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A Hermeneutics of Evil: A Synthesized Approach to the Philosophies of Paul Ricœur and René Girard

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Introduction

Research Question

What is evil? If it is ultimately a mystery of human existence, then how do we describe things as 'evil?' Paul Ricœur and René Girard reveal, via their differing methodological approaches, a historical progression of the understanding of evil, which begins in foundational myths of primitive religion and continues through the major texts of Western Civilization.[1] This progression of understanding, through the interpretation of symbols, which serve as the traces of unconscious violence behind these texts, necessarily includes a response to what will be shown as humanity's 'fallen' or evil existential situation. What common understanding on the question of evil could be achieved when these interpretations and methodologies are placed in dialogue? From where does this common understanding arise? Could the dialogue between Ricœur and Girard be further developed and adapted into a synthesized hermeneutic method for interpreting humanity's situation of evil?

Thesis Statement

By following Ricœur's hermeneutic structure of his 'conflict of interpretations', where a method of 'belief' is coupled with a method of 'suspicion,' I have developed a synthesized hermeneutic approach to the concept of evil through a complementary reading of the works of René Girard and Paul Ricœur.[2] This synthesized hermeneutic approach yields a complex reading centered on these shared themes: (1) the intersubjective constitution of the self in desire, (2) violence as the 'concrete' evil phenomena, *par excellence*, (3) the structural dynamics of symbol and metaphor as an opening towards an existential understanding of humanity's evil situation, and (4) the non-violent role of the Christ figure as the anthropological and hermeneutic key who

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[1]The 'progression of understanding' is the term I employ throughout this dissertation to consolidate Ricœur's methodology in *Symbolism of Evil*, where he gradually analyzes the symbolic progression of levels of representing evil (defilement to sin and then to guilt) with Girard's 'work of exegesis' in progress, which is also a movement of demythologization of myth, prompted by the Judeo-Christian scriptures. See Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Beacon Press, 1963), 20-22. See René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford University Press, 1987), 201.

[2] What do I mean by 'synthesis'? Does one thinker's method and approach dissolve or absorb their counterpart? Do both become so polished and molded together that they are unrecognizable in their uniqueness? My use of the term synthesis is not Hegelian, in that there is a passing into or overcoming, but in fact is closer to Ricœur's usage of *homology*. Yet, homology is too 'flattening' for their productive tensions. A third term to add to explain my usage is a 'continuum.' This will be explained more in the key terms section of this introduction. See Introduction, *Key Terms*.

provides the ethical response to humanity's evil situation. An exploration of these shared themes by placing their complementary insights into a creative dialogue, will serve to show how a synthesized, Ricœur-Girard hermeneutics of humanity's 'fallible' existential situation is not only possible, but also necessitates the way forward to a concrete ethical response of intersubjective non-violence.

Hermeneutic Point of Departure – Welcoming 'Anew the Mimetic Concept'

One of the central points of validating the potential of this synthesized hermeneutic, is from Ricœur's article "Religion and Symbolic Violence," where he states his acceptance of several of Girard's insights, such as the interconnection between mimetic desire, sacrifice, and scapegoating,

> Girard finds the key to such an extensive phenomenon as sacrifice in the structure of desire. I desire what you desire, I identify mimetically with your desire, and the only way to get out of this fatal cycle engendered by desire and its duplication is for you and me to become reconciled by uniting against a third person whom we expel. Thus, the expulsion of the third remedies the intimate threat of mimesis. As I have said before, after an initial phase in which I had welcomed what is essential in this thesis, I resisted what appeared to me, rightly or wrongly, to be a psychological reductionism. But now I see, as I consider what seems to me lacking in my own interpretation, the opportunity *to welcome anew the mimetic concept*… I want to say in closing, therefore, that my agreement with René Girard extends to the point where he interprets the Christ figure as laying bare, denouncing, and dismantling the system of exclusion of the scapegoat.[3]

Ricœur briefly describes his intellectual journey in first accepting, then rejecting, and ultimately accepting even more strongly three integral aspects of Girard's mimetic theory: mimetic identification with the desire of another, sacrifice as a structure of violent exclusion, and the Christ figure as the demythologizer of this system. Given his stated acceptance to those three massively central components to Girard's mimetic theory, the point that I find as the creative impetus for my hermeneutic synthesis of these two thinkers is expressed by Ricœur's phrase, 'to welcome anew the mimetic concept.'[4] To properly account for my method, as derived from *between* both Ricœur and Girard, is to begin first with the original text of this article, where James G. Williams translation of 'to welcome' is from the French verb, *accueillir*, which also has the

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[3] Paul Ricœur and trans. James Williams, "Religion and Symbolic Violence," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 6 (1999): 9, https://doi.org/10.1353/ctn.1999.0003.

[4] One of the ways Ricœur employs Girard's mimetic theory in this article is regarding man's inner disproportion between his fundamental created capacity and his superabundant ontological foundation in freedom. It is when this finite capacity is overwhelmed by the infinitude of the sacred that humanity turns to violence. This view will be explored in Chapter 1, *Violence as Mimetic Response.* See Ricœur, "Religion and Symbolic Violence," 8.

meaning of 'to host' or 'to receive.'[5] Thus, the 'hosting' of Girard's mimetic theory within the phenomenological hermeneutic method of Ricœur is a relationship that hermeneutically reflects the direction of this dissertation – towards the non-violent response, towards a harmonious non-rivalrous intersubjectivity. This 'welcoming anew' or 'hosting anew' makes my hermeneutic synthesis of these two different methodologies a productive expansion of their differences, where each in turn welcomes the other perspective.

But this 'hosting' or 'welcoming anew' still must be conceptually possible. In the closing of the excerpt above, Ricœur states that he accepts even Girard's most controversial claim that the figure of Christ 'dismantles' and 'denounces' the scapegoat mechanism—the 'system of exclusion.' What is implicit is that this system requires such dismantling because it is 'evil.' It functions not just via violence, but also through a *lie*, a universal collection of *méconnaissance*, or misrecognition, regarding the victims, who are expelled and sacrificed.[6] It is this preserved *méconnaissance* in symbols and rituals, where language, cultures, and institutions are produced. For Ricœur to accept this system as existing, and the Christ figure as the one who 'lays bare' this system, is to contain, in embryo, the entire thematic justification for my synthesized hermeneutic.[7]

As will be discussed in chapter 5, the Christ figure provides a mimetic model for non-violence within this order of violence, and thus another form of a generative anthropological structure.[8] Yet, beyond Ricœur's acceptance of the function of the Christ figure, the more profound complementarity with Girard's significant insights, regarding mimetic desire, and the scapegoat mechanism, will be explored.[9] In addition, because the two main theories of Girard — mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism —are integrally related and form a continuum, a thorough exegesis of their overlapping areas of commentary and investigation will be required

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[5] The original sentence, emphasis mine : 'Mais j'entrevois aujourd'hui à travers ce qui me paraît manquer à ma propre interprétation *l'occasion d'accueillir à nouveau la conception mimétique.*' Paul Ricœur, « Le religieux et la violence symbolique » in *Cahier René Girard*, ed. Mark R. Anspach (Editions de L'Herne, 2008), 146.

[6] This term *méconnaissance* is usually translated as either misrecognition or religious misapprehension in the English translations of Girard's works. See the key terms section of this Introduction, page. For Girard's usage, see René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 310.

[7] Thus the center point of this hermeneutic, as will be explained further in chapter 2, is the question of evil, and its concrete phenomena, as violence. See Chapter 2, *Centrality of Evil.*

[8] See Chapter 5, *Christ as Figure.*

[9] For mimetic desire, see Chapter 3, *'Bad' Mimesis.* For scapegoat mechanism, see Chapter 3, *Evil 'Birth' of the Sacred.*

to demonstrate this hermeneutic complementarity.[10] With this stated acceptance of several fundamental aspects of Girard's 'explanatory hypothesis,' and his willingness to 'welcome anew the mimetic concept,' Ricœur himself opens up an intriguing connection between his own phenomenological hermeneutic philosophy, and Girard's anthropological hypothesis, centering on their shared acceptance of Christ as the ultimate demythologizer of the scapegoating violence in sacrificial religion.

But does Girard reciprocate this affinity? In the conclusion of Girard's *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, he states that only the 'fine work of Paul Ricœur's *la symbolique du mal*' can perceive both what is unique about the Christian message in comparison to other world religions, and that this uniqueness is not without relation to primitive religion.[11] Thus, for Girard, Ricœur avoids the dichotomy between traditional Christian thinkers, who argue only for the uniqueness of Christianity, and anti-Christian thinkers, who view Christianity as just another part of some unidentifiable religious continuity in human culture.[12] In Ricœur's *La symbolique du mal*, the merging of these positions is precisely what he does, by stating that the symbol of defilement, which expresses the primitive sacred's contact with evil, is contained and heightened in the modern Christian experience of sin and guilt.[13] Thus the hermeneutic complementarity is

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[10] Yet, as mentioned above with the notion of 'hosting', Ricœur's acceptance of the major aspects of Girard's mimetic theory does not dissolve his own insights and perspectives that expand and critique aspects of Girard that may be too reductionist. For example, in this article, Ricœur mentions that the Christ figure of Scriptural Christianity may not be the only possible demythologizer of scapegoating. However, in an interview in 2002, Girard begins to qualify this claim. He is careful to distinguish Christ as the premier demythologizer, but insofar as other cultural figures emulate his anti-violence message and supreme victimhood, there could be other figural interpreters of primitive religion and that other cultures may possess certain insights to this structure of sacrificial religion. See further René Girard and Sandor Goodhart, "Mimesis, Sacrifice, and the Bible: A Conversation with Sandor Goodhart," in *Sacrifice, Scripture, and Substitution: Readings in Ancient Judaism and Christianity*, eds. Ann W. Astell and Sandor Goodhart (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 64.

[11] The title of this work is translated into English as *The Symbolism of Evil*.

[12] 'Traditional Christian thinkers could proclaim the cleavage between Christianity and everything else but were incapable of demonstrating it. Anti-Christian thinkers can note the continuity, but they were unable to come to terms with its true nature. Among our contemporaries, only Paul Ricœur, particularly in his fine work *La Symbolique du mal*, is willing to argue with determination that both positions are necessary.' Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, 445.

[13] Eugene Webb is the first, outside of the brief remarks between Ricœur and Girard themselves, to pursue a comparison between their works. His excellent analysis highlights several important points of dialogue, especially regarding Ricœur's notion of the *servile will* and Girard's notion of the *skandalon*: 'This exposure of the mechanism of the model-obstacle as the radical source of human evil offers a solution to the problem Ricœur sensed in his paradoxes as well as a revelation of the mystery he sensed there also. It solves the problem of the enslaved will by showing how it is enslaved and also by making clear that it lacks the genuine subjectivity that would give it the power of conscious self-determination. The mechanism of self-enslavement is in reality no mystery, according to Girard, but is objectively knowable in the manner of a scientific hypothesis regarding the socio-psychological phenomenon of the *interdividuel*.' A full reflection of this connection will take place in chapter 3, *Enslaved Freedom*.

reciprocated by the fact that there is a universal continuity of humanity's engagement with the existential boundary of evil, of which is the violence of primitive religion. However, it is redescribed and 'dismantled' as an unjust violence, and cannot be 'dismantled' from an outside or an exterior to this system or situation. This internal, but critiquing, perspective emerges progressively from this collective, mythic origin.[14] Thus, in conjunction with Ricœur's words above regarding his 'welcoming' or 'hosting' of Girard, there exists a structural hermeneutic complementarity by the fact that each is uniquely able to see a hybrid form of understanding in the deep, interlocking connections between the Christian message of non-violence and the violent system of the primitive sacred.

It is essential to note that this thesis will limit its analysis to the hermeneutic methodologies and conclusions of these thinkers. It is for this reason that I will privilege the insights from Ricœur's turn to hermeneutics and philosophical anthropology in *Fallible Man*, *The Symbolism of Evil*, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, *Oneself as Another*, and *Memory, History, and Forgetting*. Ricœur sees this philosophical focus, the problem of interpretation, as the only way forward to finish his original project on a comprehensive philosophical anthropology, began in the earlier works of his *Philosophy of the Will: Freedom and Nature.*[15] I supplement his hermeneutic core with his narrative theory and the 'readability' of the domain of action in *Time and Narrative, vol. 1*, and the concept of discourse in his work, *Interpretation Theory*, which presents a more comprehensive theory of text in reference to symbol and metaphor.[16] In my reading of the two authors, this hermeneutic affinity is evident in Ricœur's 1991 acceptance of Girard, which serves as a verification of what was already implicitly present in his earlier work on hermeneutics and the sacred. With these mutual connections brought to the fore, their hermeneutic compatibility exists not only within their philosophies, but also beyond into the 'historical'

Eugene Webb, *Philosophers of Consciousness: Polanyi, Lonergan, Voegelin, Ricœur, Girard, Kierkegaard* (University of Washington Press, 1988), 222.

[14] This 'boundary' of existential evil is regarding the engagement with a metaphysical evil, that lays beyond either a phenomenological or anthropological investigation. This dissertation is preoccupied with the experience of evil, as it seems to inhabit humanity's existential situation. The positing of a metaphysical evil is outside the bounds of this hermeneutic approach, and beginning directly from a metaphysical perspective would attempt to reduce the ultimately 'scandalous' nature of this experience when attempted to be rationalized.

[15] Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (Yale University Press, 1970), 45-46.

[16] See Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin (University of Chicago Press, 1984), 56. See Paul Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and Surplus of Meaning* (TCU Press, 1976), 62-63.

reality. Thus, the grounds for a combined hermeneutic method are not an unwarranted violence to either of their philosophies, but rather an actualization of their latent dialogue.[17]

Which sources will this dissertation employ from the works of Girard? Because of the seemingly organic growth by which Girard's theories come to develop, first being mimetic desire in his comparative literature analysis, and then later his theory of scapegoating from anthropology, almost the entirety of Girard's corpus will be included. Girard states that his two central concepts, mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism, have diverse potential manifestations across various academic disciplines due to their interdisciplinary combination into a coherent and unified system of understanding humanity and human relations.[18] These concepts relate the infinitude of desire for being within a self, to the self's mimetic modality of attempting to realize this desire. Thus, mimetic desire is an existential and anthropological foundation that can be observed in all human activities, including language, texts, religion, and politics. What this requires is a hermeneutic interpretation to reveal that this mimetic modality of desire operates unconsciously. Girard affirms that to accept one's mimetic self-composition is to commit what modernity would consider the 'sin' of denying our individuality, the romantic ideal of being an actual individual, a creative genius.[19] All of humanity bears this tension between the 'sin' from the viewpoint of a modern mindset, as opposed to what Girard considers the real sin: a failure to recognize our mimetic dependence on the models of our desires. Yet, because of the non-shareability of specific objects of desire, mimetic desire is also the engine of human conflict. Our present society is the culmination of all these efforts to subconsciously mask any direct knowledge of this violent origin and its paradoxical continuation by the institutions that humanity has created to prevent mimetic rivalries, desires, and violence. The importance of this theory in anthropology is regarding the fact that human societies were able to overcome imitative desire and imitative violence, without complex social institutions and taboos that prevent widespread violence. Thus, Girard proposes, to escape the inevitable war of 'all against all,' humanity could have only resolved this, not via a gentlemanly social contract amongst equals,

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[17] Webb, *Philosophers of Consciousness*, 220.

[18] René Girard, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origin of Culture*, eds. Pierpaolo Antonello and Joao Cezar de Castro Rocha (Continuum International Publishing, 2008), 1.

[19] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 28-29.

but via a cathartic act of violence against one victim.[20] This is the *sacred* of primitive religion, that is at the center of all human cultures.[21] Yet, despite this architectonic structure of violence from desire, Girard's communication of this system is not rigidly systematic. He communicates it via a gradual process, where each of his works excavates deeper into this subterranean structure, revealing the mechanism and in turn revealing how each text reveals a different manifestation of this mechanism. It is for this reason that I will be pulling from almost the entirety of Girard's corpus, with his major works, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, *Violence and the Sacred*, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, *The Scapegoat*, *Job: The Victim of His People*, and *Battling to the End*, being the principal texts.[22]

Placing Ricœur and Girard within Existential Hermeneutics

What is meant by the term hermeneutics and how does it bear on the focus of this dissertation, humanity's evil situation in Ricœur and Girard? The term 'existential hermeneutic' is the usual label for Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer's contributions, for they inaugurate the shift in focus of hermeneutics from the textual, to the human interpretation of one's existence, one's being-there and being-in-the-world.[23] The relevance of textual interpretation in this structure takes on a new dimension, for if 'language is the house of being' and 'all being that is understood is language,' the faculty of understanding humanity's existence or being-in-the-world occurs through interpretation.[24] This new dimension brings more

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[20] The details of the sacrificial mechanism are explained in more detail throughout this dissertation. See chapter 3, *'Evil' Birth of the Sacred.*

[21] The sacred in Girard is precisely this structure of scapegoating violence, which adds in the ambivalence of the divinization, as a misrecognition of the true nature of the mechanism, alongside the taboos, rituals, rites, cultures, that emerge from this complex. Ricœur's view of the sacred is also ambivalent, but dwells moreso as a phenomenon, as 'manifestation,' and able to be interpreted through the symbols themselves, which are reflections of a sacred universe, and less of an anthropological system. For Ricœur on the sacred, see Paul Ricœur, "The 'Sacred' Text and the Community" in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Fortress Press, 1995), 71.

[22] For Girard's unique place as an interdisciplinary thinker, whose thought has sprung mimetic applications in a diverse set of intellectual disciplines, see Wolfgang Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory* (Michigan State University Press, 2013), xi.

[23] On the significance of Heidegger's impact on hermeneutics as interpretation of existence see Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy, and Critique*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 101.

[24] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), 490. Also, on the significance of Heidegger's existentialist hermeneutics, from a more historical vantage point on the progression of the discipline from its romantic and modern roots in Schleiermacher and Dilthey, see Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Northwestern University Press, 1969), 128-129.

questions to the fore regarding representations and reality, and the connection between text and world.

As I have covered earlier, Ricœur, a self-proclaimed hermeneutic philosopher and my entry point into this terrain, does not label himself as a pure existential hermeneut. This is because he desires to bring an attitude of phenomenological reflection, where interpretation is oriented towards discovering the self in the 'mirror of its acts.'[25] However, he does not approach this purely from his Husserlian or Neo-Kantian early philosophy but instead agrees with some foundational Heideggerian insights and incorporates them into his own hermeneutically calibrated, reflective philosophy.[26] He states that man is thrown into the world, but cannot 'directly interrogate being,' and his journey towards self-understanding must go by way of a hermeneutics of the symbols of his works and existence.[27] This stems from his assertion that the act of interpretation is an act towards achieving self-consciousness, for he posits this 'cogito' as 'wounded' and unknown to itself unless it begins the impossible task of understanding consciousness as mediated by the self's activities.[28]

Ricœur's phenomenological hermeneutics seeks to bring human experiences to reflection via the interpretation of symbols grounded in experiences that are brought to language. He outlines the importance for humanity to engage with the symbols of the sacred, for they are the closest to humanity's primordial experience of evil, and thus the first attempt at a representation of 'being in the world.'[29] Because humanity understands itself as being in an evil situation, or 'fallen,' humanity's existential situation requires interpretation to be reflective, or to come to terms with its inner fallibility. This reflection presents a phenomenological interpretation of the symbolizations conveyed through language in a 'confession of sin,' which are derived from the

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[25] Paul Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Northwestern University Press, 1974), 10.

[26] On the role of Ricœur's phenomenological hermeneutic as bridging the divide in the existentialist turn of Heidegger's thought with reflective philosophy see Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics*, 219-220.

[27] 'If I begin by giving due consideration to Heidegger's philosophy, it is because I do not hold it to be a contrary solution; that is to say his Analytic of Dasein is not an alternative which should force us to choose between an ontology of understanding and an epistemology of interpretation. The long route which I propose also aspires to carry reflection to the level of an ontology, but it will do so by degrees…' Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," 6.

[28] Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," 11.

[29] Paul Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Beacon Press, 1967), 10-11.

intersection of semantic and pre-semantic experiences.[30] Thus, his phenomenological hermeneutic of the symbols of evil necessarily borders on the existential, given its conclusions and implications for an interpretive understanding of humanity's existential situation. Even though the phenomenological tendency in his approach halts right at this border and is incapable of comprehending the more concrete existential domain, it nonetheless borders on the existential.

Could Girard's mimetic theory also be considered a hermeneutic method that bears on understanding humanity's existential situation of 'fallenness'? My answer to this question is a resounding yes.[31] I argue that this is the case because he arrives at a description of the existential state of humanity (the 'order' of this world) through a reading of texts. By combining several interpretive techniques alongside his 'explanatory hypothesis,' the existential state of humanity is interpreted as 'the real violence behind the text.' Thus, his interpretations, employing both a literary and an anthropological approach, together provide the means to depict humanity's existential situation as trapped in the order of imitative desire, violence, and misrecognition. Thus, one of the central philosophical implications of his mimetic theory is the relation between the texts as institutions of *méconnaissance* regarding violence and desire, and the generative structure of violence that shadows all human productions.[32]

What is this 'generative violence' system that leaves its unconscious traces in all human activities?[33] All Girard's central concepts, such as the imitative composition of the self in intersubjective desire, the scapegoat mechanism, and the origin of institutions and culture in the sacred, are hermeneutic products of his attempts to describe and identify this 'generative' violent structure. His work, *Violence and the Sacred*, is where he develops his fundamental anthropology and reveals that a primordial connection exists between the spontaneous act of violence against an arbitrarily selected victim by the first human community and the founding act of

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[30] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 6.

[31] I am not the only one to affirm Girard as a hermeneutic thinker. See also, Paolo Diego Bubbio, "Mimetic Theory and Hermeneutics," *Colloquy: Text, Theory, Critique* 9 (2005), www.arts.monash.edu.au/others/colloquy/issue9/bubbio.pdf.; Richard Kearney, "Myths and Scapegoats: The Case of René Girard," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 12, no. 4 (1995): 1-14, https://doi.org/10.1177/026327695012004002; Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (Taylor & Francis, 2002); Gianni Vattimo and René Girard, *Christianity, Truth, and Weakening Faith: A Dialogue*, trans. William McCuaig, ed. Pierpaolo Antonello (Columbia University Press, 2006).

[32] For 'generative violence' see Chapter 1, *Girard and the Three Aspects of Suspicion*, 46.

[33] Girard, *Violence and The Sacred*, 146.

differentiation, creating a 'within' and 'without' the community.[34] This founding act of differentiating violence is the foundation of hominization, as it involves instituting sacrificial rituals, as well as the symbols of their promulgation, and symbolizes the difference itself.[35] Alongside these fundamental understandings, the methodological consequence is that Girardian anthropology is revealed through the text, rather than field research, and that it is this interpretation of texts that demonstrates this structural process, in the lineage of the productions of *méconnaissance*, the unconscious trace. This process maintains a trace in the act of human creation, which is structurally marked by ambiguity, reflecting the bidirectionality in the influences of the sacred, rituals, religion, and institutions.[36] The symbolization and ritualization of what was once a founding act of violent difference are discoverable and interpretable through possible instances of *méconnaissance*, unconsciously preserved in texts. This preservation through *méconnaissance*, however, occurs because of humanity's unconscious propensity to conceal its own violence, which lies hidden as the transition from chaotic undifferentiation to differentiation.[37] This propensity to cover up the violence is seen with the 'terror' or fear of this violence, this sacred. Deciphering this *méconnaissance* and the unconscious 'effacement of traces' occurs then through an interpretation of text and reality, and in fact, it is an ethical response to this structure, for rivalry and violence are deeply ingrained in human existence because we do not recognize our own models and scapegoats.

My Methodology - Towards an Existential Hermeneutic of Evil

So, to summarize my methodology as beginning from Ricœur's 'welcoming' of Girard's mimetic theory, it is a hermeneutic methodology that sees the binding of discourse and the text, to the domain of action. The interpretation of the domain of action is ultimately possible through the grounding of the symbol, at the dividing line between *bios* and *logos*, and thus language itself becomes possible via this original symbolic grounding in discourse.[38] My own hermeneutic

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[34] Girard, *Violence and The Sacred*, 146.

[35] "We know that ineradicable character of mimetic rivalry means that the importance of any object as a stake in conflict will ultimately be surpassed and that acquisitive mimesis, which set members of the community against one another, will give way to antagonistic mimesis, which eventually unites and reconciles all members of the community at the expense of a victim. Beyond a certain threshold of mimetic power, animal societies become impossible. This corresponds to the appearance of the victimage mechanism and thus would be the threshold of hominization." Girard, *Things Hidden*, 95.

[36] To explain this ambiguity and bivalence to the symbol and *méconnaissance*, see Chapter 1, *Origin in Symbol.*

[37] René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 26.

[38] Paul Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 59.

vantage point is interdisciplinary, for it seeks to explore *between* the domains of inquiry of Ricœur and Girard.[39] It aims to demonstrate that an interpretive continuum from the anthropological and phenomenological, into an approach to the existential that preserves the methodological differences of both, will advance their similar conclusions onto a more expansive level of understanding. I follow Hans-Georg Gadamer when he says that 'being that can be understood is language,' thus actions considered and reacted to as 'evil' for example, are understandable, via our pre-hermeneutic understanding of the domain of action.[40] To achieve this methodology, I will follow Ricœur's 'long route' of understanding the 'existential' domain, one that cannot be interrogated directly, but by way of signs.[41] Further, seeking an understanding requires its companion, explanation, following Ricœur's dictum, 'to explain more is to understand better.'[42] Thus, this situates my method firmly within hermeneutics, but not purely a phenomenological one, in the manner of Ricœur, who stays too distant from speaking about existence, or too anthropological, in the manner of Girard, which reduces the creativity and freedom of a self to a quasi-deterministic network of mediated desire and violence, nor finally too existential, which claims an understanding of being, without appreciating the depth of the ethical bearing on the understanding of language, without a means for explaining language itself.

The Necessity for Dialogue

Given that the compatibility of the two approaches for dialogue and their role within an existential hermeneutic on the question of evil has been established, what will be the manner of comparison between them? Are they equal dialogue partners, or is one's thought privileged over the other's? By being equal yet different dialogue partners, it is here that the differences in methodology provide a necessary diversity of focus, making this dialogue all the more fruitful for this hermeneutic investigation and strengthening the dialectical tension.

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[39] My usage of a 'between' here is an allusion to William Desmond's metaxology, although recalibrated in a different register, away from metaphysics and ontology, and more towards the text as a modality towards the existential and language itself. For Desmond and hermeneutics see, William Desmond, "Hermeneutics and Hegel's Aesthetics," *Irish Philosophical Journal* 2, no. 2 (1985): 94-104. For a notion of the *between* of philosophy as 'theory' and philosophy as 'praxis,' I find most relevant in my hermeneutic methodology. see the section "Being True and our Intermediate Being" in William Desmond, *The Intimate Universal* (Columbia University Press, 2016) 128-133.

[40] Paul Ricœur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text" in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Northwestern University Press, 2007), 146.

[41] Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," 7.

[42] Ricœur, "Explanation and Understanding," in *From Text to Action*, 130.

As mentioned previously, the 'text and world' relationship and how this relationship is understood is one of the primary focuses of hermeneutic philosophy.[43] Each thinker in this dialogue approaches this relationship from a different viewpoint. Ricœur's viewpoint is rooted in his phenomenological hermeneutics, which privileges the text as having an intermediary relationship between the interpreter and the world of action. Girard's viewpoint is a blend of anthropology and literature, where the text is derived from the 'real,' but also serves as a barrier to deciphering a clear structure. These divided emphases regarding 'text' in Girard and their ambiguity provide the ground for them to be brought into Ricœur's hermeneutic method for combining interpretations, the 'conflict of interpretations.'[44] However, for communicating between these differing emphases and methods, these thinkers must be brought to a common philosophical language, which is the language of Ricœur's hermeneutic philosophy and philosophy of the text. By integrating Girard's insights from his interdisciplinary approach into Ricœur's hermeneutic philosophy of symbol and the text, Girard's mimetic theory becomes more philosophically formalized, thereby strengthening its implicit practical application to the world-text-interpreter dynamic.

In addition, Girard's hermeneutic method is not directly explained by himself. Still, he mentions a diverse set of interpretive techniques in several dialogue-style interviews, in addition to his larger works. However, besides in Wolfgang Palaver's excellent work, where he has brought Girard's thought into a more streamlined analysis with lateral comparisons in many diverse areas of inquiry, these interpretive techniques have not been given a systematic review.[45] Furthermore, Girard's own hermeneutic methodology has not been situated alongside these implicit philosophical insights.[46] By employing Ricœur's concepts of discourse, narrative,

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[43] How do both thinkers approach the term 'world'? To understand their views, I turn to both of their often-repeated summaries on this question. For Girard, his hermeneutic concern is the 'real violence behind the text' and for Ricœur, there is a world brought to expression only by the interpretation of meaning from 'inside the text.' Thus, relating Girardian suspicion about the nature of the text in search of an ontologically 'real' structural violence with the real 'world,' requires seeing this boundary where this 'real' world is brought 'in front of the text' in a Ricœurian interpretive frame. This is the productive tension of this hermeneutic synthesis, that sees both an ontological status to violence and evil, as a certain 'non-being' and 'anti-event' but ultimately as an activity preserved within language, that cannot be understood without its 'traces' preserved in symbols and later myth. This is why this hermeneutic method derives its own structure from the bivalent structure of the symbol. For Girard's view, see Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 26. For Ricœur, see Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," 22.

[44] See Chapter 1 of this thesis for more on the method of combination and its application in the form of Ricœur's 'Conflict of Interpretations.' See in the next section an introductory clarification of my usage of Ricœur's term.

[45] Palaver, *Mimetic Theory*, 42.

[46] Anthony Scordino provides a very thorough reading of the difficulties for a direct application of Girard's theories towards Christian theology and considers him as a hermeneutic thinker of suspicion. Scordino's reading

symbol, metaphor, and three-tiered mimetic understanding, Girard's implicit hermeneutic method can be brought to philosophical speculation and placed in dialogue with other hermeneutic thinkers. In addition, by situating Girard's method within this hermeneutic framework, some previously overlooked aspects of his mimetic theory, such as the role of freedom, the modality of generative violence, and the relationship between the ethical domain and texts, will become more accessible for understanding and critique.

On the reverse side of this relationship, by bringing Girard into closer philosophical contact with Ricœur's phenomenological hermeneutic, a less opaque 'non-semantic ground' is provided, from which the symbolic dynamic of *donner à penser* is taken from the abstract to the concrete.[47] The mimetic anthropology of Girard strengthens Ricœur's philosophical anthropology by providing a linking hypothesis which efficiently connects the diverse applications of Ricœur's hermeneutic of the 'dividing line between *bios* and *logos,'* the symbolic opening of the sacred, and psychoanalysis, into the function of testimony.[48] This connection enables Ricœur's original goals of a concrete philosophical anthropology, particularly in relation to the question of understanding the paradox of the *servile will*, as presented in his *Symbolism of Evil*, to demonstrate a concrete bond between selfhood and its mimetic models. This hermeneutics leads to a more successful, concrete reflection on the self's activities through desire in the ethical domain, which remains 'inside the text.'[49]

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supports my justification that Girard should be considered as an existential hermeneutic thinker, albeit in his unique, anthropological style. 'Girard certainly considers himself to be doing social science, and I would also suggest that he deserves a place alongside the progenitors of other hermeneutics of suspicion such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Yet, I will argue that at least four facets of Girard's thought complicate drawing too simplistic an analogy between mimetic theory and various historical *ancillae*, the result of which is mimetic theory's *sui generis* status vis- à- vis theology: (1) Girard's own statements to the contrary; (2) the epistemic status of mimetic theory—when broadly construed to include the scapegoat mechanism—as derivative from and dependent upon biblical revelation; (3) its apparent demand for existential appropriation, if not Christian conversion, to be understood; and (4) its totalizing or monopolizing tendencies.' Anthony J. Scordino, "Method in Mimetic Theory: René Girard and Christian Theology," *Modern Theology* 40, no. 2 (2024): 334. https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12880.

[47] Paul Ricœur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: I" in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 288.

[48] For the 'dividing line between bios and logos' see Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 59. For the function of testimony see Chapter 5, *Testimony.*

[49] For a more detailed investigation of Ricœur's original project of a concrete philosophical anthropology before his turn to hermeneutics, see Barnabas Aspray's work *Ricœur and the Limits of Philosophy: God, Creation, and Evil* (Cambridge University Press, 2022). For an investigation of his philosophical anthropology in reference to his hermeneutics see David Rasmussen, *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology* (Springer, 1971).

Key Terms

Historical progression of understanding is the phrase that best captures the historical and cultural movement of understanding revealed within the texts of each successive stage of Western civilization.[50] Both Ricœur and Girard describe the existence of this progressive understanding, albeit from their perspectives of inquiry.[51] Ricœur discovers this movement from his phenomenological 'confession of sin' which reveals the evolution from a primitive form of consciousness, and the stages are represented by the symbols of defilement, sin, and guilt. Each symbol collects into a unified idea a stage of collective cultural understanding of how the texts written at that stage represent the respective understanding of evil.[52] In Girard, this historical progression of understanding refers to the 'work of exegesis in progress,' by which human society has come to realize that its institutions are descended from the violence and scapegoating inherent in sacrificial religion.[53] Girard states that this progression happens because of the tendency for the sacrificial mechanism and its production of *méconnaissance* 'wears out' which is why the major paradigm shifts in Western culture are Greek Tragedy, and its implicit critique of sacrifice, and the Hebraic prophets, and their explicit denouncing of sacrificial practices and worldly success.[54] When the term historical progression of understanding is used, it refers to both Ricœur and Girard' usage of this concept both in their similarity and diversity.

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[50] In the objections section of this introduction, I will deal with the charge of ethnocentrism levelled against both Ricœur and Girard.

