarily for survival. Judaism has never been an imperial, evangelical, or universal religion, but rather the religion of a particular people who suffered enslavement and exile by their more powerful neighbors. The totalizing claims of Hebrew monotheism are not imperial but rather limited and interpretive, a way of understanding their situation in a hostile world. Erich Auerbach helps us to understand both the totalizing nature of Hebrew monotheism and its hermeneutic function: In his essay comparing Homer with Genesis, he remarks, "The Bible's claim to truth is not only far more urgent than Homer's, it is tyrannical—it excludes all other claims" (14). The enigmatic Genesis stories subtly imply an awesome and powerful spiritual reality that encompasses all of human history and every known culture. The Bible implicitly demands that all

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[3] See also Albright on Yahweh's freedom from "any special abode" (262).

[4] Webster's *New World College Dictionary*, Fourth Edition (1999).

other traditions be understood in its light. However, the so-called tyranny of the Bible is a hermeneutic principle, not a political one. The obscurity of the biblical text, as Auerbach explains, is primarily a "call for interpretation" (11). The biblical stories

> are fraught with "background" and mysterious, containing a second, concealed meaning. In the story of Isaac, it is not only God's intervention at the beginning and the end, but even the factual and psychological elements that come between, that are mysterious, merely touched upon, fraught with background; and therefore they require subtle investigation and interpretation, they demand them. Since so much in the story is dark and incomplete, and since the reader knows that God is a hidden God, his effort to interpret it constantly finds something new to feed upon. (15)

The Bible, then, demands active engagement, which is far different from the tyrannical demand for blind obedience. For a small and threatened group such as the ancient Hebrews, active engagement is the most effective and powerful form of cultural and political allegiance. The Bible's "totalizing" claim upon the individual is primarily internal to the culture as a function of the ancient Hebrew's struggle for survival in a hostile world; Hebrew monotheism in the Bible and its iconoclastic imperatives, therefore, were not a threat to neighboring states.

In the Biblical period, the Jews could not rely on having control of any particular place or set of physical objects. Their existence was precarious, and the ban on images helped them to survive when all material forms were subject to conquest or control. Therefore we can see the ban on images as first of all a survival strategy for the Hebrew people and their cultural identity.

II. The ban on images and priestly religion

The ban on images also had profound consequences for the internal political organization of Hebrew society. Material images or figures of the gods are more subject to institutional or political control. The second commandment tends in general to erode a priestly hierarchy and its institutional monopoly of the sacred-profane distinction. A God who cannot be represented is harder to pin down to specific ritual practices and taboos. The absence of images undermines the attempt to differentiate between sacred and profane. The "hidden God" of Isaiah is everywhere and no-

where, and in the prophetic tradition he demands radical moral reciprocity rather than sacrificial expulsion. In Hosea, God declares, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (6.6). Instead of "vain oblations," the priestly ceremonies of "new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies,...even the solemn meeting" (Isaiah 1.13), God demands "Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1.17). God's unfigurable nature thus questions the very distinction between sacred and profane, redefining it in ethical terms that require personal application and subjective interpretation. The second commandment facilitates a turn to less-sacrificial and more reciprocal forms of religious practice.

The Old Testament records a strong and distinctive prophetic tradition that generally opposed itself to priestly religion. The prophet is usually represented as an individual in direct communication with God independent of the traditional religious hierarchy. The prophets in the Old Testament were the leading voices against idolatry, foreign gods, and sacrificial forms of religious worship. They advocated more internal, ethical, and formally flexible worship practices in place of mechanical sacrifices and rigid forms. The strong strain of anti-institutionalism in the Old Testament has its foundation in the second commandment. When understood in these terms, the progressive, modernizing influence of the second commandment becomes obvious.

On the other hand, iconoclasm has been used by repressive, regressive political groups; the Taliban is an obvious recent example. The difference, I think, is that in such groups the absolute transcendence of God is appropriated by a priestly caste for the purpose of legitimizing violence and oppression, whereas Old Testament iconoclasm granted identity and independence to its adherents. Iconoclasm, then, is ultimately rhetorical in nature and may be used for different purposes. We should avoid essentializing iconoclasm. To clarify, my claim is not that the second commandment is inherently modernizing, but rather that it has historically functioned in this way for Western culture.

The ban on images tends to undermine centralizing, hierarchical, sacrificial forms of government in the Old Testament. The rational, internalized moral restraint advocated by the prophets helps make possible more freedom from rigid laws. In place of the spectacular image, the Jews emphasized the word, which is more democratic because it is more easily reproduced and exchanged, less subject to institutional control. Images of

god lend themselves to public ceremonies and rituals, while the word (a concept or idea) is less accessible to the desiring imagination; it encourages the sublimation of desire rather than its immediate and violent satisfaction.

III. Anthropological implications of the ban on images

Divine images or figures are always in danger of becoming fetishes, while the word encourages dialogue or conversation, which is the opposite of sacrificial hierarchy. Alain Besançon has argued recently that the Jews forbade images not because God was so absolutely other and transcendent, but because he was so familiar. He writes:

> Biblical iconophobia is not philosophical....It is not by virtue of his nature that God is unrepresentable, but by virtue of the relationship he intends to maintain with his people. It is not because of the impersonality of the divine, but, on the contrary, because of his relation as one person to another or as one person to his people. It is God's plans for his people—impenetrable plans—that justify the prohibition. (70)

Of course, the Hebrew's "iconophobia" does not result in a complete absence of images and signs. Many critics have observed that the Jews were certainly not without art; the Bible is rich with poetry, verbal images, and the artistic apparatus that accompanied the Tabernacle, the Ark, and the Temple. In addition, in the Old Testament God manifests himself through visible signs such as the pillars of smoke and fire in Exodus. But, as Besançon comments:

> There is a striking contrast between the overwhelming and imprecise majesty of theophanies and the unequivocal familiarity of the word. Visible signs are rare: they generally precede and anticipate words. At the sign of them, the prophet prepares to listen. Discussions with God fill the lives of Abraham, Moses and the prophets. God is endlessly consulted and endlessly replies. (71)

In Besançon's analysis, the ban on images results precisely from God's intimate familiarity with his chosen people. He writes, "Judaism always seems on the brink of Incarnation. That is why the Jewish people need the commandments from their God, to resist the temptation to make an image of him or to imagine him" (78). The Hebrews' intimacy with their God is

demonstrated by the intimacy of the spoken word and in the realization of God's plan for the Hebrews in present history, not a far-distant mythic past. God is present in human history and therefore stands closer to human needs and concerns.

Besançon suggests the centrality of public dialogue or conversation as a central feature in the political development of the West, a development that reaches full fruition only during modern times, but that is rooted nonetheless in the Old Testament ban on images. Dialogue or conversation, the free and equal exchange of words, is the opposite of an arbitrary and therefore sacrificial political hierarchy that requires only blind obedience on the part of its subjects, not informed participation. The dialogic, intimate, word-based relationship between God and the Jews leads ultimately to more dialogic forms of human community.

In his book *Science and Faith: The Anthropology of Revelation*, Eric Gans argues that the unfigurability of God as formalized by the second commandment is already implied by the revelation of God's name to Moses at the burning bush, the original Mosaic revelation. When Moses asks God for His name as a means of mobilizing the Hebrew people, God says simply, "I AM THAT I AM" (Exod. 3.14). The very name of God signifies his transcendence of all forms of representation. The attempt to gloss YAHWEH results only in the tautology above. "Gershom Scholem notes that the name God gave himself, the tetragrammaton, gradually slipped away from the human voice. The high priest pronounced it once a year in the Holy of Holies, on Yom Kippur. After the temple was destroyed, it became unpronounceable" (Besançon 75). The bare name of God seems to resist all attempts at interpretation, and in this respect the original Mosaic revelation at the burning bush is more radical than the giving of the law at Sinai. In Gans's reading the Mosaic revelation represents an anthropological insight into the ethical function of language, an insight that far exceeds the simple rejection of pagan religion. He writes, "The solution of the Exodus is not merely a means for preserving national identity; it provides the ethical principle that will eventually permit the emergence of modern social systems. The hierarchical order of society is not abandoned, but it is clearly subordinated to the egalitarian morality of the originary scene" (60), referring to the origin of language itself as a scenic event.

The significance of God's name cannot be limited by any particular signifier because the meaning of God in anthropological terms is fundamentally ethical, that is, interpersonal and situational. It is only by means

of language that human society is able to exist. The fact that God's name exists at all is ultimately more important than any of the particular forms of representing Him, verbal or visual. The second commandment is meant to guard this radical anthropological insight, although the stress is placed on the visual image rather than representation as such. But the fact that the very name of God is problematic in the original burning-bush revelation suggests that representation itself is at stake here, not simply visual as opposed to verbal representations, although that distinction is important.

The relationship of the word to the image is roughly analogous to the relationship of signs to things. As Gans writes, "The sign is an economical substitute for its inaccessible referent. Things are scarce and consequently objects of potential contention; signs are abundant because they can be reproduced at will" (*Originary Thinking* 9). Similarly, words can be more easily reproduced and exchanged than material images, but this is a relative not an absolute distinction. For Gans, the Mosaic revelation suggests

> the more general truth that the presence of the scenic center [of representation] is independent of all place and of all figure, that it is the sole presence before which man exists as man, but that for as long as he remains a member of mankind—for as long as he accepts his ethical responsibility to the community, for as long as he continues to say "here I am"—this presence will not abandon him. (*Science and Faith* 62)

The God who refuses to be confined to any particular representation makes himself inaccessible to the desiring imagination, but, by the same token, he becomes more accessible as the unfigurable scene of representation itself. The sacred is liberated from the ritual center where it was subject to priestly control, and now becomes potentially universal. In modern times the sacred becomes in Pascal's phrase "an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere" (147).

The second commandment liberates the sacred from the ritual center, the scene of sacrifice. God may be found anywhere and everywhere, and this movement leads ultimately to secularization, because if the sacred is everywhere, it is also, potentially, nowhere.[5] When the ritual scene of sacrifice is evacuated of any image, humans are confronted, essentially,

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[5] On the connection between iconoclasm and secularization, see Richard H. Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (52-3).

with themselves. Limiting God to a particular form or forms tends to support the power of those who are authorized to define those forms, usually a priest or divine ruler. But the God who cannot be defined, or limited by any particular form, is more democratic and potentially accessible to all. Iconoclasm thus facilitates the modern turn away from a rigid, sacrificial, cosmic hierarchy towards democracy.

IV. Christian iconoclasm

Iconoclasm in the New Testament differs from the Old Testament in important ways, yet I emphasize its continuity as a logical development of the Jewish tradition. The Christian concept of the Incarnation includes representation as well as embodiment. Therefore, the Incarnation of Christ, considered as a physical representation of God, seems fundamentally at odds with the second commandment. We should remember, however, that beginning with Paul in the New Testament the central symbol of Christianity has been the crucified Christ, an image representing a literal act of iconoclasm, a destruction of the image of God that ultimately reveals Christ's divinity in the Resurrection.

In Girardian terms, the physical embodiment and subsequent destruction of God are necessary in order to further develop the ethical insights of the Hebrew prophets. The prophets clearly foreshadowed the Christian message of radical moral reciprocity, but only the Christian revelation fully demystifies the human violence that hides beneath the sacred. Christ was abandoned by everyone on the eve of the crucifixion, and everyone therefore shares in the guilt for his death. There are no supernatural agents for violence in the Passion story. Furthermore, the Christian message is universal: salvation is open to all regardless of ethnicity. The evangelical imperative of Christianity necessitates a different articulation of the second commandment ban on images. Indeed, images might well be necessary when the primary imperative is evangelical. Through the image of the crucified Christ, the anti-institutional, egalitarian message of the prophets becomes accessible to all humankind. Of course, the Gospel message is also spread by the preaching of the word, not simply by images or spectacular rituals—a fact that suggests the continuing importance of iconoclasm (as traditionally articulated in the second commandment) in the history of Christianity.

The image of the crucified Christ is a peculiar kind of image, in several ways. Like the Old Testament stories, it requires interpretation. We are

presented with the image of an executed criminal, but the interpretation required is the simple yet profound realization that this is God. Interpretation here is not the rational process of logical deduction, but rather the blinding insight of Paul on the road to Damascus, a personal revelation that is potentially accessible to all. The Cross is essentially dialogic, in that its meaning can be realized only by a profound transformation of the viewer or hearer. The Crucifixion is a dynamic image that enacts the process of iconoclasm, both literally and in the audience. Our previous conceptions of God are destroyed by the Incarnation itself, and our desire for sacrifice is crucified by the brutal revelation of what sacrifice really means. But the crucifixion of desire then enables the resurrection of divine love. Thus, Christian iconoclasm sets up a new relationship to the image that is defined by process, not passive spectator-ship. The meaning of the crucified Christ is realized in the conversion of the spectator.

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THE PLACE OF RENÉ GIRARD IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

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I would like to start by quoting a text which is likely to be recognized by everyone, who is even on a superficial level familiar with the work of René Girard:

> Desire that bears on a natural object is only human to the extent that it is mediated by the desire of another bearing on the same object: it is human to desire what others desire, because they desire it. Thus an object that is perfectly useless from a biological point of view (such as a medal, or the enemy's flag) can be desired because it is the object of other desires. Such a human desire, and human reality as it differs from animal reality, is only created by the action that satisfies such desires. Human history is the history of desires that are desired [Désirs désirés].

Undoubtedly, these could be words written by Girard. However, they are not. These words are quoted from the famous lectures given by Alexandre Kojève on Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* at the Ecole pratique des hautes études between 1933 and 1939. They were followed by what would become the crème of post-war French philosophy: Raymond Aron, Georges Bataille, Alexandre Koyré, Pierre Klossowski, Jacques Lacan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre.[1] Kojève's interpretation of Hegel has, as generally known, become the point of reference to the post-war twentieth

[1] Although Sartre himself could not attend the lectures (at that time he taught philosophy in Le Havre en Laon), he must have heard from it by way of Aron or Merleau-Ponty.

century philosophy in France. Before 1930 the word "dialectic" was burdened with an odium of sin, after 1930 it became a word—thanks to Kojève —radiant with prestige. Before 1930 there had been no talk of an Hegelian school whatsoever in France, after 1930 the situation changed so drastically that Merleau-Ponty was able to write these often quoted lines in 1946:

> Hegel is at the origin of everything that has been great in philosophy for over a century; for example Marxism, Nietzsche, phenomenology and German existentialism, psychoanalysis. He inaugurates the attempt to explore the irrational and to integrate it within a wider rationality that remains the philosophical task of our century. (*Sens et non-sens* 109-110)

Half a century later, these words have lost their self-evident character. While the generation of French thinkers between 1930 and 1960 stresses its dependence on Hegel, the generation after 1960 heavily reacts against him. In 1970 Michel Foucault gave his inaugural speech at the Collège de France. On behalf of his generation he testified to a generalized anti-Hegelianism at that moment: "Our entire epoch, whether through logic or epistemology, whether through Marx or Nietzsche, seeks to evade Hegel's imperium [échapper à Hegel] (*L'Ordre du discours* 74). Obviously, René Girard belongs to the second generation, which, on the one hand, embroiders on the theme of desire, borrowed from Kojève's interpretation of Hegel, but, on the other, in its search for answers precisely wishes to get rid of Hegel.

But, is it correct to call René Girard a philosopher? His schooling was that of an historian. In 1947 he graduated in Paris as an archiviste-paléographe at the Ecole de Chartres: his thesis was "La vie privée à Avignon dans la seconde moitié du XVe siècle." Three years later—in the meantime he had emigrated to the United States—he received his Ph.D. at the faculty of history of the University of Indiana. The topic of his dissertation was "American opinion of France, 1940-1943." However, he has never worked as a professional historian. He owes his reputation first and foremost to his literary analyses, subsequently to his research in anthropology, finally to his exegesis of the Bible. Time and again, Girard has expressed his preference for literature to both humanities and philosophy. Human behavior is, in his view, much less elucidated by the conceptual structures of discursive philosophy than by the evocative force of a Greek tragedy, the Biblical passion story or a modern novel. One might retort that

Girard, with this preference, is in tune with current philosophy: such leading and less controversial philosophers as Martha Nussbaum, Richard Rorty, Charles Taylor and Jacques Derrida emphasize the importance of literary study for philosophical reflection as well.

However, if we wish to label Girard as a contemporary philosopher, we are in need of stronger arguments. There should be at least a thematic resemblance with other thinkers. That does not seem to be, at a first glance, the case. Precisely in an era in which "the great stories" are deconstructed and every endeavor to form a comprehensive theory is stigmatized as "violent" in advance, René Girard turns up with both a comprehensive theory in which the most diverse phenomena are reduced to the same denominator and in which we find an undisguised apology of the deep inspiration of Christianity. Precisely because of this contrast with "postmodern" intellectual fashion Girard has been taken hardly notice of in the philosophical "inner circles," especially in the phrase-making Paris salons.[2]

In this presentation my intention is to show that Girard (also as an anthropologist and as an expert in the study of literature) positively deals with themes which are prominent in current philosophy. I would like to elaborate this presentation in two steps. First, I refer to the thematic congeniality between Girard's thought and that of other French "postmodern" thinkers, paying special attention to the seminal theme of "difference" and more specifically to the resemblances and the differences between Girard and Derrida. That difference has to do with both their interpretations of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's writings on the one hand and of the Christian concept of God on the other. In this respect, I also go into the relation between Gianni Vattimo and Girard. Then, I leave the stage of continental philosophy in order to find traces of resemblances in the Anglo-Saxon philosophical landscape as well. Here I would like to dwell on some seminal ideas in the work of Charles Taylor and in process-philosophy of A.N.Whitehead.

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[2] The lack of attention to Girard in recent philosophical surveys testifies to his isolated position in current philosophy. See for instance Alan D.Schrift, *Nietzsche's French Legacy. A Genealogy of Poststructuralism*, in which Girard does not occur at all, not even in the fifth chapter, *Why the French are no longer Nietzscheans*, in which among others we find references to the new class of French anti-Nietzscheans: Ferry, Renaut, Descombes. The exception to this inattention to Girard is Michel Serres.

1. The place of Girard in continental philosophy

Let us go back to the text of Alexandre Kojève, who does not read Hegel's dialectical logic in an abstract speculative way, but as an existential drama. In other words, he sees the Hegelian dialectic much more in an anthropological than in an ontological perspective. In this dramatic history of human kind Kojève assigns a central role to the master-slave dialectic. For human desire is different from animal desire in this sense that it never refers directly to a real object, but always to the desire of another subject. Only then does a desire become conscious of itself, when it is directed towards the desire of another. For Kojève, interhuman relationships bear in themselves in principle always the danger of conflict: they are a life and death struggle.

This anthropological reading of Hegelian dialectic has, as already mentioned, had an enormous influence on post-war French philosophy. Girard must be credited for having coined a new expression for this anthropological structure: *désir triangulaire*. However, the view on inter-human relationships hiding beneath this word—desire always desires the desire of the other, also when it seems, at a first glance, to refer to a specific object—recurs in so many of his French contemporaries: Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan....

1.1. Girard and the thought of difference

Precisely because Girard shares the same anthropological point of departure as Kojève (and Hegel), his criticism strikes at the heart of Hegelian anthropology. While Hegel's (and Kojève's) thought is structured according to the figure of *identity*, Girard makes use, as an anthropological paradigm, of the figure of *difference*. As such, he is undoubtedly a typical contemporary thinker. Let me explain this a bit more into detail.

For Hegel-Kojève the dialectic between master and slave is a stage in the journey to a final identity, a harmonious unity. For Girard, however, the figure of dialectical *Aufhebung* has lost all its magical force:

> The scandal should be recognized rather than rejected. But this does not mean that we must embrace the scandal in the manner of religious or philosophical thought. There can be no question of returning to mystical formulations or their philosophical counterparts, such as the "coincidentia oppositorum," the magical power of the negative, and the value of Dionysus. There can be no question of returning to Hegel or Nietzsche. (*Des Choses cachées* 71)

For Girard, culture always arises from a mimetic crisis. There is the continuing threat of disorder in which the borders between "I" en "you" are fading, in which "I" become "you" by absorbing "you" (for that is what "I" want in my desire) but simultaneously stops to be "I." This situation of chaos, in which people in order to be different from each other shed all differences, is both the origin of civilization and the continuing threat of its end. This process of violent *indifférenciation* is hanging over men's heads as the sword of Damocles. To escape from this "indifference," premodern cultures are invariably backsliding into the scapegoat mechanism, while modern Western culture creates a sophisticated "symbolic order" in which things get specific sign values.[3] Hence, "culture" is always—in any form whatsoever—the endeavor of human beings to avoid backsliding into this original violence. But, this endeavor itself remains extremely ambiguous. Being human implies the unbearableness of *différence*, but remaining a human being implies precisely reinstating the *différence* between different subjects. In this way, the concept of difference plays a key role in Girard's philosophy of culture. It is, as it were, a perpetuum mobile: "Differences seem to have vanished, only to reappear in inverted form, thereby perpetuating themselves" (*La Violence et le sacré* 279). Hence, it must be obvious that Girard belongs to the generation of French thinkers who put a negative sign before Kojève's interpretation of Hegel. While Kojève still succeeds, by means of his interpretation of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, to attain identity, Girard unmasks, together with figures like Sartre, and Lacan, the violent aspects of such a philosophy of identity and places value on difference. In fact, Girard is a typical postmodern author, who, by undermining the modern ideal of autonomy and by putting into relief human vulnerability and finitude, distances himself from a philosophy of subjectivity. Hence, the telling title of the first part of his first book: *Mensonge romantique*. It is the lie of human autonomy, shared by the great thinkers of both Enlightenment and Romanticism.

