Abstracts

Emanuele Antonelli

Girard and Postmodernity: Ontology of a Panic-Stricken Age

This paper focuses on a mimetic approach to the philosophical problem of the origins of modernity and post-modernity. According to Girard, the Passion of the Christ is to be considered as the wellspring of a process of deconstruction that, unveiling the sacred rationale of the constitution of social objects such as rites, taboos, but also borders, political and judiciary institutions, and so on, has been dismantling the structures that used to *contain* human violence (but also mutual imitation, unleashing therefore the potentialities of innovation, an emerging promise of double imitation). Faithfully to Girard's work, seeing in the unveiling of the victimary mechanism the source of this process, one could see in the definitive affirmation of the victimary paradigm (essentially after Auschwitz and the Gulags were discovered) a further step in the history of Modernity. If Modernity can be interpreted as an accelerating approximation to a crisis of undifferentiation, this contribution would argue that post-modernity is a legitimate periodization as far as it can describe a step further in Girard's cycle. Post-modernity is a crisis of undifferentiation already exploded and the actual crisis should be interpreted with a very special set of theoretical tools. The paradigmatic loss of every sense of referentiality that characterized postmodernity, the constant acceleration, the growing sense of alienation with respect to social and political phenomena that nevertheless *we* create, the proliferation of endogenous fixed points, are nothing but the symptoms of a well-know autotranscendent social effervescence: we are living in an age that can be properly described as *panic-stricken*.

Bianca Baggiarini

The Politics of Military Privatization and the Shifting Terrain of Sacrifice

René Girard argues that violence and the sacred are inseparable, yet how do the political boundaries of sacrifice shift when state violence is privatized? This paper provides a Foucauldian challenge to Girard by invoking the problematic of military privatization. Using Foucault's conceptual tools, I will explore how military privatization permits states to (silently and precariously) call for the end of sacrifice. I trace the genealogical trajectories of the citizen-soldier to argue that military privatization, as exemplified by the burgeoning industry of private military and security companies (PMSCs) and the current American administration's use of drone warfare, allows for the removal of sacrifice as a feature of the post-WWII social contract between states and citizens. Historically, the sacrifices of state-soldiers have been consecrated within the boundaries of the nation and memorialized in a way that allows for both the production of shared collective memory, as well as a projected future-oriented discourse of unification through shared national or ethnic destiny. PMSCs radically disrupt this notion of sacrifice, undoing certain imaginings of nationhood, citizenship and warfare. Not only do PMSCs tend to resist the language of sacrifice, they explicitly refuse the classification of their actions as sacrificial. This paper will explore why this is so through an analysis of Girard and Foucault's theories of sacrifice and biopolitics, respectively.

Katrin Becker

Christianity – Key or Obstacle to Intercultural Dialogue? A Comparison between Girard's Theory of Mimetic Desire and Legendre's Dogmatic Anthropology

According to both Girard and Legendre, Christianity is not only the origin of Western cultural order but, as such, also a significant support for individual identity. The current repression of those foundations from the collective and individual consciousness therefore has serious consequences and necessarily contributes to an aggravation of the imminent clash of civilizations. Considering the justifications of their respective assessment of the significance of the Bible and of Christian discourse, it becomes clear that herein also lies the core of an inevitable conflict between the two theoretical approaches. On the one hand, for Legendre, the Christian myth is part of a general logic of representation that each culture is subject to, i.e. it is one version of the discourse 'in the name of' that each culture must establish – therefore, a myth which 'cannot claim to be unique.' Those culturally specific discourses of reference result in a 'solitude of the systems,' which as a consequence stand in a duelling relation, where different theological offerings of politics and concepts of truth clash. On the other, according to Girard, Christianity holds the key to overcoming the cycle of inner- and intercultural violence, which is rooted in mimetic desire. By disclosing the scapegoat mechanism, the evangelical myths opened up the view on a peaceful power, superior to mimetic fury. In this paper, I will address the question of how these two apparently so contradictory approaches can – possibly in their combination – help to conceive possibilities of a dialogue between cultures, against the background of the occidental – Christian – founding myth.