[51] Here is a quote from Ricœur dealing with the necessity of the *historical* understanding, for understanding 'being' by necessity is historical: 'By beginning with a symbolism already there we give ourselves something to think about; but at the same time we introduce a radical contingency into our discourse… By what is it oriented? Not only by my own situation in the universe of symbols, but paradoxically, by the historical, geographical, cultural origin of the philosophical question itself.' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 19-20.

[52] 'Language is the light of the emotions. Through confession the consciousness of fault is brought into the light of speech… "Guilt", in the precise sense of a feeling of unworthiness at the core of one's personal being, is only the advanced point of a radically individualized and interiorized experience… the experience of "sin", which includes all men and indicates the real situation of man before God, whether man knows it or not. But sin, in its turn, is a correction and even revolution with respect to a more archaic conception of fault – the notion of "defilement" conceived in the guise of a stain or blemish that infects from without.' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 8.

[53] 'The analysis of institutions does not reveal the particular moment at which any given development took place, but it does indeed show that this development occurred in time as part of a real history.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 68.

[54] 'To know violence is to experience it. Tragedy is therefore directly linked to violence; it is a child of the sacrificial crisis. The relationship between tragedy and myth as it is now taking shape can perhaps be understood more easily if we consider an analogous relationship, that of the Old Testament prophets to the Pentateuchal texts they cite as exemplars… Tragic and prophetic inspiration do not draw strength from historical or philosophical sources but from a direct intuitive grasp of the role played by violence in the cultural order and in disorder as well, in mythology and in the sacrificial crisis.' Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 65-66.

Evil, or 'fallenness,' refers to the central focus of the existential understanding of humanity, which serves as the primary topic to be revealed through the historical progression of understanding. The differences in how Ricœur and Girard posit evil, such as Ricœur's ontological disproportion within humanity's fallibility becoming *fault* and Girard's misrecognized violence at the heart of the mimetic, sacrificial mechanism of culture, which originates from 'bad' mimesis, will be brought more into a synthesis in chapter 2 of this dissertation.[55] To start, both positions are contained within my summation of their concepts of evil, for both descriptions as either fallibility or 'bad' mimesis still remain the central issue to be defined and exposed via their hermeneutic methodologies. Yet, evil as a concept is too 'metaphysical' to be approached via this hermeneutic method, so rather than to attempt an investigation directly of abstract evil, the focus is on the phenomenon of violence as the concrete evil par excellence, which connects the ontological disproportion of fallibility, the inclination towards rivalry in intersubjective desire, the symbols of evil, and the actual system of exclusion and violence that is revealed and 'dismantled' in the culmination of the Christ figure. Thus, the evil experience that can be conveyed through language will be revealed to be a structure of violence.

Méconnaissance encapsulates the unconscious misrecognition and obfuscation of violence, which paradoxically expands meaning and hides meaning. Thus, *méconnaissance* is the unconscious distancing of humanity from its own violence that mirrors the process of symbolization and metaphorization.[56] Ricœur sees this process of hallucination as also a product of desire and a 'violence done to meaning,' and partly the reason for his call for a 'semantics of desire' in *Freud and Philosophy.*[57] So, what Girard defines as misinterpretation, misapprehension, and misrecognition, as well as the unconscious aspects of mimetic desire and the scapegoat

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[55] Girard on mimetic desire and violence: 'Even if the mimetic nature of human desire is responsible for the most of the violent acts that distress us, we should not conclude that mimetic desire is bad in itself… Without mimetic desire there would be neither freedom nor humanity. Mimetic desire is intrinsically good.' René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, trans. James Williams (Maryknoll Press, 2001), 15.

Ricœur on fallibility into evil: 'My second working hypothesis, which now concerns the matter rather than just the rational style of inquiry, is that this global "disproportion" of self would be the ratio of *fallibility*. "I should not be surprised" if evil has entered the world with man, for he is the only reality that presents this unstable ontological constitution of being greater and lesser than himself.' Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles A. Kelbey (Fordham University Press, 1986), 1.

[56] See Chapter 1, *Origin in Symbol*, 35 and Chapter 4, *The Function of Symbol in Girard and Ricœur*, 135.

[57] 'In its transposition or distortion (*Verstellung*) of the manifest content into the latent content, interpretation uncovers another distortion, that of desire into images… for a disguise is a type of manifestation and, at the same time, a distortion that alters that manifestation: it is the *violence done to the meaning…*' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 92.

mechanism, is shown to be intimately connected with desire itself and the human response to recognizing its own violence.[58] As previously stated, it is this term that will be the focus of Girard's hermeneutic of suspicion and the premier justification for his 'explanatory' hypothesis. The term *méconnaissance* serves as the repository of meaning for all the hidden aspects of the mechanism and how it continues to work as the 'logos of violence' in our world, without our overt awareness.[59]

The '*conflict of interpretations*' will be the focus of chapter 1 and will be explored in more depth there. However, as a term, it refers to the hermeneutic method of combination promulgated by Ricœur in *Freud and Philosophy* and his series of articles, also titled *The Conflict of Interpretations.*

> The two hermeneutics, one turned toward the revival of archaic meanings belonging to the infancy of mankind, the other toward the emergence of figures that anticipate our spiritual adventure, develop, in opposite directions, the beginnings of meaning contained in language – a language richly endowed with the enigmas that men have invented and received in order to express their fears and hopes… But these two functions are not external to one another; they constitute the 'overdetermination of authentic symbols.'[60]

This quote captures the need for a dialectical synthesis of both Ricœur and Girard on the existential understanding of the question of evil, for both via a 'Conflict of Interpretations' are able to more fully capture the 'two vectors' of symbolic meaning, one towards our archaeology in violence and desire, the other towards the symbols of hope in an ethical praxis of non-violence.[61]

Symbol will be discussed in chapters 1 and 4, but as a starting point, I will use Ricœur's view of this concept, where it is an instance of plurivocal meaning. At the first level the symbol is a reference to non-semantic experience, thus its 'binding.' The symbol truly becomes such by the interpretive act itself, for it reveals this first level's connection to a second, 'higher' level, that arrives through the interpretation. Thus, there are at least two interpretive directions that can

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[58] 'In order to retain its structuring influence the generative violence must remain hidden; misapprehension is indispensable to all religious or postreligious structuring.' Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 310.

[59] 'Western thought continues to function as the effacement of traces. But the traces of founding violence are no longer the ones being expelled; rather, the traces of a first or second expulsion, or even a third or fourth, are now submitted to expulsion. In other words, we are dealing with traces of traces of traces, etc.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 65.

[60] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 496.

[61] See Chapter 5, *Conclusion.*

be pursued: a 'believing' interpretation, or expansion of meaning, and a suspicious interpretation, which aims to discover this 'non-semantic' ground.

Metaphor will be mainly discussed in chapter 4 and is also descended from the structure of symbol, with one significant difference. It contains the same interpretive bivalence, where the metaphoric production occurs in the dissimilarity, the opposition between two terms. Still, it is no longer 'bound' to a non-semantic ground of experience. It is a productive instance of discourse that is now freed in the 'purified' domain of the logos. The importance of relating metaphor to symbol lies in understanding the natural progression of language away from its symbolic heritage, that is, from its proximity to generative violence.

Figure is the term for the consolidation of meaning around an interpretive identity, whose presence in a text does not restrict the bounds of its interpretive and hermeneutic application in a cross-textual space. The figure, employed in this manner, bears a typological and structural relationship to the universal aims of understanding human existence. Both Girard and Ricœur derive their use of this term from Erich Auerbach's essay "Figura," albeit with their interpretive methodological expansions.[62]

Language is the 'house of being' in a larger sense, but it is ultimately a network of significations descended from a symbolic order, which are no longer bound to non-semantic experience. Language, in its contemporary understanding, has become redescribed through the

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[62] Auerbach states 'Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events, whether past, present, or future, and not with concepts or abstractions…' Erich Auerbach, "Figura" in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. Ralph Manheim (University of Minnesota Press, 1984) 53. Ricœur expands the notion of 'figura' by comparing it with the term *Gestalt*, where both resist the Christian history of *typos*, which reduces the Old Testament figures reviewed in this dissertation to merely being inert allegories waiting for the interpretation of Christ. The notion of *Gestalt* is central, because in Ricœur's own usage, it is the 'narrative configuration' of meaning as well, seen with mimesis$_2$.' Girard's association with figura is also descended from Auerbach, but an expansion into the anthropological, comparative, and structural direction. Thus, by supplementing Girard's anthropological view of 'figura' alongside Ricœur's blending of 'figura' with *Gestalt*, an expansion of the Ricœurian notion of the 'archetypal,' seen with Adam, Cain, Abel, Eve, and the Serpent in our myth section, into the figural interpretation, where we can add the figures of Oedipus, Job, the Suffering Servant, and Christ to demonstrate the hermeneutic progression of understanding evil as grounded in the anthropological, phenomenological, and the textual. For Auerbach's essay of the 'Figura,' see Erich Auerbach, "Figura" in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*,) 11-78. For 'Figura' in Ricœur, see Paul Ricœur, "The 'Figure' in Franz Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*" in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, 96-98. For 'Figura' in Girard see note #81, Girard, *Things Hidden*, 274.

metaphoric projection, which is now 'freed' and 'purified' discourse, allowing for the usage of semiotics and semantics. Yet, language, when spoken or written, is no longer without reference; in a 'virtual universe,' it is always 'about something.' Thus, when language is used, it is discourse. In relating my usage of Ricœur's conception to the Girardian thesis, if language is the umbrella of all these essential concepts, it still descends from a principle of difference, the difference between the crowd and its victim. Thus, language has both structural and semantic components. To quote Ricœur, 'language relies on two irreducible entities, signs and sentences.'[63]

Discourse is 'the event of language' and it is dialectically related to its 'meaning.' Discourse grounds the 'actuality' of language in the activity of communication. Language, as just a network of signs, is groundless and virtual, not actual. The 'instance of discourse' is not a vanishing, solitary event, but is available to be re-said, translated, and inscribed.[64] Thus, it has a dialectical structure, that of an 'actualized event,' and that of an 'understood meaning.'[65]

Event is taken from Ricœur's notion of the discordant, individual, temporal moment of experience. To become narrativized, it is brought into a series of other events, into concordance. Yet, this undersells its importance as a rupture, or a break, that inaugurates a new understanding. For event to be brought to language, it requires it to be 'frozen' in discourse.

For the *text*, I will rely first on Ricœur's definition of text as 'any discourse fixed by writing.'[66] There necessarily exists an excavation of meaning from the 'giving to thought' which may distance or obfuscate the reality, because there exists the non-semantic experience from which text emerges. The relation of the donative aspects of text and discourse for meaning thus makes necessary a hermeneutics of suspicion, or in Girard's terminology, 'a reality behind the

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[63] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 6.

[64] 'Discourse refers back to its speaker at the same time that it refers to the world. This correlation is not fortuitous, since it is ultimately the speaker who refers to the world in speaking. Discourse in action and in use refers backwards and forwards, to a speaker and a world.' Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 22.

[65] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 12.

[66] Paul Ricœur, "What is a Text?," *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, 106.

text.'[67] This suspicious attitude will help orient this production of new meanings to its anchor in experience as reference, which, as Ricœur states, is the 'ontological condition' for language.[68]

Testimony is the dual function of narration and confession that adds the 'seal of conviction' as a witness to an event. It forms the means by which the innocence of victims is known, and an integral part in the response to the evil of violence, by placing the eschatological event of the decision of attesting, within discourse. It will be discussed at length in chapter 5.

Self is ultimately the answer to the question 'who commits evil' or 'who suffers evil' or 'who testifies against evil.' These answers will be expanded and evaluated in chapter 3 and 5, where I will engage with Ricœur and Girard on their formulations of desire, selfhood, and intersubjectivity. Thus, the answer that will be provided now is that the self is an internally divided self, whose 'ontological disproportion' between freedom and nature gives a more expanded ontological framing for the modality of mimetic desire and the desire for being. The self is radically intersubjective in its interiority and exteriority, and evil is seen as the structure of violence done to both 'spaces' of the self.

Freedom will also be discussed in chapter 3, for it forms one of the key tension points in the attempted hermeneutic synthesis. Ricœur advocates for his notion of a 'bound' freedom, that is the actualized expression of the fallibility of humanity caused by the disjunction between an abstract, pure freedom, and the self's involuntary – body, history, character, ability, nature, etc. The emergence of *fault*, the actuality of a committed evil, coming through this 'ontological disproportion,' reveals, in the hermeneutic of the symbols by which *fault* is represented, a similar structure of a 'bound freedom,' the situation of 'fallenness.'[69] This tension in the 'boundness' of

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[67] 'We conclude that there must be a real victim behind the text, chosen not by virtue of the stereotypical crimes of which he is accused, crimes which never spread the plague, but because of all the characteristics of a victim specified in that text which are most likely to project on him the paranoiac suspicion of a crowd tormented by the plague… How can we not believe that a real victim lies behind a text which presents him in this way and which makes us see him, on the one hand, as persecutors generally see him and, on the other hand, as he should really be seen to be chosen by real persecutors.' René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 26.

[68] 'Language is not a world of its own. It is not even a world. But because we are in the world, because we are affected by situations, and because we orient ourselves comprehensively in those situations, we have something to say, we have experience to bring to language. This notion of bringing experience to language is the ontological condition of reference… It is because there is first something to say, because we have an experience to bring to language, that conversely, language is not only directed towards ideal meanings but also refers to what is.' Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 20- 21.

[69] As will be shown in Chapter 2, what was 'ontological disproportion' on the phenomenological level, is a *servile will* at the hermeneutic level.

freedom to a state of 'fallenness' makes the actualization of freedom, the choice, an ethical demand. Girard provides no such view of freedom, except as an escape from the mimetic system of illusions requires a choice of 'good' mimetic model, and thus a conversion. This makes a form of mimetic freedom and a truer understanding of individuality possible but not explained. The problems in Girard's account of freedom for his own account of mimetic freedom will be discussed, and Ricœur's view of a 'bound freedom' and the hermeneutic approach of the *servile will*, provide a strong countermeasure to answer the critiques to Girard's view.

Mimesis and its relation to desire will be the central concept of chapter 3. The difference between Girardian *mimesis*, mimetic desire, and Ricœurian *mimesis*, the threefold process of emplotment and figuration. This wide difference in methodology and focus for the term *mimesis* will not prevent dialectical interplay.[70] Ricœur's usage of *mimesis* as a term is focused on the technical application of understanding and action into the realm of the text, being eventually represented as a plot or *muthos*. Girard's *mimesis* is instead the modality of imitative desire, but also imitative violence, imitative love, and the basis of his strong explanation of social movements and crowd dynamics. As a result, when the term *mimesis* is used throughout this thesis, it will be referring to Girard's conception of mimesis, which has a broader horizon of impact, beyond textual applications, unless explicitly stating that I am referring to the specific Ricœurian threefold mimetic application process that leads to emplotment or *muthos*.

Synthesis is meant not in the dissolution or absorption of differences into a new singular entity. In my usage of the term synthesis, it seeks to be the point of expressing the hermeneutic of evil that emerges via the strong and multi-leveled 'conflict of interpretations.' Thus, my hermeneutic of evil, expressed as this hybrid synthesis-homology-dialectical tension, is also attempting to express a continuum to Ricœur and Girard's methodologies and insights. It is a synthesis by identifying the 'points of contact' and showing an ability to traverse these contact points, from phenomenology to anthropology. Thus, a synthesized hermeneutic is a way of reading these contact points as the pathways to expanding an understanding of evil, as it dwells 'in and around' each of the domains of human experience.

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[70]Ricœur on the threefold process of mimetic figuration: 'What is at stake therefore, is the concrete process by which the textual configuration mediates between the prefiguration of the practical field and its refiguration through the reception of the work. It will appear as a corollary, at the end of this analysis, that the reader is that operator par excellence who take up through doing something – act of reading – the unity of the traversal from $mimesis_1$ to $mimesis_3$ by way of $mimesis_2$.' Ricœur, *Time and Narrative Vol.1*, 53.

Primary Objections

The first anticipatory objection that must be addressed before I continue is the charge of Western ethnocentrism, which is leveled against both Ricœur and Girard.[71] This charge refers not to their universal, conceptual claims about humanity, but to the privileging of sources that forms the historico-cultural basis, indicating the centrality of the Judeo-Christian scriptures above all other religious traditions, in both mimetic theory and in the phenomenological confession of sin. Ricœur's answer to this objection also further clarifies the significance of history and culture in the self-understanding of one's finitude.

> Our philosophy is Greek by birth. Its intension and pretension are universally 'situated.' The philosopher does not speak from nowhere but from the depths of his Greek memory, from which rises the question: τι το ον? What is being? This question, which sounds the Greek note at the outset, embraces all later questions, including those of existence and reason, and consequently those of finitude and fault. The face that the Greek question is situated at the beginning orients the human space of religions which open to philosophical investigation.[72]

Ricœur establishes the fundamental question from Greek philosophy, 'what is being?' as his philosophical and cultural orientation point to begin his analysis of the symbols of *fault*. How do the Judeo-Christian scriptures also receive this status? It is due to the twin heritages of Athens and Jerusalem, where Judaism is placed as Greek philosophy's first other.

> Not that any culture is excluded in principle; but in this area oriented by the originally Greek question, there are relations of 'proximity' and 'distance' that belong inescapably to the structure of our cultural memory…More precisely, the encounter of the Jewish source with the Greek origin is the fundamental intersection that founds our culture. The Jewish source is the first 'other' of philosophy, its 'nearest' other.[73]

Ricœur's usage of the terms 'cultural memory' and 'proximity' are central to addressing the objection of Western ethnocentrism, which seems to imply a sense of arbitrariness or bias, in the choice of Greek philosophy and the Judeo-Christian scriptures as the central texts to demonstrate a hermeneutic investigation of the symbols of *fault*.[74] Ricœur's phenomenological approach to these texts does not abstract his position to outside of this cultural memory. Still, it must be enacted within the real, historical, and cultural context from which one begins this reflection. This merges a retroactive understanding with the progressive understanding contained in the historical movement of the hermeneutic objects in question. This bi-directional merging brings

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[71] Palaver, *Mimetic Theory*, 31-32.

[72] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 20.

[73] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 20.

[74] Proximity, distance, and mediation from a Girardian perspective will be discussed in Chapter 3, *Mediation and Proximity*.

the universal application from the concrete particular to the understanding of evil, on an existential level, rather than merely a cultural one.

How does Girard address this claim, considering he seems to make more widespread universal claims about the singularity of the Judeo-Christian message over and against its more primitive and pagan others? It is important to note that this characterization of Girard's fundamental anthropology is an incomplete assessment, for he relies on a comparative analysis of myths and rituals from a diverse set of cultures that have no geographic or historical connections, to illustrate the universality of the scapegoating mechanism in primitive religion. However, the singularity of the Christian message does arise as an evolution of an anti-sacrificial message that progressively evolves from the Old Testament until its complete manifestation in the Gospels with the figure of Jesus. While Girard has been adamant of the singular importance of the Christ figure for world history's collective rejection of sacrificial violence and the sacred, many thinkers, using the Girardian paradigm presented in Christ of the Gospels, have found similar messages in other cultures, such as in aspects of Buddhist tenets.[75] Yet, does the claim of ethnocentrism, as an arbitrary bias of exclusion, find a foothold in the thought of Girard? Due to the role of Christianity for the progressive understanding of mimetic violence, which in fact in its history has not been recognized, the age of a rejection of sacred violence which seems to progress from the historical occurrence of Christ figure is in no way an arbitrary selection of bias, but the central point of evolution in this paradigm of sacrifice and anti-sacrifice, where all cultures, including Christianity itself, are called to be demythologized. What remains is to expand the 'points of contact' with universal interpretation of the non-violence of the Christ figure as a model for non-rivalrous desire that exist cross-culturally.

The second anticipatory objection follows closely from the above, and states this 'hermeneutic of evil' to be a 'crypto-theological' or Christian apologetic work. For the reasons above and in order to not be a historical revisionist, the Judeo-Christian approach to evil, and the 'constellation' of ancient near-east cultures that contributed to its cultural milieu, have had a dominant impact on my historical perspective, alongside that of René Girard and Paul Ricœur. Thus, their views of evil possess similar presuppositions to my own about evil; these

[75] Vannessa J. Avery, "From the Sacred to the Holy in the World's Religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism," p. 261-262 from *The Palgrave Handbook of Mimetic Theory and Religion*, ed. James Alison and Wolfgang Palaver (Palgrave Macmillan, NY: 2017); See Girard's mimetic analysis of the Hindu Vedic texts and myths in Girard's *Sacrifice: Breakthroughs in Mimetic Theory (*Michigan State University Press: 2011*)*.

presuppositions about evil and its understanding are very widely spread.[76] Further, both thinkers were confessional Christians, and wrote extensively about their beliefs.[77] That being said, this theological background to the question of evil is a necessary starting point, for its re-exploration here, in an existential hermeneutic mode. Dividing and subordinating cultural influences images much of the violence critiqued and defined in this dissertation. Thus, the goals of this dissertation, and its method and argumentation, are neither metaphysical nor theological. Its focus is to expand the understanding of evil, as it is experienced in the world. Yet, this focus does not make my dissertation in opposition to metaphysical explorations or theological approaches, for to declare such a rigid methodological boundary is enact a form of violent division, which, as this dissertation will show, is an image of the structure of evil in the world.

Structure

In Part I of this thesis, I develop the structure of this dialectic hermeneutic synthesis and establish the conceptual ground for this hermeneutic to occur, following Ricœur's 'conflict of interpretations' as model. From there, the existential understanding of evil is the driving question to be revealed that animates this hermeneutic synthesis, by an exploration of the polarity of violence. To conclude Part I of this dissertation, I turn to the question 'who' is in relation to evil and violence. To this aim, the intersubjective and mimetic composition of desire as the internal co-origin of this evil situation and the self who interprets the existential situation and is capable to respond to existential violence will be investigated.

In Part II, I turn to the progression of understanding this existential situation via symbol, metaphor, myth, and the interpretive figures of non-violence. The Christ figure emerges as the hermeneutic key and transition between the 'mythic' and 'historical'. The historical progression of understanding then culminates in the figural interpretation of Christ which opens the 'dismantling' of the system of violence and *méconnaissance* and inaugurates the testimonial function of non-violence. This 'Christo-centric' hermeneutic synthesis emerges after the

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[76] For example, a discussion on the question of 'Original Sin' will not be explored in this dissertation, even with an extensive interpretation of the Adamic Myth, see Chapter 4, note #507.

[77]For Ricœur's discussion of his Christian faith and upbringing see Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with Francois Azouvi and Marc De Launay*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Columbia University Press, 1998), 5-7. For Girard's conversion to Christianity, see "Chapter 7: Everything Came to Me at Once" in Cynthia L. Haven, *Evolution of Desire: A Life of René Girard* (Michigan State University Press, 2017), 109-20.

culmination of the historical progression of understanding establishes a framework for an existential understanding of the ethical implications via the interpretation of both text and world.

Outline of the Chapters

In Chapter 1, I will frame the dialectical hermeneutic method of Ricœur's 'conflict of interpretations.' To accomplish this, I will analyze Ricœur and Girard's respective philosophical hermeneutics and their attitudes towards the 'text,' and then place them in the various dialectical movements expressed in Ricœur's *Freud and Philosophy.*[78] Their hermeneutic philosophical insights will alternate as the two poles of interpretation, which are either the poles of belief or suspicion. These poles encapsulate other forms of dialectical interpretive movements utilized in this dissertation, such as remythologizing and demythologizing, internal and external, and the positive pole or negative pole. Girard's hermeneutic will occupy the place held by the demythologization of meaning, or suspicion, and Ricœur's hermeneutic will remythicize meaning, or belief. This dialectical relationship will not remain static throughout this thesis but will reverse itself most notably on Christ as figural hermeneutic key as having claims to anthropology and history in chapter 5.

In Chapter 2, I will address the central purpose of these two hermeneutic methods, which is the understanding of evil, as expressed as fallibility, *fault*, the *servile will*, and ontological disproportion in Ricœur, and the systemic violence of 'bad' mimesis in Girard. By first establishing how each thinker conceptualizes and defines 'evil,' I will center the orienting theme for the 'conflict of interpretations' outlined in the previous chapter. The theme of understanding the evil in humanity's situation is the guiding thread for each of the two thinkers' hermeneutics, and the justification for their synthesis. I will begin with the phenomenological emergence of evil, available for a hermeneutic understanding as the polar structure of violence, internal and external to the self, simultaneously *suffered* and *committed*.

In Chapter 3, the theme to be clarified is desire and its necessary role in forming the self via mimesis in Girard and the "wounded" cogito in Ricœur. Both thinkers share the presupposition that desire is foundational to the self's own composition for it establishes the

[78] "Thus, a third level is formed, which is properly dialectical; it is at this level that the possibility of interrelating two opposed hermeneutics comes into view; regression and progression are henceforth understood as two possible directions of interpretation, opposed but complementary." Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 342

movement toward the other, and establishes a foundational and necessary intersubjectivity.[79] This capacity of desire's role within the self is a central concept for this hermeneutic, for it both answers the question 'who' commits or suffers violence and will allow an element of self-understanding of humanity's evil situation. Thus, relating evil and desire, understandable as concrete violence, makes intersubjectivity the place of evil, but also the place of response, of non-violence. However, does Ricœur accept this intersubjective desire as necessarily mimetic? This tension in Ricœur's acceptance of the mimetic nature of desire, for this dialectical hermeneutic to build a productive difference between the two thinkers, presents an opportunity 'to welcome anew the mimetic concept.' Thus, by relating Girard's mimetic desire and Ricœur's thymic desire, the divided, intersubjective, mimetic self, is the central element to an anthropological view capable of expressing the polarity of violence as *suffered* and *committed*.

In Chapter 4, I will explore the mythical origins of this shared progressive understanding of humanity's existential situation of evil, rooted in the realm of primitive religion, through the symbols of defilement, sin, and guilt. By appraising Girard's and Ricœur's treatments of symbol as a textual entity that reveals universal existential meaning and obscures a deeper reality, we behold the productive interplay between Girard's founding murder hypothesis and Ricœur's symbol of defilement.[80] This is so because this founding murder not only forms the integral transition point in humanity's hominization but also provides an entire schema for the birth of the sacred and a form of fear/belief tethered to primitive religion and violence. Furthermore, the notion of a community is only achieved through the cathartic release of spontaneous crowd violence, and this differentiation between the crowd and the victim provides the origin of the

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[79] The justification for this in Ricœur is the *thumos*, or 'restless heart' as described in his *Fallible Man*. See Chapter 3, *Thumos and The Thymic Quests*.

[80] Ricœur has serious reservations about Freud's conception of a founding murder in his *Freud and Philosophy*. This is because he neither believes Freud's subsequent critique of faith which stems from the murder of the father to produce the necessary covenant among the brothers, nor this subsequent covenant to be less important for faith than Freud's over-emphasis of the parricide. With Girard's conception of the founding murder, as not simply brothers murdering a father, but an act of collective violence by the first human crowd, these objections are overcome and the structural moment of violence is seen to be existential. What remains from Ricœur's critique for this dissertation, is the notion of the fundamental potentiality for reconciliation, for non-violence, in the 'distancing' from the murder itself, which illustrates a deeply human incompatibility and fear of violence. 'In the famous myth of the primal murder, Freud encounters an episode that remains unexplained, although it is ultimately the pivot point of the drama: this episode is the forming of the covenant among the brothers whereby they agreed not to repeat among themselves the murder of the father… But Freud is much more preoccupied with the symbolic repetition of the murder in the totem meal than with the conciliation among the brothers… Why not link the destiny of faith with this fraternal conciliation, rather than with the perpetual repletion of the parricide?' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 535.

sacred from the community's ambivalent relationship to its victim. Further, Girard's founding murder provides an anthropological origin for the existential dread embedded in Ricœur's symbolization of defilement, which contains a primal fear of retribution, or 'dread,' that humanity cannot locate via a phenomenological hermeneutic of the 'anti-event' preserved in its traces.[81] The 'conflict of interpretations' then moves forward from this hypothetical origin by uniting the symbolization of defilement and the founding act of violence in the fear of retribution from which stems humanity's ambivalence to the sacred. It is then progressively reinterpreted by the later symbolic stages of sin and guilt.

In Chapter 5, I turn to the figures of Sophocles' Oedipus, Job from the Book of Job, and the 'Suffering Servant' in Isaiah 52-53 from the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Testament. These figures highlight the key moments of critique of this violent system, now beginning to be seen as evil. Thus, the 'prophetic accusation' and the 'tragic inspiration' are qualities of this progressive realization of human interconnection between the sacred, violence, and evil. The historical progression of understanding here also maps the introspective reflection on humanity's situation that fosters these critiques of primitive religion and the social sphere. This progression necessitates a human response that is not ritual or sacrifice. Thus, in turning to the Gospels, both thinkers' usage of the Christ figure as the retroactive hermeneutic key to this historical progression of understanding is also the path forward. Just as myth functioned as the 'effacement of traces,' promulgating *méconnaissance* about the innocence of the victims behind the violence, the Christ figure provides a new textual 'institution,' the function of testimony, which works to undo the *méconnaissance* of human violence and evil. The retroactive movement prompted by the figural interpretation of Christ reveals a path forward in a response to this evil situation, that is also *eschatological*, because of the urgency to attest, to witness to human innocence against the 'adversary' of humanity, which is paradoxically a collective human system of misrecognized violence and accusation. Thus, the 'event' of this eschatological decision, in the testimonial act of non-violence, establishes a positive mimetic, intersubjective community as 'the secret possibility' of human situation – a true 'Kingdom' for fallible, mimetic, and intersubjective selves. Each non-violent 'decision' is an act of a 'bound' freedom, a freedom bound to mimetic bonds to models. The urgency of this non-violent 'decision' is pressed upon humanity by the 'escalation' of violence, bad mimesis, which no longer has the resources of a violent sacred, ritualized sacrifice

[81] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 31.

or scapegoating, to fuel its system. The system has been 'dismantled' by the testimonial function of the 'paraclete,' This escalation of violence is continued by the now more interiorized, and seemingly 'bloodless' violent 'decision,' where a self, rivalrous with its interior, divided mimetic composition commits the act of the *decidere*, a rejection of mimetic harmony, and fallible intersubjectivity.[82]

Thus, evil, in its bipolar phenomenon of violence suffered and committed, and its externalized system of the now demythologized sacred, can be hermeneutically understood when the historical progression of its demythologization and its response are considered. The contemporary, now sacred-less, violence retains this structure of internal-external, suffered and committed, where both poles are contained in the undifferentiated evil act, an act of violence. Yet, only the testimonial act, which advocates for innocence, can dissociate suffering from committing, can reveal it to be unjust, and also expose this structure of violence to be deeply ingrained in humanity's mimetically intersubjective interiority. Thus, a hermeneutic understanding of existential evil reveals that a response to this evil must involve witnessing to innocence and mimetic modeling of non-violence, which is not only focused on the 'visible' concretized forms of violence but also on recognizing that this structure of violence is simultaneously internal to the self.

[82] 'By reminding us of this John emphasizes that every real cultural decision has a sacrificial character (*decidere*, remember, is to cut the victim's throat) that refers back to an unrevealed effect of the scapegoat, the sacred type of representation of persecution.' Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 114.

Part I
Chapter 1: The 'Conflict of Interpretations'

> *There is no general hermeneutics, no universal canon of exegesis, but rather separate and opposed theories regarding the rules of interpretation. The hermeneutic theories of which we drew the outer contours is itself broken.*[83]

Introduction

To establish this proposed dissertation using a synthesized hermeneutic for understanding evil, I will follow a model of interpretation that best allows for the differences and similarities of these thinkers to be accentuated and evaluated properly, without losing their distinctiveness and contributions. Ricœur provides us with the ideal model for this synthesized hermeneutic method due to his consistent use of dialectical methods for relating and combining various philosophical influences. The best example of this is Ricœur's own 'conflict of interpretations.' This hermeneutic model stems from a 'war of hermeneutics' and is a system of relating two seemingly opposed hermeneutic attitudes: suspicion and belief.[84] Although this system is explained in its sophisticated structure, the structures and themes themselves will also be adapted to the interpretations of Ricœur and Girard to relate the anthropological-existential approach towards evil. In this chapter, I will first examine the expression of this idea in Ricœur's *Freud and Philosophy*, and then proceed to begin extrapolating and applying the hermeneutically distinct methods of Ricœur and Girard.[85] The application of the 'conflict of interpretations' to the works of Girard and Ricœur will not only form a justification for the interpretive hermeneutic framework of this dissertation, but will also demonstrate a deep interpretive complementarity between Ricœur and Girard as fellow hermeneutic partners for the understanding of evil via symbol, metaphor, myth, and the text.

Ricœur is careful not to emphasize this method as the means to create endless combinations of interpretive philosophies, which would then support the criticism that

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[83] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy:* 27.

[84] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 37.