Like members of his French generation, Girard is no longer sensitive to the magic of negation: what Hegel-Kojève calls *Aufhebung*, he circumscribes as *exclusion*. How to subsist within difference? That is the central

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[3] Here one must situate the congeniality between Jean Baudrillard's and René Girard's thinking.

question Girard shares with his compatriots, Michel Foucault[4] and Jacques Derrida. Because Girard explicitly refers to Derrida in his two principal works, I dwell here on a comparison between both authors.

1.1.1. Girard and Derrida

It was during his tenure as chairman of Romance languages at John Hopkins University that René Girard organized in October 1966 an international colloquium "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" which was to be important for the emergence of critical theory in America. Participants included Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Jean Hyppolite, Jacques Lacan, Tsvetan Todorov and Jean-Pierre Vernant. It was at this symposium that Derrida gave his widely read and cited paper "La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines." In that period, Girard felt strongly congenial to Derrida, a feeling that was even reinforced by the publication of Derrida's subsequent essay, "La pharmacie de Platon."

In *La violence et le sacré* Girard highly praises this essay, in which Derrida analyses Plato's passionate argumentation against writing in the *Phaedrus*. Writing, meant as a remedy against forgetfulness, is in fact a poisoned medicine, an anaesthetizing agent, as Derrida paraphrases Plato's words. Both things are in Greek referred to by the same word: *pharmakon*. Plato rejects such a medicine; it is a form of "alienation" which provokes only misunderstanding. He prefers oral instruction of his theory to written representation.

In Derrida's view, however, there is more at stake. An ancient theory on the quintessence of thought and knowledge is hiding behind Plato's opposition to hand-writing. Philosophy has always interpreted real knowledge in the light of a *presence*: the thinker is present to his own thoughts, of which he has a complete overview, analogous to the words he speaks. Only when he writes them down, does he lose control. Girard is enthusiastic about Derrida's interpretation of the hand-writing as *pharmakon*:

> Derrida proves that translations of Place in modern languages manage to obliterate still further the final traces of the generative operation. For the translations destroy the unity of the term *pharmakon*; they use entirely different words to render

[4] Among others Jean-Pierre Dupuy and Paul Dumouchel have pointed out the resemblance between the function of internal mediation in Girard and the efficacy of normalization in Foucault.

> *pharmakon*-remedy and *pharmakon*-poison....We have to acknowledge in our own time a movement emerging in the opposite direction, a movement of exhumation, a revelation of violence and its dynamic of which Derrida's work constitutes an essential moment. (*La Violence et le sacré* 412)

In a later period, Girard will elaborate the *pharmakon* of Derrida's analysis of the process of hand-writing into the scapegoat mechanism, by putting its efficacy within history and the actual social context instead of limiting its function to language and intertextuality, as Derrida does. Hence, it may not surprise that six years later, in *Des Choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde*, Girard's tone is much more reserved:

> If you examine he pivotal terms in the finest analyses of Derrida, you will see that beyond the deconstruction of philosophical concepts, it is always a question of the paradoxes of the sacred, and although there is no question of deconstructing these they are all the more apparent to the reader.... This still partial deconstructions confounds our present philosophical and cultural crisis with a radical impotence of thought and language. One no longer believes in philosophy but one keeps rehearsing the same old philosophical texts. And yet beyond the current crisis there are possibilities of a rational but no longer philosophical knowledge of culture. Instead, deconstruction...risks degenerating into pure verbalism. And what the literary critics and academic disciples of deconstruction do not realize is that as soon as one seeks nothing but the essence of literature it disappears. If there is really "something" to Derrida, it is because there is something beyond: precisely a deconstruction that reaches the mechanisms of the sacred but which hesitates to come to terms with the surrogate victim. (*Des Choses cachées* 72)

Andrew McKenna has summarized the difference between Girard and Derrida in a nutshell: "Whereas Girard advances a theory of violence, Derrida is concerned with the violence of theory."[5] Derrida limits the *pharmakon*'s ambiguity to the level of textuality; Girard finds this interpretation interesting, but finally academic and without commitment. In his view, the force of expulsion does not only situate itself on a textual level,

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[5] See the excellent study by Andrew J. McKenna, *Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida, and Deconstruction.*

but refers mainly to a "real" expulsion. Girard's theory sees behind the ambiguity of the *pharmakon* the working of a scapegoat mechanism as the foundation of human culture, which ultimately has to be unmasked.

Apart from a different view of the relation between language and reality and a different interpretation of the "pharmakon," both authors give a completely different interpretation of the concept of "transcendence" as well. Unlike Derrida, Girard adheres to Christianity. However, here also the starting-point is identical. Parallel to the undermining of a philosophy of subjectivity, there is also in Girard's work a deconstruction of the violent aspects in the tradition of Western metaphysics and in the image of God with which it is closely related. Whenever he refers to philosophers in this respect, they are precisely Nietzsche and Heidegger (and the structuralists in their line). His relation to both of them is a relation of both love and hate (as with Sigmund Freud). He shares their starting-points, but opposes their conclusions. In order to make this clear, I have to distinguish between the metaphysical and the religious analyses of both authors.

1.2. Difference and transcendence: Girard and philosophy of religion

Girard follows Nietzsche and especially Heidegger in their analyses of the "violent" aspects in classical metaphysics. For Heidegger, metaphysics does not give access to real transcendence, to Being itself. It suffers from *Seinsvergessenheit*, arising from a neglect of the *Ontologische Differenz*. That which is different becomes identical, the other becomes the same. Hence, Western metaphysics is at its violent zenith in technology: there is no room any longer for Being itself.

However, with respect to both authors' concept of God Girard utters time and again his reservations. Here, I confine myself to two telling examples. One: in *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde* Girard rejects Heidegger's interpretation of the relation between the logos in Heraclitus and St. John in his *Einführung in die Metaphysik*. Two: in his lecture for the Cérisy-la-Salle colloquium around his own work, Girard himself gave a penetrating interpretation of par.125 ("Der tolle Mensch") from *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in which he not only rejects Heidegger's famous interpretation of this paragraph; on top of that, he underscores the sharp contrast between the Nietzschean concept of god and that of Christianity.

What is the quintessence of Girard's criticism? He follows Heidegger in his distance from the thought of identity and in his emphasis on ontological difference. But he vehemently rejects Heidegger's interpretation of

difference. Girard intends to show that Heidegger's "sacred being" is nothing but the product of interhuman violence: Heidegger's difference is in fact born out of violence itself. The fact that Heidegger, in speaking about Being, praises the myth of Dionysus, is for Girard significant. In his dialogue with Nietzsche and Heidegger Girard time and again emphasizes the contrast between Dionysus and the crucified, putting in relief the uniqueness of the Christian concept of God. Precisely by stressing the uniqueness of a God, who unmasks violence, and by rejecting the pre(post)modern view on Dionysian sacrality, Girard is strongly isolated amidst current French thought.

1.2.1. Dionysus and deconstruction

Of course, the influence of Dionysus on the later Nietzsche is well known. The name of this god is probably the last word Nietzsche has written down. Influenced by Nietzsche, current French philosophy has given a central role to the Dionysian as well. Undoubtedly, this is the case for Georges Bataille. Bataille considers Dionysus as the god of transgression and celebration, ecstasy and madness, eroticism and dissipation. He calls his philosophy a *heterology*, a kind of "theology" without god, making room for the other. The other is the sacred, appearing in a sacrifice which is sheer dissipation or wastefulness. For Bataille, there is no sacrifice as a consequence of the sacred, but the sacrifice itself (*sacrificium*) makes it possible for the sacred to appear (*sacrum facere*).

Michel Foucault, the author of the preface to Bataille's *Oeuvres complètes*, points to the congeniality between Bataille's concept of transgression and Heidegger's concept of transcendence or between the heterology and the thought of difference. Also for Heidegger there is a contrast between the god of metaphysics and the god for whom we can dance and sacrifice, make music and kneel down, and also for Heidegger the sacred is primarily something disturbing and appalling. What Heidegger states about sacrifice, is indeed congenial to Bataille's views. In his Afterword to *Was ist Metaphysik?* Heidegger refers to the courage to cope with the experience of fear, which makes possible the experience of being. The openness to being, in its distinction from concrete beings, can take shape in sacrifice. In other words, sacrifice is the place where Being itself can appear and Dionysus is preeminently the god who embodies this appearance.

For Girard, Dionysus is not at all the embodiment of the merry carelessness but, on the contrary, the archetype of furious violence, of chaos

threatening man and society. Precisely here we find the ethical-religious gap between Girard on the one hand and Heidegger, Nietzsche and French deconstructionism on the other. Heidegger is, in line of Nietzsche, not only the thinker who unmasks violence in its sacred dimension, but worships it as well.[6] Girard is insistent on the sharp opposition between the Christian God and the archaic sacred. Behind the sacred transcendence of violence is hiding the transcendence of love, which manifests itself preeminently in the figure of Jesus Christ. In this sense Girard's thought is rather congenial to that of the representatives of the new generation of French thinkers, who explicitly call themselves anti-Nietzscheans without, however, pleading for a return to Christianity: Luc Ferry, Vincent Descombes, Alain Renaut.[7]

Instead of going into all these authors, I dwell for a moment on the relation between the thought of Girard and Gianni Vattimo. I do that because the Italian philosopher does not only base his "weak thinking" upon his interpretation of Heidegger and Nietzsche, but also positively admits, in his essay *Belief*, to be inspired by Girard.

1.2.2.Girard and Vattimo

Vattimo interprets Heidegger's philosophy of being in terms of an "ontology of weakening." Subsequently he connects this "weak ontology" to the influence of his Christian heritage, which took concrete shape in his encounter with the work of René Girard. In 1983 he wrote a review of *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde*. In *Belief*, moreover, he refers to *La violence et le sacré*, in which Girard shows the intimate connection

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[6] See Girard, *La route antique des hommes pervers*: "This is Heidegger's profound and violent meaning when he speaks of the *shepherd of being*. The latter, for some reason, has always made me think of the wolf in disguise of the well known fable. Beneath the pure white coat of the sacrificial lamb, one black paw is showing" (221).

[7] In this respect it is interesting to note that Luc Ferry in *L'homme-Dieu ou le sens de la vie* makes use of the same terminology as René Girard in *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*. Ferry also refers to a transition from "la transcendence verticale" to "la transcendence horizontale." Ferry, however, is much more positive about this transition than Girard. From a completely different point of view, one can refer to the congeniality (resemblances and differences) between Girard's interpretation of Christianity and Gauchet's view of it as "the religion of the exit from religion." See for a critical analysis of Gauchet's view, see Charles Taylor, "Foreword" to M. Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World. A Political History of Religion* (ix-xv). It goes without saying that the relation between Girard and Levinas and between Girard and Marion is a topic that has been completely neglected in French philosophical thought. For a reference to the relation between these three authors, see James G.Williams, ed., *The Girard Reader* (282-283).

between the religious-sacred on the one hand, and violence on the other, and subsequently interprets Christianity as the exposure of sacrificial religion.

In order to follow the route of a nihilistic recovery of Christianity, Vattimo, as he states himself, seeks to go beyond Girard. This he does by seeing in the attributes that Girard ascribes to the violent-sacred deity, especially those of omnipotence, absoluteness, eternity and transcendence, the same properties that classical metaphysics attributed to the Christian God, the *ipsum esse subsistens*. From a philosophical point of view, the Heideggerian undoing or "weakening" of classical metaphysics signifies the end of this picture of God, the death of God of which Nietzsche spoke. Thus this "weak ontology" finds a connection with the central idea of Christianity, more specifically the humanization of lowering of God to the level of humanity, which the New Testament calls *kenosis*. Due to the impact of classical metaphysics, this central idea could never come into its own. Post-metaphysical thinking, however, made new room for a secularized interpretation of Christianity—according to Vattimo the only interpretation that does justice to Christianity's real inspiration.

At first glance, going in the direction of Nietzsche and Heidegger boils down to going *against* Girard's direction. For Girard, Nietzsche should be honored as an antagonist, not as a secret fellow traveler for forms of religious reverence he himself so vehemently repudiated. Hence, the question is: how to reconcile Girard's emphasis on God's transcendence and the quintessence of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's criticism of this aspect of Christianity. I will not go into this question here. Over two days, we have the opportunity to listen to Gianni Vattimo himself.

2. Girard and Anglosaxon philosophy

Of course, there is also a story to tell about Girard and Anglo-Saxon philosophy. Over forty years he has been working at American universities. Dealing with literary and anthropological studies he can not be directly situated in the common philosophical-academic circles, especially not in the circuit of analytic philosophy. That does not diminish the fact that there is a strong congeniality between central themes in Girard's thought and specific leading themes in current Anglo-Saxon philosophy.

2.1. Girard and communitarism

The idea that we (both in private and in public sphere) are formed by the recognition of others is an idea which René Girard shares with so-called communitarians. Both liberals and communitarians deal with the same question: how does human identity take shape? In a liberal's view, the individual's self-realization has been trammeled for centuries by cultural and religious values, rules and prohibitions. It is only as of the Enlightenment that the human subject proclaims the right to define his own identity in an autonomous way.

In a communitarian view, this liberal view undervalues the complex relation between the individual and society. The meaningfulness of a society is in their eyes not determined by the importance given by an individual to shared values. In fact, the process is in a reverse order: society is constitutive of an individual's identity. An individual finds its identity by addressing the values whose meaning is (partly) transcendent.

The most famous name which is associated with to the communitarians—rightly or not—is that of Charles Taylor. For Taylor, Enlightenment is governed by what he calls the "monological ideal:" modern man thinks he can define his identity by himself, in an autonomous way. However, he then forgets that identity only arises in interaction (sometimes in confrontation) with what George Herbert Mead called "significant others." Hence, the development of human identity is never monological, but always dialogical. The resemblance with Girard's interdividual psychology is more than obvious.

2.1.1. Girard and Taylor

Not only the problems they deal with but even the answers they give to their questions show such an affinity that for those who are familiar with both their writings a comparison fairly imposes itself. I intend, by way of introduction, to mention four points. First, both unmask the modern belief in a completely autonomous, self-sufficient subject. Secondly, both situate themselves explicitly in a post-Hegelian tradition. As already pointed out, Girard is a representative of French philosophy which starts from Kojève's interpretation of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. It is generally known that Taylor is a Hegel specialist and that the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*—and the problem of recognition—plays a central role in his

philosophy.[8] Thirdly, Taylor refers in the last part of *Sources of the Self* to a literary canon (Flaubert, Proust, Dostoevski) which strongly resembles that of Girard in *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*. Finally, both authors refer to the central role which Christianity can play in modern western culture.

Precisely these resemblances accentuate the differences, especially if we look at the relation between both authors from a specific point of view: how does modern western subject look for recognition? Taylor's position is more differentiated with regard to the function of the modern concept of autonomy and his expression of the specificity of Christian inspiration is, in comparison to Girard, extremely tentative and suggestive. Hence, it is no coincidence that Girard connects the origin of modern subject with an "ontological void," while Taylor tries to articulate its "moral ontology." Girard focuses on what has been lost in the constitution of modern subject; Taylor does not undervalue such a loss, but is precisely in search for an articulation of moral sources which have constituted modern subject in order to *compensate for* this loss.

That is also the reason why Taylor can characterize his magnum opus, *Sources of the Self*, as an "essay in retrieval;" precisely in this endeavor he is complementary to Girard. As a consequence, Taylor does not only emphasize the "misère" but also the "splendeur" of modernity: by articulating the substantial ideal of authenticity he tries to amend the modern, formal right of self-determination. However, nowhere does he reject this formal right of self-determination.

Although Taylor has never disguised his being catholic, this religious inspiration has always remained rather implicit. In January of 1996 he gave a lecture at the university of Dayton, where he tried to formulate an answer to the question what it might mean to be a catholic today. In other words, Taylor went explicitly into an issue that had been implicitly at the center of his concern for decades: the relation between his Christian commitment and his philosophical reflection on modern western culture.[9] It is in this respect not unimportant that he refers to Girard's work, as far as I know for the very first time. The context in which this occurs is an analysis of an apparently

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[8] Taylor published two books on Hegel, a voluminous scientific study in 1975, *Hegel*, followed four years later by a more vulgarized compendium, *Hegel and Modern Society*.

[9] Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?* Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture. With responses by William M. Shea, Rosemary Luling Haughton, George Marsden, Jean Bethke Elshtain. Edited and with an Introduction by James L.Heft, S.M.

strong affinity between religion and violence and, as a consequence, of the problem how to remain religious without falling into violence:

> What it might mean, however, is that the only way to escape fully the draw toward violence lies somewhere in the turn to transcendence—that is, through the full-hearted love of some good beyond life. A thesis of this kind has been put forward by René Girard, for whose work I have a great deal of sympathy, although I don't agree on the centrality he gives to the scapegoat phenomenon. (*A Catholic Modernity* 28-29).

2.2. Girard and process-philosophy

An analogous project to define the specificity of the Christian concept of God and to underline its value for our culture is found in another philosophical current of predominantly Anglo-Saxon origin, process-thought. At first sight, there is a great resemblance with the project of René Girard: process-thought situates itself somewhat in the margin of current, Anglo-Saxon thought and is often presented as a kind of system, aiming at the elucidation of a typically Christian concept of God in contrast with other religious concepts.

On the other hand, process-philosophy's line of approach, and in its wake process-theology, is completely different from Girard's. Alfred North Whitehead, its founder, deals with an analogous issue from a completely different angle. As a renowned logician and scientist, Whitehead looks for an elucidation of human experience and an explicitation of the Christian concept of God against the backdrop of new data in positive sciences (the theory of relativity, quantum mechanics, etc).

2.2.1. Girard and Whitehead

In his last book, Girard explicitly refers to Whitehead: "In 1926, A. N. Whitehead deplored our situation, in which 'Christianity lacks a clear-cut separation from the crude fancies of the older tribal religions'" (*Je vois Satan* 11-12). The book Girard is referring to is *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead's classic work in the field of philosophy of religion, a choice that cannot be a surprise from a Girardian perspective.

Not unlike Girard, Whitehead explicitly takes into account the Biblical tradition and puts the uniqueness of the Biblical concept of God into relief. Out of numerous possible passages that can be quoted in this respect, I choose the following one:

> In the great formative period of theistic philosophy, three strains of thought emerge which respectively fashion God in the image of an imperial ruler, God in the image of a personification of moral energy, God in the image of an ultimate philosophical principle....There is, however, in the Galilean origin of Christianity yet another suggestion which does not fit very well with any of the three main strands of thought. It does not emphasize the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover. It dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and it finds purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom. not of this world. Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved; also it is a little oblivious as to morals. It does not look to the future; for it finds its own reward in the immediate present. (*Process and Reality* 342-43)

3. Conclusion

With his emphasis on difference—a key word in his work—Girard undoubtedly has his place in contemporary philosophy. Actually, his thought is nourished by the question which you find as well in the thinking of Foucault and Derrida: "Comment se maintenir dans la différence?" A return to identity is out of question: the way of dialectic, leading from difference to identity, the path followed by modernity culminating in Hegel, is a dead end. Everybody seems to agree with that interpretation. But what about difference itself? And how is that to be interpreted?

For Girard, Heidegger's interpretation of (ontological) difference is to be rejected: Heidegger's "god-like God" is the god of violence, the god of expulsion. In opposition to this form of difference, Girard puts forward another interpretation, the affirmation of the transcendent-immanent God of Christianity. In this respect, Girard emphasizes the opposition between Greek and Christian logos, between violence that drives people out and the one who has been driven out by violence. Only in reference to the last, has one to do with a "différence réelle," a "différence essentielle." Heidegger's intuition of difference was correct, but he did not recognize its real shape. In order to do justice to the transcendence of this *différence*, we have to introduce a second transcendence: "the transcendence of love, which is invisible behind the violent transcendence which hides it from us."

Not unlike the majority of today's philosophers, Girard is sensitive to an always receding "difference." As such, his thinking is situated at the heart of current philosophical attention. But his interpretation of this dif-

ference is unlike the interpretation of most "leading" postmodern thinkers: always controversial, eccentric for some, but full of promise for many others.