Elisabetta Brighi

The Mimetic Politics of Lone-Wolf Terrorism: A Girardian Approach

Anders Breivik's massacre in Oslo last year cast light once again on the dangers posed by 'lone-wolf' terrorism. While governments have since then tried to reconsider counter-terrorism mindful of the potential contagion and diffusion of 'solo terrorism' given advances in communication and technology, the scholarly debate has somewhat lagged behind. Despite contagion theories influencing the study of international security and terrorism for decades (Mildarsky, Crenshaw, Yoshida 1980; Nacos 2009), only a few scholars have looked at the extensive theoretical apparatus developed by French-American anthropologist René Girard on the nexus between contagion, scapegoat mechanisms and 'mimetic' violence. The rare exceptions have either applied Girard's theories to broad inter-civilizational dynamics (Scott Thomas 2005) or looked at the particular nature of (Islamic) suicide terrorism and religious violence through Girard's scapegoat theory (Juergensmeyer 1991, 2008). This paper goes beyond these attempts to advance a Girardian understanding of the 'fifth wave' of terrorism (cf. Kaplan 2007, Rapoport 2002), i.e., lone-wolf terrorism, through an analysis of the case of Anders Breivik. In particular, it claims that notions of 'imitation', 'sacrifice' and 'desire' are central categories to conceptualize this form of terrorism and simultaneously reclaim it as a form of political, rather mindless, violence.

Antonio Cerella

Until the End of the World: Girard, Schmitt and the Origins of Violence

Where do the origins of violence lie? And why our global age can be defined as apocalyptic? In this paper I aim to compare Schmitt's and Girard's theoretical proposals about the origins, containment and diffusion of violence in order to explore the end of the *Nomos* and of its sacrality. For the 'mimetic' and the 'political' offer two

complementary and radical visions of the origins of conflict and its containment. This exploration is not an end in itself, but serves to trace an alternative genealogy of world politics, from its tragic beginnings up to the dissolution of the political form in the so-called age of disenchantment. How to reconceptualize the chaotic multitude and undifferentiation triggered by the dynamics of globalization? What political forms will the communities take in the era of virtual liquidity? Analyzing the work of Girard and Schmitt might shed some light on these epochal questions.

Hüseyin I. Cicek

A Mimetic Reading of al-Qaeda's Messages

In this paper I explore how self-sacrifice is legitimated in al-Qaeda's texts. Between 1994 and 2006, al-Qaeda released more than 16 statements or messages. In those texts they introduced the ideology, goals and structure of the organization; they explained why – in order to fight the enemies of the 'world' – all members of the 'base' would voluntarily carry out self-sacrifice operations. Using Girard's mimetic theory, this paper will offer a hermeneutical interpretation of the reasons why al-Qaeda members carry out suicide operations in which they are willing to kill themselves for their beliefs or faith in a different idea of Islam and humankind.

Margaret Denike

The Sacrificial Politics of Race: Biopolitics of 'Security'

This paper draws on Girard's general account of sacrificial violence to elucidate the race-thinking that structures contemporary discourses on security in Western security sates, particularly in Canada and the U.S. With attention to the relation between collective group formation (as we see, for example, in resurgent nationalisms of the era of 'terror') and to the structures and processes of inclusion/exclusion that define them, my discussion unfolds Girard's figure and analysis of 'the scapegoat' within and against contemporary theories of violence and group-based persecution (drawing on Arendt, Appaduri, Baudriard, Fassin, and Agamben to do so). It profiles the spectre of the race in the assemblages of fear that imbue security discourse, to consider the how security 'works' to foster and consolidate communities against its foreign or threats from within or without in ways that produce the very race distinctions that they are conditioned on. In doing so, it will elucidate how Girard's work on sacrificial violence is a productive for critically elucidating the affective politics of security discourse, including those that organize and inform the biopolitical formations of race distinctions and racial hierarchy in contemporary security states.