85 My own hermeneutic approach is following the reading of Maria Luisa Portocarrero's regarding the 'conflict of interpretations.' 'But what I would like to argue is that the specificity of the conflict of interpretations goes beyond these epochal considerations, in that it reveals the complementarity of interpretations, and could well be applied to other theories able to illuminate human experience.' Maria Luisa Portocarrero, "Ricœur's Conflict of Interpretations in the Making," *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies* 13, no. No. 1 (2022), 49, https://doi.org/10.5195/errs.2022.590.

contemporary hermeneutic philosophy is relativistic or nihilistic, or reduce two nuanced hermeneutic philosophers to a less nuanced synthesis through their contradictory interpretations.[86] To protect against this, Ricœur lays out several distinct criteria and dialectical structures by which this method can successfully preserve the originality of both participants, while also achieving unity. This is where Ricœur's sophisticated and seemingly exhaustive usage of dialectic reasoning is displayed. Like the layers of delicately balanced and counterbalanced feats of engineering, each participant's insights are not only placed in opposition to one another, exteriorizing the thought of each, but Ricœur also emphasizes an internal dialectic within each thinker's act of interpretation.[87] These dialectical interplays, overlayed upon other interplays, manage to reveal both horizontal and vertical movements of interpretation. This is where one thinker's position demonstrates the 'regressive' meaning, while the other reveals the 'progressive.' This demonstrates a mutual dialectical complementarity within each movement of interpretation that necessitates the other. The list of conceptual oppositions, such as thesis and antithesis, positive and negative, objective and subjective, internal and external, and belief and suspicion, is employed to depict the nuances and frames of meaning that construct this complex yet productive method of dialectical interpretation. Thus, a more balanced view of a hermeneutic synthesis can result.[88]

While this description may sound to be an idealized summation of the concepts at work in Ricœur's 'conflict of interpretations,' readers of Ricœur's *Freud and Philosophy* and *Conflict of Interpretations* can find several occasions where Ricœur uses this dialectical interpretation concretely. The most concrete occasion of this interpretation is where he places Freud and Hegel in dialogue over the interpretation of the subject in a 'semantics of desire' with the purpose of discovering self-consciousness as the purpose following the dispelling of its illusions. Ricœur labels Freud as pursuing an archaeology of the subject in the act of deciphering the distortions

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[86] Vattimo and Girard, *Christianity, Truth, and Weakening Faith*, 76.

[87] 'What gives rise to this work is an intentional structure which consists not in the relation of meaning to a thing but in an architecture of meaning, in a relation of meaning to meaning, of second meaning to first meaning, regardless of whether that relation be one of analogy or not, or whether the first meaning disguises or reveals the second meaning. This texture is what makes interpretation possible, although the texture itself is made evident only through the actual movement of interpretation.' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 18.

[88] See Introduction, *Key Terms*.

of desire, and Hegel as revealing a teleology of the subject, in the interpretation of the progressive forms of consciousness, originating in the activities of desire analyzed by Freud's 'archaeology.'[89]

Yet this iteration of the 'conflict of interpretations,' although the most concrete in Ricœur's works, is not the only possible version outlined by Ricœur. Freud is just one example of the general hermeneutics of suspicion, of which Nietzsche and Marx are considered fellow 'masters.'[90] Further, Ricœur asserts that the hermeneutics of belief can be expressed by the phenomenology of religion, as with Mircea Eliade, and Ricœur's own work in *Symbolism of Evil.*[91] In part II of this chapter, I will place Girard's mimetic theory and anthropology as 'the hermeneutic of suspicion' within the framework established in Ricœur's *Freud and Philosophy*, and Ricœur's hermeneutic phenomenology from *Symbolism of Evil*, as the 'hermeneutic of belief.' The following construction will attempt to reveal the component parts of Ricœur's systematic breakdown, but this breakdown will not be meant to repeat the systematic 'conflict of interpretations' identically. For with Girard as the suspicion pole, to emphasize too heavily the reductive notion of a system, is to undercut the meaning of an open-ended hermeneutic understanding of evil, as opening a dialectical relation between the phenomenological and anthropological, with the purpose of approaching the existential.

Structure

To accomplish this construction, part I of this chapter will cover the multivalent structure of the 'conflict of interpretations,' which arises as a logical necessity from interpretation's encounter with the 'overdetermined' symbol. [92] This origin forms the structure of the multivalent symbol, revealing the numerous aspects of the resulting interpretative structure and further indicating the many modalities of meaning contained within the symbol, text, and action. I will then begin to incorporate Ricœur and Girard's hermeneutics within the two interpretive poles, relating the dynamics of symbol into each of their areas of interpretive focus. This part will also indicate that the two interpretive attitudes to symbol and the text reveal more than a lateral relation, but a vertical one as well. This multivalence of meaning in turn leads to a synthesis of the implicit dialectical relationships between the archaeological movement of

[89] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 6-7.

[90] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 32.

[91] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 28.

[92] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 38.

suspicion and the 'teleological' movement of belief.[93] In Part II of this chapter, I will stage the 'conflict of interpretations' between Ricœur and Girard through an analysis of their implicit dialectical relationship regarding their interpretive attitudes on the question of evil. In addition, by elaborating the interpretive movement and his dynamic treatment of the text, Girard's association with hermeneutic philosophy will receive a more complete justification.[94] It is important to note that my appropriation of Ricœur's 'conflict of interpretations' will depart from the more rigid expressions of his structure, first as a matter of philosophical difference between myself and Ricœur, whose structures seem to imply a Hegelian 'totalization' of interpretation, despite his claims to the contrary, and because of the effects of the interpretive synthesis itself, where a Ricœuro-Girardian hermeneutic seems to surpass the teleological implication of the symbol expressed by Ricœur, towards an eschatological implication for violence and its understanding. This brief synopsis forecasts how this chapter will not just be analyzing the 'conflict of interpretations' as Ricœur employed it with Freud and Hegel, but by employing Ricœur's phenomenological hermeneutic philosophy within the eschatological pole and Girard's mimetic anthropology into the archaeological pole. Thus, illustrating their hermeneutic structural complementarity, which will carry forward to the progressive understanding of evil, which can be seen as an integral element for my methodological grounding.

Part I: What is the 'Conflict of Interpretations?'

Origin in Symbol

Ricœur's turn to hermeneutics in his *The Symbolism of Evil* rests on the connection between the function of the symbol and the self who engages in an act of interpretation that the dynamics of the symbol reflexively reveal. Ricœur famously states that the symbol has a plurivocal semantic function, where a primary level, which is more of a direct reference to non-semantic experience, is understood via an interpretive act of revealing this first level's relationship to a higher level of meaning, which in turn further reveals a complementary

[93] 'Teleological' is in quotes because it is by being placed in this reformulation of the 'conflict of interpretations' that a teleological understanding of evil negates the possibility of its understanding, for the response to evil is the event of an eschatological decision, to testify to non-violence. See Chapter 5, *The Eschatological Moment of Testimony.*

[94] Eugene Webb criticizes Ricœur's 'tenacity' towards a hermeneutic of belief, and states that it functions as a way to project meaning unto a 'mythical noumenal self.' Webb considers that Ricœur does not have a proper attitude to a hermeneutic of suspicion, and the pretensions to an understanding of the subject. Other than what I consider to be an unfair reading of the complexity of Ricœur's view of the possibilities of the symbol and its overdetermination, and thus the function of hermeneutic belief, he also does not consider Girard to be the logical complement as a hermeneutic of suspicion, which is the goal of this chapter. See, Eugene Webb, *Philosophers of Consciousness*, 210.

relationship between the levels. Thus, there are at least two interpretive movements that can be undergone when approaching the symbol. The progressive or believing movement asserts that it is the act of interpretation itself that is intimately involved in the relation between the different semantic stages or levels.[95] This is because the overdetermination functions not just on a vertical plane, in the manner of the synchronic in Saussure's structural terminology, but also the diachronic or historical plane.[96] The second interpretive movement, characterized by a regressive or suspicious attitude, seeks to uncover a hidden meaning beneath the first. Following the diachronic or historical aspect latent in the symbol, the suspicious attitude sees that it is necessary to decipher the symbols' own historical-cultural situation, which also exists in a relationship to the interpreter who approaches the symbol from their own historical situation. Thus, the symbol opens up two or more directions of latent meanings, one of which is a regressive movement of interpretation and its counterpart, the progressive movement.

Due to the centrality of the symbol and, later, its structural dynamism as revealing a similar function within metaphor, the act of interpretation itself can never be univocal. It necessarily has conflicting, yet valid modes of interpretation. This ambiguity is the richness of the semantic demonstration that symbols possess, which in turn makes the investigation of the sacred, myth, literature, and poetry philosophically relevant.[97] This is due to the profound connection between this multifaceted function of symbolism and the exegetical and poetic relationships to the 'boundary situations' of existence, which escapes the realm of more scientific, univocal language. Thus, interpretation must necessarily be a complex yet creative hermeneutic structure that reveals the multivalence of symbols, and thus the universe of textual symbols can then be brought into philosophic discourse.

The connection between this totality of a symbolic universe and what Ricœur calls 'second-order symbols,' or narrative, becomes the non-philosophical ground that philosophical investigation can bring to reflection.[98] The call for interpretation can interact with narratives

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[95]Ricœur utilizes the concept of participation to illustrate this movement, and the notion of participation becomes central in how the symbol reflexively is able to contribute to self-understanding. "How? How does that which binds meaning to meaning bind me? The movement that draws me toward the second meaning assimilates to me what is said, makes me participate in what is announced to me." Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 31.

[96] Ricœur "Structure and Hermeneutics" in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 32-33.

[97] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 69.

[98] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 59.

because they 'confer universality, temporality, and ontological import upon our self-understanding.'[99] This changes the entire character of interpretation for Ricœur, where it is not 'superadded' onto philosophic activity, but instead because of the narratival structure and context of the 'second order,' are necessary for the 'dawn of reflection,' which makes philosophical reflection possible, and adds this 'ontological import.'

> Interpretation therefore does not consist simply in extricating the second intention, which is both given and masked in the literal meaning; it tries to thematize this universality, this temporality, this ontological exploration implied in myth. Thus in their mythical form symbols themselves push toward speculative expression; symbols themselves are the dawn of reflection. The hermeneutic problem is not imposed upon reflection from without, but proposed from within by the very movement of meaning, by the implicit life of symbols taken at their semantic and mythical level.[100]

This dynamic 'implicit life of symbols' is the foundational semantic structure that necessitates Ricœur's turn to his 'conflict of interpretations' within the 'war of hermeneutics.' This dynamism, which contains not only double meaning, but narrative descriptions of the existential questions of humanity, within their cultural and religious contexts, makes the task of a singular method of hermeneutics impossible and creates a 'conflict of interpretations' fundamentally necessary.[101] Thus, it is also the semantic presupposition for this hermeneutic approach to evil.

Philosophical reflection must then attempt to interpret the notion of a 'symbolic totality' engendered by this mythic narrative function, which situates the symbolic functions within a cultural context.[102] This is what Ricœur terms the 'architectonic task of reason' for myth, which demands expression at the level of reflection and speculation.' This is why Ricœur states that the 'symbol gives rise to thought.'[103] Although this is an ambitious goal for the 'conflict of interpretations' as a hermeneutic structure, and a tremendous significance is placed on the function of symbol, it is important to note that this interpretive architecture must not be 'to justify cultural contingency, equivocal language, and the war of hermeneutics within itself.'[104] A

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[99] Thus the turn to myth in chapter 4 is paramount for placing the symbols of evil, and their connection to the sacred, in context. See Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 39.

[100] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 39.

[101] See Chapter 4, *Myths as Second Order Symbols*, for a more thorough explanation of the second-order symbols.

[102] 'Symbols demand this speculative reflection. An interpretation of symbols that extricated their philosophical meaning would not be something superadded to them. Such an interpretation is required by the semantic structure of symbols, by the latent speculation of myths, and finally by the fact that each symbols belongs to a meaningful totality which furnishes the first schema of the system.' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 40.

[103] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 38 and 40.

[104] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 42; In Ricœur's *Rule of Metaphor*, he spreads the semantic burden of the theory of symbol into the function of the metaphor in his reading of metaphor from Aristotle's poetics. See Paul Ricœur, *Rule*

war of hermeneutics is not a violence to texts, or in Hobbesian terms, a 'war of all against all.' Ricœur turns to the threefold semantic implication of symbols to directly bear on the 'wounded cogito'; in order to decipher the activities of its 'desire to be' in the world of discourses, in the 'mirror of its objects, works, and acts.'[105] Thus, this multivalent interpretive process is the 'task of consciousness.' However, Ricœur's positing of a 'wounded cogito' and the role of the symbol for self-understanding will not be the focus of this chapter.[106] I will instead remain with the threefold implicit capacities of the symbol that frame the act of interpretation as it informs the structure of his 'conflict of interpretations' and, later, how this structure provides the productive frame to commence a hermeneutics of evil alongside a new 'master of suspicion.'

The first instance of the 'conflict of interpretations' emerges from the ambiguous structure of the symbol, the mythic-narrative heuristic function, and the totality of the symbolic universe. [107] As I said above, *The Symbolism of Evil* is Ricœur's first large-scale hermeneutic work, but it is only after his engagement with Freud's psychoanalytic texts that Ricœur saw Freud's work as also necessarily hermeneutic enterprise to unmask a 'semantics of desire.' In this work he expounds on the interpretive acts that are characterized by the symbols regressive and progressive function, and Freud's *traudeumetung* or dream work, as primarily focused on the regressive function of psychical symbols.[108] Ricœur then expands this general direction of hermeneutic thought to a group of interpreters he called the 'masters of suspicion' who are Freud, Nietzsche, and Karl Marx.[109] Each member of this camp of interpreters, the hermeneuts of suspicion, each seeks to unmask the lies and myths of their respective domains of inquiry. [110] This

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of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language, trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin, and John Costello SJ, (Routledge, 2003) 380.

[105] In chapter 3 of this thesis, which is on the intersubjective constitution of the self in desire for Ricœur and Girard, Ricœur's notion of the 'wounded cogito' and its relationship to the interpretation will be discussed more fully.

[106] It is in chapter 3 where Ricœur's ideas of subjectivity, the self, and desire are placed in dialogue with Girard.

[107] 'Ambiguous' here refers to the logical sense of ambiguity that comes from the symbol's overdetermination. For Ricœur this notion of ambiguity is not a negative quality to avoid, but what gives the symbol its donative abilities for language.

[108] Ricœur, "Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Culture", in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 148-49.

[109] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 32.

[110] 'Thus the distinguishing characteristic of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche is the general hypothesis concerning both the process of false consciousness and the method of deciphering. The two go together, since the man of suspicion carries out in reverse the work of falsification of the man of guile. Freud entered the problem of false consciousness via the double road of dreams and neurotic symptoms… Marx attacks the problem of ideologies from within limits of economic alienation… Nietzsche, focusing on the problem of 'value' – of valuation and transvaluation – looks for

interpretive attitude of suspicion is not 'violent' but instead is valuable for providing a more philosophically self-aware foundation for what Ricœur terms his second naiveté.[111] This second naiveté is a new ground, from which an informed 'faith' in symbol and its donative capacities can begin to provide a philosophically evaluated description of the existential and fundamental boundary situations of the human situation. Thus, each movement of interpretation is mutually beneficial, referential, and necessary to encapsulate the entire semantic richness of dynamic symbols.

What is this second movement that responds to these masters of suspicion? Ricœur calls this interpretive movement that of a restoration of meaning, belief, or trust. A proper interpretation must provide a positive meaning, and not only the negative unmasking, which would result in an infinite regress of the skeptical attitude. Ricœur frames his version of the hermeneutic circle as a hermeneutic arc that has its foundation in the dialectical movement of faith seeking understanding.[112] There must be a belief, or wager, for any interpretive act, both in the interpretive attitudes of suspicion and belief, and this wager is then verified by having been subjected to rigorous philosophical inquiry. To demonstrate this 'remythicizing' or restorative aspect of interpretation, Ricœur references both the phenomenology of religion, like the work of Mircea Eliade, and also Hegel's teleology of the subject in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit.*[113] In these interpretive attitudes there is projection of meaning, that advances understanding, which counterbalances the movement of suspicion, which seeks to reveal more than the hiddenness of symbols, but their progressive ability to redescribe and inform our current understanding.

The 'conflict of interpretations' is ultimately less of a harmony between the attitudes of suspicion and belief but instead using suspicion to create a philosophically reformed belief. The destruction of meaning must necessarily be rebuilt, and only via a form of dialectical interpretation. This reproduction of meaning will satisfy the multivalent dynamics of symbolic

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the key to living and masks on the side of 'force' and 'weakness' of the will to power.' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 34.

[111] 'The contrary of suspicion, I will say bluntly, is faith. What faith? No longer, to be sure, the first faith of the simple soul, but rather the second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone criticism, postcritical faith… It is a rational faith, for it interprets; but it is a faith because it seeks, through interpretation, a second naivete.' *Freud and Philosophy*, 28.

[112] '"Believe in order to understand, understand in order to believe" – such is its maxim; and its maxim is the hermeneutic circle itself of believing and understanding.' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 38.

[113] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 38.

semantics, mythic-narrative structure, in the symbolic totality. Thus, in my reading, it is to this purpose that Girard's 'unmasking' of myth as covering up the traces of violence, can be brought within a restorative process where myth will not lose its creative function for philosophical speculation.

It is important to note that the dialectical structure of competing interpretations of Girard and Ricœur will be able to be dialectical combined because there exists an implicit form of dialectical interpretation within the explicit form. What does Ricœur mean by a necessary implicit companionship with the explicit? Here, is Ricœur on a further level of clarification of the notion of these opposed movements of interpretation.

> Seen from the outside, psychoanalysis appeared to us to be a reductive, demystifying hermeneutics. As such, it was opposed to a hermeneutics that we deemed restorative, as a recollection of the sacred. We did not see, and we still do not see, the link between the two contrary modes of interpretation. We are not in a position to go beyond a mere antithetic, i.e. an opposition whose terms remain external to one another. The true philosophical basis for understanding the complementarity of these irreducible and opposed hermeneutics in relation to the mytho-poetic formations of culture is the dialectic of archaeology and teleology…[114]

Any opposed interpretations cannot be arbitrarily combined, and in fact must possess an internal complementarity by the implicit movements of the interpretations as pertaining to an archaeology of meaning or a 'teleology.' It is the dialectical relation of an archaeology to a 'teleology' that must be revealed in Girard and Ricœur. But what makes interpretive archaeology and teleology able to be related? They must possess the same area of focus for a 'homology' to be created, and the irreducible differences in method must be preserved in this new 'totality.'

> What I wish to demonstrate then is that if Freudianism is an explicit and thematized archaeology, it relates of itself, by the dialectical nature of its concepts, to an implicit and unthematized teleology... I propose the example – or rather the counterexample – the Hegelian phenomenology, in which the same problems present themselves in a reverse order… Hegel and Freud each stand as a separate continent, and between one totality and another there can only be relations of homology.[115]

To completely demonstrate the 'homology' produced via the archaeology and teleology for Ricœur and Girard, I will now turn to the actual structure of how this 'conflict of interpretations' is supposed to function, in the elaboration of the individual aspects within these interpretive attitudes.

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[114] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 460.

[115] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*. 461.

The Explicit and Implicit Structure

How do these contrasting interpretive attitudes, made necessary by the overdetermination of symbols, become dialectically combined? In this section, I will look at the aspects of interpretive dialectical logic and thematization that Ricœur creates in his combination of suspicion and belief, to develop the structure for the grafting of Ricœur and Girard into this interpretive dialectical relationship.

The first of these thematized aspects will be (1) *the hermeneutic disposition*, which is clarified by three components within the interpretive attitude's 'suspicion' and 'belief.' The second aspect will be (2) *the interpretive directional movement* as either regressive, or towards a foundation of meaning, which Ricœur uses the term 'archaeology,' or progressive, or towards the surplus or donation of meaning, where Ricœur also uses the term 'teleology.' The third aspect will be (3) *the poles of their dialectical interplay*, labeled as either objective and negative, internal and external, or subjective and positive. The fourth and final aspect will be the implicit complementarity of the relationship as beyond a lateral opposition, but more of a vertical one, where suspicion is the first level, belief is the second level, and their hermeneutic synthesis is the third level.

The Aspects of Suspicion

Ricœur emphasizes that the three masters of suspicion, Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx, have the same (1) *hermeneutic disposition.* This disposition, or introductory approach to their hermeneutics in general, has three components. The first component is (a) the assumption of a false consciousness that obscures a true or real meaning. The second component is (b) the method by which this false consciousness can only be 'unmasked' in a deciphering interpretation.[116] The third component is the result of this deciphered false consciousness,' as giving (c) an enlarged field of consciousness' and thus an external field of access to true meaning.[117] Ricœur is

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[116] 'What all three attempted, in different ways, was to make their "conscious" methods of deciphering coincide with the "unconscious" work of ciphering which they attributed to the will to power, to social being, to the unconscious psychism. *Guile will be met by double guile.*' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 34.

[117] 'All three begin with illusions of consciousness and then proceed to employ a stratagem of deciphering; all three, however, far from being detractors of consciousness aim at extending it. What Marx wants is to liberate praxis by the understanding of necessity; but this liberation is inseparable from a conscious insight which victoriously counterattacks the mystification of false consciousness. What Nietzsche wants is the increase of man's power, the restoration of his force; but the meaning of the will to power must be recaptured by mediating on the ciphers "superman," "eternal return," and "Dionysus"… What Freud desires is that the one who is analyzed, by making his own meaning that was foreign to him, enlarge his field of consciousness, live better, and finally be a little freer and, if possible, a little happier.' *Freud and Philosophy*, 34–35.

thematizing these components within the general hermeneutic disposition of suspicion, but he also asserts that it is important to not reduce the nuance and complexity of these 'masters of suspicion.' Thus, to balance the tendency towards reduction by thematizing, Ricœur emphasizes their diversity in methodologies, their intellectual disciplines, and the nature of this false meaning among each figures' disposition.[118]

The second thematized aspect of the interpretive movement of suspicion is its regressive direction. Its focus is to excavate and reveal errors in our shared cultural meanings, deliberate oppressions, and some inescapable obstacles to understanding within our psychical life. Symbols that are interpreted are seen as the advance point of an adversarial meaning that must be driven back or unmasked. Thus, the interpretive momentum of suspicion is labeled as an 'archaeology' of meaning. The archaeological hermeneutic movement discovers the new foundation, an obfuscated foundation for meaning to progress without the burden of false consciousness. It is here we first catch sight of the necessary dialectical relationship between the contrary hermeneutic attitudes.[119]

In the third aspect, the dialectical poles of objective and subjective are established and begin to demonstrate how the synthesis can be achieved between the two interpretive movements.[120] No longer is this dialectical interplay only seen to be two separate directions of archaeology and teleology, but upon a close look contains concrete moments of interpretation that span the entire implicit relationship within this framework. These movements contain a more vertical relationship with each other and are labeled as the external or objective focus, and

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[118] As a second point of clarification, Ricœur emphasizes the notion of 'consciousness' as the primary concern in his Freud and Philosophy when discussing the masters of suspicion as posing a problem for reflective philosophy specifically. Consciousnesses *per se* and its interpretation, is not the primary and sole focus of the hermeneut of suspicion for our 'conflict of interpretations,' but primarily the false meanings and the means by which they are produced via *méconnaissance.*

[119] 'What I wish to demonstrate then is that if Freudianism is an explicit and thematized archaeology, it relates of itself, by the dialectical nature of its concepts, to an implicit and unthematized teleology.' *Freud and Philosophy*, 461.

[120] 'This approach to the intentional unity of symbols has enabled us to overcome the remaining distance between regression and progression. From now on regression and progression do not represent two truly opposed processes; they are rather the abstract terms employed to designate the two end limits of a single scale of symbolization… The most innovative figures that the artist, writer, or thinker can produce call forth ancient energies originally invested in archaic figures; … the creator reveals man's most open and fundamental possibilities and erects them into new symbols of the suffering of self-consciousness.' *Freud and Philosophy*, 522.

the internal or subjective focus.[121] Suspicion is labeled as the objective pole of interpretation because it seeks to reveal the object of the externalized universal human experience in culture, society, and our psychical natures, free from the falsified meaning in the subjective sphere. It seeks to establish a common interpretive ground for meaning behind the masks it deciphers, which are not only universal but either external to the self or external to the self's activity. This objective pole exerts a mediating influence on the interpreter and brings his interpretations to a more universal starting point.[122] This external grounding is why it is also called the negative pole because it is the negation of an accepted meaning, a negation of consciousness, and a negation of the self, via its deciphering process. By negating the established meaning and uncovering an objective and external ground for future meaning, the path is clear for its implicit and necessary relationship to the reconstitution of meaning.

The Aspects of Belief

What is the (1) *hermeneutic disposition* for the interpretive movement of belief? This unified disposition follows a similar three-component composition as the suspicious attitude. Instead of the primary assumption of false consciousness, the hermeneutic of belief has (x) a concern for the object of interpretation to emphasize its intention and to 'disimplicate' this intention from the object.[123] There is a concern for the object itself, for it contains a greater deposit of meaning than what can be brought forth upon first encounter. The second component of the disposition of belief regards the method. The method of the believing hermeneutic is one that tries not to decipher, but (y) to fulfill the disimplicated intention of the concerned-for object.[124] Ricœur emphasizes

[121] 'To overcome what remains abstract in the opposition between regression and progression would require a study of these concrete relations, shifts of emphasis, and inversion of roles between disguise and disclosure.' *Freud and Philosophy*, 522.

[122] 'The exploration of man's possibilities extends into this new kind of objectivity, the objectivity of works or cultural objects properly so-called… It is through the medium of these works that a certain dignity if man is formed, which is the instrument and trace of a process of reduplicated consciousness, of recognition of the self in another self.' *Freud and Philosophy*, 523.

[123] 'The first imprint of this faith in a revelation through the word is to be seen in the care or concern for the *object*, a characteristic of all phenomenological analysis. That concern, as we know, presents itself as a "neutral" wish to describe and not to reduce… One describes by disengaging the (noetic) intention and its (noematic) correlate – the *something* intended, the implicit object in ritual, myth, and belief.' *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 28

[124] 'Second, according to the phenomenology of religion, there is a "truth" of symbols; this truth, in the neutral attitude of the Husserlian epoché, means merely the fulfillment – *die Erfullung* – of the signifying intention. For a phenomenology of religion to be possible, it is necessary and sufficient that there be not only one but several ways of fulfilling various intentions of meaning according to various regions of objects.' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 30.

that a truly neutral mode, in the manner of the Husserlian *epoché*, is not only impossible, but is overcome by the third component of the hermeneutic disposition of belief, (z) participation.

> However, is it possible for a phenomenology of the sacred to stay within the limits of a neutral attitude governed by the epoché, by the bracketing of absolute reality and of every question concerning the absolute? The epoché requires that I participate in the belief in the reality of the religious object, but in a neutralized mode; that I believe with the believer, but without positing absolutely the object of his belief.[125]

The sympathetic activity of an interpretive belief, to 'believe with the believer,' allows for the intentions of these symbols to be understood, to be seen in a mode with a 'neutralized' distance that is not hostile or disinterested. This third component is what allows the dual meaning, and its boundness to a non-semantic ground of experience, to have the functional ability to connect to the questions of the existential which elude empty, formalized redescriptions.[126] This component will be covered more closely alongside its counterpart in the enlarged consciousness, as the notion of participation with the object, as Ricœur identifies as an 'existential assimilation of my being to being,' which illustrates the complementarity between the two dispositions, as situating the interpreter to an 'objective source' of meaning in both directions.[127]

The hermeneutics of belief's second aspect is its progressive movement, which orients the interpreter to either the present space of meaning or to the symbol's ability to describe via pointing toward these existential boundary situations. Rather than attempting to 'look behind,' the interpretive attitude tries to *look from* the situation of the symbol to its possible redescriptions of meaning in the situation of the interpreter. This progressive direction of interpretation reveals a progressive dynamic of the symbol, but with a more passive connotation in the situation of the interpreter, for they are the one addressed by the 'giving of meaning.'

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[125] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 29.

[126] 'Symbols are bound in a double sense: bound *to* and bound *by*. On the one hand, the sacred is bound to its primary, literal, sensible meanings; this what constitutes the opacity of symbols. On the other hand, the literal meaning is bound by the symbolic meaning that resides in it; this is what I have called the revealing power of symbols…symbols alone give what they say.' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 31.

[127] 'How? How does that which binds meaning to meaning bind me? The movement that draws me toward the second meaning assimilates to me what is said, makes me participate in what is announced to me. The similitude in which the force of symbols resides and from which they draw their revealing power is not an objective likeness, which I may look upon like a relation laid out before me; it is an existential assimilation, according to the movement of analogy, of my being to being.' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 31.

> 'This new expectancy of a new Word, of a new tidings of the Word, the implicit intention of every phenomenology of symbols, which first puts the accent on the object, then underscores the fullness of the symbol, to finally greet the revealing power of the primal word.'[128]

It is this expectancy in the progressive interpretation that is coupled with the progressive synthesis of prior meanings, expressed in Ricœur's framing of Hegel's teleology of the subject. To provide an example of this 'progressive synthesis' of a 'teleological interpretation' Ricœur turns to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* with the progressive figures of consciousness into self-consciousness.

> The first theme concerns the cast or form of the Hegelian dialectic. This dialectic constitutes a progressive synthetic movement…The truth of a given moment lies in the subsequent moment; meaning always proceeds retrogressively.[129]

This progressive dialectic, via a retrogressive view, governs the attitude of interpretation as it moves forward by reason of its teleological dimension of spirit, in Hegel, yet understands the present only by a retroactive glance. The hermeneutics of belief also uses this 'notion of symbolic anteriority' as the specific layering of interpretations into a teleological focus, made possible by the 'overdetermination' of the symbol. [130]

In the third aspect, the hermeneutics of belief serves as the positive, subjective, and internal moments in this dialectical relationship. This is made by the symbol's overdetermination, when approached with the believing hermeneutic attitude, because it provides an interiority from the external into the internal as the symbols 'give to thought.' Philosophical reflection is then promoted in its interiority, not via reduction or critique, but by reception and participation. The meaning becomes brought into the subjective experience of the interpreter, rather existing externally to the interpreter to be negated.

Girard and the Three Aspects of a Hermeneutics of Suspicion

To begin with the first level of this interpretation, the hermeneutic of suspicion, I will argue the notion of Girard as a hermeneutic thinker, and not just an anthropological reader of texts. The relation of Girard to hermeneutic thought has been attempted by several authors, and several authors have attempted linguistic analyses emerging from his theory of the first victim

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[128] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 32.

[129] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 463-64.

[130] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 468.

of the founding murder as the founding difference and birth of the sign.[131] Yet a full analysis of Girard's method as a philosophical hermeneutic is an area that requires more scholarship.[132] This present work will provide an analysis of Girard's approach with respect to his comparative method and his tendency to merge an idea of textuality with the domain of action. By employing Girard's theories as the hermeneutics of suspicion within Ricœur's 'conflict of interpretations,' the contours of his hermeneutic approach, and implications for philosophic thought will be established and expanded.

Girard very clearly targets a false meaning to certain texts because his stated concern is to uncover a 'reality behind' it, and this reality contains either unjust violence relating to the scapegoat mechanism, or 'romantic illusions' of spontaneous desire. Girard calls the production of this false meaning of texts, a product of *méconnaissance* , which is the lack of awareness that the actions of the individual are governed by the mimetic desire of others and the proclivity towards scapegoating.[133] This production is unconscious and automatic, because we all cannot escape our inclination for identifying and excluding scapegoats for reconciling groups, as well as our subconscious mimetic intersubjective compositions. Are all texts complicit productions of *méconnaissance*? While Girard himself does not examine all possible textual entities that have ever existed, there are a few types of texts that he considers to be the clearest examples of this mechanism. Thus, Girard does not hold all texts to be equal in the severity of false meaning being promulgated, but because most of the text being associated with human institutions, which have their roots in the sacred, there still exist these subconscious traces. Yet, the most significant group of texts for this Girardian critique are myths, because of their proximity to the foundations of culture and the sacred. These myths are the textual representatives of the purest illustration

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[131] 'The signifier is the victim. The signified constitutes all actual and potential meaning the community confers on to the victim and through its intermediacy, on to all things… Articulate language and the exchange of words, like all other kinds of exchange, surely must have its basis in ritual, in the screams and cries that accompanied the mimetic crisis and that must be reproduced by ritual because they precede and perhaps condition the reconciliatory immolation… There is no culture on earth that does not hold its sacred vocable or words to be the primary and fundamental in the order of language.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 103-04.

See Anthony Bartlett, *Theology Beyond Metaphysics: Transformative Semiotics of René Girard* (Cascade Books, 2020) for an excellent application of Girard's anthropology in dialogue with postmodern semiotic theory as a basis for non-metaphysical theology. For an application of speech act theory and linguistic study to Girard's 'scene' of the original founding murder, and its conceptual ability to be the foundational act of difference for human language, see Eric Lawrence Gans, *The Origin of Language a Formal Theory of Representation* (University of California Press, 1981).

[132] See note #31 in the Introduction.

[133] Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 40.

of the sacred that can be witnessed and thus the fundamental target for deciphering its manifestations.

What is his method for deciphering this surface meaning? Here is where Girard as a hermeneut deserves the most consideration. He develops his theory of mimetic desire from his work *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, which was a comparative study of five novelists from the 18th and 19th centuries.[134] The lateral comparison, because of the universalized themes, also transcends the texts, and even the authors themselves, for Girard's primary concern is revealing the 'novelistic insight' of the authors into this structure of desire. Girard even includes the authors biographical details, so as to illuminate the implications of novelistic insight in deciphering these traces.[135] The uniqueness of his method is also his rejection of any notion of an absolute text, and instead, heavily emphasizes the author's role as complicit in the unconscious communication of their own biographical experiences supported via the aspects of revealing and converting from mimetic desire and its effects. This emphasis connects directly with Girard's notion that the text is an agent of *méconnaissance* because of its status as a work which contains unconscious aspects relating to the misrecognition of mimesis.

Girard affirms, as his general interpretive attitude, the latent violence of *mimesis* within our texts, because they are ultimately human productions, and our blended with our *méconnaissance* and mimetic faculties.[136] But does Girard have a specific view of the symbol, as such? Girard, like Ricœur, places the origin of symbol as prior to the birth of language, and the rootedness of symbol in religious or 'natural' thought. In his *Violence and the Sacred*, he states that,

> The origin of symbolic thought lies in the mechanism of the surrogate victim… It is a fundamental instance of 'arbitration' that gives rise to the dual presence of the *arbitrary* and the *true* in all symbolic systems… To refer to the origin of symbolic thought is to speak as well of the origin of language. If the mechanism of the surrogate victim gives birth to language and imposes itself as

[134] The concepts of vanity, envy, and rivalry are illustrated as integral clues to the triangular structure of his mimetic insight, and the novel's plots where these concepts are described possess a particular insight into human relations for Girard. The texts that reveal this structure and demonstrate their hero's emergence out of this state of complete mimetic obsession have the privileged position of containing a 'novelistic insight.' See Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966) 170.