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RENÉ GIRARD AND THE LEGACY OF ALEXANDRE KOJEVE

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In a recent COV&R Bulletin, William Mishler voices a consensus opinion regarding René Girard's system of thought, "that between Girard and philosophy an incommensurable gulf exists...for the simple reason that Girard's notion of truth is not philosophy's."[1] Mishler contends that, however interesting the parallels between Girard's formulations and those of Hegel, Kojeve, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, "The gulf is more pertinent to the tenor of Girard's thought than any influence." Without gainsaying Mishler's claim as it pertains to Girard's insights regarding the victimage mechanism and its centrality to community formation, I wish to argue nonetheless that Girard's relationship with the philosopher Alexander Kojeve is more extensive, more nuanced, and more pertinent to his mimetic theory than the "incommensurable gulf" assertion suggests.

Alexandre Kojeve's Parisian lectures given in the 1930s and published under the title, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, have been widely acknowledged for their influence upon the post-war intellectual milieu in France and for their contribution to the centrality of "Desire" as a theoretical topos. Commentary has credited Kojeve's reading of Hegel for its broad impact upon literature, philosophy, and the social sciences in figures such as Raymond Queneau, Georges Bataille, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Lacan, and to a lesser extent, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault. René Girard's work however, has received comparatively

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[1] No. 20, April 2002, p. 5. Mishler makes these remarks in response to Guido Vanheeswijck's paper regarding Girard relationship with philosophy at the 2001 COV&R annual conference in Antwerp.

little attention with respect to Kojeve and his sphere of influence.[2] This is no doubt a result of the fact that Girard's concern with the historical reality of the victimage mechanism has run counter to major trends within post–war French thought, which, as Eugene Webb has pointed out, have sought to absorb "contingent reality into an ideal world of meaning constituted by the inherently linguistic structure of the human mind" (158-59). Thus Girard's emphasis on the connection between theory and reality as the

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[2] *Ibid.* Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen makes an implicit connection in his Girardian/Hegelian reading of Freud in *The Freudian Subject*, and explicitly makes the case for it in a footnote to *Lacan: The Absolute Master*, where he remarks, "The numerous and troubling cross-references between the Girardian and Lacanian descriptions [of the relationship between violence and Desire] are in all likelihood explained by common roots in Kojeve's problematic. In this respect, one should read Girard's not altogether convincing declaration of anti-Hegelianism in *Deceit* (110-12), which, in reality, is only justified by the accentuation—extremely brilliant to be sure—of the specifically Kojevian theme of the 'desire of the desire of the other'" (254, n21). Borch-Jacobsen does not further elaborate the points of intersection however. Eugene Webb likewise sees an "obvious" connection between Girard and Kojeve in the latter's "'Master' who seeks to do combat with an implacable rival so as to establish his own value and that of his objects of desire," and more generally, in their shared focus upon the centrality of 'Human desire [as]...directed at the desire of another'" (116). Webb also mentions that Girard related to him in conversation that he had been reading Kojeve at the time he was writing *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, but that he "did not consider either Kojeve or Hegel to have made a contribution toward what he himself considers his major original insight, his theory...of the resolution of violence through its polarization on a single victim; both Hegel and Kojeve, he says, remained bound to the idea of a perpetual dialectic of violence" (116). Guido Vanheeswijck seconds Girard's remark by suggesting that Girard belongs to a "second generation" of French thinkers which "on the one hand, embroiders on the theme of desire, borrowed from Kojeve's Hegel-interpretation, but, on the other, in its search for answers precisely wishes to get rid of Hegel" ("The Place of Rene Girard in Contemporary Philosophy") (http://www.ufsia.ac.be/flw/nieuws/cov&r.html). While Vanheeswijck acknowledges that Girard follows Kojeve's anthropological point of departure from Hegel, he maintains that he differs fundamentally from Kojeve in structuring his thought according to the figure of difference rather than identity. That is, Girard rejects the Hegelian and Kojevian notion that the historical dialectic will resolve in a harmonious unity on the grounds that radical social homogeneity presents the conditions for unbridled mimetic rivalry, widespread violence, and the need for a sacrificial resolution that re-establishes the paradigm of difference. In the present essay, I do not dispute these differences that Girard insists upon, or their importance for understanding Girard's singular contribution to the interpretation of culture. I do wish to point out however, that these differences emerge primarily at later stages in the evolution of his thought. I wish to draw greater attention to the substantial areas of overlap between Girard and Kojeve in the early, foundational stages of the mimetic model's development, and suggest that Kojeve remains as much an important touchstone for understanding Girard's emerging thought even where it seeks to contradict Kojeve.

proper business of thought, and his use of this connection as the basis for a radical defense of Christianity have separated his work from the main currents of post-modern thought. Indeed, Girard himself has explicitly sought to distance his work from Hegel and the Kojevian school of Hegelianism.

This essay seeks to demonstrate that, these differences notwithstanding, Girard and Kojeve have more in common than has been remarked. Girard's preoccupation with the logic and vocabulary of desire, his concept of the subject, its historical development, and its prospects of achieving both self-awareness and harmonious social relations, puts his early thought squarely within Kojeve's orbit. I begin with a review of Kojeve's formulation of desire, before discussing the considerable degree of overlap with Girard's. For both, desire is constitutive of human subjectivity, operates concretely at the level of anthropology and psychology, is concerned with existential recognition, is socially mediated, and is ineluctably bound up with violence. The argument then turns to the emergence of Girard's break with Kojeve over the question of the subject's "romantic" delusions of self-sufficiency, which is a crucial postulate for Girard only. Here I argue that even as Girard's thought develops its own separate trajectory, it conserves a number of Kojevian tenets, and where it differs, it does so through an implicit dialogue with Kojeve's model, against which it seeks to define itself. In failing to recognize the presence of Kojeve in Girard's thought, we risk missing the subtlety and the full force of Girard's ultimate break with "philosophy."

I. Consciousness and desire: Kojeve's ontology of the human subject

Kojeve's distinctive reading of Hegel simultaneously embraces the distinct ontological models of Marx and Heidegger. Like Marx, he attributes to *finite* beings that which Hegel had reserved for absolute being, believing that an ongoing *human* struggle for power and mastery has been the motive force of history. Thus Kojeve follows the anthropological and humanistic turn that characterizes Feuerbach's and Marx's inversion of Hegel. In addition however, his conversion of Hegel's transcendent "Self-consciousness" into a specifically *human* consciousness borrows from Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*, or Being that perpetually transcends itself. Put Heidegger note here. The Kojevian subject enlists the Heideggerian paradox of "being toward death," in which true human subjectivity emerges only by its willingness to overcome the living, biological self. Like Heidegger, Kojeve distinguishes the human agent from every other sort of living

being by its capacity to transcend its own biological givenness by transforming the natural order. Consequently for Kojeve, the self is a finite being, though, paradoxically, it is not an objective entity or *thing* that, as Kojeve remarks, "is always identical to itself." The self is rather an *action* such that "the very being of this I will be becoming, and the universal form of this being will not be space but time" (5). Kojeve thus differs significantly from Hegel in adopting Heidegger's paradoxical ontology. Whereas Hegel's formulation is clearly monist in addressing one Being that separates the self from the self such that identity subsumes difference, Kojeve's dual ontology privileges the figure of difference over identity. In this regard, Kojeve is perfectly anti-Hegelian,[3] for his concept of the self describes a dialectical struggle between two ontologically distinct categories, the natural and non-natural self, in which the latter becomes manifest only by negating and achieving mastery over the former.[4]

Yet, at the same time, Kojeve interprets Heidegger's dynamic Self by appropriating Hegel's formulation of desire. For Kojeve, desire creates the condition by which consciousness becomes *self*-consciousness (and thus human rather than animal consciousness), for desire is what makes the subject aware of himself *as such* by drawing his attention to the fact that he is not that which he contemplates. Hence for Kojeve, "the very being of man implies and presupposes Desire" (4). Furthermore, since desire implies want, and since Kojeve does not believe that desire and the ontological

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[3] Kojeve is quite explicit about his departure from Hegel and did not disguise this from his audience. In an extensive footnote to his lecture "The Dialectic of the Real and the Phenomenological Method in Hegel," he remarks that Hegel "just follows the tradition of ontological monism that goes back to the Greeks" (212-15, n15), whereas according to his "dualistic hypothesis, Ontology would describe Being that realizes itself as Nature separately from Action that negates Being and realizes itself (in Nature) as History" (215, n16). I am indebted to Professor Borch-Jacobsen's lectures regarding Kojeve's ontology of the human subject and its relation to Hegel's model.

[4] The argument that Girard's preoccupation with the figure of difference as an anthropological paradigm puts him at odds with Hegel's and Kojeve's preference for the figure of identity doesn't go far enough in distinguishing Kojeve from Hegel. Kojeve's dual ontology and the inherent tensions it creates puts difference at the center of his thought, and in this sense, aligns him with Girard more than Hegel. See Guido Vanheeswijck's "The Place of René Girard in Contemporary Philosophy" given at the 2001 COV&R conference: "While Hegel (and Kojeve's) thought is structured according to the figure of *identity*, Girard makes use, as an anthropological paradigm, of the figure of *difference*" (3). Vanheeswijck argues that whereas the master-slave dialectic of the Hegel-Kojeve model aims at a harmonious unity and final identity, Girard recognizes the danger and consequent impossibility of sustained homogeneity as the condition for mimetic crisis.

status of the human subject can be disassociated, then this is to say that the desiring subject is itself an emptiness in search of fulfillment. It is a negativity that seeks positive content by negating and appropriating for itself the desire, that is, the being of another. Thus while Desire is analogous to the animalistic drive of hunger for food, human desire for Kojeve distinguishes itself by seeking a non-natural object, specifically, another human desire, for only by means of such recognition does human consciousness come into being. It is only as a creature who desires to have the sovereignty of its non-natural self recognized that man becomes aware of his preeminence over an animal consciousness that is given, fixed, and incapable of self-reflection. As Kojeve remarks,

> Desire, being the revelation of an emptiness, the presence of the absence of a reality, is something essentially different from the desired thing, something other than a thing, than a static and given real being that stays eternally identical to itself. (5)

Desire seeks only that which can recognize it as the signifier of human consciousness. It therefore takes aim at other humans, which is to say, at other desires. Yet unlike Hegel's contemplative consciousness (*Geist*), Kojevian desire cannot regard the Other it seeks without attempting to destroy it through an act of appropriation. As a result, human society for Kojeve is necessarily contentious and violent since desire, by definition, seeks to negate and appropriate that which attracts its attention:

> The I of Desire is an emptiness that receives a real positive content only by [a] negating action that satisfies Desire in destroying, transforming, and "assimilating" the desired non-I. And the positive content of the I, constituted by negation, is a function of the positive content of the negated non-I. (4)

The ineluctable violence that inheres in desire as a "negating negativity" forms the basis for Kojeve's master-slave dialectic and the central importance he attaches to it as the key to understanding human history.

II. Girard's and Kojeve's overlapping ontologies

Comparisons between Girard and Kojeve rightly noticed Kojeve's remarks regarding the mediated nature of Desire, which have been seen as anticipating Girard's formulation of "triangular desire:"

> Desire directed toward a natural object is human only to the extent that it is "mediated" by the Desire of another directed toward the same object: it is human to desire what others desire, because they desire it...human history is the history of desired Desires. (6)

Commentary, however, has stopped short of exploring the full range of implications for Girard that may be traced to this passage. Kojeve's point in the above passage supports his central argument regarding the nature of desire and the ontological status of the self that Girard's mimetic model not only leaves in tact, but requires. Specifically, five characteristics of Kojevian Desire emerge that bear upon the Girardian formulation of the human subject. First, Girard follows Kojeve in positing an anthropological notion of the Self that rejects the idealist formulations of Descartes and Hegel, while it also avoids the essentialist, hypostatized Self underpinning the Romantic subject and its modern derivatives, as, for example, in the work of Freud and Camus. Like Kojeve, Girard theorizes the Self as a quasi-empirical phenomenon that cannot be reduced to an essence, but that can be understood through an analysis of its behavior. Second, Desire is constitutive of human subjectivity. That is, desire defines the self such that one *is* what one desires. Third, desire is an anti-essentialist phenomenon —it is a temporal and dynamic *action* rather than a spatially determinate and static *thing*. Fourth, Desire is not ultimately directed at objects, but at Desire itself, that is, at the Being of another. Finally, Desire is ineluctably violent, for it seeks to establish the Self through the negation and appropriation of an Other.

The most fundamental point of comparison is that for both, Desire and being form an identity relation. It is axiomatic for Girard not only that desire is mimetic, but that "Imitative desire is always a desire to be Another" (Girard 1965, 83). Thus while Girard's model of triangular desire describes the apparent role of the model as the mediator of an ostensible object-directed desire, this turns out to belie a submerged desire to possess the being of the mediator/model itself.[5] As with Kojeve, desire for Girard is not finally directed at objects *per se*, at what Kojeve refers to as the "given" and "thingish," but rather at "the spectacle of another real or illusory desire" (105) for "desire is aimed at the mediator's being" (53).

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[5] Thus, while the model would appear to mediate between subject and object, it is rather the object that mediates between subject and model.

Moreover, Kojeve's formulation, that properly human desire is a desire of the desire of another, anticipates Girard in signaling a significant departure from Hegel, for whom the self desires the self as an object. In their recognition that desire is not finally directed at objects, Kojeve and Girard have more in common with each other than with Hegel.

Kojeve's formulation of the self in isolation as an emptiness, or a "negating negativity," is no less true for Girard, though the subject he theorizes finds this a cause for despair in a way the Kojeve does not. As Girard observes,

> The soul of the [novelistic hero] is constantly being hollowed out by the abyss of nothingness (166)....All heroes of novels hate themselves on a more essential level than that of "[personal] qualities"...[for] the curse with which the hero is burdened is indistinguishable from his subjectivity. (55).[6]

Girard refers to the illusion of ontological plenitude and the subject's desire to appropriate it for oneself as "metaphysical desire," a term meant to connote the folly of human desire insofar as it aims at a non-existent, metaphysical (i.e., ontological) presence in the Other. It is important to note however that despite the pejorative sense that Girard intends, the term carries a Kojevian aptness, for if metaphysical desire serves to reject the metaphysics of presence, it does nonetheless point to a metaphysics of absence. The "nothingness" that haunts the Girardian subject is no delusion, for it is the inherent condition of desire and subjectivity. Metaphysical desire is delusional in its wish for self-sufficiency, but truthful in its desire for being itself, because we sense rightly, according to Kojeve and Girard, that we have no being as an autonomous self.[7]

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[6] It is the reality of his nothingness as an autonomous agent that brings the Girardian subject to seek the appropriation of another's being. Girard's subject makes covert, unfavorable comparisons between his own feelings of impotence and dependency, and the apparent, though illusory, self-sufficiency of the model. The Other appears to the self-doubting subject to command an enviable fullness of being that draws power from its own hidden springs, such that, as Girard's chapter title suggests, "Men Become Gods in the Eyes of Each Other."

[7] The concept of misrecognition in Girard's theory invariably amounts to a propensity for attributing to "metaphysics" what he feels can be more accurately understood in terms of "anthropology," by which he means the structure and processes of mimetic desire. "Metaphysical" desire therefore must be understood as a partially ironic term, for in one sense it refers to something that is not metaphysical in the least, but rather to the *illusion* of

For both, the human subject comes into being only through the Other. For Kojeve, "human desire must be directed toward another desire...[such that] man can appear on earth only within a herd [where] the Desires of each member...must be directed toward the Desires of the other members. That is why the human reality can only be social" (5-6). For Girardians as well, the self is coextensive with the structure of mimetic desire. Since Being cannot be pried apart from desire, and since our desires are always mediated by another's, the self is a relational and dynamic phenomenon rather than an essential, objectively real, and autonomous source of intentions. One sees this identity relation among subjectivity, desire, and social structure when Girard remarks:

> If desire is the same for all of us, and if it is the key to the system of [human] relationships, this is no reason not to make it the real "subject" of the structure—a subject that comes back to mimesis in the end. I avoid saying "desiring subject" so as not to give the impression of relapsing into a psychology of the subject. (Girard 1987, 303)[8]

The self and its supposedly spontaneous desires in which we take such pride are in fact the function of a complex set of social relations governed by the system of mimetic desire. Such a self is constantly being reformed by a shifting pattern of relations with both human and idealized models in what Girard describes as an "interdividual psychology."[9] Girard's mimetic theory thus coincides with Kojeve's in its reliance upon an ontology of the human subject as an evanescent, non-entitive agent rather than an hypostatized essence, and whose being is situated within a matrix intersubjective

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the transcendent Other. As Girard asserts, "By invoking the notion of metaphysical desire, I am not in any way giving in to metaphysics" (1987, 296). To do so would be to reintroduce the romantic Self that mimetic desire rejects, and ultimately to legitimate and apotheosize violence.

[8] Moreover, as Andrew McKenna suggests, the entire structure of desire and human relations to which Girard alludes is itself without a metaphysical center or transcendent origin: "There is no object for a subject...prior to another subject that designates it as an object of desire and because that subject in turn is constituted only by the other subject's desire, and so on, infinitely and undecidedly. The origin of desire is undecidable, being...'always already'...the copy, the repetition of another desire" (96).

[9] Eugene Webb's chapter on "Jean-Michel Oughourlian and the Psychology of the Interdividual" in *The Self Between* provides a useful analysis of how Girard's notion of the interdependency of the self and its communities is developed as a psychosociological model by Ourghoulian, Girard's interlocutor in *Things Hidden*.

action. The congruencies between Girard and Kojeve in this regard demand that Kojeve's name be struck from the list of those such as Freud or Camus who serve as proponents of the romantic and symbolist theories that Girard's mimetic model attacks. Girard's critique of "romantic" desire, in its rejection of an essential and autonomous self capable of generating its own desires, preaches to the Kojevian choir.[10]

The fact that desire operates as a "negating negativity" that aims at another desire leads both men to an anthropology of violence. Both agree that desire covets a prestige that can only be acquired by pillaging the being of the Other. Accordingly, and in language strikingly close to Kojeve's, Girard states that "Proust's [and] Dostoyevsky's hero dreams of *absorbing* and *assimilating* the mediator's being...[for] He wants to become the Other and still be himself" (Girard 1965, 54, my emphasis). For both, desire is violent because it entails a question of being or non-being (as a non-natural, i.e., human, agent). For Kojeve, Desire constitutes the Self by demanding that it be perceived and valued by others. Thus he asserts that "man is human only to the extent that he wants to impose himself on another man, to be recognized by him [as autonomous" (13). Therefore, to speak of the "origin" of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of a "fight to the death for 'recognition'" (7). This is no less the case for Girard, for whom "violence is always mingled with desire" (Girard 1972, 145). Although Girard discovers the immediate cause of violence as resulting from a "conflictual mimesis," in which two desires converge upon the same object, this is itself underpinned by the subject's fascination with the Other's apparent ontological plenitude. Indeed, according to Girard, at the moment when rivalry between antagonists intensifies to the point of violence, violence itself becomes indistinguishable from the Other's desired being. Thus for both Kojeve and Girard, violence does not arise as the result of instinctual

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[10] Girard's critique of Kojeve's dialectic centers upon his remarks that prestige, the aim of the Kojevian subject, is a pernicious illusion: "Fighting over prestige is literally fighting over nothing...the 'nothing' of prestige appears to be everything...[such that its devoted adversaries] participate in a vision...of metaphysical violence" (1987, 305). His objection, however, presupposes his own postulate that the subject operates under the romantic delusion that subjectivity ought to entail ontological self-sufficiency. As we have seen however, Kojeve does not assume this for his subject. Kojeve understands that "the I of Desire is an emptiness, " or a "negating negativity," and though this emptiness may seek "fullness" by negating and assimilating the Other's desire, he is clear in recognizing that to do so is merely to replace one emptiness with another. There is no disagreement between Girard and Kojeve on this point.

drives, either toward death or toward violence itself,[11] but inheres in the structure of Desire which by definition seeks to absorb and assimilate the other's being.

III. Girard's implicit dialogue with Kojeve: Postulates of divergence and convergence

Given the fundamental agreement between Girard and Kojeve regarding the ontological status of the human subject, where does their thought begin to separate? Girard locates the point when he states,

> The Hegelian dialectic rested on physical courage. Whoever has no fear will be the master, whoever is afraid will be the slave. The novelistic [that is, Girardian] dialectic rests on hypocrisy. Violence, far from serving the interests of whoever exerts it, reveals the intensity of his desire; thus it is a sign of slavery. (Girard 1965, 112).

In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, "deceit" rather than "desire" is the operative term that signals the moment of divergence. This is because Girard's mimetic model depends upon a crucial postulate absent in Kojeve—that subjects fall prey to the epistemological fallacy of "romantic" desire. The Girardian subject recognizes at some level that his own desires are not original and that his being does not emanate from itself, but he nonetheless believes that desire can be parthenogenetic for others and succumbs to the delusion that such others possess omnipotent self-sufficiency. The subject thus engages in a specious zero-sum logic by which the ontological autonomy of the Other comes at the expense of the Self. The subject consequently operates from a sense inadequacy, shame, and self-loathing while it regards the Other with envy. In its bid for mastery, the subject attempts to dissimulate its feelings, but its strategies inevitably fail. Its fundamental delusion regarding desire and subjectivity results in a self-defeating, unreflective mimesis. Thus Girard's postulate of the romantic fallacy ensures that deceit becomes the subject's motus operandus, for the self is both deceiving and deceived.