Rosemary Durward

Rivalry and its Anti-Dote in Charity: Implications of the Crucifixion for Wars and Rumours of Wars

René Girard's mimetic theory, which he explains through the story of Jesus' crucifixion, arises out of the empirical observation of an anthropologist. He also makes the theological claim that the crucifixion or scapegoating of Jesus works on us subjectively, because on the Cross is a weak God whom humankind in its rivalry, has crushed. In Christ's crucifixion we see human history of violence reflected back on us and we are shamed. Engaging with theology and philosophy, this paper explores the implications of the ontological argument for international

security: that Jesus' scapegoating is at once violent and a transcendence of violence, not so much because violence has been satiated , nor because we are educated and more aware of the dynamic of rivalry and can see it for what it is (even if these are true), but because the qualities of love, in patience, kindness, absence of envy embodied in Jesus Christ render it powerless. Like Girard, this paper finds strength in Jesus' apparent weakness. It brings a new insight, however, in the sense that it is his charity (1 Cor 13), that constantly extends the boundaries of the neighbourhood even in situations of rivalry and violence, that operates as an anti-dote to rivalry. A morbid, even Hobbesian presentation of motives in human or state behaviour gives ride to fear and rumours of war as well as absolutism. Assuming Thomas Aquinas' insight that charity is prior to justice, which is prior to peace, then there is likely to be a more pragmatic approach to foreign policy, a prioritization of dialogue, a preparedness to defend the common good, and a more optimistic outcome for human society.

Kent Enns

René Girard, Human Nature and Political Conflict

Twentieth Century political thought has largely turned away from rich theorizing about human nature and its implications for politics and political philosophy. Liberal theory in particular has defended core principles of cosmopolitanism, state neutrality, the priority of the right over the good, individualism, and even legitimacy, on the basis of 'thin selves' – those entities for whom autonomous choice is definitive. René Girard's mimetic theory challenges the main presuppositions of recent political thought – the thin self, individualism and autonomy – and provides the recognition that for all our talk of freedom we are, as humans have always been, largely consigned by our mimetic nature to reproduce the values, beliefs, customs and esteemed 'goods' of our given regime. By taking up the evolutionary and anthropological dimensions of Girard's hypothesis it becomes possible to articulate a mimetic understanding of an inherently rivalrous and conflictual human nature and how it is enacted within cultural contexts – from the earliest human groupings to the regimes of our own time. Political philosophy carried out in the light of mimetic theory offers significant opportunities for this domain: informed by mimetic theory political philosophy can account for not only the rivalry and violence that subtend the political, but also the necessarily 'sacred' dimension of politics which conceals and distorts its own violence under ineluctable mythological, religious and ideological self-interpretations. While recent thinkers, such as Francis Fukuyama in his *Origins of Political Order* (2011), have attempted to ground political understanding in human evolution, Girard's mimetic theory offers a far richer account of human nature, the inherent violence of human collectivities and the 'mesconnaissance' that afflicts them.

Ernesto Gallo

Unlikely Twins? Machiavelli and Girard on Violence and the Origins of the State

Despite their apparent differences, Machiavelli and Girard have much in common. Both authors have investigated violence in politics; both have illustrated the importance of the founding moment, with its intrinsic combination of murder, sacredness, and law creation. In contrast with a widespread view, according to which secular and 'immoral' Machiavelli would be completely at odds with Girard's Christian perspective, the paper analyses what the two authors' theories share. Like Girard, Machiavelli highlighted the link between 'violence' and 'institutions', not only in founding communities, but also in the crucial relation between 'good arms' and 'good laws'. Second, although his Christian faith has been deeply questioned, Machiavelli too espoused a religious dimension, which he identified with the sacredness and sanctity of the 'homeland'. Remus and Bernabo', Borgia's enemies as well as those of the Sforza, were all 'sacrificed' in the name of 'noble' political aims. Third, both Machiavelli and Girard

have lamented the desperation of their age; while Girard criticizes our time's apocalyptic nature, and the neglect suffered by the Christian message, Machiavelli strongly attacked the corruption and vain personal ambition of his fellow Florentines and Italians. The key divergence between the two authors' outlooks lies in their different attitudes towards time; while Machiavelli has mainly looked into the past, and tried to unearth the great virtues of 'his' Spartans and Romans, Girard points to the hope of a forthcoming Christian redemption. The paper thus argues that comparing and contrasting the two authors' perspectives can help us better understand the existence of a deep link between politics and the 'sacred', and the ways such a link has faded in Machiavelli's early modern age and in Girard's modern and secularising world.