[135] Although much has been written about the deconstructive affinity between Girard and Derrida, Girard is very strongly an affirmer of an 'outside the text' and feels no qualms in accusations of 'psychologizing' the author. For an excellent reading of Derrida and Girard in a productive dialogue, see Andrew J McKenna, *Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida, and Deconstruction* (University of Illinois Press, 1991). For Girard's view of 'psychologizing' the author, see Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 256.

[136] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 29.

> the first object of language, it is easy to see why language should first state the conjunction of best and worst, the divine epiphany, the rite that commemorates this epiphany and the myth that recalls it.[137]

In this excerpt we catch sight of the dual valence of symbol, also expressed by Ricœur, the concrete 'true' real reference, and the second 'arbitrary' or productive meaning. Girard also emphasizes that the birth of language is birthed with the symbol, in the founding act of the violent 'divine epiphany.' With this foundation for both the symbol and the sacred, and thus the 'generative process' of *méconnaissance* which builds from the misapprehension of this violent sacred act birthing symbol and language, the suspicious attitude towards uncovering this framework is the necessary first approach to language for Girard.[138] To approach this process of 'generative violence,' one should not be distracted by the differences in the primitive religion, but look instead for the structural similarities, which is where Girard affirms that the 'real phenomena' can be deciphered in this manner. Girard calls this process 'desymbolization' when following his 'explanatory hypothesis' through observed, experienced, real phenomena, in the chain of generations of meaning from the true violence that engendered the scapegoat mechanism.[139]

This point is elaborated on by Katarzyna Kremplewska who defines Girard's approach to symbol, and its emergence from the violence of the sacred, quite clearly. Here I quote the passage from her article, at length.

> What does it tell us about the constitution of human culture? In the aftermath of the initial, significant act of violence, the mechanism of repetition (retaining, remembering) is given a form of symbolical replacement (taking a position of distance, forgetting the fact without losing its power and influence). Thus, not only all the rituals refer metaphorically to sacrifice (a symbolic nucleus), but all the cultures are founded upon the symbolical repercussions of this act. Furthermore, culture precedes humanity and *essentia specifica* of mankind is 'symbolicity.' It is noteworthy that symbol – a fruit of a collective upheaval– is born from the womb of violence, as if it was pushed through and out of turmoil. The birth of a symbol, then, is a dramatic event, and symbol itself is blood-soaked. Hominization requires that desire (on which violence thrives) and symbolicity form an alliance.[140]

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[137] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 235-36.

[138] 'The process of discrimination, exclusion, and conjunction are the products of the generative process. They are applied first to this same process, and this application gives rise to religious thought. But they do not confine themselves to religious thought alone; they are the mechanism for all orders of thought… When applied to something other than the original process, they bring to light veritable differences, analyze real phenomena, and encompass date of a nonrelative variety – for instance, the date of human generation.' Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 236.

[139] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 237.

[140] Katarzyna Kremplewska, "Erroneous Paths of the Human Subject in René Girard's Thought," *Archive of the History of Philosophy and Social Thought* 64, no. 16 (2019). 293, https://doi.org/10.37240/AHFiMS.2019.64.16.

Because of this directly causal relationship between desire, violence, symbol, and the text, Girard does not restrict his analysis to only the world of the text, and like Ricœur, treats texts, rituals, institutions as interpretable phenomena.[141] These mimetic interpretations of the social, textual, and personal sphere have a bidirectionality that necessitates a deciphering of *méconnaissance*, but also a revealing function of mediation in mimetic desire, because of the self's intersubjective composition. Individuals and groups that are both real or textual can become mediators of our desire via the mimetic process.[142] Girard's hermeneutic of suspicion, using his explanatory hypothesis of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism, is meant to dispel the illusions of violence and desire, to act in accordance with the logos of non-violence.[143]

To further illuminate *méconnaissance* or misrecognition, Girard moves beyond the comparative aspect of his method and inserts the figural aspect. He places authors and texts alongside their counterparts who possess insights, but preference is given within this comparative structure to the singular, most revelatory figure. In *Things Hidden*, his figural interpreter par excellence, for both mimesis and scapegoating is the Christ figure of the New Testament. Here Wolfgang Palaver identifies correctly that Girard is following in the interpretive footsteps of Erich Auerbach.[144] The Christ figure is able to reveal the scapegoat mechanism in ancient myth, the Old Testament, and the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, but also provide the anti-mimetic figure par excellence. Further, Shakespeare and Dostoevsky are able to illuminate the destructive effects of bad mimetic desire by employing characters to provide counter-models to the characters overwrought with *mimesis*.[145] Thus with Girard's blending of the lateral comparative analysis with figural interpretation that traverses into the fields of anthropology, ethnology, and psychology, the wide-ranging and interdisciplinary reach of this mimetic theory, are a hermeneutics of *texts into actions* and the reverse.

What is Girard's version of an 'enlarged consciousness,' if what is revealed at the end of his analysis is the violent origin of hominization, made possible by humanity's mimetic capacity and unconscious inclination towards rivalry? What Girard uncovers via his method is the

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[141] Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 308.

[142] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 2-3.

[143] Kremplewska, "Erroneous Paths of the Human Subject in René Girard's Thought", 306.

[144] See footnote #62 in the Introduction. Also see Palaver, *Girard's Mimetic Theory* , 288.

[145] René Girard, *A Theatre of Envy* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 324-325.

common ground for the positive usage of mimesis, which can only be accomplished via the understanding of a choice of non-rivalrous model for one's desires, and this model must not perpetuate scapegoating practices. This external, shared field of meaning for Girard is the real, overlooked, non-violent message contained in the Judeo-Christian scriptures, which not only provide the counter and way out of this mechanistic and causal descriptions of human societies, but actually are integral to the method of decipherment itself.[146] Only via this positive understanding of mimesis, can the neutrality of our mimetic composition can be demonstrated if there is a real anthropological possibility for non-violence. Thus, in my interpretation, there is an implicit progression or 'an enlarged field of consciousness' that results from Girard's regressive suspicious attitude. This enlarged, mimetically explained, view of the world and its systems projects a future potential of understanding, and a role in a positive mimetic composition of the intersubjective self. Thus, Girard's overtly pursues a regressive movement towards unmasking a universal cultural heritage that contains a repository of prior meanings in the unrecognized obfuscation of violence, ritual, rivalry, and desire. Yet, this implicit 'enlarged field of consciousness' has an eschatological gravity, and not a teleological, because of the effect of this violent being demythologized, and the structure of violence as only being able to be undone by a radical, universal commitment to non-violence.[147]

Due to Girard's consistent emphasis on the intersubjective foundation of humanity within mimetism, he also clearly establishes his thought as the external, objective, and negative poles in this dialectical relationship of interpretation. He states in his dialogue with Gianni Vattimo in a chapter called 'Not Just Interpretations, There are Facts, Too,'

> There is nothing Mallarmean about the interpretive sequence that dominates my work: it is terribly commonsensical and down-to-earth, disgustingly referential. It rests on the obvious, and it seeks the obvious. Not everything obvious interests me, to be sure, only those observations that should have been made long ago and yet never were.[148]

This quote characterizes, very clearly in his own words, the Girardian hermeneutic attitude. He seeks to avoid over emphasizing productive interpretations but wants to consider the facticity of the residues of the sacred and scapegoat mechanism (which in turn relies on his interpretations

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[146] "In my view the superior revelatory force of the Passion in comparison to the Old Testament is that it is didactic in a very practical way. Not only does it show us the *truth* that was proper to all the previous myths, it makes us see both positions at the same time, one alongside the other." Vattimo and Girard, *Weakening Faith*, chap. 1, Calibre Library.

[147] See Chapter 5, *The Eschatological Moment of Testimony.*

[148] Girard and Vattimo, *Weakening Faith*, chap. 5, Calibre Library.

to base this facticity). This attitude anchors his demythologization in the objective and external world of which language and our institutions play a key role in obfuscating the violent origins, of which philosophy and academic disciplines of have been unknowingly or knowingly complicit.

Ricœur and the Three Aspects of a Hermeneutic of Belief

In this section, I will place Ricœur's hermeneutic phenomenology within his own 'conflict of interpretations.' To accomplish this overview of Ricœur's aspects of belief, I will draw mainly from his *Symbolism of Evil*, which is what he considers as within the scope of a phenomenology of religion, in *Freud and Philosophy.*[149]

In the three-part composition of the first aspect, the *hermeneutic disposition* of belief, the components of the disposition are (x) the dis-implication of the intentional object's true meaning, (y) the method of 'fulfillment' of this intention, and (z) an existential participation of interpreter to this meaning. Regarding the first component, Ricœur advocates for the concern for the intention of the object of interpretation, by adapting his phenomenological 'confession of sin' in *The Symbolism of Evil*, into phenomenological reenactment of the 'believing consciousness,' to 'believe with the believer.'[150] What this accomplishes is an ability to catch sight of the interaction of belief and the experience of evil that is contained in the symbols described by this 'confession of sin.'[151] Thus the prayers, laments, and psalms that describe humanity as being 'beset' by wickedness, is not given a psychological or sociological reductive explanation, as the ravings of the 'savage mind,' but are allowed to show themselves as early attempts at a form understanding humanity's evil situation. They can be seen as a describing of humanity's existential situation according to the experiences of those who are affected by what they regard as evil.

With respect to these first order or primary symbols, which emerge as symbolic 'stages' in the progression of the 'believing consciousness' dis-implication of the symbols of the experience of evil, from their intention, the 'believing' hermeneutic is a 'fulfilling' interpretation. Thus, as a 'fulfilling,' the attempt at expanding the meaning of the now separated intention, is possible. This attempt at a 'neutralized mode' sees the historico-cultural situation of these

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[149] 'We will take our examples from the phenomenology of religion in the wide sense, embracing here the work of Leenhardt, Van der Leeuw, and Eliade, to which I add my own research in the *Symbolism of Evil.*' Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 28.

[150] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 8.

[151] Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 3.

symbols as not too distant, or too 'primitive,' but as genuine human attempts to penetrate this existential aporia of evil. His method then sees the greater 'consolidation' of meaning at each symbolic stage, which is intended to describe the same phenomenal experiences of evil. Ricœur's usage of the act of translation between Hebrew and Greek cultures, for example, on the root of *shagah* into *hubris*, are examples of this method.[152] Thus his method, although labeled a phenomenology, is not one that is too reflexive or too abstracted from the historico-cultural influences within the symbol. This method links the activity of reflection contained in the interpretation of symbols to this 'believing consciousness' where each culture retains a universalized intention to describe the experience of evil.

The third component, the existential participation or assimilation of the interpreter in the greater symbolic totality, to 'Being,' is the area of Ricœur's believing *hermeneutic disposition* that is the most important from his *Symbolism of Evil*. Ricœur's uses the term the *servile will* as the symbolic consolidation of what was expressed in the symbolic stages of defilement, sin, and guilt.[153] This 'mystery' of the *servile will*, because of its significance in illuminating the human experience of evil, brings the interpreter to participation in this 'symbolic consolidation' as an existential assimilation towards the mystery of evil in human experience.[154] The existential assimilation of 'my being to being' indicates the symbols ability to connect to the interpreter, in this attitude of the believer, to the existential contours of the sacred, and the donative aspects of symbol in relation to these existential boundary situations. The *servile will* illuminates the ultimate paradox in his analysis of evil and *fault*, and that is the paradox of a 'bound freedom.' But to understand the expression of this symbolic consolidation of 'bound freedom,' Ricœur brings the analysis of the *servile will* into the second order symbols of myth and narrative. This existential assimilation of 'my being to Being' can only be attempted through a narrative understanding. This second order of myth and narrative is where he brings the *servile will* into an interpretation of the Adamic myth, which cannot be interpreted, in the mode of 'the believing consciousness,' without the figure of Christ in the New Testament. Thus Ricœur's hermeneutic of belief reaches its boundary at the theological level, where the Christ figure, who consolidates the *servile will*, and the Adamic figure, cannot be identified with the historical Jesus, without

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[152] Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*. 73.

[153] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 8.

[154] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 101.

transgressing the symbolic dimension, into the historical.[155] This boundary reflection will be explored in chapter 5, but the 'conflict of interpretations' with Girard's interpretation of the Christ figure, in an anthropological mode, expands the engagement with this aporetic boundary, towards the existential understanding of evil via the *fourth aspect:* the dialectical relation of an 'enlarged field of meaning' with the interpreter's assimilation towards an existential participation.

The second aspect, the progressive movement of interpretation, is demonstrated by the symbolic stages, where each succeeds the other, yet are contained within the following stage. By mapping out this progression, and how the previous form of each symbol is contained in its future progression, the progressive synthesis of defilement, sin, and guilt, elucidate the interpretive movement of Ricœur's *Symbolism of Evil.* It is this progressive movement that in turn helps animate the 'historical progression of understanding' which contributes to explaining the symbolic ability of redescription seen in Girard's elucidation of the 'tragic inspiration' and 'prophetic accusation,' which are both the 'work of exegesis' in progress.[156] This 'exegesis' is the gradual realization of mimetic rivalry and violence as the 'order of this world.'

As for the third aspect, the poles of the dialectical relationship, Ricœur consistently asserts that his analysis is on the object itself, due to his discussion of feeling and affective fragility, the intentional relationship between interpreter and object is oriented towards the subject, via the self's reception of evil symbols as internal phenomena.[157] While defilement is the most quasi-external, and sin is the most communal, each of the symbols is met with an experience of personal alienation, best represented by the feeling of guilt. Further, in order to sympathetically 'believe with the believer' a completely neutralized mode from the interior experience of evil is impossible.[158] What about the positive pole? The interpretation of symbols begins with its 'giving to thought' and does not negate these given meanings but continues to add complexity and relevance to each of the symbolic stages, even as they are taken up into second order mythic narratives. This internal and 'subjective' pole will be necessary to

[155] Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 269.

[156] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 157.

[157] See Chapter 2, *Guilt into the Servile Will.*

[158] Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 7.

understand the polar moments of violence, and the interior experience of evil, which Girard's mimetic composition of selfhood, cannot express.

The Third Level Synthesis – *The Fourth Aspect*

What do these movements look like when they are overlaid into this third level synthesis? We look to this *fourth aspect*, the relation of the third components of their *hermeneutic dispositions*: (c) the notion of 'enlarged consciousness' for suspicion, and the notion of participation as (z) the 'existential assimilation of my being to being.' In my reading, the combination of both aspects (c +z) yields what I term, the *fourth aspect* which reveals the approach of an objective source of meaning as the implicit 'teleological' result within the archaeological movement, and the reverse within the 'teleological' movement. The other aspects and their 'necessary component parts' contribute to this structure, but the understanding of evil, in my reformulation of the 'conflict of interpretations' alongside this *fourth aspect*, is the central question on this third level synthesis. It is on this 'third level' where all the components that have indicated a relation of explicit to implicit is displayed.

It is from this merging between an 'enlarged consciousness' and 'existential participation of my being to being,' that the external boundary situation exists both as the unsurpassable ground of meaning in 'archeology,' and the indicated future boundary that exists at the end of the 'teleological' movement. The believing interpretation of the symbols, when connected to their symbolic totality, point beyond the boundaries of human understanding, to existential 'aporias.' These existential aporias exist at both interpretive extremes. The outline of a symbolic whole or 'totality' is revealed to not only be a 'borderless' totality, but the rootedness of the symbolic 'totality' itself in its archaeological origin. The symbol is interpreted not just as pointing to an existential 'end' but also to an existential 'beginning,' and the interpreter who finds oneself within this interpretation of this symbolic totality of meaning, finds oneself implicated by both origin and end. Thus, participation within the symbolic totality via the act of a believing interpretation, and the assimilation of 'my being' in 'Being' itself is also implicit in the suspicious attitude. For Being itself contains within it an *archae* in addition to a *telos*. Both suspicion and belief reveal a continuum of interpretation, made necessary by the inherent vectors of interpreting the overdetermined symbol. The symbols pre-semantic ground of experience, of which it is bound to, but necessarily gives to thought, is both an archaeological direction and a teleological direction. Yet, this 'teleological' direction, as well be shown, on the question of evil, is

eschatological, because of the impossibility of a symbolic totality, and the moment of an ethical decision grounded in this 'participation.' Thus, for this hermeneutic synthesis of Girard's suspicion and Ricœur's belief on the question of evil, it will be towards these boundaries where the interpretation is led.

Part II: Ricœur and Girard in a 'Conflict of Interpretations'

In part II, I will now place the hermeneutic philosophies of Girard and Ricœur in the multivalent structure outlined in the previous part. Girard's mimetic theory and fundamental anthropology will function as the hermeneutic of suspicion and Ricœur's hermeneutic phenomenology as expressed in *The Symbolism of Evil* will function as the believing attitude. In order for this 'conflict of interpretations' to be successful, there also must be the same orienting subject matter, in the manner of Ricœur's relation of Freud and Hegel on the understanding of the subject. In this 'conflict of interpretations,' it will be the understanding of evil, as the question for both Ricœur's phenomenology, and Girard's mimetic anthropology. In the next chapter their definitions of evil internal and external to humanity's existential situation will be related more fully. I will also be employing Ricœur's definition of the symbol as overdetermined, from which the entire structure of the conflict of interpretations, which will not limit the Girardian suspicion of text, namely myth, for I will argue that Girard's thesis employs the symbols bi-directional composition.

Violence as Mimetic Response – Ricœur and Mimetic Theory

To adequately begin a synthesis of both their elaborations of 'evil' into a more coherent aim, I turn to the first example of the merging of fallibility and scapegoating as directly undergone by Ricœur in his analysis of Girard's critique of religious violence. Ricœur begins from his familiar vantage point, the dialectical tension between finitude and infinitude.

> It is in myself that I experience this disproportion between my finite capacity for adherence and the acknowledgment of something fundamental that exceeds me and threatens me by its excess, and thereby I suffer. So, violence is then like an effort to protect myself against the danger of losing my roots, an imminent threat I only obscurely perceive.[159]

Violence is the finite response, or an attempt at controlling the overflow of the source or 'groundless ground' that threatens my capacity as a human being. In Girardian language, this confrontation between the infinite and undifferentiated, with the finite, creates a violent act of

[159] Ricœur, "Religion and Symbolic Violence," 4.

differentiation.[160] This infinite is the existential source, depicted as transcendence and meaning. Thus there is the possibility of a structural description, via Ricœur's dialectical view of finitude and infinitude, that illumines Girard's view regarding the embeddedness of violence in the primordial sacred, where differentiation is the violent response to undifferentiation.

> But this capacity of reception is from the outset what I would call a community of reception, of reading, of instruction, such as we see in the religions of the Book. And even in the non-scriptural religions there is in the oral tradition something like a scripture, an inscription, brought about by the ritualization of instruction. It is therefore as an instructed community that a community lays hold of the words of this instruction and claims to reduce this instructional power to its finite capacity of comprehension (by which I mean here the ability to receive and contain). And it is into this difference, this disproportion between the excess and a finite community's informed capacity to receive, that I see the mimetic process inserting itself.[161]

Ricœur makes a very interesting parallel between the finite act of reception and the preservation of the contact with the infinite, as a people records there religious, existential source of meaning in an oral tradition, but later into a written religious text. This is now an institutional preservation of the violent finite response to the infinite, expressed alongside the Girardian focus of primitive people's taboos and rituals, but something much more comparable to the more 'modern' or 'civilized' religions of 'the Book.' The creation of the communal text can be seen as a collective act of finitude towards the infinite source as a necessary act of 'difference.' Thus, the role of the 'mimetic process' as the modality by which this communal act of differentiation is both formed and continued. Yet this act of differentiation, as an institutional inscription or reduction of the infinite, allows the finite reception, the inscription, the tradition itself, to become an 'object' of conflictual desire, and thus a future cause for rivalry, violence, and scapegoating. What was first an encounter with vertical transcendence, or the infinite, now can become deviated transcendence via appropriation and differentiation, and thus becomes a rivalrous object of desire and a cause to scapegoat others outside of this 'community of reception.'

> So this means, in conclusion, that the reception of the source or groundless ground as pure gift is henceforth, for us, inseparable from criticism of the victimary process that radically corrupts the reception of the fundamental and transforms it into entrapment in the rivalry with all the other communities that themselves were receptive communities but became entrapped. The entrapment of the source results from the conjunction between finitude of capacity and exclusion of all the other expectations, attempts, and temptations of all those who believe otherwise than I do. It is

[160] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 56-57.

[161] Ricœur, "Symbolic Violence," 10.

> this grafting of exclusion onto the finite capacity that the mimetic interpretation helps us to understand.[162]

Not only is mimesis integral to illuminating the passage from finite reception, but also the construction of the community around the object of appropriation. Thus, the potential for conflicts between differing groups who claim to have the same 'object,' revealing an 'entrapment' of the community in its 'entrapment' or binding to the source of their identity. Girard's emphasis on how the scapegoating or 'victimary process' has been revealed is shown to be from the same source of differentiated communal reception, which is preserved as a written scripture or oral tradition. Thus, it retains this structural bivalence, this ability to 'entrap' the community of the Book, but also, by its message, promote an awareness of this process of 'entrapment.' This cultural repository of meaning, which reflects the paradoxical structure of finite-infinite, is objectified as the differentiated institution, which distances itself from the infinite source. This points directly to Girard's critique of the 'communities of the Book' or in his terms 'historical Christianity' for failing to comprehend the true message of anti-sacrifice and non-violence.

> Historical Christianity covers the texts with a veil of sacrifice. Or, to change the metaphor, it immolates them in the (albeit splendid) tomb of Western culture. By this reading, the Christian text is able to found something that in principle it ought never to have founded: a culture.[163]

Thus 'historical' Christianity, via its objectification of its scriptural tradition, and turning it into an object for appropriative desire, founded its own culture via a repetition of the mechanism, this time scapegoating other religious communities and pursuing acts of violence, which were denounced in the meaning of its scriptures. In my view, this fundamental misreading of the non-violent logic contained within these appropriated texts indicates an important development in this finite reception of the infinite relationship, which Ricœur has attempted to introduce to Girard's mimetic theory. Following the 'conflict of interpretations' just reformulated, the finite reception and subsequent objectification of the reception is not itself the source of violence, it is the opening through the 'ontological disproportion' of the finite and infinite that marks human fallibility. It is making the 'finitized,' the 'differentiated' itself an object of rivalrous desire that is the beginning of the violence. Humanity is composed by its finitude and must attempt to receive the infinite in a finite vessel. The binding of the community is thus to a differentiated identity, a finite 'culture' based on the 'communal act of reception.' Only when the mimetic mechanism of a

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[162] Ricœur, "Symbolic Violence," 12.

[163] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 249.

desire focused purely on the finite, or deviated, idea of transcendence, does violence ensue, and thus, as will be explored in the next chapter, evil.

So where is *the fourth aspect* in this reading? It is in the relation of an ontological disproportion, the disjunction of the finite to the infinite, to the foundational act of differentiation. The founding act of violence for this system of exclusion is the founding act of difference for Girard. Yet, this act of differentiation as violence was a product of the mimetic desire and the rivalry between proto humans. Thus, it was originally a rivalry over an object of desire. The fundamental act of differentiation, in this case, was violence, and Ricœur's article describes the likelihood of this possibility. Thus, if suspicion reveals a 'field of enlarged meaning,' the foundational role of differentiation as the occasion for finitized objects of rivalrous desire, the believing pole reveals this as an ontological disproportion for humanity's existential situation, and its relation to the 'infinite.' Thus, in my reading, violence and mimesis are deeply embedded in these foundational existential moments of interaction before the finite and the infinite. This embeddedness of bivalent violence in the communal act of reception pushes a way towards understanding evil in the phenomenal emergence of violence.

Conclusion

It is from the structure of the 'conflict of interpretations' between Ricœur and Girard that the question of understanding evil has been put in motion. The combination of Girard's suspicious approach, aimed at uncovering a 'reality behind the text' reveals what Ricœur describes as the non-semantic ground of experiences that are brought to language in symbols. It is only a synthesis of hermeneutic attributes in the works of Ricœur and Girard that will bring an existential understanding of the question of humanity's evil situation as not bound to simply a phenomenological textual reflection but brings this understanding 'outside' of the text to the interpersonal relations in desire and their objectifications in the works of cultures as institutions and narratives. Thus outside the text, is now seen to no longer 'behind,' but in 'front of,' for it is through this strengthened contact with the anthropological ground that Ricœur's emphasis on the double-meaning of symbols and metaphor, with their abilities to redescribe reality and create new meaning, can support his claim that these symbols are the repository of existential meaning for understanding evil.[164] By combining Ricœur's and Girard's analysis of these experiences encapsulated in the symbolic language of their shared 'points of contact,' we can see this interplay

[164] Ricœur, "The Model of the Text," 165.

between reality and text bring efficacious results for elaborating the question of understanding evil.

Chapter 2: The Understanding of Evil - Orienting the Interpretation

> *Evil is part of the interhuman relationship, like language, tools, institutions; it is transmitted; it is tradition, and not only something that happens. There is thus an anteriority of evil to itself, as if evil were that which always proceeds itself, that which man finds and continues while beginning it, but beginning it in his turn. That is why, in the Garden of Eden, the Serpent is already there; he is the other side of that which begins.*[165]

Introduction

As stated in the last chapter, the central question that unifies the focus of this combined hermeneutic approach between Girard and Ricœur is the understanding of evil. By understanding, I refer to its Ricœurian usage, where the contours of something paradoxical and deeply resistant to pure definition and explanation are brought to the surface.[166] To facilitate this multifaceted understanding of evil and its manifestations, I have developed the following questions. (1) What is meant by the term evil for each thinker? (2) How do they both engage with it or approach it? (3) What are the shared 'points of contact' in their usage of the term and approaches? The focus of this chapter will then be to provide introductory answers to those three questions. These answers serve to clarify and focus on *what* 'evil' is, and *how* it is interpreted. The composite of these answers is then the guiding theme—desire, selfhood, violence, symbol, myth, and testimony—for 'understanding of evil,' which will be investigated more deeply in the following chapters of this dissertation.

What this composite between Ricœur and Girard reveals is that the central question of 'understanding evil' is inherent to both their works and can be addressed through a combined hermeneutic of the phenomena of evil in general. The composite or homology that emerges from the common points of interpretation will also reveal that these common or shared points of emphasis contain the implicit dialectical structure mentioned in the previous chapter, where suspicion provides a new ground for belief and is implicitly included in each movement.[167] These

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[165] Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 258.

[166] Yet, explanation is still the central process that links a first-level, or naïve understanding, with a more developed one, in the 'dialectical structure of reading.' See Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 72.

[167] As mentioned in the previous chapter, where Ricœur uses a 'teleology' of the believing interpretation, I show that the 'teleology' of this believing attitude is changed into an eschatology via the response to evil, which is within and integral to its understanding. This response can only be seen alongside the anthropological level and so it is an

significant points of contact are (1) the connection between fallibility and mimetic desire in an ontological 'sickness' or 'disproportion,' (2) the primitive dread of retribution as a 'matrix of terror' at the origin of the sacred, and (3) the figural progression of understanding culminating with the Christ figure. These distinct structural features reveal Ricœur's understanding of evil as the 'polar' moments of violence, both *suffered* and *committed*. Thus, the understanding of the evil phenomenon par excellence, violence, is seen as the structure around which these shared points of interpretation can illuminate the hybrid internal–external situation of existential evil. These structural points of contact ground the understanding of evil in the existential by a concrete violence that is simultaneously a 'concrete' internally violent structure. Thus, this synthesized understanding of evil, from the starting point of violence as evil act par excellence, reveals the multidirectional approach for this understanding that requires an interpretation that can approach an internal experience of evil within the self, in terms of desire and freedom, and external to it, in the form of symbol, myth, and culture.

The Centrality of Evil for Ricœur and Girard

Is the concept of evil, in fact, central to both Ricœur and Girard? Ricœur explicitly addresses the problem of evil, beginning with his *Philosophy of the Will*, which emerges from human nature as a dialectical tension between finite activity and infinite freedom, seen as *fault*.[168] Since this concept of fallibility is not evil itself but only 'the constitutional weakness that makes evil possible,' Ricœur's *Philosophy of the Will* project is focused on clarifying this aporia, which is the origin and locus of evil.[169] Ricœur calls the instance of evil, *fault*, or the concrete experience of this 'disproportion' or 'fallenness.' In Ricœur's *Symbolism of Evil*, he examines the historical occurrence of *fault*, as reflected in the cultural symbols that preserve humanity's initial understanding of this state of 'fallenness.' This dialectical imbalance within the phenomenology of the self becomes the ground for his later development of the concept of evil, as the polar moment of violence, which is both *suffered* and *committed*, in "Evil: A Challenge to Philosophy and

existential one, when the Girardian interpretation of the Christ figure is paired with Ricœur in this reformulated conflict of interpretations.

[168] Paul Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, trans, Charles A. Kelbley, (Fordham University Press: New York, 1986,), 134.

[169] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xliii. For an in depth reading of the problem of evil in Ricœur's early philosophy, see Barnabas Aspray, *Ricœur at the Limits of Philosophy: God, Creation, and Evil* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 138. Also see Jérôme Porée, "The Question of Evil," in *A Companion to Ricœur's the Symbolism of Evil*, ed. Scott Davidson (Rowman and Littlefield, 2020), cha. 1, Calibre Library.

Theology."[170] In this chapter, he discusses why violence is the quintessential evil phenomenon, as it reconciles two strongly opposed poles in the experience of evil: *suffering* evil, which is lamentable, and *committing* evil, which is blameworthy.

> All evil committed by one person, we have seen, is evil undergone by another person. To do evil is to make another person suffer. Violence, in this sense, constantly re-creates the unity of moral evil and suffering. Hence any action, whether ethical or political, that diminishes the quantity of violence exercised by some human beings over against other human beings diminishes the amount of suffering in the world. If we were to remove the suffering inflicted by people on other people, we would see what remained of suffering in the world, but to tell the truth, we have no idea what this would be, to such an extent does human violence impregnate human suffering.[171]

Thus, 'human violence' must be understood as this 'concrete' entry point to approaching the expanse of the 'mystery' of evil. Further, human violence, in its structural dimension of human relations, discovers this tentative 'unity' of the 'human condition,' at an existential level.[172] Evil as an activity is violence, and this activity has the passivity of another who suffers the violence. Thus, the mystery of evil can be approached hermeneutically, within the text-action-world dynamic, rather than through metaphysical speculation.[173]

Girard, on the other hand, does not begin to approach the concept of evil as something abstracted from its concrete circumstances, but from the dynamics of desire and violence themselves, where the poles of *suffering* and *committing* cannot be so easily distinguished.[174] Evil is shown not to be a singular phenomenon, but rather to occur throughout the progression of deviated transcendence from rivalrous desire to humanity's violence and tendency to scapegoat,

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[170] See Ricœur, "Evil: A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology", 249-61.

[171] Ricœur, "Evil", 259.

[172] Ricœur, "Evil", 251.

[173] Ricœur explains the dynamics of this diminishment of the 'power of acting' as the experience of suffering, which bears on the existential level of human experience. This dynamic between suffering, acting, and 'victimization' will be brought to the fore as this chapter continues, in humanity's 'binding' to the polar moments of violence. 'With the decrease of the power of *acting*, experienced as a decrease of the effort of *existing*, the reign of suffering, properly speaking, commences. Most of these sufferings are inflicted on humans by humans. The result is that most of the evil in the world comes from violence among human beings. Here, the passivity belonging to the metacategory of one's own body overlaps with the passivity belonging to the category of other people; the passivity of the suffering self becomes indistinguishable from the passivity of being the victim of the other (than) self. Victimization appears then as passivity's underside, casting a gloom over the "glory" of action.' Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 320.

[174]'The difficulty of this question has led René Girard towards thinking from his part that the concrete problem of evil *committed* cannot be distinguished from the evil *suffered*.' Translation and emphasis mine. Original text : « La difficulté de cette question a conduit René Girard à penser pour sa part que le problème concret du mal commis ne pouvait pas être distingué de celui du mal subi. » Cristina Henrique de Costa, « La part de la littérature dans l'experience du mal » in *Le mal et la symbolique : Ricœur lecteur de Freud* eds. Michael Funk, Azadeh Thiriez-Arjangi, Geoffrey Dierckxsens, Andres Bruzzone (De Gruyter, 2022), 103.

whether in the modern context or the primitive institution of the sacred.[175] But it is important to note that the primitive sacred and its ritual violence are not shown to be genuinely evil until the revelation of the violent mechanism of scapegoating, with the Judeo-Christian scriptures. It is not until the advent of the anti-sacrificial perspectives of Judaism and Christianity, and the progressive realization of its non-violent message, that this *méconnaissance* can be 'laid bare.'[176] Yet, the true Christian message has had mixed success, and modern humans have vestiges of this satanic mechanism that continue to operate in a cloud of *méconnaissance* or misrecognition. Thus, what is evil for Girard are the continued operations of scapegoating, violence, and rivalrous desire, which are operating in the modern world despite the demythologization of violence by Christ. Thus, for Girard, the definition of evil is immanent to the historical-cultural sphere, and only from this hermeneutic of culture and history can evil be brought to the surface, seen as the demythologization of violence. It is from some prehistoric mimetic crisis to the ritualization of the crisis in ancient religion, to the demythologization efforts that emerged with the advent of Judeo-Christian revelation, that the definition of evil is intimately linked to its historical manifestations, and according to my interpretation, reveals an existential understanding through a non-violent 'hermeneutic of suspicion.' This 'hermeneutic of suspicion' continues to work against the system of scapegoating and violence in contemporary culture, because the mimetic composition of human desire remains hidden and interwoven with both the individual and the community, always in need of being revealed or uncovered. The definition of evil, then, for Girard, is this active-passive and hidden-revealed system of 'bad' mimesis, or what he terms either 'Satan,' the 'adversary,' 'satanic system of accusation,' within the 'scapegoat mechanism.'[177] In my reading, this system operates by multiplying *fault* by both the contagiousness of violence and desire, and its ability to efface its traces, which necessitates uncovering and revealing this system.