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[11] This is the basis for his critique of Freud whose plethora of biological desires not only rehearse the romantic ideal of spontaneous desire, but whose several postulates can be reduced to a single principle in the mimetic model.

Kojeve does not formulate his subject in this way. The Self is not motivated by a sense of shame, nor does it approach the Other with envy, because it does not strive for romantic autonomy. It has no need for deceit. As Girard notes in the passage quoted above, Kojeve's master and slave dialectic entails an overt struggle for ontological recognition that demands courage rather than deceit. The Kojevian subject wishes to establish its humanity by transcending its biological givenness, its animal consciousness. To become truly human, that is, to achieve mastery, it must be willing to risk its life, just as those who succumb to the fear of death secure their enslavement. Kojeve's agon is thus a psychologically straightforward engagement—one imagines, for example, two knights jousting—where the goal of satisfying desire, of achieving mastery and thus human consciousness, is understood from the outset to be wholly dependent upon the Other.

Girard's postulate of endemic self-deception, which characterizes his thought at every stage (his theories of mimetic desire, the victimage mechanism, and the Judaeo-Christian scriptures), would substantiate the assertion of an "incommensurable gulf" separating him from Kojeve, were it not for the coincidence of their fundamental ontological models that keeps their larger formulations tethered in a tacit dialogue. Instead, Girard's thought develops in tension with Kojeve's as a force field between the poles of sameness and difference. One sees this at each level of theoretical engagement: at the level of social psychology, at that of theorizing historical causality, and that of prognosticating the eradication of violence.

Each advances a model that insists upon the corollary relationship of desire and violence as the interpretive key to understanding history. Girard's theory of history builds directly upon the premise of the subject's romantic fallacy, where unreflective mimesis as the source of violence formed an ever-present threat to primitive communities. A necessary, if not sufficient, condition for communal survival thus rested upon the ability to adopt mechanisms for quelling violence. One of Girard's most important insights emerges at this juncture—that in moments of violent crisis communities have managed to preserve themselves through the unanimous victimization of a positionally innocent member. For Girard, the evolution of civilization has depended upon a scapegoat mechanism whose efficacy utterly depends upon its remaining concealed to the understanding. The persecution of certain stereotypic individuals or subgroups succeeds in restoring a community rent by internal violence only insofar as the persecuting majority remain blind to their own culpability in projecting the causes of violence upon the victim. The history of culture is therefore the

morally specious history of "good" violence directed at the scapegoat replacing the "bad" violence for which the scapegoat is allegedly responsible. Insofar as culture remains blind to the truth of its inherent violence and injustice, (a blindness that originates in and builds upon the blindness of the individual's romantic fallacy), history for Girard has not been morally meliorist.

Kojeve's dialectical model of history, following Hegel, links violence to desire, but follows his distinctly different premises regarding the subject's self-understanding. Kojeve's model also depends upon an element of self-deceit, but its function and significance is quite different. Like Girard's subject, Kojeve's master errs in not recognizing that its moment of victory is simultaneously a moment of defeat, for the recognition it seeks cannot satisfy desire when it comes from the vanquished Other, that is, from a slave. While this parallels the experience of Girard's subject who necessarily finds victory over its rival to be a disappointment, Kojeve does not view it as a permanent state of affairs. The dialectical structure of his thought, in which human consciousness attains self-awareness in the victories of the worker and the intellectual, suggests a means of overstepping the impasse. While Kojeve anticipates Girard in viewing the human record as most deeply characterized by violence, the dialectical phase of self-deception in the master's hollow victory gives way to a more just epoch of self-understanding. For Kojeve (again following Hegel), it is the slave who ultimately models the best means of channeling desire, for he recoups the humanity he had lost in succumbing to the master by learning to transform the given, natural order through the process of work. Work elevates the slave to the condition of true mastery, because, unlike the master's false victory, work does not suppress what it negates. That is, by transforming the natural object into something imbued with human consciousness, work provides the means of self-transformation. For Kojeve, it is the worker who gradually overcomes the master's error and comes to realize that the Other is himself.

Instead of finding themselves separated by an unbridgeable chasm, the mutuality of Girard and Kojeve's aims for the evolution of human consciousness remains intact. Thus despite the differences between their historical formulations, each believes that the ultimate eradication of violence depends upon the redirection of desire and the realization of identity between Self and Other. Their differences pertain to how such a revelation is attained, and once again, this results from their different assumptions regarding the nature of self-deceit. For Kojeve, history's final

peaceful synthesis occurs when men are able to resituate the possibility of transcendence and transcendent knowledge offered by religion within the sphere of human knowledge:

> Now, according to Hegel, one can realize the Christian *anthropological* ideal (which he accepts in full) only by "overcoming" the Christian *theology*: Christian Man can really become what he would like to be [i.e., a true "Individual" resulting from the synthesis of the absolute and the particular] only by becoming a man without God—or, if you will, A God-Man. He must realize *in himself* what at first the thought was realized in his God. To be *really* Christian, he *himself* must become Christ. (67)

For the orthodox Christian, one's individuality (understood as the conjunction of one's particular life with the universal spirit) is recognized in a transcendent state only after one's death. Kojeve's anthropological turn, however, argues that genuine individuality entails replacing the Christian ideal of transcendence with an immanent but absolute self-understanding. For Kojeve, the story of Christ mythologizes and adumbrates just such a final synthesis of the transcendent and the immanent. In such a world, man's ability to "realize in *himself* what at first he thought was realized in his God" (67) will effect the erasure of class distinctions and "the disappearance of wars and bloody revolutions" (159n).

Girard's chapter entitled "Men Become Gods in the Eyes of Each Other" takes precise aim at Kojeve's "millenarian" scenario, accusing it, in effect, of succumbing to the self-deception that it seeks to overcome. For Girard, the elimination, or rather the anthropologizing of the Christian idea of transcendence implies the pernicious illusions of "horizontal transcendence" and "metaphysical desire" that trigger mimetic crises and their resolution through legitimized murder. The truly peaceful response to violence for Girard does not depend upon rejecting the transcendent, but rather upon differentiating true from false transcendence. His dispensation thus engages Kojeve's rendering of Hegel precisely over the issue of what it means to "become Christ." For Girard, the individual sloughs off the veil of violence-perpetuating self-deceit when he re-directs desire toward appropriate models, with Christ the example par excellence. But which Christ? For Girard, it is not the Kojevian God-man of absolute knowledge, but the Christ whose passion reveals the *skandalon* of mimetic desire, the plight of the sacrificial victim, and the corrupt principles upon which com-

munity formation operates. Christ's answer to endemic violence, for Girard, builds from a new foundation of insight that exposes and moves beyond the romantic fallacy.

Kojeve's assertion that man must become a "God-man" (Kojeve's description of the Intellectual) would, for Girard, appear to embrace false transcendence by re-introducing the romantic myth of the self-sufficient subject. Girard's formulation of desire insists that man by his own initiative will never gaze inwardly upon the abyss of his individual being with anything other than a shame and horror that leads unavoidably to envy, violence, and collective scapegoating. The valorization of existential individualism at the expense of religion and its valuation of transcendence is wholly untenable for Girard. The "abyss of nothingness" that torments the Girardian subject, far from being the condition of humanity triumphant, is the terrible secret he must conceal from his rival at all costs, and the source of a violence that does not overcome fear and shame so much as perpetuate them. Thus for Girard, Kojeve's veneration of the human and the putative triumph of man that squarely inhabits his nothingness would seem to be a form of "bad faith." Without Christ's example as the mediator of desire, the God that the Kojevian subject attempts to realize within himself will surely become the deranged apotheosis of his own violence.

Such an evaluation of Kojeve's thought seems apposite when directed at the apparent self-sufficiency of his "God-man" Intellectual. Yet Christ's revelation that the Self cannot be disassociated from the Other, the central premise of Girard's "interdividual psychology," is also the chief insight of Kojeve's Intellectual. Kojeve's master and slave are ontologically interdependent, and their ultimate synthesis at the "end of history" depends upon the recognition of this sameness.[12] If Girard's truths are finally not entirely those of philosophy, they are nonetheless hard-won from an implicit agon with Kojeve's Hegelianism. The relationship between their formulations is thus neither one marked by entirely different first principles nor of merely interesting but irrelevant parallels. To dismiss Girard's engagement with "philosophy" is to ignore how his work emerges from within philosophy and continues to evolve in dialogue with it. Would it be going too far to say that in keeping with his own critique of romantic originality,

[12] Girard believes that his interdividual psychology would not invite violence because it operates without delusion, yet it envisions an ontological homogeneity no less radical than Kojeve's formulation of the end of history. It would thus appear just as susceptible to the violence that Girard sees arising from the effacement of distinctions between Self and Other.

Girard's system, brilliant as it is, does not emerge partheno-genetically, but rather relationally with the Kojveian Other it seeks to exclude?

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MIMESIS AND SCAPEGOATING IN THE WORKS OF HOBBES, ROUSSEAU, AND KANT

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Intellectual fashion in our academic world forces us towards originality. Searching for mimetic desire or traces of scape-goating in literature or philosophical texts gets therefore some applause because it has not been done before. It has become fashionable in the humanities to have your own special French intellectual to be innovative and conquer new fields. For many of us Girard's mimetic theory might be of some help to better our standings in originality. But what seems to be an easy game at first sight has its disadvantages, too. Applying mimetic theory gets at least as much criticism as it earns applause. What is praised as an original contribution by some might at the same time be debased as something quite idiosyncratic by many others. I still remember the reaction of a quite reputable political scientist from Berkeley to a paper of Girard given at a little seminar at Stanford, in which he reflected on the origin of human culture in the scapegoat mechanism. The political scientist welcomed the paper in a friendly way, asking us, however, if by taking Girard's thesis for granted one might not as well be allowed to say that culture is based on jellybeans. This strange joke is in a way a typical reaction to the mimetic theory if we remember how often people do not understand at all why it is of any importance to deal with mimetic desire and scapegoating. Mimetic theory seems to be either one of those fashions which are caused by the necessity to be original or a strange obsession of a small sect following a

guru who at least understood that you just have to insist on some bizarre ideas long enough to get some recognition in the end.

My paper will try to show that such a critique of the mimetic theory is definitely wrong. Whatever major work in political philosophy I read I often came across exactly those questions that are addressed by the mimetic theory. I think the collaboration of some scholars in mimetic theory would allow it to write a history of political philosophy by focusing on mimesis and scapegoating without excluding any of the major authors. I will try to do this today by the examples of Hobbes, Rousseau and Kant. In a first step I will show you how these three founding fathers of modern political philosophy were all concerned with mimetic desire. The rise of the modern world forced them to view human beings as mimetic competitors. In a second, more difficult step I will focus on traces of the scapegoat mechanism in the works of these three authors. Although scapegoating is less visible than mimetic desire it is nevertheless possible to see how this relates to the violent origin of human culture. A third part will address the differences between Girard's view on mimetic desire and scapegoating and the comparable views taken by Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant. These differences are caused by the respective relationships to the biblical revelation. Whereas Girard's theory emphasizes the importance of the Bible to understand mimesis and scapegoating, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant are representatives of the modern neglect of the biblical revelation. A comparison of these three authors with an Augustinian perspective helps to understand the way, in which they differ from Girard's mimetic theory.

1. Mimesis in the works of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant

A. Hobbes

Hobbes's anthropology describes human beings as genuinely mimetic (Achterhuis 23f; Palaver 1991, 40-45). In Hobbes's early treatise *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic* this is most explicitly visible. Human beings desire according to the other by always comparing themselves with one another. "All joy and grief of mind" consists "in a contention for precedence to them with whom they compare themselves" (Hobbes 1994, 163f; see also 50-60; 1991, 119). Human life with all its passions is paralleled in this book to a race, which has "no other goal ...but being foremost" (Hobbes 1994, 59). It is a race in which

> "Continually to be out-gone is misery.
> Continually to out-go the next before is felicity.

> And to forsake the course is to die." (Hobbes 1994, 60)

Hobbes describes almost all passions as mimetic relationships and also explains the unlimited desire of human beings by their mimetic nature:

> As men attain to more riches, honors, or other power; so their appetite continually groweth more and more; and when they are come to the utmost degree of one kind of power, they pursue some other, as long as in any kind they think themselves behind any other. (Hobbes 1994, 45)

I think Leo Strauss was the first, who emphasized the importance of mimetic passions in Hobbes's political philosophy. Of course, Strauss did not yet use the term "mimesis" himself. He, however, referred to vanity as the essential passion that can be found at the heart of Hobbes's anthropology (Strauss 1963, 11-15, 111-113, 132-135). Hobbes himself explained vanity as a mimetic emotion. It roots in "glory", a passion characterized by comparison:

> GLORY, or internal gloriation or triumph of the mind, is that passion which proceedeth from the imagination or conception of our own power, above the power of him that contendeth with us. (Hobbes 1994, 50)

Where he specifies glory and refers more explicitly to vanity itself, "vain glory", Hobbes most likely refers to Don Quixote and his imitation of Amadis of Gaul when he relates vanity to the situation

> when a man imagineth himself to do the action whereof he readeth in some romant, or to be like unto some other man whose acts he admireth." (Hobbes 1994, 51; see Girard 1965, 1-4)

Furthermore, Hobbes directly mentions imitation and fashion, a typical modern expression of mimetic desire, as signs of vanity:

> Signs of vain glory in the gesture, are imitation of others, counterfeiting attention, affectation of fashions.

Girard reflected on vanity where he summarizes Stendhal's novelistic insight into mimetic desire:

> Stendhal uses the word "vanity" [*vanité*] to indicate all these forms of "copying" and "imitating." The *vaniteux*—vain person—cannot draw desires from his own resources; he must borrow them from others. Thus the *vaniteux* is brother to Don Quixote.... (Girard 1965, 6; see also 7, 14f)

Like Hobbes, Strauss identifies vanity also with pride and shows that it is the pride of human beings that necessitates the Leviathan, the absolute state (Hobbes 1994, 50; 1991, 54; Strauss 1963, 13). Because in the *Book of Job* the Leviathan is called the "king over all the children of pride" (Job 41.34; King James Version), Hobbes took the name of this monster to give his famous book its title:

> Hitherto I have set forth the Nature of man, (whose Pride and other Passions have compelled him to submit himselfe to Government;) together with the great power of his Governour, whom I compared to *Leviathan*, taking that comparison out of the two last verses of the one and fortieth of *Job*; where God having set forth the great power of *Leviathan*, calleth him King of the Proud. *There is nothing*, saith he, *on earth, to be compared with him. He is made so as not to be afraid. Hee seeth every high thing below him; and is King of all the children of pride.* (Hobbes 1991, 220f).

Like vanity, also pride is a mimetic passion (Girard 1965, 56-59). It was Eric Voegelin, who treated pride as the central passion of Hobbes's anthropology by taking Strauss's interpretation as his starting point (Voegelin 1999, 62-64; 1987, 179-187). Voegelin not only called Hobbes "one of the greatest psychologists of all times" but also underlined the mimetic nature of his psychology by characterizing pride as a "passion aggravated by comparison" (Voegelin 1987, 179, 181).

Still Hobbes's history of the English civil war, his *Behemoth* written at the end of his life, is full of insights into the mimetic nature of human beings. By focusing on this book, Stephen Holmes calls Hobbes's man a copying man:

> *L'homme copie* irrationally imitates the beliefs and behavior patterns of those around him, failing to notice what he is doing. He acts without thinking about it, not in order to save time as economists might imagine, but from mindlessness, distraction,

> inveterate slovenliness, poor moral character, and an inborn penchant for imitating the preferences of companions. (Holmes xvii)

Finally, I would like to emphasize that Hobbes was aware of the fact that mimetic desire very easily leads to conflicts, enmity, and war. Mimetic desire leads people to long for the same objects. If these objects, however, exclude a common possession this will result in war. In his *Elements* Hobbes describes this logic of mimetic desire most clearly:

> Considering that many men's appetites carry them to one and the same end; which end sometimes can neither be enjoyed in common, nor divided, it followeth that the stronger must enjoy it alone, and that it be decided by battle who is the stronger. (Hobbes, 1994, 78; see also 1991, 87)

Regarding the divisive nature of mimetic desire Hobbes is closely in touch with folk wisdom if we just think of all those proverbs focusing on the troubles caused by objects of mimetic desire that cannot be shared. In a conference at Antwerp we just have to think about Hieronymous van Bosch's use of a Flemish saying to illustrate envy in his painting *The Table of the Seven Deadly Sins* from 1480: "Two dogs seldom come to an agreement over the same bone."

B. Rousseau

Despite the fact that Rousseau has strongly criticized Hobbes's anthropology and parts radically from his predecessor in regard to Hobbes's description of the state of nature as a state of war, the French philosopher is a mimetic thinker, too. As soon as Rousseau focuses on the state of society he, like Hobbes, describes human beings as mimetic. The term he uses is *amour propre*, a kind of selfishness or self-love misunderstood that is based on comparison. Similar to Hobbes's view of mimetic men, also *amour-propre* is a restless desire and has a tendency towards hatred and violence:

> *Amour-propre*, which makes comparisons, is never content and never could be, because this sentiment, preferring ourselves to others, also demands others to prefer us to themselves, which is impossible. This is...how the hateful and irascible passions are born of *amour-propre*. Thus, what makes man essentially ...wicked is to have many needs and to depend very much upon

> opinion. (Rousseau 1979, 214; see also Saint-Amand 77; Hamerton-Kelly 240)

Amour propre can be identified with the mimetic passions vanity, pride and envy. Girard refers to it as Proust's term for mimetic desire (Girard 1965, 59, 298f; 1977a, 6, 11).

Like Hobbes, Rousseau compares life governed by *amour propre* to a race and refers to its destructive consequences:

> I could explain how much this universal desire for reputation, honors, and advancement, which inflames us all, exercises and holds up to comparison our faculties and powers; how it excites and multiplies our passions, and, by creating universal competition and rivalry, or rather enmity, among men, occasions numberless failures, successes, and disturbances of all kinds by making so many aspirants run the same course. I could show that it is to this desire of being talked about, and this unremitting rage of distinguishing ourselves, that we owe the best and the worst things we possess, both our virtues and our vices, our science and our errors, our conquerors and our philosophers; that is to say, a great many bad things, and a very few good ones. (Rousseau 1990, 112)

C. Kant

Kant, the third author of this inquiry, differs again from Rousseau and Hobbes in many respects. Nevertheless, he can be counted among these mimetic philosophers, too. In his anthropology he refers, for instance, to fashion as an example of the natural inclination of human beings to compare themselves with those you are more important and to imitate their manners (Kant 1977, XII 571-573). In the following I will focus on Kant's treatment of envy to introduce into his complex discussion of mimetic desire. His definition of this destructive vice immediately reveals its mimetic character:

> Envy (*livor*) is a propensity to view the well-being of others with distress, even though it does not detract from one's own. When it breaks forth into action (to diminish well being) it is called envy proper; otherwise it is merely jealousy (*invidentia*). Yet envy is only an indirectly malevolent disposition, namely a reluctance to see our own well-being overshadowed by another's because the standard we use to see how well off we are is not the

> intrinsic worth of our own well-being but how it compares with that of others." (Kant 1996, 576)

By emphasizing comparison Kant refers to the mimetic nature of this passion. According to Helmut Schoeck, Kant's condemnation of envy is one of the harshest in modern philosophy. Kant sees it as a destructive vice that has no positive value at all. This judgement, however, is only true on a superficial level. As soon as envy turns into action Kant sees it as something really evil counting it among the passions. But as long as it is only an inclination it is only "indirectly malevolent" because jealousy or envious stirring belongs to human nature itself:

> The predisposition to humanity can be brought under the general title of a self-love which is physical and yet compares (for which reason is required); that is to say, we judge ourselves happy or unhappy only by making comparison with others. Out of this self-love springs the inclination to acquire worth in the opinion of others. This is originally a desire merely for equality, to allow no one superiority above oneself, bound up with a constant care lest others strive to attain such superiority; but from this arises gradually the unjustifiable craving to win it for oneself over others. (Kant 1977, VIII 673)

This type of a comparing self-love, a form of jealousy or rivalry, builds the stem on which diabolic vices like envy are grafted.