Viola Giuliano

Religious Self-Sacrifice and Symbolic Violence. A Girardian Reading of Contemporary Suicide Terrorism

The 9/11 suicide bombings opened a significant debate about the relationship between religion and violence. Using the thoughts of anthropologist René Girard, this paper investigates the possibility of setting out an alternative interpretation of this relationship – and consequently of contemporary suicide terrorism. In contrast to predominant approaches to the study of terrorism, the aim here is to understand the resurgence of religious violence not through the category of causal or instrumental explanations, but rather by reconstructing a discourse which makes sense of the symbolic dimension underlying religious self-sacrifice at the base of suicide bombings. Particularly important for this alternative interpretation of suicide bombings is Girard's theory of sacrifice. This enables us to shift the focus from the external function of jihad to the (internal) structural relation between sacrificial violence and social order. This new perspective gives further insight into the study of the relation between religion and violence. In fact, by linking together the notions of sacrificial violence and religious fundamentalism – seen as a reaction to the fear of indifferentiation – it is possible to consider the religious factor as a significant element in the explanation of the resurgence of contemporary religious terrorism, a pivotal element which has usually been underestimated in recent debate on terrorism.

Anne I. Harrington

Mimetic Rivalry, Nuclear Weapons and the Struggle for Power

In *Battling to the End* René Girard, in conversation with Benoît Chantre, reveals Clausewitz as a theorist of reciprocal action, the same mimetic movement that Girard argues is the source of all human conflict. Reciprocal action drives the escalation to extremes, which ultimately culminates in absolute, apocalyptic war. In this paper, I apply Girard's insight into Clausewitz as a theorist of the apocalypse to explain how nuclear weapons function as a currency of power. I argue that nuclear weapons are the ultimate expression of mimetic rivalry because they carry the association between violence and power to its logical extreme. Nuclear weapons consolidate an ever-greater ability to unleash destructive force in the hands of fewer and fewer individuals, and are construed as conferring an indisputable power on those in possession of that capability. However, in carrying the association between violence and power to its logical extreme, nuclear weapons simultaneously reveal the self-defeating contradiction inherent to mimetic rivalry—a contradiction that can only be reconciled through the annihilation of the nation-state form, either by subjugating it to a higher law or by apocalyptic earthly destruction. The practices of deterrence and nonproliferation indefinitely postpone the moment of reconciliation by 'scapegoating' the weapons and treating them as the source, rather than the symptom, of the underlying problem. The choice between these

alternatives of submission to a higher law or violent destruction is still within our grasp. However, we can only 'escape mimetism,' as Girard says, 'by understanding the laws that govern it' (*Battling to the End*: 106).

Michael Kirwan

Rene Girard's Mimetic Theory: An 'Anti-Political Theology'?

The paper will be a survey of the implications for political theory of Girard's mimetic theory. This has usually meant an identification of the convergences, as well as differences, between Girard's emphasis on social victimisation ('scapegoating') on the one hand, and theories of 'katechonic' or Leviathan political systems (such as Schmitt's Political Theology), on the other. In addition however, we need to take note of the latest 'apocalyptic' phase in Girard's career, when he asserts that 'politics cannot save us'. Rather than reading this as a counsel of despair, we should see Girard's later writings as an injunction to revise and expand our definition of politics and its possibilities.

Stéphane Marcireau

Christianity and the Rise of the Individual: A Girardian Reading

People are subjected to their mimetic desire and – as long as they do not experience this dependence – they remain chained to whom they borrow their desire from. René Girard's anthropology helps us to understand how mimetic desire, rivalry and violence are merged together, revealing the illusions concerning individual's autonomy. Religion and politics are directly connected to the increase of violence and its reabsorption through the scapegoat mechanism. But as long as peace is brought back by a unanimous violence directed against a scapegoat, people cannot be free. And yet, according to Girard, the mimetic mechanism has been unveiled by Christianity. Christian revelation not only allows us to understand the origin of violence but also gives us the keys to get rid of it by means of the conversion and the imitation of Christ. The issue of the rise of the individual is all the more essential as René Girard notices a growing violence in the world in which we live in. Girard helps us to understand why Christianity is at the same time the force behind both the rise of the individual and a growing violence: Christianity is a *pharmakos*, i.e. the plague and the solution to the crisis. Consequently mimetic theory suggests a brand new humanism as regards to Christianity, the individual and its liberty.