How can these two understandings of evil be synthesized, and why is it even necessary for the 'conflict of interpretations?' Due to the complexity of evil as inhabiting the internal, intersubjective, and external aspects of humanity, it requires a hermeneutic that reveals its origin and continuation as manifestations of the relationship between desire and freedom. The polar moments of human violence will be the concrete 'foothold' for the beginning of this synthesis, for

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[175] Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 32-33.

[176] Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, 218.

[177] See Chapter 3, *Satan and the Paracleitos.*

Girard derives evil as the revealed structure of human desire and violence, and Ricœur sees *fault* as the 'concrete' emergence of evil from this 'ontological disproportion.'[178] It will begin with violence as the concrete manifestation of evil embedded in language, myth, and culture, indicating the co-extensivity of humanity's existential situation with evil, where the response to what is considered evil is also contained in language.[179] Thus, this hermeneutic can interpret the ambiguous polar moments of violence, with the corollary aspects of desire and freedom, within the cultural foundations of humanity contained in symbol, myths, and the sacred. These cultural foundations are the intersubjective expressions of humanity's inner disproportion in the self, or fallibility, enacted via the thymic quests of desire. This hermeneutic must be able to engage with both the interior, phenomenological dimensions of the self and the anthropological manifestations in the external sphere.

Structure

Part I of this chapter will examine Ricœur's work, *Fallible Man*, and highlight a course of investigation that begins with the self's interiority and composition. It will also provide a brief overview of the *Symbolism of Evil*, focusing on the transition from primary symbols to second-order symbols of evil, as summarized by Ricœur's paradoxical concept of the *servile will* and its 'response' via the Christ figure. *Symbolism of Evil* provides a seamless transition into what Girard understands to be the locus of evil – the founding murder and the ritualized violence of scapegoating.

In part II, there will be an overview of Girard's treatment of our central question, understanding evil as 'personified' in the satanic system of bad mimesis. I will follow the reverse

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[178] Violence, as 'concrete,' does not mean only 'physical violence' but all activities where there is a disproportion between the agent and a victim, seen as a reduction, constraining, destruction or diminishment, of the victim. Thus all acts that are generally considered to be 'evil,' such as lying, abuse, betrayal, theft, exclusion, as well as the overt ones of murder, are considered in this framework. Further, the structure of this disproportionate activity itself, of violent differentiation, will be seen as the internal structure of a divided self that commits the *decidere*, as seen with the act of 'pride' or vanity. See note #205.

[179] This point is also emphasized in Cristina Henrique De Costa's chapter « La part de la littérature dans l'experience du mal » where she states that the abstraction of symbol from myth on evil, via a believing hermeneutic, must be supplemented to the demythologization of evil by Girard's method, to testify to the reality the historical occurrence of evil and violence. 'To the subjective word of mythic discourse, one must therefore add faith, as a *testimony* to the violence of men. However, without the understanding of the collective mechanism itself, the founder of sacred violence, no discourse on evil could be known to be correlated to the pole of the historical reality of evil.' Translation and emphasis mine. Original text : « À la parole subjective du discours mythique il faut donc ajouter foi, en tant que témoignage de la violence des hommes. Or, sans la compréhension du mécanisme collectif lui-même fondateur de la violence du sacré, aucun discours sur le mal ne saurait être corrélé au pôle de réalité historique du mal. » in *Le mal et la symbolique : Ricœur lecteur de Freud*, 104.

direction on this continuum, from externalized focus of sacred violence as residing in cultural institutions as the natural inheritors of scapegoating, into the satanic system of 'bad' mimesis, which entraps humanity in relationships of competitive imitation and deviated transcendence in the infinitude of 'bad' mimetic desire. The Christ figure reappears again, as a way out of this system, but this time in the anthropological dimension. Girard's view of the Christ figure's 'response' is a demythologizing of the illusions or *méconnaissance* and the 'bad' mimetic system. This demonstrates that one of the points of interest in the continuum of understanding evil is the perpetuation of the 'effacement of traces' which contribute to the continued existence of violence, and thus evil, within (and without) the human situation.

The conclusion will be a synopsis of understanding of evil as both internal and external to humanity via an analysis of Ricœur's 'welcoming anew' Girard's mimetic theory to explain this structure of violence and *méconnaissance*. The notion of a 'bound' freedom in the *servile will*, along with the *suffering* and *committing* of violence, is brought into the Girardian formulation of the *skandalon*, or the 'stumbling block' of mimesis, which forms a 'double bind' between the self and the community. This polarity of the structure of violence, seen with the 'bound' freedom of the *servile will* reveals a series of 'polar' moments. Such as the interiority and exteriority of an intersubjective desire, bivalence of symbol and metaphor, and in the progression of understanding itself. The coalescence of these 'polar' moments of violence, and thus evil, are overcome through the figure of Christ, who serves as the testimonial response to evil, through dissociating of these poles of *suffering* from committing, in promulgating not only the existence of innocence in the evil of *suffering*, but how to respond to this scandal.

Part I – Fallibility, Fallenness, and The *Servile Will*: Ricœur's Definition of Evil

The question of evil is central to Ricœur's early works, as it forms a significant justification for his movement beyond phenomenology. This move beyond is prompted by the encounter with the concept of evil as one of these 'productive aporias' that form a challenge to both self and other understanding.[180] Ricœur emphasizes that his definition of evil does not

[180] The concept of a 'productive aporia' is one of the defining features of Ricœur's thought that reconciles his respect for an inexhaustibility of a purely rationalist approach to certain philosophical questions, with a demand for intelligibility that can be derived from these aporias of philosophical inquiry. See Ricœur, *Time and Narrative vol. 1*, 5.

originate from the ethico-moral dimension, but instead emerges from the human's interior experience of 'fallenness' or 'disproportion.'[181] Ricœur posits that the ontological tension within the human is what produces this experience of 'disproportion,' for the human is a mediation between its infinite freedom and finite, created existence.[182] This tension between the infinite will and finite nature, or the concept of fallibility, still requires a more concrete understanding, because it is only the potential or place for the concrete, committed, or historical evil to enter the world as *fault*. Thus, Ricœur's turn to hermeneutics in his *Symbolism of Evil* is an attempt to understand the experience of fallibility as it extends into the domain of action, for concrete *fault* is preserved in the multivalence of language.

In Ricœur's later essay, "Evil, a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," he attempts to break down the concept of evil into its three 'popular' occurrences: sin, suffering, and death.[183] Ricœur contends that those three 'evils' all contain two polar moments, blame and lament, which make any rational approach to evil resistant to univocal understanding.[184] Violence is considered the concrete expression of evil, as it is a single phenomenon that unifies these simultaneous poles: *suffered* and *committed*.[185] These two poles contribute to the experience of a hybrid situation of evil, and thus of violence, as both internal and external to the self. In my reading, what this allows for the hermeneutic understanding of evil is for the analogous expression of the poles, *committed* and *suffered*, to understand an interior experience of evil via violence, as the violence to the 'divided' self. This analogous expression to violence in the external sphere, then reflects the same structure. Violence, then, is the quintessential evil phenomenon, for it is the central expression of this union in the internal and external polarities of evil. Its concretization in history, seen in the sphere of action as lying, murder, fraud, etc., emerge after this 'pre-ethical' understanding of violence, as this polar structure, that can explain both an internal experience and an external experience.

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[181] Yet, the 'ethico-moral dimension' of evil for Ricœur is never far away and serves as one of the goals of his reflection on evil as emerging from the 'ontological disproportion.' In the preface to *Fallible Man* he comments on this 'grandeur of the ethical vision of the world that although still important, needs this ontological grounding.' Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlviii-xlix.

[182] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xliii-xliv

[183] Ricœur, "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology", 250.

[184] Ricœur "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology", 249.

[185] Ricœur "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology", 259.

In the following section, which analyzes Ricœur's approaches to the concept of evil in his *Philosophy of the Will*, I will begin with fallibility, as presented in his *Fallible Man*, and then move on to the experience of *fault*. Following my hermeneutic, for this progression from fallibility to *fault* to be understood, the understanding of the emergence of violence in both its experience internal to the self and the experience external to the self must be seen to be 'co-extensive.' This requires two methodological shifts: (1) from phenomenology to hermeneutics and (2) from hermeneutics to anthropology. In my analysis of Ricœur's *Symbolism of Evil*, it becomes clear that the experience of *fault*, whether *suffered* or *committed*, identifies an action as evil by also joining an 'evil history' that is ongoing and predates my action.[186] In the dialogue with Girard, it is this 'evil history' that will be shown to be a history of violence.[187] Ricœur finds that not only the hermeneutics of this 'confession' of evil from mythic and biblical texts can highlight the contours of a violent origin, as a 'matrix of terror,' but in the pairing with Girard's suspicion, the cultural responses to this avowal inform not just the existence of evil, but the importance of hope as the natural human response to the concrete *fault* of violence and this violence's 'generative' effects in the *méconnaissance* of humanity's 'ontological disproportion.' By explicating the consistent movement from the internal faculties of the self to the external repositories of cultural meaning seen with the bivalent symbol, the communal efforts of humanity working out this disproportion open the way towards a response to anthropological concretization of 'real' violence. This 'productive aporia' of the question of 'ontological disproportion' in bound freedom, is approachable via an interpretation of polar violence. It is into this opening where Ricœur's formulation then can 'welcome anew' the suspicious hermeneutic of mimetic theory to demonstrate the progression of understanding of this 'evil history' of humanity.

What is Fallibility? – An Analysis of *Fallible Man*

To begin, Ricœur's first volume of his Philosophy of the Will is *Freedom and Nature*, where he develops a thorough analysis of the two poles of human existence: the voluntary, or infinitude of freedom, which exists through its finitude, or the involuntary, explained as the locus of acting and circumstantial body.[188] *Freedom and Nature* serves as a formal and

[186] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 156.

[187] This 'evil history' can only be understood via an interpretation of the symbolic and mythic approaches to this emergence, which is the focus of chapter 4 and the 'progression of understanding.' See Chapter 4, *Introduction.*

[188] Aspray, *Ricœur at the Limits*, 32.

phenomenological exploration of humanity's situation within the phenomenological bracketing of the human will, which Ricœur emphasizes as the first step in any proceeding investigation of these concepts in the reality of the human condition. The second step is to follow the seeds of this disproportion between the finite and the infinite in his 'empirics of the will,' where this discovered cleavage or *fault* serves as the potential for 'real' evil to enter the world.[189] It is for this reason that this work will not be analyzed in detail here, because his concept of fallibility is not fully elaborated until the next volume.

Fallible Man is technically the first part of the second volume on the will, where its companion in part two is *Symbolism of Evil. Fallible Man* explores the implications of this ontological disproportion within human affectivity, where Ricœur attempts a more genuine philosophical anthropology rather than just a phenomenological analysis of the human.

> On the contrary, I said that I would here remove the parentheses in which it was necessary to put Fault and the whole experience of human evil so as to delimit the field of pure description… The present work intends to do away with this purely descriptive abstraction by reintroducing what was bracketed.[190]

By being no longer bracketed from the reality of human action and its effects, Ricœur's analysis reveals the importance of the affective experiences of this disproportion, thus an 'empirics of the will' rather than just a phenomenology. The concept that results is humanity's fallibility or the locus of where evil can enter alongside human activity.[191]

> We know only that we cannot start from the simple term, but must rather start from the composite itself, from the finite-infinite relation. Thus it is necessary to start from the whole of man, by which I mean the global view of his non-coincidence with himself, his disproportion, and the mediation he brings about in existing.[192]

This 'whole of man' and the 'global view' are what Ricœur terms the non-philosophical precomprehension, or what he calls the '*pathetique* of misery.' What does he mean by '*pathetique*' and why is it a 'non-philosophical precomprehension'? Ricœur consistently maintains the position in his works that philosophy has non-philosophical beginnings, and it does not begin anything; it analyzes, universalizes, and brings to a central methodology of logical consistency, the diversity of human and communal experiences. This *pathetique* is 'the matrix of any

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[189] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xli.

[190] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xli.

[191] 'With the concept of fallibility, the doctrine of man approaches a threshold of intelligibility wherein it is understandable that evil could come into the world through man.' Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xliii.

[192] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 4.

philosophy that makes disproportion and intermediacy the ontic characteristic of man.'[193] Thus, in this dissertation, this 'ontological disproportion' is one of the central structures in approaching humanity's evil situation. The 'finite-infinite' relation is already expressed within the *pathetique*, in all its aporias and mediations.[194] For our investigation, Ricœur's focus on Plato's usage of *thumos* as the 'intermediate' center that reveals this disproportion (the division between *epithumia* and *eros*) will be broken down more thoroughly in the next chapter on the connection between Ricœur and Girard's formulations of intersubjective desire.[195] Still, for now, they are foundational starting points in Ricœur's development of his *pathetique* of misery, which places humanity's intermediacy actively between the finite and infinite, or existing as a *mélange* where the internal 'co-origin' of evil is intertwined in this desire matrix. Attempting to identify the components of this *mélange* is the next step.

For the next two stages, I will give a brief overview, highlighting the important points of reflection for building towards Ricœur's approach to evil. In the first stage, the 'transcendental synthesis of the *pathetique*,' its purpose is to introduce the idea of synthesis on the object, which reveals the structural necessity of an intermediate or 'third term.'[196] This introduces reflection, but not introspection, for the transcendental synthesis is directed at an external object.[197] But why is the reflection ultimately inadequate or insufficient? Because 'it remains deficient with respect to the substantial richness of which myth and rhetoric gave a pathetic understanding.'[198] The transcendental stage is necessary for revealing this structure of dialectical mediation, but it

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[193] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 5.

[194] So what is an example of a *pathetique* that demonstrates these qualities? Ricœur turns to Pascal, Plato, and Kierkegaard. These explorations of *pathos* form the raw material for reflection and lay the groundwork for his philosophical anthropology. 'We can detect a certain progression in going from the Platonic myth representing the soul as a mélange to the beautiful Pascalian rhetoric of two infinites towards Kierkegaard's *Concept of Dread*.' Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 6.

[195] 'That is where the third term, the one Plato calls *thumos*, becomes enigmatic. It is no longer a "part" in a stratified structure, but an ambiguous power which undergoes the double attraction of reason and desire… the *thumos*, the heart, is the unstable and fragile function par excellence.' Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 10.

[196] Ricœur on why one must begin with a 'necessary, although inadequate' transcendental reflection, 'From it I seek a clue to the exploration of all the other modalities of man as intermediate: what was mélange and misery for the pathetic comprehension of man will be called 'synthesis' in the object…Without this transcendental stage, philosophical anthropology would quit the *pathetique* only to fall into a fanciful ontology of being and nothingness.' Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 5,17.

[197] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 18.

[198] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 46.

only reflects 'the abstract framework of our life-world.'[199] To understand how the human being mediates between the finite and the infinite, this structure must be revealed at each stage of this dialectic, in the 'surplus that a merely transcendental reflection does not allow us to elevate to the plane of reason.'[200]

At the next level, this third term, in this now 'practical synthesis' is the 'constitution of the person by means of respect.'[201] This new stage contains the 'zero-origin' of affectivity indicated by motivations and desires, and it is also where we feel the 'primal difference between the I and all others,' which is intimately linked with the 'affective closing' of the body as unable to be shared.[202] Here we see the possibility of *fault* within fallibility emerging in this 'affective closing' of the finite, and one of the central products of the 'ontological disproportion,' which is self-dilection.

> Just as one's position cannot be shared with another, so also the affective situation in which I find myself cannot be exchanged. It is here that egoism, as well as vice, finds its opportunity: out of difference or otherness it makes a preference.[203]

Finitude at this stage of the practical synthesis, shows the possibility of 'egoism' and 'vice,' which I will argue, are violent acts of self-division, by choosing a false, egoistic view of selfhood, instead of an intersubjective, always other-mediated view.[204] This aspect of finitude, related to character, is the unchangeable and natural restriction to our freedom.[205] Yet, character is not just the capability of selfishness and restricted freedom. To summarize the finitude of character, Ricœur says that it is the

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[199] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 47.

[200] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 46.

[201] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 53.

[202] Ricœur's usage of the term *person*, to express the unity of a particular body and a particular self, will not be explored in this dissertation, for the question of selfhood and other than self, alongside the questions of desire and violence, must first be investigated, before returning to the term the 'person.' For a more complete view of the 'person' in Ricœur's thought, see Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 30-39.

[203] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 55.

[204] I am following Girard in his usage of the *decidere*, from his *The Scapegoat*. He is using the Latin form because of its etymology descended from the violent act of cutting, which I see as representative of the polar moments of evil, inaugurated in the choice of self in 'self-dilection.' This etymological connection to self-violence, or self-affect in the French '*se decider*' seems to be in its grammatical construction, from the reflexive pronoun 'se.' This reflexivity, inherent to decision making, expresses the dividedness of the self, and the internal otherness, that must be harmonized and not separated. See Johann Michel's chapter entitled 'The Status of the Subject in Ricœur's Phenomenology of Decision,' in *A Companion to Ricœur's Fallible Man: Studies in the Thought of Paul Ricœur*, ed. Scott Davidson (Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), 112-114.

[205] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 56-57.

> limited openness of our field of motivation taken as a whole… the openness of my field of motivation is my fundamental accessibility to all values of all men in all cultures… I am capable of every virtue and every vice; no sign of man is radically incomprehensible, no language radically untranslatable, no work of art to which my taste cannot spread.'[206]

Thus, although character is a restriction on the potency of freedom, and potential birth of self-love and the various evils that stem from it, it is also the aspect of finitude that universalizes humanity and forms a basis for understanding the other. In my reading, it is also integral to the intersubjective community of humanity's existential situation. This fate of character is unalterable, received, and inherited, but fundamental for what it means to be human. An introductory aspect of the understanding of evil takes shape here, where self-dilection is shown to be a preference that inaugurates other 'evils' in this complex relationship of the already 'divided' self. This 'decision' in the Latin etymology of the term from *decidere*, to cut, and in this dissertation, my usage of the term *decidere* refers to the violence caused to the self via self-dilection.[207] This is the emergence of evil within the person, as *fault*, emerging from a deviation from this structure.[208] In the understanding of evil I am exploring, begun in a hermeneutic of polar moments of violence, does not posit a radical evil. The road to deciphering humanity's fallen existential situation requires the 'hypothesis' of a primordial innocence, and not a 'fallen duality.'

> We can only answer this: We have access to the primordial only through what is fallen. In return, if the fallen denotes nothing about from which it has fallen, no philosophy of the primordial is possible, and we cannot even say that man is fallen.[209]

Ricœur's dialectical progression through the stages of *Fallible Man* indicates the need for a further, more empirical dimension of his analysis that was bracketed in the previous stages. It is the concept of *feeling* or affective fragility, which unites the 'ontological disproportion,' the

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[206] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 60.

[207] Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 114.

[208] In this discussion of the ethical self, Ricœur is quick to point out the complete acceptance of this Kantian moralist formulation of the self, as it births Kant's ethical vision of the person, leads inevitably to a vicious circle of 'the downfall' being constitutive of humanity, thus no prior state of innocence. The reason is that this view of the person, as mediated by the faculty of respect, is that respect brings the faculty of desiring under the control of reason, which subdues it. Thus, fallibility in this frame would not be only a potential within the dialectical structure, but the *fault* already constitutive of the person. Ricœur extends this objection to Kant's moralist view of respect and reason subjugating desire as constitutive of any ethical vision of the world, for it presupposes a radical evil and an already fallen duality to humanity. So Ricœur, whose view of understanding I am following for the elaboration of the origin of evil, rejects Kant's formulation which derives a notion of the original ethical obligation. 'In the analysis of respect, the Kantian moralist presupposes an already fallen sensibility, and it is this that he excludes from the moral sphere… The moralist starts with a situation in which the duality of good and evil is already constituted, in which man has already chosen the side of evil.' Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 75.

[209] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 76.

finitude of character and its potential self-dilection, with the intersection of *bios* and *logos*, thus introducing the opening towards the symbol.

For Ricœur, feeling is the affective locus of the self, *par excellence*.[210] Ricœur compares it to Plato's conception of *thumos* as 'the living transition from *bios* to *logos*,' which connects directly to the function of symbol as the dividing line that marks the passage from *bios* and *logos*.[211] This is because feeling,

> At one and the same time it separates and unites vital affectivity or desire (*epithumia*) and the spiritual affectivity that the Symposium calls *eros*. This center point of the self is the 'restless heart' where 'all the disproportions that seen culminate in the disproportion of happiness and character would be interiorized…'[212]

Thus feeling, which will be brought into the Ricœurian conception of the *thumos* in this dissertation, will be a central point of connection to this interiority of the intersubjective self and its expression in symbol, for both exist in this space between *bios* and *logos*, and both are characterized by a fundamental, bivalent structure. This structure is seen by how 'feeling is the revealer of intentionality' via its referential movement back toward the self. Thus it is also the source of 'affection,'

> For it is on the things elaborated by the work of objectification that feeling projects its affective correlates, its felt qualities: the lovable and the hateful, the desirable and the loathsome… But since these qualities are not objects facing a subject but the intentional expression of an undivided bond with the world, feeling appears at the same time as a coloring of the soul, as an affection… Feeling expresses my belonging to this landscape that, in turn, is the sign and cipher of my inwardness… This paradox, however, is only the sign pointing toward the mystery of feeling, namely, the undivided connection of my existence with beings and being through desire and love.[213]

Investigating the 'sign and cipher' of 'inwardness' where 'this paradox' of 'existence' makes feeling fundamental to the understanding of evil within disproportion as a voyage out of a reflective or phenomenological investigation and into the hermeneutics of symbols.[214] Ricœur sees hermeneutics as this attempt to decipher feeling's openness to the 'undivided bond with the world' via its receptivity, that both colors existence, and opens it toward *fault*. Feeling's

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[210] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 105-106.

[211] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 82.

[212] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 82.

[213] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 89.

[214] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 91.

characterization as the moment of 'belonging' and the entire external-internal connection between self and world returns to the notion of *thumos*, as the 'restless heart.' [215]

To understand *thumos* in the fullness of Ricœur's analysis in *Fallible Man* would shift the focus of this chapter from clarifying the theme of understanding of evil to excavating the complexity of desire and its intersubjective function as a modality by which evil is continued within the self and in the communities. Thus, the analysis of *thumos* which must be paused here, with Ricœur's directional cue towards the 'modalities of desire' for further investigation,

> The illustration of *thumos*, therefore, must be looked for within the passions that are essentially (and not accidentally) interhuman, social, and cultural… We must even say that what we understand at first are primordial modalities of human desire that are constitutive with respect to man's humanity…[216]

Thus, the connection between human desire and its externalization into humanity become the entry point to work backward to understanding fallibility. Fallibility, as the internal capability or potency for *fault*, is only understood as *fault*-enabling when the 'modality' of desire and passion become revealed as the extreme tension points between finite and infinite. 'It is this secret rift, this non-coincidence of self to self that feeling reveals. Feeling is conflict and reveals man as primordial conflict.'[217] In my reading it is this primordial conflict that is the turn to violence, and the structure of violence that foreshadows its polar structure as the most concrete expression of evil.

Now that the progression from fallibility to *fault* has been mapped in Ricœur's *Fallible Man*, what does the preceding analysis provide for the understanding of evil? The dialectical structure that is reproduced on these three levels of syntheses, the transcendental, practical, and affective, reveals that the area of 'ontological disproportion' at the 'heart of man' is an internal conflict that is the condition for *fault* inside the self. This 'geographic' area of *fault* reveals desire as the internal 'restless heart' that shares an externalized 'undivided bond with life' via its affective fragility or 'feeling;' therefore, this internal 'feeling' is also an external ontological

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[215] Ricœur concludes that the 'entire locus' and 'node of disproportion' rests on investigating Plato's intuition of the concept of *thumos*. To properly illuminate the path of this investigation to the innermost point of disproportion within the concept of fallibility, Ricœur proposes to question the termination or ends of these two extremes of which *thumos* mediates. This investigation reveals the need for a reflection on *thumos* and its positive dimensions of the 'restless heart,' which will be explored in the next chapter on the question of desire. Desire will be the beginning point for applying the hermeneutics of understanding evil to the interior dynamics of an intersubjective self, so as to fully explicate this starting point of the 'conflict of interpretations' a hermeneutics that explores the connection between a desire that is 'thymic' to one that is mimetic. See Chapter 3, *Thumos and the Thymic Quests*.

[216] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 111.

[217] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 112.

'belonging.' However, this transition from fallibility to *fault* originates from the dividedness within 'man as primordial conflict.' The dual composition of this disproportion introduces a fundamental 'ambivalence' seen as an ontological belonging/conflict. This 'ambivalence' reflects the internal-external dynamics of symbol, the same dynamics that necessitate a 'conflict of interpretations.'[218] Further, these dynamics illustrate the multivalent problem that disproportion proposes for this hermeneutic investigation by indicating not only the 'area' for evil as an internal *fault*, but how and when fallibility becomes *fault*. Thus, the fundamental 'ambivalence' of feeling, *thumos*, and its structural comparison to symbol, necessitates a journey to the external, or the 'interhuman' to find a more concrete description how *fault* appears in the 'modalities of desire,' and when it emerges into 'culture.' This requires a hermeneutics of symbol and of myth, for those are the repositories of meaning by the intimate, reciprocal connection between 'fallenness' and disproportion which makes humanity available to each other in a sphere of 'belonging.'

This required hermeneutic is first undertook in Ricœur's *The Symbolism of Evil*, where Ricœur pursues a radical change in methodology, perspective, and approach, even beyond his claims that it is a 'phenomenological hermeneutic.'[219] This work will form the center point of the internal-external understanding of evil, for 'it is always "through" the fallen that the primordial shines through… Thus, the evil of fault refers intentionally to the primordial; but in return, this reference to the primordial constitutes the evil as fault, that is as di-gression, as de-viation.'[220] It is from *The Symbolism of Evil* that important conceptual and methodological transition from Ricœur's concepts of fallibility and via and our interpretive pole of interiority will open up to Girard's definition of evil in the sacred, rivalrous desire, and scandal as externalized 'interhuman' violence.

A Hermeneutics of Fault – *The Symbolism of Evil*

The Symbolism of Evil is the methodological genesis of Ricœur's hermeneutic philosophy.[221] Ricœur states that it is a 'phenomenological reenactment' of the 'believing

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[218] See Chapter 1, *Origin in Symbol.*

[219] 'To catch sight of that leap we must make a fresh start and enter upon a new type of reflection bearing on the avowal that consciousness makes of it and on the *symbols* of evil in which this avowal is expressed.' Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 143.

[220] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 144.

[221] This section on *Symbolism of Evil* will only be a cursory reading through the symbolic stages on developing on an introductory understanding of evil. A deeper exegesis of the symbolic stages, themselves, will be pursued in Chapter 4, *The Function of Symbol for Girard and Ricoeur.*

consciousness' for by believing with the believer, one can trace a historical progression of understanding *fault*, via the donative richness of the primary symbols of 'defilement,' 'sin,' and 'guilt.'[222] While all three of these primary symbols represent significant iterations of this experience of evil, they are not mutually exclusive, and each symbolic stage is preserved within each successive stage. For example, the third primary symbol, guilt, represents the closest experience to the modern consciousness because of its radical interiority of self-accusation, which I will argue is the symbolic interiorization of structural violence that can no longer be externalized. The second primary symbol, sin contains the communal dimension as the objective offense against God, and defilement, the most original symbol, captures the quasi-physical experience of contagious contact mixed with the dread of retribution. The origin of defilement is the most primitive experience of *fault*, and it is the first boundary where Ricœur's phenomenological hermeneutic reaches an aporia.

This aporia concerns the origin of evil as *fault* and which is best represented by his usage of the phrase *πόθεν το κακόν*?[223] The experience of defilement depicts what Ricœur considers to be the original situation of human 'fallenness,' because of its quasi-physical characteristics, and its direct relationship to primitive religion and the sacred.[224] Ricœur considers philosophical reflection on defilement to be difficult because we enter the 'reign of Terror' and it 'belongs to a mode of thought we can no longer, it seems, "reenact" even "in sympathetic imagination."'[225] Ricœur emphasizes an 'oblique approach' which reveals its extreme symbolic richness for describing evil's unique internal-external characteristics that are preserved in all of the later symbolizations of evil. One of the characteristics of defilement that illustrate its distance from the contemporary 'confession of sin' is the lack of 'personal imputation' of *fault*, but simply the 'objective violation of an interdict.'

> We are astonished, for example, when we see involuntary or unconscious human actions, the actions of animals, and even simple material events called defilements – the frog that leaps into the fire, the hyena that leaves its excrement in the neighborhood of the tent. Why are we astonished? Because we do not find in these actions or events any point where we might insert a judgment of personal imputation, or even human imputation; we have to transport ourselves into a

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[222] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 8.

[223] 'Whence comes evil?' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 8.

[224] "What resists reflection is the idea of quasi-material something that infects as a sort of filth, that harms by invisible properties, and that nevertheless works in the manner of a force in the field of undividedly psychic and corporeal existence." Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 25-26.

[225] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 25.

> consciousness for which impurity is measured not by imputation to a responsible agent but by the objective violation of an interdict.[226]

This characteristic of defilement illustrates the more original state of evil where 'doing ill' and 'faring ill' have not been disassociated.[227] What connects evil and misfortune for Ricœur? It is the fear of reprisal or punishment. 'Man enters the ethical world through fear and not love.'[228] This primitive dread of the 'objective violation of the interdict' is 'our oldest memory' for Ricœur, and this dread of vengeance is preserved into his next to symbols of sin, guilt, and eventually, salvation. 'It proceeds itself in all its imputations and sublimations. At first, the Impure takes vengeance. It will be possible for this vengeance to be absorbed into the idea of Order and even into the idea of Salvation, by way of the "Passion" of a Suffering Just One.'[229] This theme, of the 'Suffering Servant' consolidating vengeance, and redescribing it as the Judge and Paraclete, will be discussed in chapter 5. For now, a mapping of the understanding of evil is imaged here, but remains to be further 'concretized.' This original sacred terror of the dread of retribution at the heart of the original experience of evil being *suffered* or *committed*, simultaneously, is a central insight that will form necessary aspect for the interpretive synthesis with Girard.

But what about the other two primary symbols, sin, and guilt? Identifying an original experience is a key step, but the understanding of evil must enclose the more subtle expressions of fallibility's transition to *fault* as it has evolved historically. Sin as symbol indicates a departure from the pure fear of contagion and retribution because it considers the communal and objective dimension, where humanity finds themselves as having sinned against their relation to a god.[230] Ricœur relies on the Hebrew and Babylonian 'confession of sin' at first, but eventually weaves in the Greek conception of *hubris* and *hamartia*, beginning with the translating of Hebraic *davar* of

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[226] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 26-27.

[227] A more effective analysis of this 'undifferentiated' idea of evil, seen with defilement and its insistence on the observation of taboos in preventing contagion is explained more simply and more effectively by Girard's account of contagious mimetic crisis in *Violence and the Sacred*. In chapter 4 of this dissertation, I will demonstrate the similarities in analysis between Ricœur and Girard on this investigation of the primitive sacred, and its ambivalent structure of originating in the dread of vengeance and contagion. See Chapter 4, *Original Retribution and 'Matrix of Terror.'*

[228] Ricœur, *Symbolism of evil*, 30.

[229] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 30.

[230] 'It is already the personal relation to a god that determines the spiritual space where sin is distinguished from defilement… Polarly opposed to the god before whom he stands, the penitent becomes conscious of his sin as a dimension of his existence, and no longer as a reality that haunts him…' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 48.

Yahweh into the Greek *logos.*[231] It is here that these symbols of evil are not bound to the particularity of Hebraic 'confession' for it is via the historical act of translating these terms, that a universalizable 'language' of evil can be interpreted beyond the cultural particularities.[232] Thus, interpretation gains a foothold into the 'confession of sin' as available for a philosophic reflection on the 'utterances' of both God and human, that characterizes this relationship at the heart of sin as a breach of this bond. A deeper hermeneutic analysis of these utterances will occur in the section on the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.[233] The crucial point for the primary symbol of sin comes from Ricœur's analysis of the decalogue, where the 'confession of sin' identifies the heart of humanity as the center point requiring conversion, characterized as 'covetousness.'

> The specific character of the Decalogue resides, then, less in the material content of its articles than in the sense of this elevation to a higher level undergone by the ancient codes…This rhythm is visible also in the designation of 'covetousness,' in article 10 as an evil disposition more internal than the forbidden modes of behavior: 'covetousness' recalls the endless demand that proceeds from divine holiness and that makes one's neighbor and all that belongs to him infinitely respectable.[234]

'Covetousness' reveals an existential dimension, where both the wickedness of 'covetousness' is opposed by another infinite, the demand for love of 'one's neighbor.' The connection between 'covetousness' and the 'bad infinite' of desire will be explored alongside Girard in part II of this chapter, but what this reveal with the symbolic stage of sin, is that *fault* begins to take on a radically interior dimension, where two possibilities of the human are presented. 'Covetousness,' which seen later as the 'bad infinite' of desire or an 'infinite demand' to respect or love one's neighbor.

To continue this intersubjective dimension of sin, in Ricœur's reflection on the Hebraic roots, and their Greek translated counterparts, the roots *pesha* and *shagah* connect not only with an evil intention or internal state, but also affirm the communal, and intersubjective character of

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[231] 'The *ruah* of Yahweh in the Old Testament, which we translate by Spirit for lack of a better term, designates the irrational aspect of the Covenant; but this *ruah* is *davar*, word (*parole*). It is no accident the only suitable equivalent of the Hebrew *davar* was the Greek *logos.*' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 51.