Nevertheless, nature needs mimetic rivalry as a "spur to culture." (Kant 1977, VIII 674: "Triebfeder zur Kultur") In Kant's famous essay *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* he most explicitly elaborated his idea that an antagonism—an "unsocial sociability" (Kant 1991, 44)—rooted in mimetic desire has to turn a sheepish, idle and inactive Arcadia into a prosperous culture governed by human rationality:

> Nature should be...thanked for fostering social incompatibility, enviously competitive vanity, and insatiable desires for possession or even power. Without these desires, all man's excellent natural capacities would never be roused to develop. Man wished concord, but nature, knowing better what is good for his species, wishes discord. (Kant 1991, 45)

Despite Kant's praising of nature's use of mimetic desire to develop human culture, he generally rejects mimesis as something evil wherever he dis-

cusses individual morality or education. He seems to be as scared of mimetic desire as Plato was in the ancient world. This becomes especially clear as soon as we focus on Kant's writings on education. There, he severely criticized the imitation of models because of its disposition to envy and hatred:

> We only excite envy in a child by telling him to compare his own worth with the worth of others...."See how such and a such child behaves himself!" An exclamation of this kind produces only a very ignoble mode of thinking; for if a man estimates his own worth by the worth of others, he either tries to elevate himself above others, or to detract from another's worth. But this last is envy. We then only seek to impute faults to others, in order that we may compare favorably with them. Thus the spirit of emulation, wrongly applied only arouses envy. (Kant 1960, 106)

Emulation has to be carefully used in education by restricting it to a very narrow field:

> Emulation may occasionally be used to a good purpose, as when we tell a child, in order to convince him of the possibility of performing a certain task, that other could easily do it.

Kant seems to be aware that the imitation of examples might easily have those destructive consequences typical of internal mimesis. He recommends instead an extreme type of external mimesis that avoids the arousing of any envy. No concrete human being should be taken as moral example but only the idea of humanity itself:

> So it is not comparison with any other human being whatsoever (as he is), but with the idea (of humanity), as he ought to be, and so comparison with the law, that must serve as the constant standard of a teacher's instruction. (Kant 1996, 593)

According to Kant, a comparison with the moral law of reason has to substitute for any mimetic relationships with concrete human beings or every other finite being including seraphs (Kant 1977, VIII 570). This applies even to his view of Jesus Christ as a moral example. Jesus serves as a model only insofar as he represents the idea of humanity itself. As a

concrete and historical person he is, according to Kant, not an example whom Christians have to follow (see Hauerwas 131; 270).

Kant's position on imitation and the role of examples in morality is clearly summarized in his *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*. Imitation and examples have to give way to reason alone.

> Nothing could be more fatal to morality than that we should wish to derive it from examples. For every example of it that is set before me must be first itself tested by principles of morality, whether it is worthy to serve as an original example, i.e., as a pattern; but by no means can it authoritatively furnish the conception of morality. Even the Holy One of the Gospels must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognise Him as such; and so He says of Himself, "Why call ye Me (whom you see) good; none is good (the model of good) but God only (whom ye do not see)?" But whence have we the conception of God as the supreme good? Simply from the idea of moral perfection, which reason frames a priori and connects inseparably with the notion of a free will. Imitation finds no place at all in morality, and examples serve only for encouragement, i.e., they put beyond doubt the feasibility of what the law commands, they make visible that which the practical rule expresses more generally, but they can never authorize us to set aside the true original which lies in reason and to guide ourselves by examples. (Kant 1977, VII 36f)

2. Traces of the Scapegoat Mechanism in the Works of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant

Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant can justly be called mimetic thinkers. This, however, is mainly limited to their knowledge of mimetic desire. It does not apply to an equal understanding of the scapegoat mechanism as the origin of human culture. All three of them are representatives of the social contract tradition, which is according to Girard "the great humanistic whitewash of mimetic rivalry, the standard escape hatch for those who cannot pursue the mimetic logic far enough" (Girard 1991, 228). Generally speaking Girard's harsh criticism of the social contract tradition is justified. But he himself observed that all philosophers claiming a social contract as the origin of society presented it as "a purely theoretical device". It might therefore be possible to observe traces of the scapegoat mechanism beneath the surface of the political philosophies of these thinkers.

A. Hobbes

In the case of Hobbes we can find such a remnant of the scapegoat mechanism exactly where we come across the insoluble paradox of the social contract regarding its logical possibility in the state of nature. According to Hobbes, in the state of nature, in which there is no civil power, contracts are not reliable. "Covenants, without the Sword, are but Words, and of no strength to secure a man at all." (Hobbes 1991, 117) If that is true, how could a first contract establishing a sovereign power—a social contract—have been concluded at all? What gives treaties any strength in the state of nature? Hobbes sees the fear of God as the only means by which contracts in the state of nature can be strengthened. Sacred oaths are the practical realization of that fear:

> Before the time of Civill Society, or in the interruption thereof by Warre, there is nothing can strengthen a Covenant of Peace agreed on, against the temptations of Avarice, Ambition, Lust, or other strong desire, but the feare of that Invisible Power, which they every one Worship as God; and Feare as a Revenger of their perfidy. All therefore that can be done between two men not subject to Civill Power, is to put one another to swear by the God he feareth: Which *Swearing*, or OATH, is a *Forme of Speech, added to a Promise; by which he that promiseth, signifieth, that unlesse he performe, he renounceth the mercy of his God, or calleth to him for vengeance on himselfe.* Such was the Heathen Forme, *Let* Jupiter *kill me else, as I kill this Beast.* (Hobbes 1991, 99)

In this passage Hobbes himself indirectly links his concept of the social contract to sacred oaths rooted in the scapegoat mechanism. Divine vengeance is central to Hobbes's conception of oath leading back to the founding murder as the origin of a wrathful god. The particular oath mentioned by Hobbes is the one between Rome and Alba Longa reported in Titus Livius's history of Rome. Livy used the Latin words *foedus ferire* to describe the conclusion of this treaty. *Ferire* encapsulates the sacrificial element since it means not only to conclude a treaty but also to kill, to strike, to hit or to stab. According to Fustel de Coulanges, the word *foedus* also goes back to bloody sacrifices because it means originally the victim—a kid or a young goat—that was slain when a treaty was concluded (Fustel de Coulanges 207f). A careful reading of Hobbes's political philosophy therefore shows how he had to refer to sacred oaths rooted in the

scapegoat mechanism to explain the principal possibility of the social contract.

B. Rousseau

Rousseau's political philosophy does not allow us a similar view into the violent abyss out of which society emerged. His thinking, however, is not really detached from scapegoating. He too had to give in to the logic of the scapegoat mechanism. In his political theory he tried to answer the question how a society governed by *amour-propre*—mimetic desire leading to conflicts and hatred—can become peaceful. Rousseau's answer consists in the thesis that mimetic desire has to be transformed into patriotism:

> It is certain that the greatest miracles of virtue have been produced by patriotism: this fine and lively feeling, which gives to the force of self-love [*amour-propre*] all the beauty of virtue, lends it an energy which, without disfiguring it, makes it the most heroic of all passions. (Rousseau 1990, 142; see also Saint-Amand 1996, 93, 98-99, 169).

A collective form of mimesis—a "common emulation in all to live and die for their country"— must overcome envy that leads to civil war (Rousseau 1990, 150). According to Rousseau, this common emulation is linked to the nation-state and its political distinction between friends and enemies. Rousseau's solution comes very close to Aeschylus's overcoming of internal feud by a common hatred against the foreign enemies of the Greek *polis*. It's not by chance that Rousseau saw the Greek *polis*—especially Sparta —as an important example of his own concept of the political. A careful reading of Aeschylus's tragedy *Eumenides* reveals that the Greek concept of the political consisting in the distinction between internal friends and external enemies is an offspring of the scapegoat mechanism (Girard 1987b, 146-153; Palaver 1998, 38-45). Rousseau's political philosophy was deeply influenced by this Greek tradition. We are even able to recognize elements leading back to the scapegoat mechanism at the center of Rousseau's political philosophy. His distinction between the general will *(volonté générale)* and the will of all (*volonté de tous*) in his book *The Social Contract* explicitly reveals that patriotism is based on a common national enemy, that is an external scapegoat if we want to reveal the deeper roots of it (see Hamerton-Kelly 239-242). Rousseau quotes the Marquis d'Argenson to illustrate how people can be fused into a political unity: "The agreement of two particular interests is formed by opposition to a third"

(Rousseau 1990, 203). This simple formula expresses not only Rousseau's view of the political it also manifests the course national politics has taken in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hannah Arendt describes Rousseau's political solution to the mimetic crisis in a way that reminds us both of the scapegoat mechanism as the origin of the political and of the modern concept of the political with its friend-enemy distinction in the Schmittian sense: Rousseau

> took his cue from the common experience that two conflicting interests will bind themselves together when they are confronted by a third that equally opposes them both. Politically speaking, he presupposed the existence and relied upon the unifying power of the common national enemy. Only in the presence of the enemy can such a thing as *la nation une et indivisible*, the ideal of French and all other nationalism, come to pass. Hence, national unity can assert itself only in foreign affairs, under circumstances of, at least, potential hostility. (Arendt 1990, 77)

C. Kant

In the case of Kant it is more difficult to find traces of the scapegoat mechanism playing an essential role in his political philosophy. A first look seems to suggest that he was quite aware of the dangers of scapegoating. Similar to his deep dislike of mimesis he also very much feared all situations in which a group may turn into a lynch mob encircling their victim. In his plea for a representational government he distinguishes republicanism, a form of government in which the powers are separated, and despotism which does not have a separation of powers. He calls the latter a "democracy in the truest sense of the world" and emphasizes its tendency to lead to a unification of all against a single opponent:

> It establishes an executive power through which all the citizens may make decisions about (and indeed against) the single individual without his consent. (Kant 1991, 101; see also Siebers 95)

Building on Kant, Hannah Arendt summarized the disposition of a democracy that is not restricted by the rule of law to scapegoating in her definition of the extreme form of power: "All against one" (Arendt 1970, 42).

Kant's emphasis on representation shows quite some sympathy for the traditional concept of the divine right of kings. In order to prevent the

violence of the mob he supports a strong political authority. Similar to his view of the rationality of moral law as the primary antidote against all vices coming along with mimetic desire he insists on the necessity of a strong political authority to transcend the level of the crowd that is always eager to unite against a single victim. Human beings driven by mimetic desire for honor, power or property require, according to Kant, a "master" to break their self-will and to force them to obey a universally valid will under which they can be free (Kant 1991, 46). To find such a master that is just in himself and yet a man seems to Kant to be one of the most difficult political tasks. But because "nothing straight can be constructed from such warped wood as that which man is made of," nature only requires to "approximate to this idea" (Kant 1991, 46f) of a highest authority.

Mimetic theory helps to solve the riddle how a transcendent authority can be instituted to create peace in a society. It is the scapegoat mechanism from which political sovereignty emerged to overcome a violent chaos at the dawn of human civilization. Kant seems to have come very close to an insight into the violent origin of political order. He views the social contract not as a historical fact but just as an "idea of reason" (Kant 1991, 79). Where he reflects on the historical origin of civilization itself he suggests that it could only have been a violent origin. His suspicion that political authority has its origin in violence causes him, however, to claim the futility of all questions concerning the origin:

> It is futile to hunt for *historical documentation* of the origins of this mechanism. That is, we cannot reach back to the time at which civil society first emerged (for savages do not set up any formal instrument in submitting themselves to the law, and it can easily be gathered from the nature of uncivilised man that they must have initially used violent means). (Kant 1991, 162)

Kant's insistence on the futility to uncover the origins of culture is not really due to the fact that he thinks that such an inquiry is impossible. Even if we could find any historical evidence he would try to outlaw such an attempt. He knows too well that the disclosure of the violent foundation of a society would undermine its order. Kant, therefore, forbids the ordinary people to speculate on the origin of their society:

> The origin of the supreme power, for all practical purposes, is *not discoverable* by the people who are subject to it. In other words, the subject *ought not* to indulge in *speculations* [Kant

> 1977, VIII 437: "vernünfteln"] about its origin with a view to acting upon them, as if its right to be obeyed were open to doubt. (Kant 1991, 143)

In Kant's view searching the origin of a society means a "menace to the state":

> For if the subject, having delved out the ultimate origin, where then to offer resistance to the authority currently in power, he might by the laws of this authority...be punished, eliminated or banished as an outlaw...A law which is so sacred (i.e., inviolable) that it is practically a crime even to cast doubt upon it and thus to suspend its effectiveness for even an instant, cannot be thought of as coming from human beings, but from some infallible supreme legislator. That is what is meant by the saying that "all authority comes from God," which is not a *historical derivation* of the civil constitution, but an idea expressed as a practical principle of reason, requiring men to obey the legislative authority now in power irrespective of its origin. (Kant 1991, 143)

It is his rejection of any form of resistance that causes his refusal to inquire the origin of culture. Historically, Kant was able to observe a modern recurrence of the scapegoat mechanism in his own time. His reflections on the right of resistance appeared only a few years after the execution of Louis XVI during the French Revolution. In connection with these considerations, Kant wrote a long footnote on this execution and the one of Charles I in seventeenth century England. According to Kant, both these executions arouse "some dread in any soul imbued with ideas of human right" (Kant 1991, 145; [Kant 1977, VIII 440: "was die mit Ideen des Menschenrechts erfüllte Seele mit einem Schaudern ergreift"]). How can this strange awe be explained? Kant refers to the legal formality of these executions contradicting all concepts of rights:

> The reason why the thought of the formal execution of a monarch *by his people* inspires us with dread is that, while his *murder* must be regarded merely as an exception to the rule which the people have taken as their maxim, his *execution* must be seen as a complete *reversal* of the principles which govern the relationships between the sovereign and the people. For it amounts to making the people, who owe their existence purely

> to the legislation of the sovereign, into rulers of the sovereign, thereby brazenly adopting violence as a deliberate principle and exalting it above the most sacred canons of right. And this, like an abyss which engulfs everything beyond hope of return [Kant 1977, VIII 442: "wie ein Alles ohne Wiederkehr verschlingender Abgrund"], is an act of suicide by the state, and it would seem to be a crime for which there can be no atonement." (Kant 1991, 146)

Kant's explanation of the sacred terror caused by the executions of Charles I and Louis XVI suggests that he actually looked into the abyss of the scapegoat mechanism which is really a contradiction in itself. It is the rule of violence to create a law against violence. Also Kant's short reference to the murder of a monarch as an exception to the rule alludes to an important dimension of the scapegoat mechanism, which is structured by the exception (see Girard 1987a, 99-104). Kant, however, did not really want to know what was happened in these executions. Shuddering in front of the sacred he turned his eyes away. Whereas he thought that these events were just suicides of the states, they actually became the founding murders of modern democracy in England and France (see Hamerton-Kelly 219f).

Kant's political philosophy can be characterized as an attempt to prevent a recurrence of the scapegoat mechanism. In order to fulfill this task he had to approach towards foundational violence as close as possible without reaching, however, its full exposure. Kant could not add a critique of violence to his series of critical works. Such a critique would have undermined his rigid and cold concept of law—an offspring of the scapegoat mechanism itself—that he defended to contain collective violence. Walter Benjamin, who blamed Kant's categorical imperative for its inadequacy to criticize violence, asserted that in capital punishment the violent "origins of law jut manifestly and fearsomely into existence" (Benjamin 286; see Girard 1977b, 298). Kant's position on the death penalty is a proof of his blind spot about the origin of culture. He defended capital punishment against its early critics like the enlightenment thinker Marchese Beccaria. According to Kant, murder must be retaliated by capital punishment even if a state ceases to exist:

> If civil society were to dissolve itself with the consent of all its members..., the last murderer in prison would first have to be executed in order that each should receive his deserts and that the people should not bear the guilt of a capital crime through

> failing to insist on its punishment; for if they do not so, they can be regarded as accomplices in the public violation of justice. (Kant 1991, 156)

3. An Augustinian critique of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant

Despite my claim at the beginning of this paper that Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant may be called mimetic thinkers, a more thoroughgoing reading of their philosophies brings an important difference between their positions and Girard's mimetic theory to light. I will demonstrate this difference by comparing those three philosophers with an Augustinian perspective.

Augustine seems to me to be the philosopher who comes closest to Girard's mimetic theory. We can find traces of this affinity already in Girard's early works (Girard 1965, 58f; 1978, 5f; 1997, 140; 1999, 42f). In 1994 Girard claimed that one can find three quarters of what he has said already in Saint Augustine (Girard 1994, 196; 1991, 296).

Augustine is truly a mimetic thinker (see Alison 293-295; Graham). A first proof of this can be found in his definition of religion as the imitation of God. It is the "highest duty of religion to imitate him whom thou worshippest" (Augustine, *de civ.* VIII.17). Imitation, however, is not only at the heart of religion, it is also central to Augustine's view of human life. Like Girard, he does not reduce mimetic desire to its bad distortion causing violence but starts with good mimesis. If human beings orient their desires towards God they imitate him in a humble way. Augustine calls this form of love *amor Dei*, the love of God (Augustine, *de civ.* XIV.28). Its opposite occurred during the fall. Adam and Eve chose a satanic imitation of God when they abandoned him by turning their desires towards themselves. *Amor Dei*, the love of God, became *amor sui*, a bad love of self that from now on forced human beings to fight against one another. Augustine identifies *amor sui* with pride and calls it *perversa imitatio Dei*, a perverse imitation of God.

Similar to Hobbes, also Augustine explains conflicts between human beings by the fact that the desires of fallen men and women lead them to long for the same temporal objects that cannot be divided or shared. According to Augustine, the earthly city always remains divided against itself because of its rejoicing in temporal goods that are always to small to satisfy all (Augustine, *de civ.* XV.4). Romulus and Remus are his main examples to illustrate the deadly consequences of human competition to be foremost in temporal things (Augustine, *de civ.* XV.5).

Close to Girard's insight into the scapegoat mechanism, Augustine also claims that the earthly city—formed by *amor sui*—is founded on a murder. Cain is its founder (Augustine, *de civ.* XV.5). Romulus, the founder of Rome, follows him in this respect.

Through grace Augustine became aware of his own pride, a life completely determined by *amor sui*. In his *Confessions* he narrates his conversion that opened his heart to God, a goal of desire that no longer leads to rivalry and envy with others but is increased in its value the more people join his longing. If human beings foremost desire is to rejoice in God —*fruitio Dei*—by only using temporal goods to obtain this goal and not enjoying them, violence would lose its mastery over the world. Augustine's own conversion enabled him to recognize two ways of love going along with two modes of imitation that result in two different types of cities. By conversion he became a genuine mimetic thinker following the apostles in the Gospels—whose conversion made them witnesses of the truth of the biblical revelation—and preceding those novelistic authors like Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Proust and Dostoevsky who also by conversion became revealers of mimetic desire.

In his first book *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* Girard distinguishes between novelistic authors that reveal mimetic desire and romantic authors who just reflect it. He counts modern philosophical and aesthetic theories among the second group (Girard 1965, 268; see also 17, 168, 173, 228, 258). This classification may apply to Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant, as well. Their philosophies are closer to a reflection of mimetic desire than to a real revelation of it. An important proof of this thesis can be seen in the lack of good mimesis in their theories. They are no longer influenced by the spirit of the Bible that enabled Augustine and his novelistic successors to overcome human pride by gratefully receiving good mimesis as a divine gift.

A. Hobbes

Despite Hobbes's many references to the Bible he has lost Augustine's insight into mimetic desire. Hobbes's anthropology reduces human life to bad self-love. *Amor sui* has become the only form of love available to human beings in Hobbes's world whereas *amor Dei* or good mimesis is no longer a possible (see Voegelin 1987, 184). Hobbes identifies the condition of the fall, pride or *amor sui*, with human nature itself (see Strauss 1971, 184; Voegelin 1987, 186). Grace, love of God, or *fruitio Dei* no longer play a role in his philosophy (Voegelin 1999, 63). He rejects the traditional

concept of a *summum bonum*, a highest good (Hobbes 1991, 70). Human felicity consists in the restless hunt for earthly goods:

> *Continuall successe* in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continuall prospering, is that men call FELICITY; I mean the felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetuall Tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense. What kind of Felicity God hath ordained to them that devoutly honor him, a man shall no sooner know, than enjoy; being joyes, that now are as incomprehensible, as the word of Schoole-men, *Beatificall Vision*, is unintelligible. (Hobbes 1991, 46)

Hobbes is right to claim that there is no eternal peace in this life. He, however, does not only say that but excludes any connection between life in this world and a longing for the eternal peace in God. Human beings are therefore condemned to long for temporal goods only. A strong state—the Leviathan—has to contain all violence that necessarily results from the mimetic entanglements of people whose envious self-love can no longer be redeemed by grace.