Márcio Meruje

The Aporia of Collective Violence: From Hobbes' Contractualism to Girard's Mimetic Rivalry

Based on the theoretical assumptions of Thomas Hobbes and René Girard, this work aims to critically analyse the concepts of 'collective violence' and 'founding violence'. These two concepts have to be understood both as theoretical categories (i.e. the foundation moment of every society is by definition violent) and as historic dimension (i.e. all states are founded on violence). Apparently, Hobbes' contractualism seems to be in stark contrast with Girard's idea of the spontaneity of violence. Yet mimetic theory can be used to integrate the Hobbesian political construction. Is Hobbes' rejection of the polis the result of a biblical transformation of the world? If so, would Hobbes been aware of the mimetic crisis, the existence of a primeval mimetic rivalry – and would the leviathan been thought as the resolution of the political and social crisis in order to put an end to collective violence?

Dzhamal Z. Mutagirov

Modern Forms of Violence and Sacrifice

Using Girard's ideas on violence and sacrifice, this paper offers a reflection on the nature, causes and forms of terrorism's manifestations in order to explain how terrorism can also be seen as a form of self-sacrifice perpetrated in the name of forced renunciation of violence, revenge for violence, retaliation for cruelty, abuse, etc. States are institutions founded to protect the rights and security of its citizens. Yet, what happens when states lose control over peace-making and arbitration activities? 'Such is the moral construction of the world that no national crime passes unpunished in the long run', Jefferson once wrote. 'Were your present oppressors to reflect on the same truth, they would spare to their own countries the penalties on their present wrongs which will be inflicted on them in future times. The seeds of hatred and revenge which they [sow] with a large hand will not fail to produce their fruits in time'. The crimes committed both domestically and internationally in which hundreds of thousands of people are killed, maimed, orphaned are thus like seeds sow, seeking for revenge of the humiliated, slain victims. As Girard has foresaw, imitation is the fundamental mechanism behind human behaviour. Accordingly, the preservation of peace and justice in our societies cannot only be based on a 'muscular' understanding of politics but it requires a new frame of mind and wisdom to develop alternative democratic solutions.

Vern N. Redekop

Mimetic Structures of Violence and Blessing in Israel/Palestine

Mimetic structures are complex, diachronic, relational patterns that infuse relational systems with a particular orientation that is manifest in attitudes and behaviours. As such they take on a life of their own that can be emplotted, with critical junctures along the way. Such critical junctures in mimetic structure of violence apparent in Israel/Palestine include the partition in 1948, the wars of 1967 and 1973, and the first and second Intifadas. The mimetic nature of these structures can be viewed through the lenses of human identity needs, mimetic rivalries, scapegoating, hegemonic structures, and ethnonationalism. For Israeli Jews, the dominant ethno-narrative is an Ashkenazi driven account of centuries of anti-Semitism culminating in the Shoah. This narrative bears a sub-text of ethnonationalist claims for self-determination of a national group, complete with claims for territory on land that has symbolic and ancestral significance, meeting identity needs of meaning, connectedness, and most significantly, security. The Palestinian ethno-narrative is one of centuries of occupation, entailing subjugation at the hands of the Ottomans, the British, and finally Israelis. The longevity of occupation meant that concepts of self-determination and institutions of self-governance were stymied by overwhelming occupying powers. For Palestinians, threatened are identity needs for meaning (including justice), connectedness, security, and, most significantly, recognition. By framing the challenge as one of transforming mimetic structures of violence to blessing, a heuristic process is opened through an exploration of a new imagination of the implications of a reciprocal orientation of mutual wellbeing.

