

EUROPEAN SUMMER SCHOOL MIMETIC THEORY

July 12–25, 2010 The Netherlands

Crisis and Truth

An interdisciplinary introduction into the thinking of René Girard

The first Summer School Mimetic Theory will be held from 12 – 25 July in Leusden, The Netherlands. The course will give a systematic introduction to Mimetic Theory as developed by René Girard and his students, and aims at offering participants a new insight into the relationship between culture, violence and religion.

Crisis and imitation

The recognition of ‘imitation’ as a fundamental motivational force in human behaviour is the point of departure of mimetic theory. While enlightenment thinking and the human sciences have no problem accepting the role of imitation in learning processes, they have disregarded the importance of imitation in both the way we make our intimate individual choices and in the genesis and persistence of violent conflict. Instead they have promoted a belief in the uniqueness of the individual. Our failure to understand crises, both in our individual lives and in the world at large, might be attributed to this misapprehension of the autonomous self. Girard shows that in great novels the futility of the search for a unique self is exposed as a ‘romantic’ illusion.

Crisis and its resolution

Girard also opens our eyes to violence as the source of social order and consensus. Existing or potential divisiveness is externalised as violence against a third party – an enemy, scapegoat or other presence marked as evil. This so-called scapegoat mechanism is a self-regulating mimetic process that has to remain hidden from those involved in order to function. Our blindness to this violence has archaic religious roots, which, according to Girard, have been progressively exposed in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

Mimesis and cultural knowledge

For Girard the concept of mimesis is the key to understanding other fields of cultural knowledge ranging from myths, Greek and Shakespearean tragedy and biblical scriptures to human evolution and the crisis of our post 9-11 world. His innovative contribution to the human sciences is increasingly being recognised. (see Girard Network). Mimetic theory offers a challenging new playing field for reconnecting the various academic disciplines that study human relations and culture.

Teachers

Girard’s students and colleagues who are renowned scholars in their respective disciplines of literature, theology, anthropology, and philosophy will teach the course. Among them are James Alison, Jean-Pierre Dupuy, Paul Dumouchel, Robert Hamerton-Kelly, Simon Simonse and Nikolaus Wandinger.

Teaching Programme

Following Michael Kirwan’s (2005) observation that Girard’s work reads as a ‘thriller’, the Summer School course offers students a journey through Girard’s texts, his debates with other thinkers and his reflections on violence and religion in the world of today. The course will consist of lectures, discussions of cases and reading and writing assignments both individually and in groups. Writing assignments may eventually serve as a building block of a larger project or a credit in the home university. Core texts will include chapters from Girard’s *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* and other key texts. Participants will be expected to have read an introductory text before arrival in Leusden.

Student Profile

The Summer School will be taught in English and aims at:

- top undergraduates who have just or almost finalized their Bachelor study
- graduate students
- PhD students

The number of participants is 25 max.

Venue

The International School of Philosophy (ISVW) in Leusden, 50 kilometres from Amsterdam will host the Summer School. This location offers an inspiring climate for learning and reflection.

Tuition fee

The European Summer School is generously funded by Imitatio. Therefore we are able to keep the tuition fee at € 1500 to cover the costs for tuition, course materials and administration only. The costs for accommodation and meals are taken care of by Imitatio. The tuition fee has to be paid in full before 1st June 2010 via bank transfer.

Participants should arrange their own travel and insurance. For those in need there is a small fund available.

More information and application

If you wish to apply, please, download the application form here. For updated information about the programme keep track of MT Summer School 2010.

If you have questions, feel free to contact:

Thérèse Onderdenwijngaard

Organizer European Summer School Mimetic Theory
Secretary Dutch Girard Society