B. Rousseau

At first glance Rousseau seems to be closer to the Bible than Hobbes. The French philosopher does not reduce human life entirely to a bad form of mimetic desire but distinguishes a peaceful state of nature without bad mimesis from a state of society governed by *amour-propre*. Rousseau's state of nature is characterized by a peaceful self-love, *amour de soi*, that does not lead to violence because it is a solitary self-love with no need of others and therefore without mimesis. Rousseau's distinction between a good self-love in the state of nature and a bad self-love in the state of society, however, does not correspond to the orthodox distinction between the status before and after the fall. Rousseau's anthropology rejects the biblical tradition (see Taylor 357). Augustine condemned solipsistic self-love as pride and thought that there could only be a good form of self-love if it was oriented toward the love of God. Rousseau, on the contrary, insisted on the natural goodness of a solipsistic self-love. In this respect, Girard follows Augustine. He shares with Rousseau many insights into mimetic rivalry but parts from him regarding the ultimate source of destructive competition. Close to Augustine, he sees all longings for in-

dividual autonomy, which the tradition identified with original sin, leading to violent conflicts between people. By comparing Rousseau with Dostoevsky he attributes to the French philosopher only a romantic reflection of mimetic desire, whereas the Russian novelist is justly praised for its revelation (Girard 1997, 40, 65, 96f, 99). Dostoevsky became a mimetic thinker by overcoming pride while Rousseau, on the contrary, could not reach conversion. This can be underlined by comparing the *Confessions* of Rousseau with those of Augustine. Rousseau's book remains an apology of his own life. His childhood was pure innocence and he only realized first signs of an evil self-will when a teacher disturbed his natural course of life:

> My desires were so rarely excited and so rarely thwarted, that it never came into my head to have any. I could swear indeed that until I was put under a master I did not so much as know what it was to want my own way. (Rousseau 1953, 22; see Bailie 134f)

According to Rousseau, human beings are innocent as long as society does not force them to become evil. Augustine, to the contrary, writes a book, in which he does not hesitate to blame himself even when he remembers his own childhood and youth. The Latin Church Father chose the right title for his book, because confessions—the title of his famous book—meant to him "accusation of oneself; praise of God" (Brown 135). Rousseau repeated the title without any longer following its content.

C. Kant

Kant's antidote against bad mimetic competition is neither Hobbes's absolutist "King of the Proud" nor Rousseau's dream of a non-mimetic self-love in a peaceful state of nature but a "rational self-love" [Kant 1977, VII 193: "vernünftige Selbstliebe"] that prevents self-love from turning into selfishness ["Eigenliebe"]. The use of reason, however, could, according to Kant, be "fully developed only in the species not in the individual" (Kant 1991, 42). Nature therefore has to use mimetic vices to unfold a cultural development that hopefully will lead to a world of perpetual peace in which the use of reason should more and more dominate. According to Kant, this evolutionary creation of the good out of evil brought forward by nature is "the design of a wise creator—not...the hand of a malicious spirit who had meddled in the creator's glorious work or spoiled it out of envy" (Kant 1991, 45). Despite Kant's claim to represent a philosophy of history that is in accordance with a divine creator, he seems, however, to be closer to a

satanic explanation of cultural development. Two decades after Kant wrote his little treatise *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (1784), Goethe identified Kant's evolutionary logic with the nature of the devil itself. In his tragedy *Faust I* (1808), Mephistopheles—a satanic character—calls himself a "Part of that power which still produceth good, whilst ever scheming ill."

Kant's interpretation of the biblical narratives about the fall supports my thesis that his philosophy of history is closer to the logic of Satan than to the biblical revelation. His treatise *Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History* (1786) summarizes the chapters two to six of *Genesis* concluding that

> Man's emergence from that paradise...was nothing other than his transition from a rude and purely animal existence to a state of humanity, from the leading-strings of instinct to the guidance of reason—in a word, from the guardianship of nature to the state of freedom. (Kant 1991, 226)

In order to progress towards perfection the sin of the fall seems to be a necessary step of cultural evolution. Kant significantly parts from Augustine and his identification of original sin with human pride.

In Kant's later work *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) his view of the fall seems to have moved closer to Christian orthodoxy. But also this work parts significantly from Christian tradition. In Kant's eyes there is no longer the need of grace to overcome the fallen state (see Kittsteiner 73-87):

> Man himself must make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, whether good or evil, he is or is to become. (Kant 1977, VIII 694)

Human beings have to convert by their "own powers" (Kant 1977, VIII 698). It is in this regard that Kant differs most significantly from Girard's mimetic theory. His "moral religion" (Kant 1977, VIII 703) confined within the limits of pure reason does not allow grace to become an essential means for conversion. Girard's mimetic theory, too, is not a theological apology of Christianity, but an apology in the fields of social sciences (Girard 2001, 3). But when Girard tries to answer the question how the disciples of Jesus ware able to overcome their own violent contagion against Jesus he had to leave the purely "commonsensical and 'anthropological' context" (Girard

2001, 189) of his most recent book. In it he recognizes that the Holy Spirit has enabled the disciples to triumph over mimetic violence. Girard refers to the conversions of Peter and Paul to highlight the necessary role of the Paraclete (Girard 2001, 190f).

By following the examples of Peter and Paul or all the other saints in their footsteps we open our hearts to the gift of grace. It was Augustine who insisted on the need of grace to counter the corrupted wills of human beings after the fall (see Alison 12). With the help of mimetic theory we can translate Augustine's insight into an "anthropology of grace" (Alison 37):

> First, there is no change in "me" except insofar as there is a change in the relationality with the other; and second, this change can be initiated only by the other.

Kant's refusal to consider grace and his exclusion of good mimesis parts with this line of an Augustinian anthropology. It seems, on the contrary, to be a modern version of Pelagianism.

Kant's exclusion of grace and good mimesis separates him from Girard also regarding the type of peace these two theories aim at. Kant trusts in reason and represents a "philosophical chiliasm" (Kant 1977, VIII 682; see also Kant 1991, 50), which longs for a "perpetual peace" that can be achieved "here on earth" (Kant 1991, 53; see also Höffe 2001, 165, 179, 181). Girard, on the contrary, is an apocalyptic thinker who does not believe in the "peace of the world" (John 14.27)—because even as a concept of reason it remains linked to the scapegoat mechanism—but looks forward to the "peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Phil 4.7; see Girard 2001, 186). Like Augustine, Girard knows that we have to wait until an "eternal peace" is given to us by God.

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INDIFFERENCE AND ENVY: THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MODERN ECONOMY

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1. Girard and economics

René Girard himself has not written very much on economics, at least explicitly. Though his works are full of insights into and short remarks on the sacrificial origin of different economic phenomena or the way in which mimetic relations and commercial transactions are often intertwined and act upon each other.[1] Unlike religion, psychology, psychoanalysis, literature and anthropology, the analysis of modern and traditional economies from the point of view of mimetic theory has never been carried out by Girard himself, but for the most part by other people, for example, in the French speaking world, which I know best, essentially by Michel Aglietta and André Orléan in *La violence de la monnaie* (1982) and by Jean-Pierre Dupuy and myself in *L'enfer des choses* (1979) and as well as others, such as, by Mark Anspach, Andrèw Feenberg, P. Lantz, A. Orléan, G.-H. de Radkowsky and Lucien Scubla in various works on economy, economic anthropology, or the place and role of money in literary texts.[2] In a way, this is somewhat surprising since the relationship between mimetic and economic phenomena, at least in a broad sense, was seen quite early on. For example, soon after the original publication *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (1961) the French Marxist Lucien Goldman wrote in his *Pour une sociologie du Roman* (1964) that Girard's work was the most important book to read in order to understand

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[1] For example, *Mensonge romantique* (18-23); *Des choses cachées* (82-88).
[2] See Anspach, Feenberg, Lantz, Orléan [*passim*], de Radkowski.

the effects of economic alienation on literature since Georg Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* (1920). Moreover in a footnote in *Les origines du capitalisme* (1971) Jean Baechler suggested that those wishing to understand the nature of the infinite desire for acquisition which capitalists economies have institutionalized should read Girard's book.[3] Whatever the reason for Girard's relative disinterest in economic phenomena others have not been prevented from tackling this problem and it bears witness in a special way to the dynamism and intellectual power of the mimetic theory that its application to the field of economics has essentially, if not entirely, been due to the work of others rather than to the efforts of René Girard himself.

2. The substantivist-formalist debate

In the late 1940's and early 1950's a debate began that divided (and still divides) the community of economists and of anthropologists interested in economic phenomena. It concerns the nature of economy and is generally referred to as the substantivist-formalist debate. It was first formulated in the works of the Austrian economist, Karl Polanyi.[4] In *The Great Transformation* (1945), a book on the history of the formation and organization of the market economy in Europe from the late 18th to early 20th centuries, Polanyi already argued that the modern market economy was a rare historical accident. Furthermore Polanyi said, unlike what liberal and economic ideologies pretend, that there is nothing natural about the market. It does not correspond to any spontaneous human tendency to barter and exchange, and it does not arise by itself as soon as certain conditions are satisfied. On the contrary, modern markets have been put into place through sustained and voluntary state policies which consciously destroyed traditional solidarities, authorized the unlimited sale of land and labor and literally created the labor market, for example, in England through the Reform Bill of 1834 that repealed the existing Poor Laws which had prevented the free circulation of labor. The system formed by market economies, the balance of power among European states and the gold

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[3] Interestingly, 24 years later, in the second vastly enlarged edition of that work, *Le capitalisme*, (1995) the reference to Girard has disappeared though the text of the original work, which now constitutes the second part of the book, is otherwise reprinted in its integrity.

[4] Actually Polanyi in *The Livelihood of Man* (1977) sees the origin of the debate in Carl Mengers, *Principles of Economics* [1871]. Let us say then that it found its first modern formulation in the work of Polanyi.

standard granted Europe one century of unprecedented economic growth and relative peace, from the end of the Napoleonic wars to the catastrophe of 1914. Yet that First World War, as well as the Second and the authoritarian political movements that led to it, were, according to Polanyi, the result of the inevitable collapse of a system wrought with contradictions. The collapse was inevitable because the market system rested on some very particular political and economic conditions, the balance of power and the gold standard, something which was not clearly understood by its proponents. However, the main reason the break down of the market system could not have been avoided is because it is a highly unnatural economic system that replaces the normal function of economic activities, which is to ensure the livelihood of man (which is the title of Polanyi's last book),[5] by the unlimited search for profit. Furthermore, theoretically it is based on the idea of *homo oeconomicus* an abstraction to which no reality whatsoever corresponds in spite of economic and political efforts to create a world consistent with economic theory. In later years Polanyi, with the help of many collaborators, went on to document his claims with historical and anthropological studies of trade in various archaic and traditional societies.[6]

Such claims were bound to generate controversy. They challenged classical economic theory on at least three points. First, the naturalness of the market. To some extent this is both an empirical and a conceptual question. Whether or not the market is natural, whatever that may mean when one really comes to think about it, is a question of knowing if it is rare or frequent, if it arises spontaneously as soon as certain "natural" conditions are satisfied or if these conditions need to be explicitly and voluntarily created as Polanyi affirmed. These are empirical questions. But then, even if markets economies are rare, perhaps even unique in the history of mankind, does it follow that markets are "unnatural" in any other sense than that they are rare? Jean Baechler, for one, believes that capitalism is rare and, in a way, that our present experience is unique in the history of mankind; yet he asserts that it is the only natural form of economic organization.[7] Second, Polanyi's claims challenge the universality of economic theory. Since Adam Smith, at least, economists believe that their discipline

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[5] Published posthumously in 1977.

[6] For example: *Trade and Markets in the Early Empires* and *Dahomey and the Slave Trade: An Analysis of an Archaic Economy.*

[7] See J. Baechler.

is founded on some universal traits of human nature and therefore that it applies at all places and at all times, that it defines efficient or economic behavior independent of all historical or cultural contingencies. This is precisely what Polanyi and many anthropologists reject. They argue that this illusion induces economists, and the anthropologists who adopt it, to view non modern economies as failed attempts to create rational and efficient markets, while they are often actually very successful institutions in their own right, in view of their different goals. However the main point is that market economies are the exception rather than the rule and economic man nowhere to be found, economic laws are not universal theorems of efficient behavior and are only true within the economists' formal models and perhaps, at times, within modern economies, which have been artificially transformed in order to be consistent with economic theory. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Polanyi's claims challenge the moral neutrality of modern economic theories, in which exchanges are by definition fair if they are free, other-wise, says the economists, they would not have taken place. Modern market economies, argue the substantivists, are socially destructive. Traditional economies, according to Polanyi, were imbedded in the social structure. He meant by that, first, that in traditional societies economic activities were not separated from other types of social relationship, but were present in various forms of ritual, political, domestic or cultural activities. The economy did not constitute an independent sphere of activity, but existed as an aspect of different types of social relations. Second, as anthropologists have known since Marcel Mauss's famous *Essai sur le don* (1923-24), exchange in traditional societies is not a way of making profit but a means through which the social bond is continuously created and relations of solidarity enacted. Modern market economies are, in contrast, characterized by the independence of the economic sphere. This means that economic transactions constitute a domain of activity in itself, separated from other forms of social relationships. It is claimed that economic exchanges constitute a type of activity whose rationality and efficiency require it to be free of all restraints from traditional beliefs or obligations. Furthermore, this economic model of interaction tends to invade all social relations and to replace the personal bond of traditional exchange by abstract connections between individuals that are established only through money and the division of labor.

The debate has been going on since this time. It flares up once in a while, but is pretty much continuous, with each camp holding its position.

The formalists generally ignore the substantivists and simply refuse to discuss the issue, claiming "that the proof of the pudding is in the eating," that the system works in spite of its failures and difficulties and that market economies have led to unheard-of levels of economic and demographic growth. Though the substantivists are very active in economic history and economic anthropology, and often produce remarkable studies, they have always failed to make any significant inroads into classical theory. Of course I am not presumptuous enough to believe that I can convince an economist, but I do think that mimetic theory can allow us to reformulate the problem , i.e., the question of the radical novelty of market economies, and whether they are an unnatural exception, in a way which may throw some light on this debate. Of course, as it should be clear to every one by now, this is not just some scholarly debate in economic theory; what is at stake is our own attitude towards the modern economy. I suspect that each and every one of us can recognize him or herself in the substantivist or the formalist position, and, if you are like me, in both, at different times.

3. The ambivalence of scarcity

In *L'enfer des choses* (1978) I argued that scarcity functions in the modern world in the way the sacred does in traditional societies. That is to say, it is as a means of protection against violence. Like the sacred according to Girard, scarcity contains violence in two senses of the verb to contain. First, in the sense that it limits and controls violence: it keeps it in check. It is, as I said, a means of protection against violence. Second, in the sense that it incorporates or embodies violence within itself, in the sense that to some extent it consists of violence. Hence, like the sacred, scarcity is a violent way of protecting ourselves against our own violence. This presupposes that scarcity is not a natural condition, just like the sacred is not divine, but something that we make and, in a sense, an institution, or, better, a matrix out of which modern institutions are made, starting with the market. Some may consider it obvious that we make scarcity. That is, I suspect, because they confuse what I call scarcity with inequality. Some may consider the claim to be preposterous. Scarcity, they will say, refers to the fact that resources are finite and the multiplicity of ends open to us entails that we must choose and decide how we will use our resources and which resources will go to what end. Economics is simply the science of the rational or efficient allocation of limited resources. This, though in itself unobjectionable, misses the point. Socially, scarcity is not the fact that resources are limited, but the fact that, no matter the real quantity of

resources they are deemed insufficient to satisfy the needs and desires of all. This is a quite different problem, for the social allocation of limited resources does not in itself entail that the needs, and even the desires, of all will not be met. Scarcity is the mimetic mechanism through which these further conditions are satisfied and it is this what protects us from our own violence.

It has long been known that increasing one's income is not the only road to abundance: one can also limit one's needs and desires. In *Stone Age Economics* Marshall Sahlins reminds us that this solution was preferred by many traditional and primitive societies. Yet, contrary to what Sahlins sometimes seems to suggest, we should not think that this solution was an individual one, or even a "cultural" solution in the sense that noble values, like as a certain sobriety in desire, were internalized by agents. In fact, many very simple and poor societies show large discrepancies in wealth and power and intense rivalries between agents which suggest that the "bons sauvages" are not particularly more restrained in their desires than we are ourselves. Sahlins's remark makes sense only if we think about it socially. The restraints and limits in question are established by bonds of solidarity, prohibitions and obligations, i.e., by the sacred. They are set by sacrifice and by the sacrificial mechanism that unites everyone, except the victim, in one and the same community. Under those conditions, to refuse help to one whose fundamental needs are not fulfilled is to cast him out of the community. That is why help of some sort is never refused in normal circumstances. Yet, for those who receive that help, to question the amount, or to ask for more, at least repeatedly, is generally, as we commonly say, "to ask for it." That is to say, it is to expose oneself to a refusal which will not be for this time only, but forever, in short it is to expose oneself to the risk of being cast out of the community. Though this will certainly happen often, it is perfectly consistent with the fact that there is no one within the community whose basic needs are left unattended. Bonds of solidarity, obligations and prescriptions restrain the desires of those who have, by imposing upon them a duty to give, and of those who have not, for they must be satisfied with what they get. Thus "abundance," so to speak, is achieved at the same time that the existing hierarchies of wealth and power are reproduced. It is achieved through the normal functioning of the sacrificial system, that is to say, by the violent mechanism that protects traditional societies from their own violence.

Scarcity is the result of the demise of that system of protection against violence. More precisely, it is the result of the progressive rejection of

these various bonds of solidarity. There is a long and interesting story to be told as to how and why such an evolution took place, too long for the space allotted here. By rejecting traditional obligations of solidarity, or rather by the general weakening of such obligations a new social space was created in which those who were left to fend for themselves could live, i.e., those who were neither helped nor eliminated from the community. Progressively, this space was extended to all of us. The mechanism for this is relatively simple. The weakening of the obligations of solidarity can either be a curse or a blessing depending on your present situation. If you are well off, to be able to say that you have no duty to help, that these are neither your poor, nor deserving poor, is no disadvantage. Given this, some were always ready to extent this independent status to themselves in spite of the precariousness it entailed. In a sense, scarcity is nothing but a social organization where this status of independence has become general. As a consequence, the problem of how to allocate limited resources now arises. It concerns each and everyone of us. Because of the uncertainty typical of this independent status, but also because since there are now no binding rules to prescribe a specific re-allocation of resources in times of need, the problem is now everyone's individually not only on the receiving end but also on the giving end. Scarcity is socially constructed because whether or not resources are sufficient to satisfy the needs of all does not depend primarily on the size of the resources available, but on the social bonds, obligations, prohibitions and prescriptions which link the members of the community. It depends on the type of social organization.

But how does this new form of social organization protect us from our own violence? In at least two ways, I think. First, by rejecting traditional bonds of solidarity. This may seem strange since obligations of solidarity are fundamental to the sacrificial system's ability to protect traditional societies from their own violence. Yet, bonds of solidarity are also means through which, in a traditional society, whenever a conflict erupts, many people, i.e., a whole family, a clan or a tribe, are immediately concerned and in danger of being engulfed in the dispute. Traditional bonds of solidarity impose obligations of violence and duties of revenge. They expose one to being the next victim of a conflict in which one has never taken part "personally." Traditional bonds of solidarity are a violent form of protection against violence. That is why they can always ultimately end up feeding the violence they aim to stop. Scarcity isolates conflicts. Just as it allows us not to help those whose basic needs are not satisfied, it allows us, "not to get involved" in other people's conflicts. Scarcity generates, to

borrow an apt phrase from Norman Geras, a "contract of mutual indifference."[8] Such indifference, just as it creates a situation where resources are insufficient to satisfy the needs and desires of all, also liberates us from our traditional duties of violence. This isolation of conflicts makes it more difficult and less likely for violence to converge in a unique dispute that engulfs the whole community. Thus scarcity protects us from our own violence first by providing us with a form of social organization that makes it more difficult for violent contagion to converge upon a unique enemy. The sacred is built on the sacrificial crisis itself. It reproduces and forces agents to reproduce, as Girard reminds us, the very actions which led to its violent issue. It is therefore not surprising that the same obligations and prohibitions which protect the community in normal times can serve as a channel through which violence travels. Scarcity, to the contrary, because it rests on the abandonment of these same obligations cuts off that path to the propagation of violence. Furthermore, since it is not permanently threatened by the danger of a general conflagration, scarcity can remain a relatively "non-pacified" social situation where many local, more or less violent conflicts cohabit within the stable order of society.

Scarcity also protects us against our own violence in a more dynamic way. Fascination with one's own mimetic conflict and rivalry makes one indifferent to the needs and conflicts of others. The plurality of conflicts present within scarcity actually encourages each individual to renege on the obligations of solidarity in order to pursue more intensely his or her own cherished and hated privileged rivalry. To put it in another way, the more one is fascinated by one's own conflicts the less one will be easily fascinated by the conflicts of others and tempted to join them, so the plurality of conflict actually makes for the divergence of rivalries rather than for their convergence against a unique antagonist. This is why in scarcity also it is by their own violence, or at least by their own mimetic behavior, that agents are protected from the more disastrous consequences of mimetic fascination. Furthermore, because in these conflicts there are necessarily winners and losers, scarcity cannot but create large amounts of frustration and resentment which, in the absence of the catharsis provided by sacrifice, must at some point, it seems, erupt into a society wide sacrificial crisis. Yet, over the last centuries our modern forms of social organization have shown a remarkable degree of stability in spite of the high level of rivalry they contain. The reason, I believe, is that though scarcity does not possess any

[8] See Geras, *The Contract of Mutual Indifference. Political Philosophy after the Holocaust.*

proper sacrificial ritual. It does not lack of substitute victims for agents to transfer their resentment to, in fact, they are everywhere. They are the "poor losers" who inhabit the gaps of our social security systems and the streets of our cities. They are all those who, having been rejected by the fair and impersonal functioning of the market, are now left to their own devices to fare best as they can and who face our general indifference, when it is not our silent suspicion that they must in some way deserve what has happened to them. Our indifference is not just the counterpart of our fascination, the reverse side of the coin whose other face is our own envy, it is also our form of "ritual immolation."