Paul M. Rogers

René Girard and Thomas Aquinas on Prophecy and the Purging of the Notion of Justice

This paper aims to bring into systematic dialogue the thought of René Girard and Thomas Aquinas on the subject of prophecy and its relationship to the political order. For Girard, the political order, forged out of mimetic crises and the resolution of these crises through the scapegoat-mechanism, remains at its core religious. Prophets, because of their claim to direct divine communication, carry vast political consequences. Genuine prophecy attempts to unveil past mimetic crises and scapegoat resolutions and signals the movement away from mythology towards history. History forces a society to confront its principles of justice and recognize progressively its need to strip away violence and vengeance from its judicial systems and relations with other societies. Aquinas' notion of prophecy, while much more formal than Girard's and almost ahistorical at times, is also linked to his notion of justice and in particular to the virtue of religion, which he treats under justice. Prophecy is a deeply social phenomenon for Aquinas, since prophets' knowledge becomes foundational for communal belief. The implications of this notion of prophecy suggest that for Aquinas the justice by which society is governed (natural justice), should be distinguished formally from revelation, even though in practice the two are almost inseparable. This distinction allows revelation to be in a potentially progressive dialectic with the concept of justice, and this translates further into a dialectic between theology and political philosophy. From this dialogue I conclude that despite their markedly different approaches Girard and Aquinas share some common insights into how 'true' or 'false' prophecy shapes a political order's notion of justice.

Andrea Salvatore

A 'Theoretic Double': Violence, Religion and Social Order in Girard and Schmitt

This paper aims to compare Girard's cultural anthropology and Schmitt's political theory. Conceptual support for a parallel reading can be found in the key concepts and the social perspective shared by the two authors. In particular, Girard and Schmitt share the general view that the widespread violence which is at the origins of any social context can be effectively restrained (but never totally eliminated) only by (re-)directing violence against people that are considered, by the whole community, as the sole guilty party for an extremely dangerous situation. The paper is divided into four parts, each dedicated to a particular aspect of the parallel reading I propose: the problem, the solution, the danger, the resolution. The first part focuses on the original condition of widespread violence that characterises any given community, by comparing the polemological perspective adopted by Schmitt to the mimetic theory advanced by Girard. The second part considers the ways out of the undifferentiated original reality: Schmitt's political decision and Girard's scapegoat mechanism. The third part dwells on what the authors respectively consider as the ever-present danger lurking in any (reiterated) attempt to preserve social order (the neutralisation of the political in Schmitt and the sacrificial crisis in Girard) and the different interpretations of the Pauline concept of katechon they give. In the fourth and final part, the analysis focuses on the relevant role the theorist has to play, according to both the authors, in order to unmask, reveal and (partially) neutralise the essentially violent nature of any process of institutionalisation.

Laura Schuurmans

Mimesis and Nuclear Deterrence. A Case Study of Iran and North Korea

Rene Girard's fundamental thoughts are based on his 'mimetic theory' that emphasizes on the basic principle of imitation that influences lives and which generates a behavioral pattern in the sense that human desire is not a natural feeling, but a desire 'borrowed' from others. He also argues that this mimetic behaviour is a source of conflict. When the United States dropped its atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945, the US was the only country in possession of a nuclear arsenal. Following the end of WWII, the nuclear arms came into being. In the coming

decades, one nation after the other developed nuclear weapons capabilities. By the mid-1980s, the world stockpile had increased to tens of thousands of nuclear bombs and warheads. India and Pakistan successfully test-fired its nuclear arsenal in May 1998. Can this nuclear arms race be based on Rene Girard's thoughts of his 'mimetic theory' or is this phenomenon a mere balance of power strategy among nations? In more recent years Iran and North Korea have been under scrutiny for their controversial nuclear activities. To contain nuclear proliferation, what action could the international community take? Are UNSC sanctions the best options? Against the backdrop of Rene Girard's mimetic theory, will worldwide proliferation continue to be a source of conflict, and could this ultimately pave the way for a nuclear war?