[232] 'This translation, even though only approximate and inexact, was itself an important cultural event. It expresses the conviction, first, that all languages are translatable into one another, and that all cultures belong to a single humanity…' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 51-52.

[233] See Chapter 4, *Evil, Law, and the Prophets* of this dissertation, and Chapter 5, *From Prophetic Accusation to Tragic Inspiration.*

[234] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 59.

evil.[235] In particular, when describing the root of *shagah* as expressing how the human has lost their 'ontological place' Ricœur cites from the *Poem* of Parmenides, where humanity that has fallen into 'error' is like 'a mob without judgment.'[236] As the reading alongside Girard will emphasize, the loss of 'ontological place' becomes the experience of a loss of individuality via dissolution into the crowd. I consider, at this point in the hermeneutic, this loss of 'ontological place' to be the place of 'disproportion,' which demonstrates an ambivalent structure to the communal dimension, where, via feeling, one's belonging with the community and the world is initiated and continued, yet the experience of sin colors this belonging as a *fallen* community. Thus the 'ontological place' is necessarily communal; however, the communal can devolve into a 'mob without judgment' and 'wander astray' or deviate from the covenant relationship. This intersubjective aspect of sin is further supported by the notion of 'captivity' and its ability to bind the human internally and externally to personal imputation and communal imputation.

> The captivity is literally, a social, intersubjective situation… the sinner is 'in' the sin as the Hebrew was 'in' bondage, and sin is thus an evil 'in which' man is caught. That is why it can be at the same time personal and communal… that, too, is why it is a power that binds man, hardens him, holds him captive… However, 'internal' to the heart of man the principle of this bondage may be, the bondage in fact constitutes an enveloping situation…' [237]

It is this duality of an internal-external 'bondage' that a connection to the other experiences of evil will be opened up, which will be explored in depth later, such as the *skandalon* and its double bind.[238] At this stage of the understanding of evil, the 'ontological disproportion' is a communal disproportion, and as a communal disproportion it binds the self and the community, which was conceptually possible by the capacity of 'feeling' described in the section on *Fallible Man*. When supplementing the emergence of 'covetousness' that is opposed by love of one's neighbor, both of these drives are within the 'primordial discord' of the thymic 'heart of man.' These moments, in the symbol of sin, are haunted by the retributive violence and quasi-physical characteristics of contagion, inherited from defilement. What remains, in the last symbol of evil, is to accomplish

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[235] 'A third root denotes rebellion (*pesha'*), revolt, stiff-neckedness… The intersubjective, social symbol of revolt thus becomes the least formal and most existential symbol of sin… Finally, another symbol (*shagah*), with apparently less emotion resonance, designates precisely the situation of having gone astray, of being lost, in which the sinner finds himself… Thus, it forecasts the more modern symbols of alienation and dereliction; the interruption of the dialogue, having become a situation, makes man an alien to his ontological place.' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 73.

[236] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 73.

[237] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 93.

[238] 'The *skandalon* is the obstacle/model of mimetic rivalry; it is the model in so far as he works counter to the undertakings of the disciple and so becomes an inexhaustible source of morbid fascination.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 418.

the dissociation of the *suffering* of evil, from its *committing*, in the full movement towards this interiorization of the experience of evil.

Guilt into the *Servile Will*

The third primary symbol, Guilt, pivots to the most inward conception of *fault*, yet cannot be purely identified as such because it forms a 'protest' against this rationalization via the many directions and manifestations of guilt. How does guilt 'protest' against the previous conceptions of *fault*? It 'protests' via its splintering of the many characterizations of its cultural reactions to the concept of 'law.'[239] This splintering of guilt is one of the reasons why Ricœur, up to this point, has resisted any ethical or moral approach to evil, and has only analyzed the symbols that are indicative of evil as *suffered* and *committed* in the phenomenological and hermeneutic dimension. Guilt is also the most subjective moment of the experience of evil. 'It can be said that guilt is the *subjective* moment in *fault* as sin is its *ontological* moment… Guilt is the awareness of this real situation, and if one may so, the "for itself" of this kind of "in itself."'[240] Guilt, as the 'for itself,' can be seen as an internal project, in my interpretation, as the interior movement of self-accusation that is the internalized experience of violence, in its 'spiritualized' extension of sin. The symbol of guilt, even as it encapsulates the most contemporary experience of evil as the most inward, begins to redefine and redescribe the other prior symbols of evil, by this interior, 'subjective,' movement. To approach this complex interior experience of the 'splintering' of guilt, Ricœur states that it must be understood by a 'double movement,' where first it ruptures the continuum from the prior symbols, and then it resumes them. It is in the hermeneutic approach to this ability of guilt to absorb its prior symbolizations in evil, after their redescription, where Ricœur introduces his concept of the *servile will.*[241]

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[239] 'In the first place, guilt, considered by itself, leads in several directions: in the ethico-juridical reflection on *penalty* and *responsibility*; in the ethical reflection on a delicate and scrupulous consciousness; and finally, in the direction of a psycho-theological reflection on the hell of an accused and condemned consciousness.' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 100.

[240] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 101.

[241] 'Guilt is *understood* through a double movement, starting from the two other stages of fault: a movement of rupture and a movement of resumption. A movement of rupture that causes a new stage to emerge – the guilty man – and a movement of resumption by which this new experience is charged with the earlier symbolism of sin and even of defilement, in order to express the paradox toward which the idea of fault points – namely, the concept of a man who is responsible *and* captive, or rather a man who is responsible for being captive – in short, the concept of the *servile will.*' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 101.

So how does the primary symbol of guilt lead into the *servile will*? Ricœur turns to the moment where defilement and guilt reveal their contemporaneity with each other, and guilt then provides a reflection on the ontological dimension of *fault*.

> It can be said, in very general terms, that guilt designates the subjective moment in fault as sin is its ontological moment… It can already be dimly made out in the theme of defilement… and as dread is from the beginning the way of internalization of defilement itself, in spite of the radical externality of evil, guilt is a moment contemporaneous with defilement itself…[242]

This contemporaneity reveals that the emergence of the symbol of guilt in the Greek, Hebraic, and Christian communities as affecting a fundamental change to the experience of evil from the sacred as dread of retribution, to the more internal experience of the loss of self. 'That is why the consciousness of guilt constitutes a veritable revolution in the experience of evil: that which is primary is no longer the reality of defilement… but the evil use of liberty, felt as an internal diminution of the value of the self.'[243] It is this emergence of guilt which radically changes defilement, and also sin, that introduces the concept of the *servile will*.

The emergence of the concept of the *servile will*, or the paradox of a bound freedom, where the human is 'responsible and captive' recalls the earlier dialectical tension of finite and infinite, albeit discovered via hermeneutics in the domain of *fault*. It this concept that will form a major step in the clarification of the theme of understanding evil, for it not only encapsulates Ricœur's analysis of the three primary symbols of evil, but it also is a concretization of the dialectic of infinite and finite from his reflection on fallibility in *Fallible Man*, which I will now extend towards his reflection on violence as the polar phenomenon of evil. It is the paradox of the human's reflection on guilt, where it reveals the human as already bound, in a state of disproportion, that it is not the pure victim of, but also its participant. This concept of the *servile will*, because of its paradoxical construction, is also a central hermeneutic concept for the second half of *Symbolism of Evil*, for bringing this paradox to a fuller understanding, it inaugurates the second stage for understanding evil via the mythic narratives.[244]

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[242] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 101.

[243] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 102.

[244] The complete analysis of myth and narrative will be held until the chapter 4, but their emerges in Ricœur's analysis the significance of an ultimate symbolic figure which resolves the aporias of his fundamental anthropological myth, the myth of Adam, and it is the Christ figure. It is this figure who consolidates the symbols of the Son of Man and Suffering Servant in his previous analyses of the prophetic literature. In chapter 5 I will relate Ricœur's description of the Christ figure, alongside Girard's, see Chapter 5, *Christ as Figure*.

Thus, in this second half of *Symbolism of Evil*, which will be resumed in chapter 4, it is where Ricœur introduces the second order symbols, where the primary symbols are placed in the context of the mythic narratives of the origin of evil. Ricœur asserts that to fully gain insight into the origin of evil and its effects on human self-understanding, the *telos*, or 'end' of evil must also be brought to analysis, for each of the mythic narratives are fundamentally an enclosed, essential history. Thus, to move in the direction that Ricœur has outlined with these 'second order symbols,' it requires Girard's hermeneutic of suspicion regarding the historical progression of understanding mimetic violence, which better illumines the 'origin' and the 'end' in anthropological-existential mode.

> The relation, or the tension, is an integral part of the experience; or, rather, the experience subsists only in connection with the symbols that place fault in a totality which is not perceived, not experienced, but signified, aimed at, conjured up. The language of the confession of sins, then is only a fragment of a vaster language that indicates mythically the origin and end of fault, and the totality in which it arose.[245]

Fallibility, *Fault*, *Servile Will*, and Violence

To return more directly to the understanding of evil, the central concept, which unites both the conceptual tension of fallibility and the concrete expression of *fault* in language is the *servile will*. This central concept and all that is contained within the richness of its paradoxical structure, demonstrates a transition with fallibility as a dialectic of infinite meaning and finite perspective, that can only be revealed in Ricœur's hermeneutic of guilt, the most modern experience of evil. Due to Ricœur's believing hermeneutic, his insistence that symbols have an anteriority that is preserved and maintained, shows guilt as redescribing yet preserving both defilement and sin, its prior symbolic stages, while still preserving its legacy of historical experience. At the deepest level of this concept, closest to its aporetic boundary, there exists the recurring theme concerning the 'ontological place' or 'ontological dimension' that becomes diminished or alienated in each of the symbolic stages. This alienation emerges at the interior of each stage and reaches its apex in the 'hell of guilt,' which is paradoxically is both a *suffering* of evil by its *committing* by the self. It is this loss of 'ontological place' which forms the same symbolic interior to the second order symbols of mythic narratives which attempts to describe an evil that has always existed, an evil continued by humanity, of which it suffers. Thus, the full understanding of the *servile will* and its paradoxical bound freedom that gives substance to the

[245] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 170.

human's interior experience of alienation is shown to be understood only by a similarly 'bound' response to this paradox.

How do we understand the central aspect of boundness within the symbolic experiences of evil? Turning back to Ricœur's essay "Evil, A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology" the polar dichotomy of violence as the ultimate representation of evil as both 'blameworthy' and 'lamentable' returns to the fore. It is my view, following Ricoeur's analysis, that violence emerges as this phenomenal concretization of the paradoxical *servile will*, for as it is *committed*, it receives blame, but the *suffering* is lamentable for both the victim of said violence, and also the agent, who embodies this evil in action and enacts the *fault* of the ontological discordance – the primordial conflict within the self is externalized as conflict in the 'interhuman' sphere. The flow from internal to external and the reverse is encapsulated in the concrete phenomena of violence. The two sides of this conflict within and without the self are either 'covetousness' or love of one's neighbor. It is this question of the concretization of the polar moments of evil in violence, as a bound 'interhuman' situation, that the anthropological hermeneutic can begin by revealing violence in the 'evil history' of myth and the sacred. Thus, by following the 'reverse route' of Ricœur's fallibility to *fault*, moving from violence to desire, Girard's internal notions of an 'ontological sickness' that drives the 'bad' mimetic desire of the Satanic system of rivalry and scandal, will productively concretize the Ricœurian reflections in a 'conflict of interpretations.'

Part II – Defining Evil with René Girard

'Bad' Mimesis, Satan, and Scandal

To effectively place Girard's insights into the theme of understanding evil as a hermeneutic synthesis, his concept of evil and the approach must be adequately defined. Due to his methodological differences between his *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* and his *Violence and the Sacred*, the starting point for the explanation of these points will be begun from his later works, which 'synthesize' the dual valence of his theories: *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, which places the arc of his thought in one movement, and *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, which contains a more focused and clarified view of evil. By beginning from Girard's most mature expression of his entire mimetic system, the insights of earlier works gain more clarity and more

significance in the total reach of implications for his explanatory hypothesis.[246] It is from the later, more unified conceptualization that I will then work from. The hermeneutic insights of his literary criticism, which is primarily focused on mimetic desire and its discovery, and his anthropology, focused on sacrifice and scapegoating, are shown more clearly to be a single schematic approach.[247] Further, Girard's textual methodology, as it bears on the hermeneutic applications, is more clearly able to operate within both (or more) disciplines when the breadth of his theory has been expressed. Both domains of text and action are interpreted via the explanatory hypothesis.[248] Further, his structural and comparative view of the mechanism makes 'lateral' interpretation of all texts possible because texts are works of human activity, which always contain some instances of preserved *méconnaissance.*

To understand Girard's concept of evil, it is necessary to begin with his emphasis on the tenth commandment of the Decalogue and its prohibition against covetousness to identify how *mimesis*, an ethically neutral capacity for Girard, could be related to evil.

> The verb 'covet' suggests that an uncommon desire is prohibited, a perverse desire reserved for hardened sinners. But the Hebrew terms translated as 'covet' means just simply desire… The desire prohibited by the tenth commandment must be the desire of all human beings – in other words, simply desire as such.[249]

It is from this point of the historical prohibition against desire that Girard's conceptualization of evil can be gathered in, by working in reverse from the prohibition against 'desire as such.' His concept of mimetic desire as a neutral faculty becomes 'covetousness' when its desired object, indicated by the model, is liable to create rivalry between the model and the self. Girard goes on to indicate the propensity for rivalry to emerge if desires are left unchecked, 'If individuals are naturally inclined to desire what their neighbors possess, or to desire what their neighbors even simply desire, this means that rivalry exists at the very heart of human social relations.'[250] For Girard to make this leap to 'rivalry' at the center of human relations, it is because this fact is

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[246] Girard sees his works as deeply connected and following the same mimetic insight, which he does not consider as his own, but merely a 'discovery.' Cynthia Haven, *Evolution of Desire*, 75.

[247] This single schematic approach is seen when evaluating Girard as a hermeneutic thinker rather the ambiguous term of being 'interdisciplinary.'

[248] The major component of how I can reconcile Girard's textual approach with his insights rests on this implicit theory of the 'reading' of the domain of action, to form narratives, which Ricœur has elaborated and developed. See Paul Ricœur "Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," 144-67.

[249] Girard, *I See Satan*, 7-8.

[250] Girard, *I See Satan*, 8.

revealed via the diversity of taboos against desiring what belongs to your neighbor. The function of taboos for Girard are simply to prevent the propensity of rivalrous desires to be copied by others, leading beyond a duel-rivalry, to a community wide rivalry that is a mimetic crisis. Girard posits from this that principle for determining what is desirable, must be located in the neighbor themselves, for these prohibitions are clearly protective of the other, and the objects of desire become replaced in a rivalry. The tenth commandment thus illustrates the inclination towards evil as stemming from desires of dangerous objects, and the quality of what determines the dangerousness of the object is simply the disjunction between an imitated, multiplied desire of another, and a singular object. 'Desire as such' then is the faculty that potentiates evil actions for the self, yet desire is not evil in-itself, much like Ricœur's concept of fallibility, so desire's turn to *fault* must be via the choice of a model of desire.[251] This choice of the model of desire, is where the question of freedom emerges for Girard as well, because freedom is always already mediated in the mimetic relationship to models. Thus, freedom in Girard is also a 'bound freedom' but, in my reading, it is too bound. If the self is always mimetically determined by models, the turn towards rivalry and its eventual product of violence, or what Girard terms, internal mediation, the question of how to escape this network of 'bad' mimesis is a pressing concern.[252]

Internal mediation becomes an occasion for the development of 'pride' or the advanced stage of 'the ontological sickness' as Girard refers to it in his first work, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*. 'The ontological sickness grows more and more serious as the mediator approaches the desiring subject. Its natural end is death. The power of pride cannot but end in the fragmentation and ultimately the disintegration of the subject.'[253] Girard's view of the subject will be discussed at length in the next chapter, but I will focus instead on the role of pride and his striking term, 'ontological sickness.' It is the destiny of pride, or the 'romantic illusion' or pretension to an invincible selfhood, or 'Promethean' subject, that is actually 'suicidal' in certain levels of Girard,

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[251] 'The mimetic nature of desire accounts for the fragility of human relations.' Girard, *I See Satan*, 10.

[252] This becomes one of the difficult problems for Girard's view of freedom that is mimetically calibrated. How does one escape the influence of a 'bad' model or rival? In chapter 3, in an exploration of the mimetic-thymic self, this view of freedom can be addressed. 'The principal source of violence between human beings is mimetic rivalry, the rivalry resulting from imitation of a model who becomes a rival or of a rival who becomes a model.' Girard, *I See Satan*, 11.

[253] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 279.

because of the rejection of communion with others.[254] According to my hermeneutic synthesis this 'suicide' of pride is reflection of the 'self-dilection' from Ricœur's 'ontological disproportion.' It is the act of self-violence, that brings together both poles of violence in the most clear way, by committing violence to the self it is doomed to suffer. This 'ontological sickness' yields the 'hell of guilt' in the radical interiorization of this violent structure. Thus, this consolidation is labeled the *decidere* of the self, the violent decision by the self against the self, which chooses to not 'heal' the divided self's natural vocation towards intersubjectivity, but alienates itself.[255] So not only is covetousness towards those things belonging to the neighbor is an indication of the 'bad' desire in the mimetic structure, the reverse direction, the disproportionate love of self and denial of the role of the other for one's desire, is also a form of 'bad' desire, an internalized 'covetousness.'

Girard's definition of evil gains clarity between coveting and pride when desire creates an actual rivalry. The term *skandalon* for Girard is what designates this mimetic rivalry, and he pulls it directly from the Gospels themselves.[256] It is a 'paradoxical obstacle' that 'the more this obstacle, or scandal, repels us, the more it attracts us.'[257] The function of the *skandalon* is then a source of entrapment or binding to one's 'bad' mimetic desire, for it functions as a 'fascination' within the self and other dynamic of internal mediation. This fascination of the *skandalon* inaugurates the 'double bind' of attraction and repulsion. Girard indicates that in the New Testament, Jesus' response to scandal is quite severe, 'If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away…'[258] The 'causes you to sin' is translated from the verb form of *skandalon*, *skandalezein*. Thus, the extent of the evil system of 'bad' mimesis, which grows from an internal mediated desire, is shown to extend from the 'scandalizable' tendency of desires to copy one another, reciprocally, especially ones that are liable for fascination. Thus 'bad' desires are more likely to bind the mimetic rivalry to one another. This bind is fueled by interlocking acquisitive drives, as both desirers are seeking to fulfill the felt 'lack of being.'[259] The persistent lack of

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[254] 'Inevitably the fatal outcome of ontological sickness is, directly or indirectly, a form of suicide, since pride has been freely chosen.' Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 280.

[255] Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 114.

[256] Girard, *I See Satan*, 16.

[257] Girard, *I See Satan*, 16.

[258] All biblical citations in this dissertation will be cited from the *New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition*. Matthew 18:9

[259] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 53.

fulfillment, despite the valuation of the desired object from a mediator who has now become a rival , is thus a vicious circle of desire and appropriation contained in the fascination. The ultimate outcome of the vicious circle is violence. The tendency towards scandal in internal mediated desire at the communal level, where the binary mediator-desirer relationship has a series of other relationships in proximity, is the later fuel for the much more destructive system of violence known as scapegoating. The crowd that forms is a collective product of a contagious 'ontological sickness,' thus a 'quasi-suicide of the collectivity' because pride, paradoxically, has destroyed the individuality of all.[260] This violent system continues the paradoxical structure of scandal's 'double bind' because this 'Satanic' system uses the 'accusatory' scapegoating as the only violent release from the crisis of internally mediated, rivalrous desires.[261] The source of human violence is not an instinctual drive for Girard but emerges with the fascination or fixation on the self or other via the idolization of a 'bad' desire, all emerging from what I will compare to Ricœur's ontological disproportion.

> The conflicts resulting from this double idolatry of self and other are principal source of human violence. When we are devoted to adoring our neighbor, this adoration can easily turn to hatred because we desperately seek to adore ourselves, and we fall.[262]

Thus, as will be explained in the next section, the function of primitive religion is to provide a systematic repetition of controlled violence, which prevents an escalation of uncontrolled violence and loss of difference caused by scandalized desires. For Girard, this system is still preserved, but no longer functions, and it is still hidden under layers of *méconnaissance* by our cultural inheritance of culture from primitive religion, seen with institutions that prevent the growth of rivalrous desires and violence.

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[260] 'As the mediator approaches, the phenomena connected with metaphysical desire tend to be of a collective nature. This is more apparent than ever in the supreme stage of desire. Thus in Dostoyevsky along with the individual suicide we find a quasi-suicide of the collectivity.' Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 280.

[261] 'Satan is absolutely identified with the circular mechanisms of violence, with man's imprisonment in cultural or philosophical systems that maintain his *modus vivendi* with violence. That is why he promises Jesus domination provided that Jesus will worship him. But Satan is also the *skandalon*, the living obstacle that trips men up, the mimetic model in so far as it becomes a rival and lies across our path… Satan is the name for the mimetic process seen as a whole; that is why he is the source not merely of rivalry and disorder but of all the forms of lying order inside which humanity lives. That is the reason why he was a homicide from the beginning; Satan's order had no origin other than murder and this murder is a lie. Human beings are sons of Satan because they are sons of this murder. Murder is therefore not an act whose consequences could be eliminated without being brought to light and genuinely rejected by men.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 162.

[262] Girard, *I See Satan*, 11.

'Evil' Birth of the Sacred

But if this violent escalation is inherent to the progression of misplaced desire, is evil nothing other than a moralization or judgment of something so inescapable because of the *méconnaissance* of our mimetic compositions? To address this, I will examine how Girard views the origin of prohibitions or taboos in primitive religion, or the fear of 'bad' mimesis in communities. As indicated earlier by Girard's discussion of the decalogue, archaic prohibitions seek to prevent mimetic rivalry in all forms. Another example of this function of taboos are the various ones surrounding the birth of twins, which is an anthropological occurrence of the mimetic outcome of 'idolization of both self and other' which inaugurates a loss of difference.[263] This loss of difference is how Girard identifies the ultimate primitive fear that spurs the violent economy of sacrifice, which he terms the sacrificial or mimetic crisis.[264] This makes the fear of violence intertwined with the fear of loss of identity. Violence as such is not prohibited, but undifferentiated violence as derived from a violent chaos. Girard follows the intuition of taboos preventing loss of difference as the principle of violence to protect the community from this existential and omnipresent threat. Thus in my pairing with Ricœur, the community and the individual are differentiated via controlled violence, but undifferentiated violence is a certain fear of an overwhelming infinitude.[265] The primitive dread of the sacred, in its most original form, is this primary loss of differentiation caused by unrestricted mimetic desire, into rivalry, into violence—the 'war of all against all.'[266] For the first occurrence of this unchecked violence of undifferentiation to have been overcome by the earliest human community or communities, there had to have been an act that restored a primary, fundamental difference. This founding act of

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[263] 'In some primitive societies twins inspire a particular terror… the origin of this terror has long puzzled ethnologists… Twins invariably share a cultural identity, and they often have a striking physical resemblance to each other. Wherever differences are lack, violence threatens… When faced with biological twins the normal reaction of the culture is to avoid contagion… Any act of direct physical violence against the anathema is scrupulously avoided. Any such act would only serve to entrap the perpetrators in a vicious circle of violence – the trap "bad" violence sets for the community and baits with the birth of twins.' Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 56-57.

[264] 'In short, to the extent that their antagonism becomes embittered, a paradox occurs: the antagonists resemble one another more and more. They confront one another all the more implacably because their conflict dissolves the real differences that formerly separated them. Envy, jealousy, and hate render alike those they possess…' Girard, *I See Satan*, 13.

[265] This point was first introduced in Chapter 1, *Violence as Mimetic Response.*

[266] 'The community affirms its unity in the sacrifice, a unity that emerges from the moment that the division is most intense, when the community enacts its dissolution in the mimetic crisis and its abandonment to the endless cycle of vengeance. But suddenly the opposition of everyone against everyone else is replaced by the opposition of all against one… The mimetic process occurs before the collective murder, which constitutes at once its paroxysm and its conclusion.' Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, 24-25.

differentiation, in the context of violence, could not have been an act that was non-violent, due to the uncontrollable escalation of prior violence via contagious imitation. This necessarily violent act must have focused on a singular victim, as demonstrated by the modality of scandalization and fascination, where the copied desires coalesce into fewer and fewer 'metaphysical' objects.[267] Thus the act of collective murder became the first concrete sacrifice, which became imitated in ritualization, to establish the cultural norms of the boundaries of a community.[268] It is within this schema of undifferentiated violence, to differentiated violence, that brought the first order and a foundational peace to the community. The cathartic effects of a peace restored or inaugurated by difference, broke into chaos, and defined, with blood, the boundary of internal and external to the community.[269] As will be seen in the pairing with Ricœur, this structure of violence seems to be carried into the experience of violence within the self. Thus, this interpersonal (interhuman) bond, codified in traumatic violence, is the birth of the primitive sacred, and the entire ritual economy of ancient religion. Sacrifice, ritual, taboos, and language bear this mark of differentiation via the communal act of violence out of violence. This concrete situation provides thus a paradoxical, ambivalent structure to the internal bond of the community with the external bond to the sacred, that created peaceful difference but, in my reading, also retroactively bears the collective *fault* for the previous state of chaos and the confusing of the poles of violence *suffered* and *committed*.

Thus, the anthropological intertwining of understanding evil as violence coming from lack of differentiation and the revelation that the whole system of scapegoating of violence is deeply intwined with 'bad' desire. This intertwining of desire and violence illustrates Ricœur's polar moments of violence *suffered* and *committed*, on an internal and external level. The question

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[267] 'This process of transfiguration does not correspond to anything real, and yet it transforms the object into something that appears superabundantly real. Thus it could be described as metaphysical in character.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 296.

[268] Girard's analysis of founding, or etiological myths as beginning from an act of violence or expulsion is quite illuminating here. See Michel Serres' book *Rome*, where he engages with this aspect of Girard's thought in relation to murder of Remus by Romulus as the establishing of the boundaries of Rome. Michel Serres, *Rome: The First Book of Foundations*, trans. Randolph Burks (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

[269] 'The community affirms its unity in the sacrifice, a unity that emerges from the moment when division is most intense, when the community enacts its dissolution in the mimetic crisis and its abandonment to the endless cycle of vengeance. But suddenly the opposition of everyone against everyone else is replaced by the opposition of all against one. Where previously there had been a chaotic ensemble of particular conflicts, there is now the simplicity of a single conflict: the entire community on one side, and on the other, the victim.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 24.

remains, *who* can be called the 'victim' of this system, if all are complicit in the mimetic crisis, and this sacrificial system created, properly, human culture? Due to the literal a-historicality of this event, the original victim, has been lost. Thus, the understanding of evil, beginning from Ricœur's 'ontological disproportion' and Girard's mimetic modality for the desire of another's being, the violent undifferentiation that results from an escalation of 'pride' and 'self-dilection' is an evil *suffered* by all and an evil *committed* by all. Paradoxically, the binding to each other in this scandalization, dissolves what the self-desired most, its false view of its intersubjective composition. Yet, the fundamental *méconnaissance* of this process required to be continued to 'accuse' a singular victim, which restored difference to the crowd, is still operative. It is precisely on this point that Girard considers the combination of his theories of mimesis and scapegoating to be an explanatory hypothesis, with the goal of revealing persecutory violence behind cultural institutions, both primitive and modern. Evil is not just 'bad' desire, not just 'violence,' not just 'lying,' but the complex, binding system that colors the existential situation of humanity. On this level, humanity is its own victim. This sacred 'order of the world,' soaked in the blood of what Girard determines are 'innocent' victims, because no single individual could be guilty of the sheer magnitude of the crime of the collective rivalry and undifferentiated violence, is only shown to be persecutory when reinterpreted by the pro-victim hermeneutic perspective that can pierce the layer of *méconnaissance*.

> Seen in the context of the victimary anthropology centered on victimage mechanisms that we have just sketched out, this attitude of indifference is unacceptable. Suppose that the texts of mythology are the reflection, at once faithful and deceptive, of the collective violence that founds community; suppose that they bear witness to real violence, that they do not lie even if in them the victimage mechanism is falsified and transfigured by its very efficacy; suppose, finally, that myth is the persecutors' retrospective vision of their own persecution. If this is so, we can hardly regard as insignificant a change in perspective that consists in taking the side of the victim, proclaiming the victim's innocence and the culpability of his murderers.[270]

This 'mechanism' that generates myth as a falsification of a real murder which formed the shared cultural understanding of origins, has engendered the subsequent 'order of this world,' which is now revealed to be evil. This entire complex system of obfuscating, containing desire, rivalry, violence, is fueled by the misrecognition of the source or existence of this violence. This entire system, which at its origin could not have been revealed to be evil, has been revealed to be so now, and is the focus of his 'victimary anthropology.' The focus of Girard's anthropological hermeneutic is to show this 'already there-ness' of evil, in the 'fallen' situation of humanity. In

[270] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 147-48.

my reading, Girard's hermeneutic, by his 'explanatory hypothesis,' also brings his anthropological analysis towards the existential, in seeking to understand the 'ontological sickness' that afflicts humanity's mimetic desire for another's being, and violent differentiation as the structure of human communities. Thus this gradual revelation of the evil 'order of the world,' must emerge from the same cultural milieu, thus not only the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, but also from Greek tragedy's veiled commentaries on Greek religion.[271]

Christ the Demythologizer

The understanding of evil for Girard turns to the question of how it is revealed, for what was 'necessary' for hominization left a legacy of violent 'traces' in symbol and myth, from which humanity now sees as violent and exclusionary. The center point or 'cornerstone' of this 'explanatory hypothesis,' which addresses both violence and the dangerous potential of mimetic desire, is the figure of Christ in the Gospels.

> If we accept that all human religions and all human culture come down to the parable of the murderous labourers in the vineyard – that is, come down to the collective expulsion of the victim – and if this foundation can only remain a foundation only to the extent that it does not become apparent… The words from Psalm 118 thus have a remarkable epistemological value; they require an interpretation for which Christ ironically calls, knowing very well that he alone is capable of giving it in the process of having himself rejected, of himself becoming the rejected stone… The rejected stone is the scapegoat, who is Christ. By submitting to violence, Christ reveals and uproots the structural matrix of all religion.[272]

This excerpt indicates the hermeneutic and anthropological relevance of Girard's interpretation of Christ for his 'explanatory hypothesis.' The Christ figure, which for Girard is beyond merely a textual figure, is the scapegoat *par excellence*, because his own interpretation of the mechanism and his own death as scapegoat.[273] It is the preservation of this twofold hermeneutic movement via Christ's action and interpretation, that form the ability to effectively unmask the 'murderous labourers in the vineyard' which can be seen as the structure of a rivalrous crowd. Christ is the 'cornerstone' of the epistemic process of understanding evil, by halting the transition from the 'ontological disproportion' of lack of being in desire, to rivalrous violence, by advocating instead

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[271] There exists a growing field of Girardian scholarship which shows that the supposed uniqueness of the Judeo-Christian message of non-violence is not the only revelatory text. That being said, this does not diminish the impact of the Judeo-Christian scriptures but indicates that they are an emblematic part of a larger movement in human history to reveal our violent origins. See further René Girard, *Sacrifice: Breakthroughs in Mimetic Theory*, trans. Matthew Patillo and David Dawson, (Michigan State University Press, 2011).

[272] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 178-79.

[273] Christ as figure in both Ricœur and Girard will be discussed in Chapter 5, *Christ as Figure*.

for a mimetic harmony.[274] The logos of non-violence functions then as a revelation of evil committed in violent scapegoating, by providing the non-mythologized, viewpoint of the victim, and shows another alternative to the structure of human communities.

Satan and the *Paracleitos*

Further, Girard elaborates that Christ functions as the first *paracleitos* in opposition to the adversarial accuser of victims from the crowd mechanism. This *paracleitos*, or witness to the defense, is opposed by the accuser, or Satan, who is the figural representative and personification of the entire system of 'bad' mimesis.[275] Thus, the figure of Satan is not a scapegoat for humanity's evil, but coextensive with these human acts that have been sketched. Satan takes on many forms in the thought of Girard, for it is the name for the internal mediation of a misplaced mimetic mediator, to rivalrous conflict of doubles, to undifferentiated violence, to the attempt of restored difference in the lynch mob of the crowd against a victim.[276] Thus 'Satan' is not a being, but a mechanism whose 'non-being' functions parasitically on individuals and communities as the previous 'foundation of the world' before the Christ's non-violent revelation.

> The devil's 'quintessential being, the source from which he draws his lies, is the violent contagion that has no substance to it. The devil does not have a stable foundation; he has no *being* at all. To clothe himself in the semblance of being, he must act as a parasite on God's creatures. He is totally mimetic, which amounts saying *nonexistent as an individual self*…The devil, or Satan, signifies rivalistic contagion, up to and including the single victim mechanism. He may be located either in the entire process or in one of its stages.[277]

Although Satan is an imitator *par excellence*, it's for this reason it inhabits this space between non-existence as independent entity, and a parasitic imitator that only 'exists' via its connectedness to the other and the 'bad' mimetic system. Girard also maintains that system is the more 'personal' side of the Satanic system, for the impersonal system is the function of the *skandalon*.[278]

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[274] 'The Gospels tell us that to escape violence it is necessary to love one's brother completely-to abandon the violent mimesis involved in the relationship of doubles. There is no trace of it in the Father, and all that the Father asks is that we refrain from it likewise. That is indeed why the Son promises men that if they manage to behave as the Father wishes, and to do his will, they will all become sons of God. It is not God who sets up the barriers between himself and mankind, but mankind itself.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 215.