It should be noticed, though, that the essential condition for this system to exist is a negative one. It rests on an absence, on the rejection and refusal of bonds of solidarity and spontaneously arises when there is nothing to replace them and mimetic relations are let free to play. This means that scarcity is not properly an institution, but, like the sacrificial crisis, a spontaneous mechanism that can serve as a matrix for different institutions.

4. The debate revisited

Central to Polanyi's argument is the empirical finding that market economies are the exception rather than the rule, and that they did not arise spontaneously. Though his claims are well documented they leave open one question, why did this exception occur? Why did modern market economies arise precisely there and then? If market economies are such an "unnatural" economic system, through what rare and unlikely accident did they ever appear? Mimetic theory provides at least a plausible general answer to these queries. Given that the historical effect of Christianity is to progressively ruin the sacrificial system and that scarcity spontaneously emerges as traditional bonds of solidarity are abandoned, then we should expect this system to arise in a region where Christianity has long weakened these bonds. Why it emerged precisely where and when it did, as well as the role of the state in this process, are questions too complex to even begin to answer in the present context. Nonetheless, what mimetic theory gives us is a means for understanding the radical novelty of modern market economies and a reason for their "unnaturalness." Their historical specificity is related to the unique breakdown of the sacrificial system caused by Christian Revelation. It is also linked to rejection of that Revelation. Scarcity is what we live in, which is neither the sacred, nor the Kingdom of God.

From a purely secular and scientific point of view, mimetic theory allows us to understand the particularity of modern economies. They are neither natural, nor unnatural but rest on a different regime of human mimesis which is made possible by the absence of traditional bonds of solidarity. Or, to put it in another way, scarcity constitutes, like the sacred, a fixed point in the space of collective mimetic behavior. This explains its remarkable power of attraction. It also explain why it was hitherto unheard of, without having to conclude as the substantivists do that it is in some way against nature. Mimetic theory also allows us to understand why substantivists and formalists are talking at cross purposes. They are not really talking about the same thing. Substantivists claim that at all places and at all times economic processes have been embedded in the social structure and that it should be so here also. They argue that modern economies with their abstract market systems are not the rule but the exception. Formalists counter that traditional rules of solidarity are irrational in view of the optimal allocation of rare resources. Both are right. The substantivists' empirical claim is correct, though not the normative conclusion they derive from it. The formalists' theoretical response is accurate, except that they remain unconscious of the specific conditions necessary for the empirical application of their theory. Ultimately both are wrong because they believe that they are essentially dealing with economic phenomena. Substantivists observe, but cannot explain, that economic processes are always embedded in the social structure, while formalists take for granted the independence of such processes, unaware of the mimetic mechanism through which they gain their modern autonomy. Behind these different types of economies are distinct regimes of mimetic behavior which explain their particularities.

Mimetic theory also provides us with a different outlook on what may be called the moral dimension of this debate: an outlook that some may find relatively uncomfortable. Let me explain. There are two sides to this moral debate. One is that of the formalists. According to them the market is by definition fair. Given ideal conditions of perfect information, where exchanges are free, in the sense that no one is forced to exchange but can refrain from concluding a bargain until he or she finds a satisfactory price, and where agents are rational, exchanges are by definition fair or they would not take place. Of course we may want to retort that these "ideal" conditions are generally not satisfied. To which the formalists will usually answer, not without reason, that this is probably true and therefore, that it is not the presence, but the absence of market conditions which are to be blamed. The substantivists on the contrary will claim that modern market

economy has historically been destructive of traditional bonds of solidarity; it has instituted indifference to the suffering of others as a way of life. They will claim that the exclusive rule of market transaction progressively destroys the moral fibre of a society, no matter how 'fair' the market may be in principle.

Mimetic theory suggests that we can share neither of these points of view. The destruction of sacred bonds of solidarity periodically strengthened by sacrificial rituals cannot be such a bad thing. Substantivists also fail to see that our indifference, which they condemn, protects us from our own violence, and that by condemning it they condemn own violence but fail to renounce it. Formalists are right that in ideal conditions market exchanges are fair, but they fail to see the violence that is embedded in this fairness. A fair exchange is one about which neither of the parties has any reason to complain afterwards. It lasts for an instant and leaves no bond or obligation between the agents afterwards. That is precisely what it means to say that it is fair. A fair exchange is a relation which of itself gives to its participants no reason to enter into another relation later on. Justice as fairness is justice amongst those who are indifferent. Yet we should not condemn it, for until everyone has renounced his or her own violence, it is what protects each individual against all those who are not indifferent. The ambivalence of scarcity is our own ambivalence.

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COMPLEX SYSTEMS, IMITATION, AND MYTHICAL EXPLANATIONS

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Abstract

In this article we analyze in a new way the epistemological concept of mythical explanation. It is shown, within the framework of the theory of dynamic and complex systems, that this kind of explanation is grounded on the substitution of distributed causation by lineal and single causes. Considering four examples, we show which mechanism is operating in that substitution. The first one concerns a computational implementation of a racial segregation model. The second one will be the analysis of an imaginary panic. The third one starts with the theory, developed by René Girard, concerning sacrifice rituals and the emergence of scapegoats. Finally, the fourth one is based on the introduction of the imitation mechanism as an explanation for the financial markets behavior.

Introduction

Common sense often states that certain explanations are an illusion, in the sense that they are a "myth." On the other hand, theoretical reasoning wants to discard anything that could be called a mythical explanation. Both common sense and science make, however, an extensive use of that kind of explanation, and in fact the word "myth" does not necessarily mean "illusion." It can be understood as a mechanism due to a condition of the individuals: its bounded rationality. If it is an illusion, its meaning approaches what Kant called a "transcendental illusion," an illusion that is a necessary one.

More precisely, that is the condition which states that the actions exercised by the individuals upon each other are local actions; each

individual acts in function of the behavior of the neighbors with which he is in a direct contact. We will show that this condition implies that the aggregate of each individual local action cannot be represented by any of them: that global aggregate is external to all. Each individual is "myopic." he has a "short horizon." and he has, continuing with the spatial metaphors, an extremely limited vision of the wide scale consequences of his actions.

The purpose of this article is not to analyze the structure of certain myths as pursued in fields such as ethnology, anthropology or mythology. It is rather to analyze the structure and epistemic function of what will be defined as a mythical explanation. The main argument will be guided by the theory of dynamic and complex systems. Within that framework it is possible to make the computational synthesis of the local/global dialectic. More precisely, we will start with what is usually designated by agent-based models (see, for example, Epstein and Axtell, Axelrod, Cederman, Arthur, LeBaron). In order to achieve the definition of mythical explanation, an implementation will be exposed of what was perhaps the first example of computational synthesis in the spirit of agent-based modeling, Schelling's model of segregation. That example can be used as a step to show that a mythical explanation consists in the replacement of a local and distributed causation by what, since Aristotle, is called an efficient causation. That idea will then be developed with the analysis of panic. A further illustration of the main elements of mythical explanations will be based on René Girard's work, showing how Girard's theory fits within the framework of dynamic systems theory. Finally, we will see how the financial markets, as complex systems, can provide a last example of the mythical replacement of local causation by a global single cause.

Agent-based models and concept of mythical explanation

We begin with a particular implementation of Shelling's model of segregation (Schelling). The model can be represented in a network composed by automata or agents that can assume two states corresponding to their "race" or color: either G (grizzly) or W (White). The behavior of each agent is local, which means that each one receives the influence off—and influences—eight other neighbor agents. That "influence" can be understood as an "incitement to move," that is, each agent possesses "movement" and he moves (or not) from his position to another one, according to the proportion of individuals of his color located within his defined ray of neighborhood. We can specify the value of 37% of neighbors that can

induce an agent to move. More specifically, the algorithm that implements Schelling's model can be expressed like this:

- Each individual calculates the number of neighbors of his color (with eight agents as the ray of neighborhood).
- If that number is less than 37% (that is, if more than 63% are of opposite color), he moves to a place randomly chosen that satisfies that condition of preference; otherwise, he does not move.

And that's all. It is indeed a very simple algorithm. In our implementation of the model we start with an initial random population of agents.[1] The iteration of the algorithm leads the system to an invariant final configuration, a fixed point.[2] That configuration clearly shows a segregation situation: groups with grizzly elements clearly separated by groups of white elements (see Figure 1).

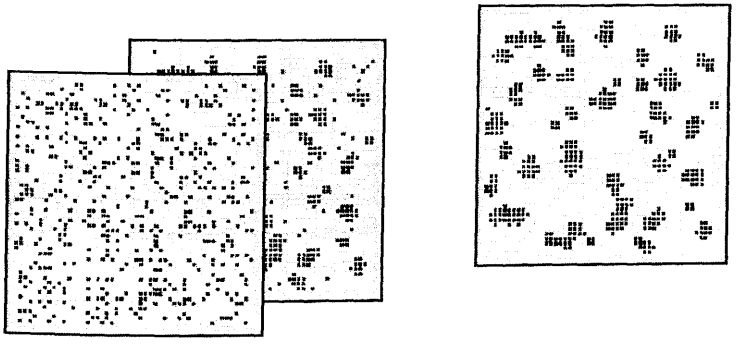

Figure 1: Schelling's model defined in a network with 50 * 50 agents, with 509 grizzly and 1991 white. The first diagram represents an initial random distribution. The second one represents the state of the system after 45 iterations. The third one is the invariant final state reached after 201 iterations.

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[1] A more complete mathematical analysis of Schelling's model can be found in Alves, C., Machuco Rosa, A., Antão, A., N., "Distributed Causation and Emergence in Finite Models." The implementation of the model can also be run on line at that URL.

[2] In informal terms, we recall that a fixed point is a point that verifies the equation $f(X)=X$, where X designates the vector of the states of the system, and that a fixed point is *stable* when it remains invariant under the action of small perturbations. Otherwise, the fixed point is *unstable*; an unstable fixed point is also called a critical point.

It is important to notice that the agents of the model are interdependent and that they interact in a nonlinear way, that is the global behavior of the system cannot be obtained by the independent sum of the behavior of each agent. It follows that the local analysis of the model, taking each one of its parts separately, does not allow to foresee its future evolution. That is the situation of the agents that the model is supposed to represent: as we assumed them to be myopic, they can just represent isolated parts of the system, and therefore none of them can foresee the final state to which the system converges. Therefore, no agent can anticipate the wide scale consequences of his behavior. But one could anticipate (to prove) what the computational simulation clearly shows: the state of complete integration corresponds to an unstable situation, while the state of segregation corresponds to a stable fixed point. Therefore, starting from an initial random state, a pattern or global order emerges, which, we stress again, cannot be deduced from the isolated behavior of an agent or subset of agents

We are not arguing that the model explains the empirical reality of segregation; our main concern is to underline that it illustrates a dynamic process in which the final state is the aggregate and non-intentional effect of many nonlinear interactions, a dynamic that will be seen as foundation for mythical explanations. Notice again that the effect (global segregation) is really non-intentional, given the fact that the rule of the model is non-segregationist. What is then the *cause* of the segregation? In a certain sense, at least in the sense more commonly attributed to the concept of causation, the cause does not exist. The cause is a distributed causation, not present in any isolated part of the system. In agreement to the spirit of the theory of complex systems we will name it: *distributed causation.* It is no more than the result of the multiple nonlinear interactions among the elements of the system. As it is shown in the simulation, it is not present in any agent or individual taken separately, and therefore cannot be represented or identified by any of them.

It is a type of cause that we are not used to associate with the word and concept of causation. This is not a surprise. In fact, the hypothesis that we advance here is that the causes more easily understood by us are the Aristotelian causes: the formal causation, the material causation, the efficient causation and the final causation. Leaving aside the formal cause, for which the interpretation is not always very clear, we now recall the main characteristics of these causes:

• *Material causation*—that from which one thing comes and that makes it persist, i.e., the material from which one thing is made.

•*Efficient causation*—the primary cause of rest and change, i.e., the thing or agent responsible for the change in the form of a certain body, as in the case of the sculptor and the statue. This definition does not necessarily mean that the change must occur by direct physical contact.

•*Final causation*—the purpose for which one thing is made, as when a knife is used to cut some desired food.

These causes may be resumed by the conception of an individual (considered almost in isolation) that is the cause modifying some object (efficient causation), eventually as a mean to an end (final causation). Notice that, among the three causes, the efficient causation is the primordial type of causation, and it is a kind of *local* causation.

Clearly the distributed causation is not mentioned. In fact, the difficulty to understand that kind of causation can be traced to a situation illustrated by Schelling's model: an individual that is "myopic," has "short vision," cannot represent a distributed causation because this causation is beyond his horizon of accessibility. Only a theoretical elaboration, or a computational synthesis, when we have a global representation of the reality that the model describes, gives access to a distributed causation.

However, as we will stress again, it is known that intelligibility is always sought. How? The fundamental hypothesis is that the Aristotelian causes are primary and absolutely intelligible, in the sense that we have a direct experience of these kind of causes, and any kind of causation not related to direct experience will be reduced to the primary causes, in particular to the efficient causation. *It is the substitution of a distributed causation by an Aristotelian causation, the efficient causation, that we call a mythical explanation.*

To begin seeing the implications of this definition, let's recall Schelling's model again. Let us suppose, once more, that a local and distributed causation led to a state of segregation. Then, to the individuals attached to a cohesive group, segregation appears as *given*. We could ask a question to one of them: "What do you think was the origin of this segregation?" Surely everybody will agree that it will be implausible an answer of the type: "It seems to have been generated by the accumulation of many interactions of individuals, all non-segregationist." It is more plausible to consider other answers: "our community has decided so," or "each one of us has decided so because we don't like them around and they don't like us."

Notice, first of all, that this answer supposes the use of a majority rule when it is an opposite rule that is really responsible for the dynamics of the segregation model. Secondly, the important point in the answer can be the

use of pronouns like "us" and "we," as well as the collective entity "the community." In the case of the first answer it shows the replacement of a local and distributed causation (which no one can experience) by a single and global cause (the "community," in this case), that completely satisfies the intelligibility, because that cause works in the same way that a local cause works, i.e., as an efficient causation—a cause that an individual can experience. In the second case the answer shows the replacement of nonlinear interactions by an explanation based on linear ones, using the independent sum of segregation behaviors, being a fact that everyone also experience each one of those behaviors. In both cases, we see the replacement of a distributed causation by a global cause that works as an efficient causation.

Critical transitions of phase

Our implementation of Schelling's model is a first illustration of the emergence of global states from local interactions, a process upon which is founded the search of intelligibility by the use of mythical explanations. But the model is insufficient to deal, in all its generality, with the emergence of global macroscopic states that accompanies the formation of myths. We need to be guided by a larger theory, the theory of critical phenomena and cellular automata. As briefly as possible, we will present certain well-known aspects of these theories that are important for the understanding of the argument in the remaining sections of this article. (See, for instance, Fischer for a detailed account of critical phenomena.)

A magnetic material, composed by elementary magnetic moments, called spins, provides a good example of a critical phase transition. A spin can just point to two opposite directions of space. Interactions between spins favor an ordered state where they are all parallel, pointing to the same direction (the so-called ferromagnetic phase). On the contrary, thermal energy favors a disordered state where the spins point randomly to those two directions of space (the so-called antiferromagnetic phase). The behavior of the system can depend on an external parameter, the temperature, that can take a *critical value* at which the system exhibits sets of ordered spins inside random spins, which, at their turn, are inside sets of ordered spins, and so on, so that the system is scale-free at the critical point. For our purposes, the main and generic fact pointed out by the theory of critical phenomena is that there are two great phases—a phase of order and a phase of disorder or entropy—separated by a critical or unstable point.

We will not enter the mathematical and physical details that justify the statement that the behavior of a magnetic material is a *universal* behavior, and that it is that same behavior that can be found in a kind of discrete dynamical systems, called cellular automata. As a matter of fact, the above implementation of Schelling's model was a particular cellular automata. More generally, and thanks to the work of S. Wolfram (Wolfram), it is known that the totality of cellular automata can be classified into four large classes: the classes I and II of cellular automata, where the automata converges to invariant final states (stable fixed points and cycle limits, respectively), the class III, a class of disorder (chaotic states and states of larger entropy), and, finally, the class IV, a class of transition between II and I, on the one side, and III, on the other. The class IV is a *critical* class where we can see the emergence of correlations between the automata. So, again, we have two great and universal phases mediated by a critical one: a phase of order in which elements—each element—of the system dependent on each other, a phase of disorder in which the elements are independent, and a critical region in which each element can "communicate" with other elements situated very far away (that is, at a distance greater than the distance of local interactions) (see, for example, Langton).

We think that this kind of universal behavior can lead to a better understanding of the emergence of mythical explanations. We will start now with a qualitative example.

The wave and the panic

Let's imagine a summer afternoon in a region mainly occupied by tourists. For example, the Algarve, in the south of Portugal. At a certain moment each individual follows with his own routine, contacts with a relatively reduced number of other individuals, and nobody cares too much of what's going on outside that chosen place of good holidays. In a calm summer afternoon at the beach, we can appropriately say that the individuals are in a situation of relative independence, because the behavior of each one is not too much constrained by others.

Let's now suppose the sudden appearance of a rumor, the rumor that a catastrophe of oceanic origin approaches. For example, the rumor that the sea is beginning to move dangerously towards the beach—a giant wave! Although this point is an important one, we will suspend for the moment the question of knowing if the rumor was groundless or not. Whatever the case, there is a fact that is unquestionable. As the new, no doubt, spreads, the individuals begin to be more and more tied up to each other. In

particular, everybody begins to be oriented towards the same source, for example, trying to see if the water in fact moves as a giant wave. And even if no one actually sees the wave, each one tends immediately to try to find out if in fact another one sees the phenomenon. Each individual tends to be very tied up to others. The rumors that say that somebody saw the phenomenon, and where it was seen, increase, also increasing the dependence among the individuals. It is not the dependence related to the one individual supposed to have seen the giant wave, but rather the dependence related to the network that, from neighbour individual to neighbour individual, diffuses the new and places everybody in the same phase. Let's finally suppose that an additional rumor effectively generates a situation of *panic*: a general escape (on panic, see Dupuy). In a real, quite recent event of this kind, and across a region of about 80 Km in the Algarve, we were able to actually see a massive escape from the beach.

Now, the general escape is no less than the climax of a tendency that was growing by accumulation. What happens in a process that leads to panic? Each individual tends to be more and more dependent of the words and actions of others. It is not a dependence to others "in general," but to those individuals in the same physical neighbourhood and with whom the interaction is a local one. Each individual tends to *imitate* his neighbours; each one feels the *pressure* of his fellow neighbours. For example, looking at when and where he looks at. Fleeing when and where he flees. At the moment of the utmost widespread panic, each individual tends to follow the escape of those that he sees to flee. Clearly, this is a local process based on imitation: I imitate somebody, and the one behind me imitates me at his turn, in a process that, from nearest to nearest, accelerates itself. It can become infinitely fast and, at that moment, it happens that all individuals, without being aware of, are in a state of global coordination: if a rumor, maybe definitive, appears, the general escapade follows. It is a mechanism of positive retroaction by which the tendency to the escape spreads increasingly, becoming infinitely fast when the critical state of global coordination is reached.

In the example under analysis, it can be said *a posteriori* that it was a groundless rumor, and that in fact an imminent catastrophe didn't exist.[3] That statement reinforces the local nature of the mechanism that led to the

[3] The author of this article, which was in the Algarve in the summer of 1999, can testify that, indeed, there was no giant wave. None of the large number of TV stations dispatched to cover the event was able to report one.

panic, because, in fact, there was no real cause. On the contrary, in the case of a very real cause (we could see beyond any doubt a giant wave), the coordination or everybody's common phase—the escape—would not have its origin in local interactions, but rather in a real event external to all individuals. This is an important observation because it suggests a better understanding of the dynamics of the process. The situation of panic is interesting because, evidently, the individuals don't attribute the general movement of escape to the local interactions but rather to "the cause". *Some real cause* for the escape must exist; it must exist an efficient cause. So, if, finally, it is verified that the movement of the ocean was a kind of vision induced by others, each one would propose an *a posteriori* explanation for the escape: it was due to the rumor, to what somebody said or supposedly saw. The individuals recover the intelligibility in that way, because somebody diffusing one rumor is an intelligible material and efficient cause that can perfectly explain the collective movement of escape. But it is clear that what the individuals do not perceive, because they can't, is that the "true" cause does not exist, that is, the fact that it is a distributed cause resulting of multiple local interactions that have led the system to a state of global coordination.

The structure of mythical explanations can now be better understood. It was underlined that the individuals cannot experience a distributed causation: that type of causation does not exist anywhere because it does not have the qualities of *reality* and *existence*, characteristics of an efficient cause. But the individuals have a direct experience of a local interaction. The local interactions are in fact "suffered" by each one; the pressures are very real. In our example, they consist of the "latest news" that each one transmits concerning the approaching of the wave, or in that direct pressure making me look at when and where somebody else looks, and then flee. All these are direct pressures that anyone can experience.