Naveed Sheikh

Towards a Mimetic Theory of Nuclear Proliferation: Girard, the Post-Colonial Condition and the Meaning of the Bomb

Theories on nuclear proliferation are almost entirely predicated on axiomatically settled meanings within ideational and praxiological contexts that simultaneously rationalize and justify the acquisition of the 'absolute weapon' by the technologically superior and morally astute. The nuclear device, within this constellation, takes the form of not merely a strategic weapon but the very epitome of modernity itself, and to this extent signifies the potency of Western civilization and its functional extensions within a stratified order(ing) of both meaning and power. For the non-nuclear subaltern (hence, defined in relation to an absence), her objectification in relation to the nuclear-yielding hegemon can only be dislodged by the mimicking of the exact hegemon, thus simultaneously reifying meaning structures while attempting to unsettle the radical contingency of her own being in relation to the dominant empire of meaning. Predicated on these assumptions, the present paper seeks to develop a tentative mimetic approach to proliferation studies by marrying René Girard's work with, first, post-colonial theory and, second, constructivist understandings of nuclearization. It argues that the vexing question of the quest for nuclear capability among post-NPT nuclear proliferants require engagement with historic memory and situational mimetic desire, both in turn arising from identities and narratives that are not reducible to simplified notions of national interest but speak rather to conditions of existence. From such a post-strategic re-reading of security politics, we learn of not only the multiple architectures of meaning that traditional realist approaches do not theorize, but also encounter the paradox inherent in the globalization of Western modes of knowledge.

Arata Takeda

Aristotle on Mimesis and Violence. Things Hidden since the Foundation of Literary Theory

Much of the scholarly debate on Aristotle's Poetics has revolved around the notion of *katharsis*. The long-running debate and the conflicting theories on the question of *katharsis* in tragedy, however, have eclipsed another question of practical relevance, namely the question of the use of violence within the framework of tragic mimesis. Aristotle's argument on this question was categorical: According to him, the best tragic plot in terms of its kathartic effect on the spectator involved someone who intended to kill a family member in ignorance, but in the end recognized the person and was prevented from the act of killing. This was clearly to suggest that tragic mimesis ideally should do without the use of violence: the kathartic effect was best to be achieved through the threatening, and not the executing, of violence. Remarkably, European tragedy trod a path full of violence, and this despite Aristotle's authority within the field of drama from the Renaissance up until the 18th century. Why has Aristotle's unique view on mimesis and violence been so far ignored? What are the social and ethical consequences of acknowledging this view? And what political implications does it have for René Girard's theory of

mimetic violence and its significance for human security? The paper explores these and related questions by shedding new light on the historical hiddenness of insights developed in Girard's thought.

Scott M. Thomas

Mimetic Theory and the Study of International Relations: Theoretical Issues and Research Trajectories

The purpose of this essay is to introduce Rene Girard's mimetic theory, the theory of culture, religion, and violence, and to begin to relate it to some of the key issues in international relations theory, and to identify some of the areas of research that it might usefully be related. Firstly, the article introduces mimetic theory and some of its basic concepts – mimetic desire, mimetic rivalry, the scapegoat mechanism, and the sacrificial crisis, and emphasizes that mimetic theory is a theory of how culture, religion, and violence are related, and so it is not narrowly a theory of religion and violence. The reason is that the theory is part of a general theory of the origin and maintenance of culture. Secondly, this is why the article engages the debate over theories of religion in theology, religious studies, and the social sciences. The 'problem of religious violence' is too narrowly conceived as a problem of religious violence (with related concepts like religious civil wars or religious terrorism), when the role of culture is ignored or marginalized. This is done purportedly to take religion seriously in international relations, but it does so by not taking culture seriously. Thirdly, this is the necessary background to examine the concept of the 'ambivalence of the sacred,' which underlies much scholarly research on religion and international relations – what factors, under which conditions does religion contribute to peace or to violence. Mimetic theory questions, or at least reconfigures, this construction of the problem of religion and violence – the violent eruptions that disturb social peace and social cohesion, to critically examine the sources of the unveiled, hidden, violence, and the scapegoat ideology that operates in domestic society and in foreign policy to maintain any society's cultural and political order. Finally, and this is why mimetic theory may be relevant to the theory of international relations, its concepts of mimesis, mimetic rivalry, and the scapegoat mechanism, helps all of us to think more clearly and systematically about the rivalry between states, the concepts of international anarchy, international society, the cultures of anarchy, international conflict, and what the English School has called the cultural foundations of international order. In a global age it is by doing this mimetic theorists seek to help all of us, in any society, and even their own, get beyond the scapegoat ideology in politics, social policy, and foreign policy so we can help build a more peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive world.