[275] The *paracleitos* will be discussed at length in Chapter 5, *Paracleitos*.

[276] 'From the moment when the sacrificial order begins to come apart, this subject can no longer be anything but the *adversary par excellence*, which combats the installation of the Kingdom of God. This is the devil known to us from tradition-Satan himself, of whom some theologians tell us that he is both subject and not subject at once.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 210.

[277] Girard, *I See Satan*, 42-43.

[278] Girard, *I See Satan*, 45-46.

Satan, the accuser or adversary, is able to be identified as a visible system only with the advent of the Christic defender of victims.

Thus, the understanding of evil must go beyond the figure of Christ as symbol towards anthropological interpretive key, to bring this understanding of the capability for evil within the 'conflicted' or divided self and the externalized violence of the 'order of this world.' The understanding of evil as intertwined with desires and its 'binding' scandals, in the rivalrous relationships of internal mediation, is an evil *suffered* while also an evil *committed*. This internal experience moves to the external system of the passage from rivalry to violence, and its contagiousness, that can only be resolved via another act of violence. Satan then reappears as the accuser of the innocent and is shown to be so by the advent of the paraclete, and the death of the Christ figure as scapegoat, *par excellence*. Christ as scapegoat and positive mimetic model then provides the moment to separate the polar moments of violence *suffered* from *committed*, by being a completely innocent victim. Thus, evil *suffered*, is always the product of a violent structure. To understand the evil system, is to reveal that *méconnaissance* blinds humanity's awareness of its committing of violence. The inheritance of this opposition between the 'order of this world' and the 'kingdom of God' forms the dialogue for understanding evil in the social and communal sphere, as preserved within cultural institutions and their symbols, which are shown to be inheritors of the victimage anthropology, albeit in a state of mimetic *méconnaissance*. The approach towards evil for Girard reflects the hermeneutic pursuit of its unmasking. The response to this 'bound' situation of polar violence is the introduction of the Christ figure who shows how the paradoxical submission to the violent system, in radical love of neighbor, dissociates the poles of *suffering* from *committing* evil.[279]

Conclusion: The Understanding of Evil in its 'Points of Contact'

The precedence of the conceptual relationship between violence, evil, mimesis, and 'ontological disproportion' provides a thematic roadmap for the 'conflict of interpretations' elaborated in the previous chapter. The understanding of evil through the combined hermeneutic has several 'contact points' that can now approach the aporetic and paradoxical character of evil, bringing it to a multifaceted clarification and response. According to the 'conflict of

[279] Yet, the testimonial response to evil, as witnessing to innocence, as seen with the function of the paraclete, is necessary to promulgate the positive mimetic 'contagion' of this demythologization of *méconnaissance*. See chapter 5, *Testimony*.

interpretations' I developed in chapter 1, the 'ontological disproportion,' as it moves to the composition of the 'primordial conflict' within the self, emerges as the first contact point, with the centrality of mimetic desire as it binds self and other, where evil, seen as pride or self-dilection, haunts the practice of this internal-external relationship via the finitude. This neutral capacity of desire, expressed as either *thumos* or mimesis, is the capacity that turns to *fault* or to love of neighbor. It is this turning towards *fault*, especially in its most dynamic form as violence, that will highlight the structure of desire as the transition point to the intersubjective and cultural sphere of understanding, seen as the 'interhuman.'[280] These cultural manifestations that can be seen as both mimetic and thymic, bring us to institutions, for that is where 'power' is manifested in the intersubjective, as the 'crowd' in a violent sense, or a 'kingdom' in a non-violent sense.[281] The understanding of evil here rests on the interpretations of the role of violence in the sacred, and the legacy of the symbols of evil as transmitted by the members of these communities, seen as expression of 'the believing consciousness,' whose experiences of evil are shown/hidden in myth and *méconnaissance*. Thus, the second contact point is myth and symbol, as this 'origin' of *fault* is brought to language and bears both the responsibility of unmasking the evil of violence in its polar moments, but also the complicity of its continuance in the effacement of traces. The figure of Christ emerges as center point on this continuum, encapsulating both critique of institution of sacrifice for perpetuating a system of violence, and the means for understanding the proper practice of desire for a necessarily intersubjective self, who does not 'idolize' immanent models. The motif of the *servile will* emerges as the third contact point within this progression, which consolidates the 'bound freedom' of scandalized mimetic desire, and the Christic unmasking of this bound state in the anthropological and symbolic consolidation of response to the multifaceted and polar understanding of evil as simultaneously *suffered* and *committed*.[282] This

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[280] Thus, desire and its intersubjective composition that aims towards the restless heart and its projects and encounters with the other for its 'fulfillment' will be the starting point of our continuum, beginning with the mimetic composition of desire from Girard, and the functionally capability of this concept within Ricœur's philosophical anthropology.

[281] For extended reflection on the kingdom of intersubjective participation in a We, see Chapter 5, *The Eschatological Moment of Testimony*.

[282] Raymund Schwager SJ, the first theologian to employ mimetic theory and reciprocally develop Girard's theological insights, states an interesting connection between the satanic structure of bad mimesis with Ricœur's *servile will*. 'But they do not trace this type of involuntary mechanism to the biological nature of man; rather they interpret it—in the words of Ricœur—through a "symbolism of evil," as the enslavement of the innermost spiritual freedom of man.' A further discussion on the complicated relationship with the notion of freedom, and this connection will be expanded upon, especially the notion of 'innermost' freedom. See Raymund Schwager, "Mimesis and Freedom," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 21 (2014) 29-45.

continuum structure is necessary to reveal the intertwined exteriority and interiority to the understanding of evil, via the many contemporaneous moments and alternating influences. Thus, this final contact point is the forward impetus of 'the conflict of interpretations' in the *who*, the self that is both capable of mimetically responding to evil via the hermeneutic of an unmasking of evil or is seen to be responsible for the committing of evil, via an act of 'bound' freedom. This *who*, this self remains within a continued opposition between the paraclete and the Satanic system of accusation. Thus, a function of positive promulgation of innocence, which advocates for the innocence of 'victims,' both of which are not just external scapegoats, but internal ones as well, is the necessary response to polar violence, for the 'fallen situation' of humanity is still bound to a system of scapegoating, but not *hopelessly* so.

Chapter 3: *Thumos* and Mimesis - Desire and Intersubjectivity

There is no escape from the subjective and the individual – as I believe – if human beings are to confront, somehow, the evils of common life.[283]

Introduction

With the method of the 'conflict of interpretations' clarified in chapter 1, and the goal of understanding evil established in chapter 2, it is time now to close Part I of this dissertation with an investigation into *who commits* or *suffers* evil. To answer this question, desire, and its corollary, the intersubjective self, will be addressed. I believe there to be a fundamental complementarity between Ricœur and Girard on the concept of desire, and I believe that in order to reveal this complementarity it requires a hermeneutic welcoming 'anew the mimetic concept' within Ricœur's divided self.[284] This complementarity relies (1) on their expression and function of desire, (2) their corresponding views of selfhood, and (3) a placing of desire and selfhood into the existential situation of evil. Desire and intersubjectivity are the targets of this chapter because there can be no understanding of evil, without understanding the desire to *commit* evil.

On the one hand, Girard's theory of mimetic desire and its foundational role to an *interdividuel* self will first be analyzed, where the question of freedom to commit evil, or to not commit it, is ultimately insufficient to assert that conversion from out of the mimetic system yields true individuality. On the other hand, to expand the intersubjective emphasis of Ricœur's desire, and provide a stronger anthropological grounding, I will relate his notion of the *thumos* in *Fallible Man* to his dialectical view of intersubjectivity and selfhood in *Oneself as Another*. However, Ricœur's view of otherness is too 'Hegelian' to be a 'concrete' form of intersubjectivity.[285] Thus by relating Girard's too 'externalized' view of intersubjectivity, which

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[283] This quote, from an article by Katarzyna Kremplewska, entitled "Erroneous Paths of the Human Subject in René Girard's Thought" approaches Girard similarly to my own view, where the question of freedom must be explained more in his work to reconcile the moments of 'individualization' in his mimetic theory, where either the victim is separated from the crowd, or by a 'conversion' away from entrapment of mimetic relationships. See Katarzyna Kremplewska, "Erroneous Paths of the Human Subject in René Girard's Thought" *Archive of the History of Philosophy and Social Thought* 64, no. 16 (2019). 300. https://doi.org/10.37240/AHFiMS.2019.64.16.

[284] Ricœur, "Religion and Symbolic Violence," 11.

[285] '*Oneself as Another* suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other, as we might say in Hegelian terms.' Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 3.

dissolves freedom in mediation, to Ricœur's too 'internalized' view, which dissolves otherness within the self, the 'conflict of interpretations' begins on this question of *who commits* evil and *who suffers* evil in a productive, hermeneutic tension. This tension provides a 'polar' view of intersubjective desire that can engage with an understanding of evil as itself reflective of this paradoxically polarity, seen in the internal-external phenomena of violence.

What emerges out of this complementarity in tension for the understanding of evil is that desire has an anthropological and ontological role in the formation of both intersubjectivity and selfhood. Desire reveals a modality for the emergence of evil as an internal violence that is 'falling away' from desire's original goodness, whereby the intersubjective drive of desire becomes a violence against an otherness. This violence is simultaneously internally focused, against the otherness internal to the self and externally focused towards an Other. This existential view, which is possible via the anthropological and phenomenological in combination, shows that if violence is always already intersubjective *fault*, the self *suffers* the violence it *commits*, which is mimetically shared at the level of the community, who *suffers* and *commits* its own violence. The one *who* desires, the self, is the place of the emergence of evil, represented as the polar moment of violence. But this intersubjective self, is 'bound' to the community, to the 'evil history,' where it mimetically first received this 'evil' desire. The self and community are paradoxically both the ones who *commit* violence, the *adversary*, and the ones who *suffer*, the *victim*. Further, the discussion regarding the question 'who' brings in a further question regarding freedom. To explain this simultaneity of committing and suffering, Ricœur's notion of the 'bound freedom' of the *servile will*, is brought within Girard's notion of a 'conversion' towards true freedom via a positive mediation of non-rivalrous mimetic desire. It is the potential of a mimetically bound freedom to escape this polarity, that forms the conceptual framework for the response to humanity's evil situation.[286] This chapter will focus on two terms that are integral to both of their formulations of desire, which reveal that desire has a necessarily intersubjective composition and purpose. These terms are the *thumos*, as introduced in the last chapter, from Ricœur's *Fallible Man*, and mimesis, or mimetic desire from Girard's mimetic theory. Thus, a

[286] But is *to suffer*, always *to commit*? The reversibility of the poles, as will be shown, is only possible via the demythologization of this violent system, which shows there to be an innocent form of *suffering*. This theme will be reprised in the testimonial acts of witness to the innocence of victims. Thus a positive mimetic 'institution' of non-violence is possible. See Chapter 5, *The Eschatological Moment of Testimony*.

synthesized hermeneutic approach to an understanding of evil cannot be expressed without a combined account of Girard's and Ricœur's views of intersubjective desire, selfhood, and freedom.

Structure and Terms

In Part I of this chapter, I will discuss Girard's mimetic desire or mimesis. The structure of imitation to our desires reveals an external openness to the other that is more than a passivity, but an agency to composing from 'without.' This view of selfhood indicates that there is no subject for Girard, there is only mimesis.[287] Thus, the critiques of mimetic desire, as the paradigm for not just the composition of selves, but for the problematic view of 'freedom,' in Girard's mimetic *interdividuel*, will be reviewed at the end of the first part of this chapter. This analysis reveals that the hermeneutic understanding of the concept of evil must have an interior perspective, to a self and its agency, indicated by the need for conversion from 'self-dilection' and

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[287] For a critique of Girard's view of intersubjectivity see Andrew O'Shea's book, *Selfhood and Sacrifice*, where he sees the issue of the self in Girard as a difference in prioritization between his earlier works on literature, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* and 'the literary space,' and his works that are more focused on his mimetic anthropology, the 'cultural space.' O'Shea pairs his reading of Girard with Charles Taylor, to bring back a more sophisticated view of subjectivity, that shows the early Girard's scapegoating of romanticism as unnecessary, and to restore some semblance of a 'free moral agent' that can survive Girard's cultural critique of violent scapegoating. He argues that in these earlier works, Girard is in fact 'scapegoating' the notion of the 'romantic self' or 'romanticism' to establish his intersubjective view of the self and decentered subjectivity. In his later works, he does not do this because the entire mimetic system has been elaborated and there are two logoi, the logos of violence and the logos of non-violence, which serve as the two bases for mediation. However, he misreads how Girard's two theses are read together from *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* and *Violence and the Sacred*. The central unification point, is how the figure of Christ, as elaborated in *Things Hidden*, is both destroyer of the violent mechanism, and the savior of the mimetic selves via the possibility of proximal positive, non-rivalrous mediation via his entry into history. By being a mimetic figure, between the 'literary' and 'cultural' space, the figure of Christ reconciles his suspicion in both spheres. See Andrew O'Shea, *Selfhood and Sacrifice: René Girard and Charles Taylor on the Crisis of Modernity* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010).

For a contrast of Ricœur and Girard over the question of subjectivity, the article by Gavin Flood, entitled, 'Mimesis, Narrative, and Subjectivity,' attempts to critique Girard's view of subjectivity and mimesis as read through the Ricœurian lens of his threefold mimesis as presented in *Time and Narrative vol. 1*. Flood is much less nuanced in his reading of Girard than O'Shea because he not only misses the centrality of Christ as emblematic of the reclamation of true subjectivity in Girard (it is dismissed for 'problematic' cultural reasons), but he also misses the fundamental notion that mimetic desire is inherently neutral. (The omission of *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* from his bibliography is glaring.) The majority of Flood's commentary focuses on Ricœur's view of narrativity emerging from the three-fold mimetic structure, rather than its role in expanding his philosophical anthropology. Further, his view of Girard's textuality as radically different than Ricœur's from the *Conflict of Interpretations*, most notably 'Meaningful Action Considered as a Text' is incorrect, especially when considering the connection of 'symbolicity' as the point between *bios* and *logos*. In fact, Ricœurian narrativity manages to explain the identifiability with fictitious literary figures for external mediation in Girard, when the two textualities are compared. See Gavin Flood, "Mimesis, Narrative and Subjectivity in the Work of Girard and Ricœur," *Cultural Values* 4, no. 2 (2000): 205-15.

For a more psychological perspective of Girard's view of intersubjectivity, as *interdividuel* see, Jean-Michel Oughourlian, *The Genesis of Desire*, trans. Eugene Webb (Michigan State University Press, 2010); see also Jean-Michel Oughourlian, *The Mimetic Brain*, trans. Trevor Cribben Merrill (Michigan State University Press, 2016).

'internal mediation.' This conversion restores autonomy and freedom to the *interdividuel*, yet still via another mediator of desire, whom we imitate.[288] The inherent neutrality to mimetic desire demands a more clear and sophisticated view of the interior dimensions of desire within Girard's *interdividuel*. The mimetic self presents insufficient answers to the question 'who' commits evil or 'who' converts away from it.

In Part II, I will discuss Ricœur's view of intersubjectivity from *Oneself as Another*, preparing for a discussion of *thumos* from *Fallible Man*. Ricœur's usage of *thumos*, or the restless 'heart,' is directly attributed to Plato's *Republic*, but Ricœur emphasizes a fluid composition, manifested in the 'thymic quests' of having, power, and worth (*avoir*, *pouvoir*, *valoir*). *Thumos* is restless because it is either 'fighting on the side of' *eros*, the philosophical desire, or on the side of *epithumia*, desire of the vital.[289] *Thumos* is thus an internally divided situation of desire, whose originally good thymic quests, which are oriented by the ethical aim of 'living well with and for others in just institutions,' can easily become mal-formed because the 'desire of desire has no end.' Due to Ricœur's assertion that desire posits the self as a 'lack' and 'effort to be,' the *thumos*, as the centermost point of fallibility and the 'restless heart' is central to the early Ricœur's thoughts on selfhood and evil. Ricœur also posits a phenomenological, prior goodness to the formulation of intersubjective desire in the original intention of the 'thymic quests.' The 'objectifications' of these quests demonstrate the interior desire of the self's endless pursuit, must then 'recapture itself' in its acts via an interpretation of the thymic works of human culture.[290] I find that these three 'thymic quests' contain an intersubjective ethical urgency, which can be traced to the later Ricœur's view of the threefold 'injunction' of otherness from within the self, as described in his *Oneself as Another*.[291]

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[288] The composition of the *interdividuel* will be discussed at length in the next part, but the critique arises, is there an 'external' of desire for the *interdividuel*, considering that when we have encountered a desire which we imitate, it becomes a part of our desire? Wouldn't the internal view of the *interdividuel*, desire itself? My point, which will be explained in depth, is that the notion of a conversion from rivalrous and violent desire, thus a rejection of certain models, must have an internal view for this 'reclamation' of freedom and autonomy, as well as account of freedom to attempt to choose a new model in the first place.

[289] For a discussion of the thymic quests, see Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 83, and for a discussion of the threefold manifestations of internally felt Otherness, see Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 317-318.

[290] Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics" in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 18.

[291] In Part II of this chapter, I will show how the notion of *thumos*, which animates Ricœur's philosophical anthropology in *Fallible Man*, is not contradicted or overcome in his study of selfhood and otherness in *Oneself as Another* but provides more analysis and context to the self's internal divisions, where otherness is found at the center of the self.

In Part III, I review the relation of both mimesis and *thumos* in the versions of intersubjectivity and the understanding of evil they reveal. When placing this thymic interiority and 'bound' freedom alongside the mimetic receptivity of external models from Girard, and the necessary suspicious attitude regarding how we imitate our models, the 'conflict of interpretations' can be resumed on the question of understanding evil. This 'conflict of interpretations' reveals a imitative receptivity to desire in its 'archae' through positing an original goodness, which shows intersubjective communion as the vocation of non-rivalrous mimesis. This hypothetical goodness is prior to the anthropological violence of the founding murder, thus properly situating 'real' violence as a 'deviation,' a malformation of humanity at the existential level. The malformation of the 'thymic quests' in an internally divided desire, which is informed by imitating the desires of others, establishes that conflicts occur in attempting to fulfill an egoistic pursuit of *avoir*, *pouvoir*, and *valoir*, which are instead the 'secret possibilities' of humanity.[292] This malformation of humanity, structured by the violence of egoism, does not dissolve these intersubjective quests' potential and destiny of this 'ethical aim.' This 'ethical aim' is inaugurated by a mimetic *praxis* of harmony - participation as a 'We' in a 'kingdom of God.' This intersubjective participation in a 'Kingdom' reveals that the internal-external structure of violence, is the warping of a productive and peaceful internal-external structure of desire. Thus, a freedom 'bound' to an otherness interior and exterior to the self, is not a constrictive binding, but a humble dependence.

Evil, interpreted through the polar moments of violence and intersubjective desire, is seen as the existential situation of a malformation, a deviation, of a fundamentally positive structure towards the intersubjective aims of a 'Kingdom.' Egoistic desire 'lacks' a 'kingdom' where 'participation in a We' satisfies desire's quest for being in proper, balanced, nonviolent mimesis, so violence must be 'generative' of its own structure. The analyses of both Ricœur and Girard's view of selfhood and desire reveal how evil's emergence is a *'skandalization'* of this system, where the self, via its 'bound' freedom, undergoes a *decidere*, a self-imposed violence to its necessary intersubjective relationship to otherness in openness and nonviolence. Evil, at the existential level, is seen as co-extensive by its intersubjective receptivity to otherness and co-extensive with our freedom to do violence to ourselves and others, while being bound to suffer the same violence. Thus, the understanding of evil, in relation to selfhood and desire, reveals an implicit dialectic

[292] 'Peaceful identity lies at the heart of violent identity as its most secret possibility.' Girard, *Battling to the End*, 46.

interpretive movement with the suspicious hermeneutic of mimesis and its externality, and the believing hermeneutic of *thumos* and its interiority.

Part I: Girard and Mimetic Desire

Desire for Being and 'Negating Negativity?'

Beginning with Girard's concept of mimesis, which is used interchangeably in his works with the term mimetic desire, his hermeneutic of the illusions of desire reveals humans as fundamentally 'imitative' in not the only the 'things' people desire, but also 'how' this desire is realizable. This is because Girard's first point of departure comes from Aristotle, that all humans learn via imitation, and it is this foundation in imitation that humanity, who finds themselves in existence, begins to interact with others and the world.[293] Considering that desire is this *ekstatic* principle for activity (and passivity) in the world, the questions 'what do I desire' or 'what is desirable' are only answered in observing what others desire. Thus, all desires are already imitated desires. But what is the aim of this imitation of desires? His second point of departure is where he also joins some of his French philosophic contemporaries in the aim of this desire.[294] Girard states all desire is desire for another's 'being':

> The object is only a means of reaching the mediator. The desire is aimed at the mediator's being.[295]

This is where Girard, who proclaims himself to be an anthropologist and not a philosopher, journeys into philosophy. The objects of desire are continually replaced upon their satisfaction, yet the mediator (the one who signals the worth of these objects, by their desire) tends to remain. The quality that establishes the mediator's desire as worthy of mimesis is this 'fullness of being' that the imitative self lacks.

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[293] 'Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation.' Aristotle, *On Poetics*, trans. Seth Bernadette and Michael Davis (St. Augustine's Press, 2002), 8.

[294] The parallels to Sartre, Kojève, and Lacan have been commented on by scholars, where a criticism of Girard is that he embraces an ontology of violence in his portrayal of mimetic desire, especially when looking at his first two works, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* and *Violence and the Sacred*. For a thorough reading and elaboration of the conceptual distance Girard's views of mimetic desire and violence have to the French Kojèvian tradition, as well as Hegel himself, see Andreas Wilmes, 'Portrait of René Girard as a Post-Hegelian: Masters, Slaves, and Monstrous Doubles.' *The Philosophical Journal of Conflict and Violence* 1, no. 1 (2017): 27. Also see Bogumił Strączek, "Desire and Its Mirror Effects: The Girard-Lacan Encounter," *META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2022): 250-62.

[295] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 53.

Where Girard departs from Kojève and others is that the imitation of desires does not 'necessarily' negate the model of desire.[296] When mimesis becomes rivalry, then the negativity of mimetic desire cannot achieve 'recognition' because the outcome of a negative mimetic desire, in the process of recognition via negation described by Hegel, instead generates real, scapegoating violence, where instead of 'recognizing' the other, the other has been progressively 'misrecognized,' even 'divinized.'[297] However, if there is a path towards being 'recognized' it is according to a positive mimetic mediation, where one's awareness of the influence of the mediator of desire, does not 'scandalize' the desirer. The self, which may seem like an ontologically negative project that must negate the other to fulfill this abyss, ignores mimesis as potentially positive, where models can inform the desire prior to rivalry. [298] It only leads to a 'violence' in the pretension to be an 'individual,' which is a solipsistic motivation that destroys the positivity of mimetic composition of the imitative self in desire.[299] To be an individual, while having mimetic desire, means the other desire you have copied then has to be nihilated, and the object of desire, taken from your rival, so you can become the one to be imitated by others, even though this breeds further resentment towards the others who attempt to steal your perceived autonomy

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[296] However, while Kojève uses this view of desire to explain the basis for a violent system of recognition, the similarities between Kojève and Girard, as Andreas Wilmes argues, are 'superficial.' It is important to note that Wilmes reading of the Kojève-Girard similarity differs than George Erving's article ('René Girard and the Legacy of Alexandre Kojève,' *Contagion* 10 (2003): 111-125.) where Erving views the similarity between Girard and Kojève is over their 'over-lapping ontologies.' Wilmes rejects this view soundly by indicating the growth of the ontological clarification in Girard's later works, notably *Battling to the End*, which is a point in which I am in complete agreement. See Wilmes, 'Portrait of René Girard as a Post-Hegelian.' 75-77.

[297] 'This dialectic of 'master and slave' presents curious analogies with the Hegelian dialectic, but there are also great differences. The Hegelian dialectic is situated in a violent past… The novelistic dialectic on the contrary appears only in the post-Napoleonic universe… Only the novelist, precisely to the extent which he is capable of recognizing his own servitude, gropes toward the concrete — toward that hostile dialogue between Self and Other which parodies the Hegelian struggle for recognition.' Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 110-11.

[298] The critique of Girard's ontology of violence from a Christian theological persuasion, is exemplified by John Millbank. In my view the dangers of Girard's totalizing theories for theological appropriation are legitimate, but the danger of his critique of humanity's anthropological situation, as in dialogue with an 'ontology of violence,' is necessary to properly understand this ontological, immanent frame. See John Millbank, "Stories of Sacrifice: From Wellhausen to Girard," *Theory, Culture & Society* 12, no. 4 (1995): 15-46. https://doi.org/10.1177/026327695012004003.

[299]Girard locates this 'solipsistic motivation' as promoted in the philosophical projects of Hegel and Sartre, which ultimately contribute to the misrecognition of the mimetic structure of desire and violence within culture. Thus it is to the 'novelist' that can counter the humanist philosopher. 'Hegel's unhappy consciousness and Sartre's *projet* to be God are the outcome of a stubborn orientation toward the transcendent, of an inability to relinquish religious patterns of desire when history has outgrown them… Stendhal and Proust, even though they are unbelievers, part company at this point with Sartre and Hegel to rejoin Cervantes and Dostoyevsky… The novelist, regardless of whether he is a Christian, sees in the so-called modern humanism a subterranean metaphysics which is incapable of recognizing its own nature.' Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 158-59.

and fullness of being.[300] To assert the self as an ontological negation of others via its mimetic desire, only, is to do violence to the natural state, which is where the human is always already formed and mediated by hierarchized mimesis in a family structure.

The view of Girard as having a violent ontology is a misreading of mimetic desire as a negativity.[301] Thus, these negative characteristics of mimetic desire do not make mimetic desire itself a philosophical 'negating negativity.'

> The affirmation of self ends in the negation of self… Ever since Hegel, the modern world has boldly and openly presented this same negation as the supreme affirmation of life. The exaltation of the negative is rooted in that *blind lucidity* which characterizes the last stages of internal mediation.[302]

The 'lack of being' which is the impetus for mimetic desire then seems to only be fulfilled, when the 'blind lucidity' of *méconnaissance* has been lifted, which cannot merely be done in a suspicious mode, but 'positively.' Mimetic desire has the 'secret possibility' of positivity, though not only a renunciation of self-love and pride in the grips of internal mediation, but through the choice of a positive mimetic mediator.[303] Thus, the necessity of an 'explanatory hypothesis' characterized in an unmasking of this easily misrecognized effects of mimesis, goes beyond providing forms of ascetism that can release the grip of imitation gone amok in the quest to satisfy one's pride. Mimetic desire has a positive ground for the reclamation of a truer sense of 'freedom' that is not based on the 'promethean' pretension to the power of negativity, that must be discovered in its intersubjective composition of relation-building and not destroying.

Mediation and Proximity

I will return to the question of freedom in Girard's mimetic conception of desire, but to discuss even the existence of freedom in the Girardian system, I must discuss in more depth the

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[300] It is important to note that the reverse, becoming swallowed up by the mimetic phenomena of the crowd, also produces a similar nihilation, albeit in the opposite direction. The crowd nihilates the balance of the mimetic, *interdividuel*, where the restless desire to become an individual, means you are defined by the opinion of the other to recognize your uniqueness, thus all those who look to your desire for mimetic composition of themselves are rivals, and thus you are bound to your own lack of being. In the reverse, the mimetic composition by the crowd, first nihilates the interior of the mimetic self, by becoming part of the capricious, violent, unreflecting mob that restlessly seeks for a scapegoat to recenter the rampant 'undifferentiation' and to restore some identity through violence.

[301] 'The *Negative* which so many modern philosophers identify with freedom and life is in reality the herald of slavery and death.' Girard. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 288.

[302] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 287.

[303] This idea, elaborated more fully in *Battling to the End* with the role of Christic mediation, is contained in embryo in the conclusion of *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*: 'The apocalypse would not be complete without a positive side.' Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 291.

question of mediation. The form of mediation mentioned in some of the references above, in very negative terms, is 'internal' mediation, the form liable for rivalry and conflict. The psychological modality of mediation shows that not only individuals we know personally can become mediators, but fictitious literary, television, or media figures.[304] The other form of mediation of desire is what Girard terms external mediation, which is mediation with a much lower possibility of rivalry. Yet, this greater distance between the desirer and mediator has ambivalent characteristics in both forms of mediation. The benefit of greater distance being the lack of potential rivalry, while still the occurrence of meaningful desires to imitate. The harm of this greater distance is the lack of effectiveness or impact to the frequency of desires in daily life to proximal objects, and the inability to show a true intensity or quality of desire. Thus, the ambivalence of external mediation is based on its distance from concrete, lived experience of the desirer. The effectiveness of the internal mediator is due to its placement in similar circumstances and life situations, and so is a vector of imitation and contagion. Thus, because internal mediation is much more present in the individual's life, it has more potential for scandal, which means it is liable to become a habitual source of negative mediated desire via fascination with the mediator, without certain prescriptions of taboos or moral codes to legislate proximity, under threat of violence (recall the discussion of 'covetousness' from chapter 2).[305] The notion of proximity, which is used to illustrate the difference in both impact and danger between external mediation of desire and internal mediation of desire takes on more psychologically relevant components, because of the function of this identification does not necessarily require a 'real' mediator, just the misrecognition of one.[306] Further, this notion of proximity directly opens up the strong

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[304] Mediation itself can be functionally compared to a form of Freudian identification ('triangular identification') albeit with less internal contradictions, as Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen excellently argues. In Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen's book, *The Freudian Subject*, he pursues a thorough critique of several Freudian concepts, namely the Oedipus Complex and identification, by using a mimetic reading of Freud on the subject. Although Borch-Jacobsen departs from Girard on several points, his analysis of the Oedipus Complex and identification are shaped by Girard's mimetic theory, and further supplement Girard's own challenges to the Oedipus Complex as the staging for a mimetic-like relation with others, most notably in Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*, 169-92. For critique of Oedipus Complex see Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford University Press, 1982) 180-82, and 186-194, for Triangular Identification.

[305] Chapter 2, *A Hermeneutics of Fault – Symbolism of Evil.*

[306] The function of misrecognition within identificatory process in relation to the mediation of desire is further shown to be a contributing factor in its fluidity, ambivalence, and lack of firm identity formation. Borch-Jacobsen shows this when he deconstructs Freuds incomplete view of identification and instead claims it to be used in the mimetic process of identity formation via a mediator. 'To identify by means of a similar love, because of an identical desire - is this not the way Freud always describes the Oedipal rivalry?... But that is also what he does not say, when he persists in decomposing the ambivalence of identification into two contradictory values and into two successive phases, sometimes situating identification in pre-sociality, sometimes situating it within sociality, as sociality. He

intersubjective view of desire, where because of the foundational role of imitation, and the dramatic changes it can take on when mediators are within the daily experiences of the *interdividuel*, the 'individual' as such may be a physical entity, but its social proximity and network of relations is shown to be much more dynamic and foundational identity source.

Yet when mimetic desire is not properly oriented, this mal-mediated desire is not just a problem for the self's relationship with others, but the principal cause of conflict among human beings in general.[307] Girard's pivot to the more anthropological and even biological view of mimetic desire begins with this focus on the evolutionary scarcity of objects that are indicated by mediators as desirable for the fullness of being they communicate, and are not shareable.[308] Because each mimetic desire is within a network of interconnected copied desires, the original scarcity of objects in early human communities made violence from rivalry much more likely, and this is compounded if these societies do not have the forms of restricting rivalry, through rituals, taboos, and their later evolution as a judicial system.[309] This is the basis for Girard's argument in *Violence and the Sacred* regarding prohibitions against incest, because of the likelihood of rivalry that could be destructive to early human societies. In the contemporary age, Girard focuses on social movements based on the dissolution of restrictive class hierarchies that have previously been meant to present widespread internal mediation.[310] This anthropological and historical scale of internal mediation, in our more post-sacred, democratic world, leads to more rivalry, and more competition, but now without the rituals of violence to prevent its escalation. Social proximity, which can be seen possibly with the advent of social media forms, indicates the powerful role of mediation, and the explanatory hypothesis of mimetic desire provides a necessary structure to our relationships and selves.

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therefore says what he does not say, allows himself to say what he does not want to say: that the ego is the other, that peace is violence, that sociality is a-sociality. And vice versa.' Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject*, 202 – 203.

[307] Girard, *I See Satan*, 10.

[308] It is important to note that desires are different than appetites for Girard. Appetites are basic human biological needs, like food, water, shelter. Mimetic desire only gains precedence after these appetites are satisfied. Moreover, the modern era of human history has been filled with mimetic conflicts driven over copied desires, because of the increases in satisfied human needs, and the decrease of hierarchical and institutional restrictions on the free choice of human beings, like aristocratic or caste hierarchies. See Girard, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origin of Culture*, eds. Pierpaolo Antonello and Joao Cezar De Castro Roza (Continuum International Publishing, 2008), 56-57.

[309] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 49.

[310] Girard, *Battling to the End*, 45.

Thus, the role of mediation and proximity are important in the determination of mimetic desire as good or evil, healthy or destructive for the self and community.[311] But the determination of a moral value of these forms of mimesis, as good or evil, is determined after the fact, by various proscriptions and prohibitions. Further, the power of the immanent, proximal, 'real' model is always more powerful and more dangerous, so how can one avoid this 'evil,' seen as the negative infinitude of desire on the immanent plane through rivalry? Without a moral, metaphysical presupposition regarding good and evil, how can one say that the violence of internal mediation is not necessary for the advance of culture, and the collective identities of social groups? It must be a unique mediator that indicates desires that are non-rivalrous, yet proximal enough to be compelling and relatable for the mimetic self. It seems like a 'positive' mimetic desire, depends on pure external mediation, which seems to be a form of escapism or a denial of the 'immanent' plane, and relies on strong psychological identification. Thus, to dive deeper into these objections, which is (1) whether the immanent, socially proximal plane is always evil because it is an elaborate cultural construction of ordered violence to prevent disordered violence, and (2) the role of mediation as undermining agency and freedom that cannot be reclaimed without an 'afterworldly' or escapist external mediation. To answer these objections, a deeper investigation into the mimetic self and its *interdividuel* composition reveals how it can function as a neutral, yet always mimetic foundation, where determination by structures of mediated desires is not a destination. What follows is that a *praxis* of an ethical response to evil is possible, without being first derived from morality. Mediators and models, when seen properly as 'positively' intersubjective are not inauthentic forms of desire, which are driven by crowd contagion, 'afterworldly' identification, or egoism, but an actualization of a community in *interdividuel* authenticity.[312] However, the missing link between the objections and my response, requires an elaboration of freedom within a Girardian mimetic self that is not provided.