There is, in fact, a reason, a direct cause of the escape, that is not exactly the one imagined by the individuals—a real wave or a rumor that somebody diffused—but one of a similar nature. It is this similarity that explains how the mythical explanation appears, that is, how the phenomenon is explained by the hypothesis of a single and external cause. *The single cause is a cause that reproduces, in an invariant way, the type of direct—but not distributed—causation among individuals, only it is imagined as exercising globally on everybody the type of direct causation that each one exercises on a neighbour.* The single cause is then considered to be the cause of the individual's global coordination.

This is particularly clear in our example. What leads the individuals to the state of escape? The belief in a giant wave. However, they had not been driven to escape by the real vision of a giant wave (they didn't see any), but due to the accumulation of local pressures, of local interactions between a large number of people.

We can now arrive to a consequence that follows from the interactions generating mythical explanations: *when entangled in situations of strong interdependence, the individuals can be led to lines of behavior that they would never follow if they were independent.* In the case of the wave, they were taken to a line of behavior that, considered individually, none of them would carry out, unless pressed by a very real wave. If we imagine that each individual was completely isolated, it is plain that each one would just flee if he really saw a giant wave. What could have been the real cause of an individual and independent behavior replaces, in a mythical way, the distributed causation that truly started the panic. A mythical explanation is always based on linear interactions. In other terms, we can say, once more, that a mythical explanation consists in the substitution of the result of the nonlinear interactions between the individuals—substitution based on the efficient and local causation that each one can experience—by an imaginary and single global cause that, acting independently on each individual, still has the form of that efficient causation. This could be seen as the construction of the imaginary starting from the real.

Girard and the emergence of myths

Last section's implicit hypothesis was that the onset of panic is very far from being a particular phenomenon. It points to quite general mechanisms, precisely those made clear by the theory of dynamical systems. We will now show that the very same mechanisms guide the work of René Girard. Our main purpose is not to elaborate upon that point, but we must stress out that the intuitions and analyses guiding the intellectual work of Girard's, receive full confirmation, at theoretical level, from contemporary approaches to the study of dynamic and complex systems. Having said that, it is more important to see how that work, a work that has the analysis of myths as main subject, elucidates the mechanisms of mythical explanations.

As it is well known, Girard's work is a work about the origins, about the mechanisms present at the formation and critical breakup of human communities. That origin is not an absolute point, in the sense that a true explanation can only be reached when the point of origin is moved and made dependent on the mechanisms that place as derived what was taken

as origin: if Girard's work is at the intersection of mythology, anthropology and psychology, it points to biology as a subsequent level of explanation. We do not follow here that whole derivation, placing our starting point at the level of the human communities instituted by the myths that always accompanied its evolution. On the subject of myths, Girard wants to show which function sacrificial rituals carry out, and his hypothesis is that they perform a real social function. It is in this context the he insists that the sacrifices narrated by myths really happened (Girard 1972). In that sense, a myth is not a "myth" in the common sense of the word, but the narrative of a real event.

What is then, in general lines, the purpose of sacrifice according to Girard? Its purpose consisted, and continues to consist, in blocking the infection processes of contagion and mimetical diffusion. Among these processes, Girard stresses the dynamics of violence. Leaving aside its origin in animal behavior, we can begin by imagining a community where violence is, at a certain moment, absent. Life goes on in a well-ordered way, and we can say that the individuals are then independent. Let's now suppose that, due to some reason, violence starts at some place. We are referring to communities where most individuals have direct or indirect connections with almost everyone. In this kind of network, it is easily immediately understood that violence cannot but spread from neighbour to neighbour. Because it is, in fact, of the nature of violence to appeal to violence: "violence pulls to violence" (Girard 1972). The local spreading of the violence starting at an initial focus means that the individuals are less and less independent and become more and more bound up with one another. Following Girard's terminology, the individuals become more and more *doubles* of each other: they imitate each other, through a process that grows until the generalized violence spreads from any point to any point of the system. The individuals are going from an independence phase to a dependence one, in which everybody is at the same phase of violence.[4]

According to Girard, sacrifice rituals are instruments that block the spread from any point to any point of a process that is contagious. It is important to understand that they portray the mythical ritualization of a dynamics. That is, we should not assume that, gathered in an assembly, the

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[4] One should stress again that the descriptions of Girard concerning the spread of the violence could be fully justified, at theoretical level, by contemporary graph theory, in particular by random graph theory. For an excellent and up-to-date account, see Albert and Barabási. That theory could be used to show that the violence *must* spread when a critical point is reached.

individuals would sign an agreement (an "original social contract") to institute a sacrifice with such a function. The sacrifice, and its ritualization, is caused by a local process from which will emerge, by mythical replacement, the sacrificed victim's central figure. We won't mention here the myths analyzed by Girard that support this conclusion. That analysis shows what the logic of events indicates: the sacrificed victim represents the passage of an independence phase to a phase of common dependence. What happens is that each one's pressures are replaced by an invariant of all those pressures. This invariant is the Other of each individual, that is, it is the Other of them all, and so, their violence towards each other will be exteriorized in the violence of all individuals against the sacrificed individual. At that moment, the individuals are fully "in phase" and they feel themselves as a community. Girard writes:

> What is the source of this mysterious unanimity? The antagonists caught up in the sacrificial crisis invariably believe themselves separated by insurmountable differences. In reality, however, these differences gradually wear away. Everywhere we now encounter the same desire, the same antagonism, the same strategies—the same illusion of rigid differentiation within a pattern of ever-expanding uniformity. As the crisis grows more acute, the community members are transformed into "twins," matching images of violence. I would be tempted to say that they are each *doubles* of the other. (117)

It is when the individuals feel more different that they are in fact more and more close to each other. This erosion of differences, of real independence, implies that correlation spreads locally, until a state of global coordination emerges— the state of maximum uniformity in which the individuals "are all pointing in the same direction." Girard continues:

> If violence is a great leveler of men and everybody becomes the double, or "twin," of his antagonist, it seems to follow that all the doubles are identical and that any one can at any given moment become the double of all the others; that is, the sole object of universal obsession and hatred. A single victim can be substituted for all the potential victims....(117)

The sacrificed victim appears when the community reaches the critical point, at which each one is the double of each other. Now, if the sacrificed victim is no more than the invariant of these multiple interactions, then the

individuation, the referent of that invariant, can only be *arbitrary*: any member of the community can, potentially, become the universal object of that violence.

This arbitrariness can also be seen in another way. In the absence of interactions, it is not plausible to think that the specific sacrificed victim is really the cause of the crisis of each individual taken separately, just as, in the example of the wave in the section above, no individual would be lead to the escape if the interactions or a real wave were absent. But the interactions do exist, and so the victim emerges as a non-anticipated consequence of those interactions. Now, given the fact that, by sacrificial rituals, a community puts an end to violence, the conclusion can only be that the victim was indeed the *individual cause* of the widespread violence. We really have a *myth* here: the replacement of a distributed causation by an exemplary cause that has the form of an efficient cause.

The last statements can be confirmed by Girard's theory of the scapegoat. Many of the countless historical examples of scapegoats (see Girard 1982, for examples) are based on the idea that the scapegoat is the cause of social disorders. That cause has a sort of infectious nature: the scapegoat generates the social disorder by sending a kind of fluid or virus that contaminates the whole community. The scapegoat is an efficient cause that uses a material cause that spreads in a field with contagious properties; that shows the relationship between a principle of local causation and the emergence of an efficient cause. In fact, the scapegoat typifies the mechanism of replacement of a distributed causation by an efficient causation. This last type of causation is absolutely primary: "given the fact that there is no other cause for the violence than the *belief* in an exterior and single cause [en une cause autre], it is only needed that this universality be embodied in a real individual, the scapegoat, which becomes the other of everybody" (Girard 1982, 128, emphasis added).

However, we repeat, the genesis of the scapegoat implies that the system has reached a critical point—each one is the double of each other—and then any small disturbance of the system leads to a phase of order. The individuals don't understand, because they can't, that they are responsible for that order (i.e., "disorder," in Girard's terminology), and so the explanation of that state can only be reached by some exterior cause. In other words, it is at this moment that the control is reestablished: the social disorder is fully explained through a transcendent entity. In reality, "the crowd throws on impotent victims the responsibility for its own state of crisis, a responsibility that however does not belong to an individual or to

a specific group of individuals. This way collectivity offers itself the illusion of reestablishing a sort of control of its destiny" (Girard 1978, 184). Mechanisms of single causation, with linear and modular separation, are indeed the archetypical models of control (see Machuco Rosa 2002). Within the logic of sacrifice, it is the recognition of a single and external cause, the exemplar substitute of a distributed process, that allows the community to abandon its state of crisis. The final conclusion drawn by Girard is, obviously, that the scapegoat can finally be ritualized as a beneficial entity, because his sacrifice has reestablished the social order.

Let's summarize. In Girard's theory we can detect two great phases separated by a critical point; the ritualization of the sacrifice is a summary of that dynamics. First, an independence phase in which the individuals follow "a normal life." ("social order," in the ordinary sense of the word; "disorder" in the sense of information theory, see below). Then follows a process of local contagion that converges to a critical point where there are only doubles. This is an unstable point followed by a phase of disorder ("order," in the sense of information theory). But nobody is fully aware of that dynamics, so intelligibility and control are reestablished by the illusion of the existence of an external and efficient cause, the scapegoat. We conclude that the scapegoat has a mixed nature: he is the exteriorization of the tension between order and disorder, present at the critical point, therefore being responsible for both order *and* social disorder.

Imitation in financial markets

The theory of sacrifice proposed by Girard describes a dynamic process that is critically separated by two great phases: a phase that we have called an "independence phase" and a "dependence phase" in which the individuals are synchronized or aligned. Given the fact that the individuals only have a local representation of the state of the system, the consequence is that the critical point is exteriorized under the form of an efficient cause that is imagined as acting globally on everybody. We will now see that it is still that same idea, in part mathematically formalized, that reappears in another type of complex social systems. We refer to the economy, which is now more and more thought in "mimetic" terms.

That was not always the case. In fact, the theory that has dominated the field of economics for over almost a century, the so-called "neoclassical theory," is based on the crucial assumption of agent's independence. They do not compare themselves to each other; they do not imitate each other.

We will not enter into the details of neoclassical theory, but two fundamental aspects should be considered.

The first one concerns the general mechanism of formation of prices as proposed by Leon Walras and formalized later. According to Walras (Walras), the economy tends to a regime of equilibrium in which the total amount of the excess of demand (considered in all markets) will be zero. The question is then to know how such an equilibrium can be reached. As Friedrich Hayek noticed many years ago (Hayek 91), that problem could be solved if all its data (the values of each good in each market) "were known to a single mind." Actually, Walras proposed a solution of the same kind through the fiction of the auctioneer. The auctioneer is a sort of omniscient being that, provided with the knowledge of all demands and all offers in all markets, acts in the following way: it systematically adjusts the prices, increasing those where there is an excess of demand (so the prices go down), and decreasing those where there is an excess of offer (so the prices go up). That mechanism can be formalized by a system of differential equations (see, for example, Kehoe), but it is most important to recall that the fiction of the auctioneer means that the prices are at equilibrium *before* any real exchange between the agents takes place. Any real exchange begins when the system is already at equilibrium, and so the prices appear to all economic agents as *given*. The economic agents don't interact, they don't communicate directly. Their only relationship is an indirect one, a relationship through the given prices: they just communicate to each other through the universal and transcendental mediator represented by the auctioneer. This one is present to all agents, but these do not have any direct relationship.

We then see that a mythical replacement allowed the economy to become a "rigorous discipline." The mythical explanation consists in the replacement of the decentralized actions of the agents, which are the real cause of prices, by the figure of a single mind, the universal and transcendental mediator that announces to everybody the result of his calculus. In that sense, neoclassical economy is a theoretical elaboration of the way by which the agents could explain a reality that appears to them as given. But the auctioneer does not only represent the construction of a body of theoretical knowledge by mythical replacement. He is also the single mind that *completely determines* the economic reality—technically, that hypothesis means that Walras assumed that the stable equilibrium point of prices is *unique*, and so ruling out the possibility of multiple fixed points in competition. However, that hypothesis leads precisely to the disregard of

any interactions between the agents, that is, it implies considering economy as a non complex system (see Arthur, Durlauf and Lane, for a panoramic of the models of economy as a complex system). As we would point out again, economy's neoclassical theory concerns how the individuals would act *if* they were independent.

The second aspect that should be mentioned refers to the theory of rational expectations and one of its extensions, the hypothesis concerning the efficiency of capital markets. The theory of rational expectations would deserve a detailed treatment (see the classic presentation in Lucas, and a good discussion in Sargent), but it is enough to say that it is a theory that supposes the economic agents as rational, possessing a model that allows them to estimate the future prices, all of them following that same model identically (each one being aware that everybody else follows that model), and all of them in possession of the total relevant information. Based in these premises, the agents form their own expectations concerning the value of a stock.

Now, the so-called efficient market hypothesis states that in an informally efficient market, price changes must be unforecastable if they are properly anticipated, i.e., if they fully incorporate the expectations and information of all market participants. We have an apparent puzzle: the more efficient the market, the more random the sequence of price changes generated by such a market must be, and the most efficient market of all is one in which price changes are completely random and unpredictable. The reason, of course, is that the agents are trying to make a profit from the information they get when an announcement randomly arrives to the market. Thus, if all the well-informed agents see that a stock is now overvalued, they immediately incorporate that information in the construction of prices and sell, which makes prices return to their "fundamental value." Prices will always randomly oscillate around their "fundamental value." The consequence will be that the "chartists strategies," the "technical analyses"—observation of eventual patterns in the graphs of temporal evolution of prices, projection of past trends into future ones, patterns in trading volume, and so on—are condemned to be overcome by strategies in terms of "fundamental analysis."

The efficiency-market hypothesis describes a situation of double independence. On one side, the future value of a stock is not determined by its past values, and on the other each agent bases its expectations on the fundamental value of the stock, not in the analysis of other agent's intentions. From that hypothesis of independence, it follows that the change

of prices can be represented by a Gaussian normal distribution (see, for example, Fama). That result gives a definitive meaning to the agent's independence: if they are independent, then the demand function can be mathematically represented by random and identically distributed variables.

However, much empirical data shows that the Gaussian distribution is far from being an accurate description of the evolution of the indexes of stock markets: the deviation is in general superior to the standard deviation expected in a Gaussian distribution, that is, there is a higher probability for extreme values. In fact, several numeric details (see, e.g., Farmer) lead to the conclusion that the independence hypothesis and the Gaussian distribution have to be abandoned.

How to replace them? Our purpose is not to analyze the models of the stock markets from the point of view of its empirical adequacy, but rather as examples of the consequences that follow the rejection of the independence hypothesis. In other terms, we will see how financial markets can be regarded as complex systems in which there are global states distributively caused by local interactions. In fact, in recent years several models were proposed that, in order to explain the departure from the values of a normal distribution, assume the *imitation* as the main mechanism of interaction between investors (see Cont and Bouchoud, Johansen and Sornette, Iori, Kaizoji). These are no longer independent and communicate directly. If so, we can expect that the formal models should display critical behavior. That can be shown selecting one of these formal models, the model proposed by Andreas Johansen, Didier Sornette and Olivier Ledoit (Johansen, Sornette and Ledoit).

The purpose of the model is not only to explain the departure from a Gaussian distribution, but mainly the apparent existence of a crash's precursors, designated by financial analysts as oscillations of periodic logarithm: the curve of prices exhibits a sequence of minima and maxima in the temporal succession t_n, such that $(t_{n+1} - t_n) / (t_n - t_{n-1}) = \lambda$, where λ is a constant factor of scale. That geometric contraction converges to an accumulation point that is an unstable critical point at time t_c, the time of the crash. At that moment, a massive sell-off occurs, which represents a great deviation from the "normal" situation of the markets, the existence of an approximate equilibrium between sell and buy orders.

To explain those crash precursors, D. Sornette and co-workers have offered the hypothesis that each financial agent (an individual investor or a mutual fund) acts locally: he bases his decision on chats, on several relationships with some known fellows and on the available news. The hypothesis is that each agent acts through local imitation. That imitation

process can be formalized assuming that the crash hazard rate *h(t)* designates the probability for a crash to happen in the following lapse of time, if it has not happened yet. So, *h(t)* means the probability for the occurrence of a massive sell off. The dynamics of the crash hazard rate follows the equation:

$$\frac{dh}{dt} = C\, h^{\delta} \text{ with } \delta > 1 \quad (1)$$

where C is a constant. The exponent $\delta > 1$ quantifies the number of agents that interact with a given agent, and it's the existence of those interactions that causes the increase of *h(t)*. Under the fundamental condition (1), the integration of (1) leads to a critical point, the integration being:

$$h(t) = \frac{B}{(tc - t)^{\partial}} \quad \text{with} \quad \partial = \frac{1}{\delta - 1} \quad (2)$$

As already stated, it is not very important for our purposes to evaluate to what extent the model is really capable of predicting a crash. Neither is it important to present here the additional economic details of the model. The essential point is that it shows a quite general situation: a competition between two opposite phases, a tension that explains the existence of critical transitions of phase.

So, if we eliminate the imitation, there is a phase in which the agents act according to an objective and common exterior reality; in short, according to the 'fundamental value' of the market. That is the phase of equilibrium between buying and selling. In the language of information theory, it is a pha with a maximum of entropy: the probability of randomly picking a sell order approaches 50%. It is the normal situation of the market, the situation without crises and in which the agents are independent. Following the intuitive sense of the word, in the section on Girard's theory we called that state a state of "order." But the word "order" now means "disorder," and the inverse also applies. It is only a question of terminology: what Girard calls "disorder" is now called "order" in the language of the information theory.

Therefore, in the absence of interactions there is a state of equilibrium. But, if interactions—the imitation process—are introduced, the probability of a crash grows exponentially. The model states that point very precisely, because of the condition $\delta > 1$, which is *a necessary one* to get the critical

point (the crash) to which (2) converges. With the increase of the probability of a crash, the agents become more and more aligned in a state of global coordination. That global coordination is marked by the increase of $h(t)$, which means, for example, that the agents continue to buy, but under the expectation of larger returns, given that they are betting in a market in which a crash can happen. Obviously, the prices continue to increase until a critical point is reached, in which cascades of local imitation spread through the whole system causing the global coordination. At that moment, the agents are synchronized in the same phase and massive sell orders trigger the crash. The crash accomplished, the market returns to the normal situation of disorder.

What kind of behavior corresponds to the unstable fixed point that, not intentionally, is caused by the agent's local imitation? The panic that happens in the crash is the invariant of multiple local actions. Just as we saw in the previous examples presented in this article, we see again that the *individuals are led to lines of behavior that they would never follow if they were independent*; remember that, in Sornette's model, the crash hazard rate $h(t)$ depends exponentially on the parameter that quantifies the number of interactions. To put the same idea in a reverse way, the individuals are lead to a kind of action that, if isolated, they would just carry out if very real causes forced them to that kind of action, for instance, if a deep economic crisis was in fact real. But when the stock market is "bullish" the only foundations seem to be the local pressures that, in a distributed way, lead to the emergence of the global state of massive sell.

Given what has been said so far, there is just one element still missing in this brief report concerning the emergence of mythical explanations in financial markets. Who are, then, the scapegoats of financial markets? No doubt that the institutional investors are often sophisticated people who also use very sophisticated mathematical and computational tools. However, the mythical replacement also occurs. In certain cases (see, for instance, the currency crisis in Malaysia in 1997) a certain individual is clearly identified as the scapegoat. For example, *one* individual, George Soros, seems well fit to the role, even if studies show that he cannot have such an influence (see Conetti, Morris and Shin). In another cases, the abrupt fall in the indexes is attributed to *a* certain announcement. For example, the condemnation for abuse of monopoly by the software company Microsoft would be responsible for the vertiginous fall of the index of technological stocks, NASDAQ, in April 2000. But this is a *post factum* explanation (see Johansen and Sornette 2000). As a matter of fact,

"news" are constantly "bombarding" the market, and if we accept that a crash is produced by distributed local causation, it is true that one piece of news can be the onset of a widespread sell off. But that news could be *any* news. Considering that, in the neighborhood of the critical point, the system is extremely sensitive to any small disturbance, one single notice, that could in fact be any notice, could trigger the crash. Only after the events, will the individuals try to rationalize—in terms of external, single and efficient causes—an outcome that has no single cause at all.[5]

Finally, a last, and perhaps more relevant, example of mythical explanation in financial markets happens when the "speculators," themselves considered as a collective entity, are the scapegoat: it is the "speculation"—*somebody else's speculation*—that turns out to be the scapegoat. That is, the distribute causation is reified, made *a thing*. Control and rationality are thus reestablished and the desire for explanation is finally satisfied.

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[5] See Schiller for an analysis of the *post factum* explanations of 1929 and 1987 crashes.

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