Jodok Troy

Desire for Power or the Power of Desire? Mimetic Theory and the Heart of 20th Century Realism

For René Girard, mimetic rivalry is the main cause of interpersonal violence. He thus addresses a fundamental problem of international relations theory: the problem of anarchy as it is outlined in various basic texts of Realism, also acknowledging the conflicting potential of desire. The paper argues in favour of deepening the discussion between the thoughts of the French philosopher, anthropologist, and literary theorist René Girard and the tradition of 20th century Realism at the example of Hans Morgenthau who frequently stressed in his concept of 'the political' the importance of the human desire for power. For Girard, the problem of conflicting desire is solved by the scapegoat mechanism, the canalization of mimetic violence, focusing on the Other as the foundation of society. Nevertheless, international relations theory has also pointed out that identity is formed prior to the construction of the Other. The paper addresses both Girard's insights for international relations theory as well as genuine disciplinarian insights, ultimately bringing them into a fruitful discussion. I argue that the anthropologist

insights of Girard can enrich the general thinking about the terms Self, Other, and identity, particularly in the 20th century Realist tradition. Ultimately, this leads to the proposition that appreciating Girard's thoughts helps to make implicit claims and assumptions of Realism, particularly regarding violence and sub-state issues, more explicit.

William Clark Wolf

Hegel's State and the Divinity of Violence: A Girardian Reading of the Philosophy of Right

A well-known feature of G.W.F. Hegel's Philosophy of Right is his so-called 'divinization' of the State. Readers may suppose this to be a metaphorical adornment, but for Hegel, the State's divinity is not merely a superlative designation but in fact expresses the very essence of divinity, which, is, in his terms, to be Spirit 'for itself' in history, rather than a substance 'in itself.' The State expresses the 'universal' and thus is the individual's rational destination and source of freedom, for which the individual ought to sacrifice. However, from a Girardian perspective, the coincidence of sacrifice, community, and divinity in Hegel's political philosophy can hardly be accidental. Therefore, in this paper I will provide a reading of Hegel's Philosophy of Right which demonstrates that the phenomenological transcendence of the State for Hegel is in fact a product of its sacred violence. That is, the State cannot be violent because it is divine; it is divine because it is violent. Hegel, in effect, repeats in secular modernity the mimetic sequence that Girard uncovers in ancient religion, which leads from the victim of collective violence to divinity. Like the mythic *méconnaissance* which attributes transcendence to the victims of violence, Hegel attributes transcendence to the authorized bearers of violence. Despite Hegel's rational intention, his thinking suffers from its sacrificial rationalization of violence, which ignores its victims for the sake of universality.

[Harald Wydra](#)

Spells of the Sacred in a Global World

Taking up the challenge of the 'resurgence of the sacred' in the global age, this paper conceptualises collective social conditions in politics under which quests for sacrality arise. Making the case for the permanence of quests for the sacred, the central underlying idea is that the sacred appears under conditions of political fluidity. Quests for sacrality culturally frame political and social dynamics in contingent historical events. Voids of meaning emerge when regularities, hierarchies, conventional limits of 'normal' politics, and markers of certainty break down. In other words, the binding power of the sacred as a being out of time and as inspiring a sense of awe, verticality, and order occurs in liminal borderline experiences of crisis, revolt, or terror. Forms of collective self-transcendence emerge in unexpected and inexplicable moments of authority vacuum. The fractal character of complex events has a wide spatial and temporal range. The focus here is on the ritual and performative creation of new logics of action. Political judgments about the morally good and the axis of evil, the 'civilised' and the 'barbaric' have been supported in the name of sacred myths and truths, by means of 'sacred violence' in terrorist attacks, or sacred narratives of genocide. Drawing on selected examples from 'new wars', 'religious terrorism', cultural trauma, and humanity's capacity for self-destruction, this paper identifies three major practices of the boundlessness of a global age: quests for purity, the spell of victimhood, and the appeal to a 'sacred future'.

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