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[311] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 116-117.

[312] Girard views 'authenticity' in desire as a realization, or conversion, that one is always within the mimetic mechanism, which he contrasts with his representation of inauthentic desire as belonging to the crowd, which can only happen without reflecting on the mimetic nature of desire. To express this point, Girard, in his polemical style, compares Heidegger's 'pre-understanding of mimetic desire' in his concept of *Das Man* with his exclusion of himself from this notion, with the ill effects of succumbing to the 'crowd.' 'The distinction between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' desire is not always groundless, but when it coincides with the distinction between myself and the others, I think it is quite suspicious. Martin Heidegger believes that he stands apart from any mimetic influence from his social surrounding, with *Das Man*, that is the tagging along of all these people who believe and desire everything which is believed and desired around them. Therefore, in the moment in which everybody became Nazi around him, Heidegger became Nazi too…' Girard, *Evolution and Conversion*, 45-46.

Mimetic Intersubjectivity and Freedom

In Girard's thought, the self, because it is the product of its mediated desires, is always intersubjective, or in his preferred view, *interdividuel*. How does Girard view characterize the self, while denying subjectivity? The first point of clarification is semantic regarding the notion of a 'reclamation' or 'restoration' of 'true' subjectivity. This notion of 'reclamation' is central in Girard's work, and the glancing over of this clarification is part of the confusion over 'how' he denies subjectivity, and in fact, what kind of subjectivity he denies. This return of true freedom only occurs with a sort of deliverance or conversion from internally mediated desire.

The mimetic self is composed as the locus of all these copied desires from mediators, or as Jean-Michel Oughourlian says, a *holon*.[313] The objects of desire indicated by the mediators are considered in Girard's first work to be 'metaphysical' objects because they are always signifying something beyond their apparent relevance to the mediator and the one who desires. This 'something beyond' as previously indicated, is what Girard emphasized as the promise of a fullness of being which was given to the object by the 'plenitude of being' that the mediator already possesses. We, as always already imitative, are driven towards this fullness by our perceived lack of being. Thus, in this quest of desire, we find ourselves to be mimetic combinations of the amalgamation of our mediated desires, constantly in search of the 'plenitude of being.' The intersubjective relation, which forms what Girard and Jean-Michel Oughourlian term the *interdividuel*, is between the desirer and its mediators.

> *Jean-Michel Oughourlian*: 'If I follow your reasoning, the genuine human subject can emerge only from the rule of the Kingdom; apart from that, there is never anything but mimetism and the *'interdividuel.'* Until then, the only subject is the mimetic structure itself,'
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> *René Girard*: 'Precisely.'[314]

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[313] Girard himself does not use the term *holon*, so I will not use it further, I will instead opt for the term of *interdividuel* and intersubjective, to relate it closer to Ricœur's philosophical terminology, and less towards psychology. Yet, I find it valuable for elaborating and explaining the preservation of an individual in a constitutive mimetic relationship. The following quote explains the genesis of the term of 'holon' as the psychiatrist Jean-Michel Oughourlian, uses it from the work of Arthur Koestler. 'I propose to call this unitary entity of *interdividual* psychology a 'holon.' This term was coined in 1967 by Arthur Koestler, in his *Ghost in Universal Machine*… Koestler specifies that biological holons are self-regulating entities that manifest simultaneously some of the independent properties of wholes, as well as some of the dependent properties of parts. He calls this general characteristic of all types of holarchies 'the Janus principle.' It can be seen that every social holon (individual, family, clan, tribe, nation, and so on) is at once a coherent whole in relation to its constituent parts and part of a larger social entity.' Jean-Michel Oughourlian, *The Puppet of Desire: The Psychology of Hysteria, Hypnosis, and Possession*, trans. Eugene Webb (Stanford University Press, 1991) 16-17.

[314] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 292.

In this excerpt from *Things Hidden*, we can see the interplay between subjectivity and mimesis with regards to this view of selfhood. True subjectivity is achieved when mediation is not a form of enslavement, but a form of positive community, like the description of the 'Kingdom of God' from the Judeo-Christian scriptures. It seems that Oughourlian and Girard see this reversal of the 'mimetic structure itself' as possible but requires a form of perfect intersubjective harmony. The obstacles to this perfect community of intersubjective harmony are mimesis' proclivity towards rivalry, but also the modern subject, which is another form of the 'romantic lie.'[315] The 'romantic lie' yields to the entire mimetic structure, which assumes the true subject position, unbeknownst to the desirer, because blindness regarding the mimetic structure's existence increases via fascination with models who seem to embody the autonomous subjectivity.[316] Thus, there is no hope of acquiring or achieving 'true being' when mimesis is the subject. It is when the *'interdividuel,'* always in relation to mediators, realizes the origin of their desire, and can forsake the illusion of autonomy, will the possibility of a mediated autonomy return. Continued blindness instead turns the act of mediation into rivalry, which is revealed to be a double bind, where the doubleness is more than a simultaneously loved and hated mediator turned rival, but in the interior of the *interdividuel.*[317]

As I have related so far, there is no spontaneous individually created desire that was brought forth outside of a context of mediation. This claim to originality, or as Girard terms it, 'spontaneous' desire, is considered to be the 'romantic lie' or 'romantic illusion.' This illusion is created by our *méconnaissance* or misrecognition of the source of our desires. This concept of *méconnaissance* , or misrecognition, is a unique concept for Girard that attempts to explain many of the diverse phenomena associated with the mimetic system in general. Yet, the question of understanding evil returns to this reading of Girard's view of desire and intersubjectivity,

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[315] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 39.

[316] 'We feel that we are at the point of attaining autonomy as we imitate models of power and prestige. This autonomy, however, is really nothing but a reflection of the illusions projected by our admiration for them. The more this admiration mimetically intensifies, the less aware of it is of its own mimetic nature. The more 'proud' and 'egotistic' we are, the more enslaved we become to our mimetic models.' Girard, *I See Satan*, 15.

[317] Jean-Michel Oughourlian argues that the 'forgetfulness' (*méconnaissance*) over the source of desire yields the double bind that engenders something beyond a philosophical or existential issues, but verifiable psychological neuroses. 'But the model does not always remain a model to the necessary degree. When he or she becomes a rival, the misunderstanding becomes pathogenic because it embraces a double claim: (1) a claim on the part of the self to ownership of its own desire; (2) a claim on the part of the desire to its anteriority to the desire of the other, to priority over the other's desire. This double claim is made by both neurotics and psychotics.' Oughourlian, *The Puppet of Desire*, 18. For more on the 'double bind' see note #446.

because of the centrality of addressing the problem of the 'blindness' of pride, which is ultimately the implication of the 'romantic illusion.' But considering mimetic desire itself is not always the pride of 'original sin,' it is rather the modality that brings oneself to a state of solipsistic pride.[318] The good of mimetic desire is that it can also bring one out of this potentially evil state. Girard states that what is required is a 'conversion,' which is a quasi-gnostic event of realizing one's mimetic composition, and the inability to autonomously create and pursue one's desire. To understand how this choice away from pride can be made, a deeper shift towards the intersubjective must be pursued for it remains to be said how one can freely choose or pursue this awareness if one is always already mediated.

This first instance in Girard's work of this reclamation of true intersubjectivity from the system of mimetic illusions regarding the source of desire is in the conclusion of *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel.*

> If we are still blind to the unity displayed in novelistic conclusions, the unanimous hostility of romantic critics should be enough to open our eyes… all the heroes utter words which *clearly contradict their former ideas*, and those ideas are always shared by the romantic critics. Don Quixote renounces his knights, Julien Sorel his revolt, and Raskolnikov his superhumanity… The unity of novelistic conclusion consists in renunciation of metaphysical desire. The dying hero repudiates his mediator: 'I am the enemy of Amadis of Gaul and of all the infinite battalions of his kind… today, through God's mercy, having been made wise at my own expense, I loathe them.'[319]

This quote encapsulates Girard's interpretation that there exists an analogical 'unity' to his novelists in the conclusions of their greatest works, which consists in an ultimate realization of their complete absorption by negative mimetic desire.[320] As quoted earlier, Girard gives a summary of the hero's transformation,

> Every level of his existence is inverted, all the effects of metaphysical desire are replaced by contrary effects. Deception gives way to truth, anguish to remembrance, agitation to repose, hatred to love, humiliation to humility, mediated desire to *autonomy*, deviated transcendency to vertical transcendency.[321]

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[318] For the role of 'Original sin' in this dissertation, see note, #507. For a Girardian reading of Original Sin in a theological register, see Raymund Schwager, *Banished from Eden: Original Sin and Evolutionary Theory in the Drama of Salvation*, trans. James G. Williams (Gracewing Publishing, 2006). Also see James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin through Easter Eyes* (Crossroad Herder, 1996).

[319] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 293-94.

[320] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 293-94.

[321] Emphasis mine. Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 194.

So, if the self is always already *interdividuel*, how then can freedom be reclaimed? Is it only in death that the self receives clarity because of the end of dependency on mimetic composition? How can the illusion of bad mimesis be lifted? Girard asserts that this conversion that 'engenders a new relationship to others and oneself' is accomplished via 'The aesthetic triumph of the author' which 'is one with the joy of the hero who has renounced desire.'[322] The renunciation of this 'self-centeredness' which in turn reveals an identity between the 'universal Self' and the 'profound self' arrives via the *suffering* of the author, who, outside the text, undergoes this process of conversion and deliverance via an identification with the hero who parallels his mimetic journey.[323] 'The novelists are a phenomenological *epoché*. But the only authentic *epoché* is never mentioned by modern philosophers; it is always victory over desire, victory over Promethean pride.'[324] Thus to overcome bad mediation, and loss of 'self' in an *interdividuel* structuring of mimetic desire, there must be a modeling of such 'a dying to self.' Girard connects this movement of conversion and renunciation of pride with the evolution of this position in Western Tradition. Here I quote this section at length,

> The banality of novelistic conclusions is not the local and relative banality of what used to be considered 'original' and could again be given oblivion followed by a 'rediscovery' and a 'rehabilitation.' It is the absolute banality of what is essential in Western civilization. The novelistic denouement is reconciliation between the individual and the world, between the man and the sacred… Novelistic conversion calls to mind the *analusis* of the Greeks and the Christian rebirth. In this final moment the novelist reaches the heights of Western literature; he merges with the great religious ethics and the most elevated forms of humanism, those which have chosen the least accessible part of man.[325]

This authentic 'autonomy,' in respect of being free of self-destructive relationships toward mediated objects, is a selfhood that is seemingly won through a form of conversion, that is exemplified in some of the great works of literature. However, in Girard's later thought, although contained in embryo with *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, this modality of achieving authentic

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[322] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 295.

[323] This suffering, first due to the violence of the prideful *decidere*, is now distinguished, its polarity differentiated. The author can see themselves as suffering, through an acknowledgement of their suffering, separate from its committing. Thus the 'banality' undermines the pretension of pride, the paradoxically reclamation of mimetic individuality. 'The title of hero of a novel must be reserved for the character who triumphs over metaphysical desire in a tragic conclusion and thus becomes capable of writing the novel. The hero and his creator arc separated throughout the novel but come together in the conclusion.' Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 297.

[324] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 300.

[325] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 308.

interdividuel selfhood in a positive mimetic desire bears an even more universal, 'culture' shifting model, to make such a 'conversion' even possible.[326]

A Critique of Girard's view of the Self and Freedom

So, authenticity, autonomy, and even freedom is won from within the mimetic structure by an act of conversion. Yet, the question of 'how' this freedom from this mimetic structure as subject can be converted away from, other than 'model selection,' is opaque. It is this lack of clarity regarding freedom and the self that is partly the need for Ricœur to accompany Girard to bring an understanding of the phenomena of evil and its pre-ethical emergence. Thus, the radically intersubjective self, or the *interdividuel* demands a more sophisticated account than what he gives it. This demand is not because his primary account, especially in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, is inaccurate or unsophisticated, it is because the implications for a philosophical account of this *interdividuel* simply requires more specificity, especially with insistence on the reemergence of 'true freedom' and 'true subjectivity' with the discussion on Christic, non-violent imitation.

Thus, the issue is how conversion from the loss of subjectivity in internal mediation and improper external mediation, can yield reclamation of a mediated and authentically mimetic intersubjectivity? Further, how do we give an account of an interiority of an intersubjective desiring self that can be affected by a seemingly rational conversion? Is it possible to break from mimetic chains without contact with this perfect mediator?[327] For our discussion of the understanding of evil, if evil emerges from the ontological disproportion between finitude and infinitude, freedom and nature, what is the relationship between mimesis and freedom?

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[326] It is here I must pause the discussion of this movement, and the significance of the figure of Christ as mediator, which can only be understood in the progression of understanding from the mythic tradition, through the ancient Greek critiques of the sacred in Tragedy, the Hebrew prophetic literature, and the testimonial function of the Gospels, pursued in chapters 4 and 5. Thus, the author and the figure's analogous conversion, through suffering, now seen in a clear polar relationship to *committing*, is only possible when the system of prideful *méconnaissance* has already been demythologized and mimetically modeled, by another figure.

[327] This also the emergence of the theological considerations of the figure of Christ. For my argument, it cannot voyage into this boundary, for this change of matter echoes Ricœur's insistence on the transition from philosophy to theology. (See, Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 270-71) Further, it is also why the hermeneutic paring of these two is necessary, for a deeper explanation of this 'fallenness' of internally mediated desire that does not require an immediate jump to Girard's hybrid anthropological-theological affirmation of Christ as the Divine. A corollary to this point is the insistence on the conversion to Christic mediation, the ultimate figure of non-violence, as the sole means to converting from our mimetic solipsistic tendencies, can be shifted to a more philosophically universal one, where figures of non-violence in all human history reflect a similar form of mediation.

Girard's close friend and the first theologian to employ Girard's mimetic theory, as well as correct some of its inconsistencies, was Raymund Schwager.[328] The Swiss theologian wrote an article entitled, 'Mimesis and Freedom,' which attempts a biblical hermeneutic discovery of the conflicting role of freedom and the challenge that Girard's theory is too characterized by his evolutionary biological determinism in the origin of violence. In his discussion of freedom, he describes it as a phenomenological enslavement, and employs Ricœur's concept of the *servile will*, or 'the enslavement of freedom,' which is central to the hermeneutic understanding of evil, as we discussed in the last chapter. However, I find that his account of freedom still rests in this exterior dimension of the intersubjective, and the discussion does not go into how the choice of models can be pursued in a positive direction. As Schwager states, 'They exude an influence and a fascination that seductively engenders imitation, and this is more decisive in determining public behavior than free, inward choice.'[329] The excellent point of this article is showing the passage from the biological evolutionary side of imitation into mimetic desire, and then into violence, as biblically supportable with an account of freedom at the collective level. Yet the possibility of 'conversion' from mimesis relies too heavily on the theological ground of the intervention of the *paracleitos*, of which Schwager cites Girard's final chapter from the scapegoat.[330] Considering the work of this dissertation as tangential to theology, but not a theological work, this answer cannot suffice to reveal the complexity of conversion within a 'bound freedom' that is too externalized. Only by bringing Ricœur's intersubjectivity into dialogue with mimetic desire, can reveal the possibility of a mimetic interiority of the self that is not mechanistically determined, while still being mimetic.

A further critique to supplement my own view, Katarzyna Kremplewska's article, "Erroneous Paths of the Human Subject in René Girard's Thought."[331] This article is a well-written and insightful commentary on the issues of Girard's account of the subject, which also

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[328] For excellent biographical insights as well as insights into the formation of mimetic theory in respect to theology, see René Girard and Raymund Schwager, *Correspondence 1974-1991*, trans. Chris Fleming and Sheelah Treflé Hidden, eds. Joel Hodge, Scott Cowdell, and Chris Fleming (Bloomsbury, 2016).

[329] Raymund Schwager, "Mimesis and Freedom," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 21 (2014): 29-45.

[330] Schwager, "Mimesis and Freedom", 42.

[331] Katarzyna Kremplewska "Erroneous Paths of the Human Subject in René Girard's Thought," *Archive of the History of Philosophy and Social Thought* 64, no. 16 (2019), 291-307, https://doi.org/10.37240/AHFiMS.2019.64.16.

attempts to emphasize the nuanced points in mimetic theory and the greater implications of mimetic desire to his later apocalyptic vision. This article seeks to identify and highlight the problems, but she does not provide answers or corrections to his theory and intends to leave these problems unresolved. The importance of the question she raises is encapsulated in the quote from her article written as the epigraph to this chapter. 'There is no escape from the subjective and the individual – as I believe – if human beings are to confront, somehow, the evils of common life.'[332] In my reading, this quote also illustrates the concern for Ricœur over how to address our capabilities of violence, if there is no individual. The problems she states are the same that I have identified in my own questions above: 'Suppose that we intuitively agree with this thesis of Girard, the question that arises here, in connection with the one asked at the beginning of this section, is who (or what?) is the subject of the desired but missed conversion? Individuals? Societies? Humanity? The desire itself?'[333] These questions focus again on the agency of an individual to resist the mimetic contagion, and the role of freedom and autonomy towards this agency in companion with the *interdividuel*.

So why does Kremplewska see Girard's account of the individual lacking, yet necessary to his overall argument? It is the role of the victim, who stands apart from the crowd, either willingly or unwillingly. The victim, as individual, is central to the function of mimetic theory, and Klempewska cites Girard's reading of the potential stoning of the adulterous woman in the New Testament.

> The one who is guiltless is challenged to throw the first stone. What is at stake, then, is making the first step and taking responsibility. The scene illuminates the exceptionality and rarity of the act of starting something, of triggering a course of events. By awakening individual self-examination, Jesus avoids the unleashing of violence. By appealing directly to everyone's individual conscience, he evokes individual human selves.[334]

This is exactly the point Girard is trying to make about true subjectivity when one escapes the 'satanic' structure of violence. Yet, as Klempewska points out, how is this possible given his account of mimesis and the intersubjective. She goes on to indicate that individuality can emerge via the force of the exclusion of the crowd but ultimately forms a repudiation of the crowd by their victimhood. So, the *interdividuel* that converts, and the victim who is scapegoated, paradoxically both reclaim a sense of true subjectivity, and both via a form of violence. One via a

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[332] Kremplewska, "Erroneous Paths", 300.

[333] Klempewska, "Erroneous Paths", 298.

[334] Klempewska, "Erroneous Paths", 299.

'death of the self,' but the other via the death of belonging, or membership to the community, which dangerously leads in their potential sacrifice. This point, of the path of defeat, of *suffering*, to reclaiming a form of subjectivity, is revealed in Kremplewska's analysis and is in step with Girard's view of the logic of non-violence as not the logic of human society, so constructed. Both means of individuality require defeat, in a sense, failure. Yet, the Girardian account of agency is still not clear, and it seems it needs a more full account of an interiority to its mimetic composition to provide a more formal answer to these objections.

Victimhood and Freedom: Differentiating the Polar Moments of Evil

Thus, by compiling the critique of Girard's view of freedom, the victim of scapegoating, of collective violence, is excluded, cast out, and *suffers* an act of violence. But, according to Girard, this victim is always an innocent victim, for the collective *fault* of undifferentiation via rivalry. Paradoxically then, this act of violence restores individuality and possibly authenticity to the one who suffers, for they have been forcibly excluded from the undifferentiated crowd and are distanced from the *committing* of the violence. The extreme pole of *suffering*, when seen to be a non-committed *suffering*, separates the polar moments of violence. This separation, in passivity to violence, actively is a reclamation of individuality, and thus of freedom. However, this freedom, is literally 'short-lived.' In an analogical mode, the one who converts from solipsistic mimetic mediation and sees their mediation as destructive of their authenticity, suffers with a sense of distance and proximity, to their own *committing* of the *decidere*. Thus this 'conversion' through *suffering* freely chooses the contrary of pride, in its 'humiliation' by accepting an innate mimetic dependence. They revalue others not as rivals, but as themselves, who both exist in a state of formative mimetic dependence. The one who converts suffers a death, a violence, through this realization, but by seeing through the cloud of *méconnaissance*, is able to understand *who* is *committing* this violence. The victim of the crowd undergoes this process in a more concrete, external mode, but without their choosing to do so. But how can the self-victim exemplify *suffering* in a manner as the crowd-victim? One seems like an exercise in self-reflection, the other arrives by a dehumanization, a brutality.

To understand the problem of freedom in this reversal, the interconnection between the self and the crowd must be mapped. Pride is self-violence that is both *committed* and *suffered*. Pride leads to rivalrous imitation, and eventually the loss of difference with the rival. The contagion of this 'scandalous' relationship eventually transforms into a mob or crowd. To prevent the

escalation of this system, the crowd identifies a scapegoat, the victim of their violence. The self-victim, through understanding an interpretation of its pride that it suffers, prevents the escalation in the beginning. The possibility of freedom at the beginning of this process, in conversion through a suffering in the rejection of pride, forms an ability to separate the poles of violence. However, when the mob leads to violence against a solitary victim, it leads to the victim's release from the crowd, also achieving a form of release from the system. Thus, those *who suffer* violence, yet hold to the act of non-violence, in a way model a distancing from the *committing*, which always implies another sufferer. By not reciprocating, the non-violence allows for this victim to escape the system and become an individual. The question remains, in the concrete experience of this victimization, is this individuality worth the suffering? How is this a 'response' to evil, other than a submission to it?

Thus freedom, a state dependent on others, but no longer seeking to vainly asset a false individuality, can be discovered within the Girardian system. However, to escape the circle, how the choice of model can be changed, through *suffering* violence and not *committing* it, still requires expansion. A clear answer within this paradoxical logic does not emerge, but what does emerge will indicate points of relief and of explanation in Ricœur's account of 'enslaved freedom' and the *thumos*. We were victims of our pride 'from the beginning' in the imitation of others' pride.[335] At all points we could have been released from the system, if the right mediator was proximal enough to be imitable. The demythologization of *méconnaissance* is possible in the reversal of the polar moments of violence, but only because *suffering* itself has already been shown to be an innocent *suffering*. The inescapability to this system to continue its cycle, the cycle of sacredness, of violence, of evil, depends on the *méconnaissance* of innocent suffering, and must preserve the non-distinction in the polar moments of violence. Thus, humanity is not determined by this system if 'good' mediators are able to exist. Yet, to explain how this freedom to choose mediators can function, we must move beyond the suspicious attitude of Girard, which has exhausted its spiral, which now waits for the intercession of the right mediator, and to restore belief in the notion of the agency of humanity within its 'bound' freedom.

[335] 'He was a murderer from the beginning' is a motif central to Girard's mimetic hermeneutic on evil, as discussed in the last chapter. Girard, *Things Hidden*, 162.

Part II: Ricœur on *Thumos* - Desire and Intersubjectivity

In this second part, I will begin with Ricœur's view of selfhood and then conclude with an analysis of his concept, the *thumos*. This 'reverse' progression will expand the Ricœurian concept of desire, a concept that is usually simply defined as 'lack,' 'need of,' or 'affirmation to be,' as a concept capable of the vision of intersubjectivity he claims it supports.[336] To accomplish this retroactive rediscovery and expression of desire in Ricœur, I will return to his concept of the *thumos* from *Fallible Man* after his account of intersubjectivity in *Oneself As Another*.[337] The challenge that will be presented at the end of this analysis will be the reverse of the difficulties seen with Girard's mimetic desire. This difficulty is the question of otherness, which is ultimately 'not other enough' to be truly intersubjective, for otherness is reduced to an interior in the task of self-understanding, which engages and seeks to define otherness' externality.[338] A return to the expression of intersubjectivity in Ricœur's *thumos*, and its role in the interior 'primordial conflict' of the self, seemingly reprised in the dialectical account of selfhood, sameness, and otherness, provides a path towards resolving this difficulty. Evil, when observed as the polar moment of violence that is *committed* and *suffered*, is seen as connected to the 'bound' freedom within the self to decide, a *decidere*, to subjugate the otherness within the self. To understand then the interior intersubjectivty that the *thumos* provides, I will analyze and relate its 'quests': *avoir*, *pouvoir*, and *avoir* (having, power, and worth). These are concretizations of thymic desire in action, which show an inherent ethical harmonious relationship with otherness, that is marked by non-violence. These 'quests' are easily seen as instances of the malformation of intersubjective

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[336] Ricœur defines desire as 'need or lack' in his early work *Freedom and Nature*; however, this analysis is only a starting point, to begin his explanation of the corporeal situation of humanity, and the biological drive in the 'eidetic' modality of this work. The biological function of desire in Girard is an appetite, which when compared to the full introductory definition of desire in *Freedom and Nature*, cuts away the biological notion of desire and opens the direction for the following analysis for a question of desire as it relates to freedom and subjectivity. 'Desire is the specific, directional experience of an active lack – that is, need or active affect – clarified by the representation of an absent object and of the means for attaining it, sustained by basic affective feelings…' Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* trans. Erazim V. Kohak (Northwestern University Press, 1966),104; Further, as Johann Michel indicates in his work *Ricœur and the Post-Structuralists* that Ricœur has a 'vitalistic' view of desire, so it is necessary to add to these influences, Spinoza's 'effort to be' and Jean Nabert's 'originary affirmation.' See Michel, *Ricœur and the Post-Structuralists*, 33.

[337] I find that this view, where Ricœur himself does the reverse, and reprises aspects of his discussion of *thumos* in *Oneself as Another*, is justifiable by the explicit structure of *Oneself as Another*, as a series of interconnected, specific 'studies' that each addresses the question, opened up by the previous study. My approach attempts to bring the specialization of *Oneself as Another* back into the more broad and existentialist, philosophical anthropology begun in *Fallible Man*.

[338] I cannot claim this quote for myself. These words were spoken to me by William Desmond in a pithy observation of Ricœur's *Oneself as Another*, when in conversation about my thesis project.

desire and reveal the structural interconnection between desire and violence, but in fact are posited as originally good. Thus, the understanding of evil internal to Ricœur's selfhood and desire, in the *thumos* and its quests, requires the externality of otherness as the object of these 'thymic quests.' Thus, a concrete anthropological externality, and not merely a phenomenological anthropology, is opened within the interior of Ricœur's intersubjective self, and is explored in the interpretation of symbols.[339] Yet, the concrete view of otherness is shown to be avoided by Ricœur in his closing of *Oneself as Another*, in a 'tone of Socratic irony' where he breaks off the discussion of otherness with an aporia.[340]

What this part will demonstrate is that although Ricœur and Girard differ over their views of subjectivity, one positing 'a wounded' subject and the other positing a mimetic non-subject, their views of the self share structural similarities (in reverse) with regards to the implications of desire and otherness as informing the self's intersubjective composition. The wounded cogito is the 'task' of interpretation, which can never be realized. [341] Girard, sees no vantage point from outside the system of violence, which entraps us all by our own misrecognized desires.[342] What the thymic and mimetic, 'welcoming anew,' provides is that the self is an existentially hermeneutic one, where the self whose 'task' of interpretation has an ethical urgency. The 'mirror' of its acts, the entirety of its interpretive sphere, is structured by the order of violence, an evil situation. The 'subject' of the mimetic-thymic self is 'wounded' by the violence of this system, and its task of interpretation is a *praxis* of non-violence, of demythologizing *méconnaissance*. Thus the 'reclamation of true subjectivity' occurs in the interpretation and understanding of the violence of the world, that is both suspicious of the system and believing in

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[339] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 258.

[340] 'Allow me to conclude on a tone of Socratic irony. Is it necessary to leave in such a state of dispersion the three great experiences of passivity—the experience of one's own body, of others, and of conscience—which introduced the three modalities of otherness on the plane of the "great kinds"? This dispersion seems to me on the whole well suited to the very idea of otherness. Only a discourse other than itself, I will say, plagiarizing the *Parmenides*, and without adventuring any further into the thicket of speculation, is suited to the metacategory of otherness, under penalty of otherness suppressing itself in becoming the same as itself.' Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 356.

[341] 'But this truth (*ego cogito*) is a vain truth; it is like a first step which cannot be followed by any other, so long as the *ego* of *ego cogito* has not been recaptured in the mirror of its objects, of its works, and, finally, of its acts.' Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics" in C*onflict of Interpretations*, 17.

[342] 'In that chapter, on the basis of one single intuition, Clausewitz raises himself above all Hegelianism. His view of history is more accurate, more concrete. You cannot view it from above or get an eagle-eye view of the events. I myself thought that was possible when I was writing *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, in which I imagined Christianity provided the point of view from which we could judge violence. However, there is neither non-sacrificial space, nor "true history."' Girard, *Battling to the End*, 35.

the 'secret possibility' of non-violence. The 'bound' freedom in this mimetic-thymic intersubjective self is the freedom to interpret, to understand, this violent system which we are mimetically 'bound' to, in our bonds to and by internal and external otherness. With the notion of *thumos* reclaimed into Ricœur's own philosophical anthropology, the gravity towards the self will show an inward aspect of the intersubjective that is not defined by the desire to merely understand itself, but a more *ekstatic* desire, towards an intersubjective harmony with otherness. By 'welcoming anew the mimetic concept' into the framework of an internal desire that seeks to be externally framed, the interpretation of this externality, which bears on the interiority via mimesis, can be properly demythologized and provide an ethical urgency to this intersubjective desire. Thus, if there is a subject, it must be interpreted from the intersubjective first, for we find ourselves already enmeshed in the objectifications of *thumos* made by our mimetic models – our imitated quests of *avoir*, *pouvoir*, and *valoir*.

Ricœur on Intersubjective Selfhood: Analyzing *Oneself as Another*

Ricœur's work, *Oneself as Another* serves as what Johann Michel calls Ricœur's 'intersubjective turn.'[343] Selfhood and otherness, are the explicit subject of this work, as the title indicates, and it serves as a culmination of the many years of Ricœur's research into his hermeneutics of the self, '… namely that the hermeneutics of the self is placed at an equal distance from the apology of the cogito and from its overthrow.'[344] As this quote mentions, Ricœur is striking a middle stance between the foundationalist view of the cartesian cogito, which is as 'vain as it is invincible' and the equally as radical suspicion of the subject, given as the 'anti-cogito' of Nietzsche.[345] Ricœur sees this hermeneutic self as a perpetual search for self-understanding in the construction, destruction, and expansion of narratives; however, the perpetuity which characterizes this hermeneutic discovery of the self, is not a Sisyphean, unproductive struggle, but the 'task of consciousness.'[346] This 'task of consciousness' is driven by the 'desire to be' and inaugurates the hermeneutic quest of discovering the self in the 'mirror' of its activities. *Oneself as Another*, then, is characterized by a diverse approach, attempting to answer the questions 'who am I,' 'who is the moral agent,' 'who is the narrative about?' By spanning a diversity of

[343] "Le tournant de l'intersubjectivité," in: Johann Michel, *Paul Ricœur: une philosophie de l'agir humain* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2006), 73-119.

[344]Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 4.

[345] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 12.

[346] Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," 22.

methodologies and backgrounds, which indicate the complexity that these questions reflect for a non-foundationalist view of selfhood, Ricœur is able to amass a multifaceted approach to answering these questions.[347]

In the last study of *Oneself as Another*, entitled 'What Ontology in View?,' it moves into where otherness breaks in upon the self, and calls forth a response. This breaking in upon the self is where Ricœur attributes to Lévinas the challenge where the face of the other calls the self to account.[348] Yet, by extending this 'injunction' beyond a dialogical sense of otherness, into the other outside of the merely 'you,' it expands the grounding for the ethical aim and the selfhood that responds via respect and solicitude.[349] These three moments of an internal otherness within the self are (1) the passivity of the flesh, (2) the passivity of what is foreign, and (3) the passivity inherent to conscience or *Gewissen*.[350] It is the function of *Gewissen*, that not only designates 'good and evil on the moral plane,' but also signifies the attestation of selfhood.[351] Ricœur states the conscience is 'that place par excellence in which illusions about oneself are intimately bound up with the veracity of attestation.'[352] Suspicion, then, in regards to conscience is necessary because of its complementary role to attestation (discussed in chapter 1) as the 'credence and trust' where one finds themselves '*existing* in the mode of selfhood.'[353] Ricœur sees this Heideggerian formulation of *Gewissen*, as ultimately lacking the primacy of the ethical aim, despite Heidegger's acknowledgement of 'debt' in the notion of the conscience. Ricœur considers the role of an

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[347] The book is divided into ten studies, beginning with his linguistic and analytic forays, speech act and action theory, narrative theory, ethics, morality, and ultimately phenomenology and ontology. Each study represents levels of inquiry that lead to the next level, and it is only in the last three studies where a resemblance to the existentialism, phenomenology, and anthropology depicted in *Fallible Man* is rejoined. Ricœur's justification for this is that a true hermeneutics of the self will have to be a philosophy of 'detours,' and the claims of language philosophy, analytic philosophy, and action theory, all provide ways to not only answer these questions concerning 'who,' but also provide the means to begin identifying the tripartite dialectical relation of sameness (*idem*), selfhood (*ipse*), and otherness.

[348] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 189. Also See Emmanuel Lévinas, *Autrment qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 180.

[349] What is solicitude? It is this balanced exchange of *giving* and *receiving*, between self and other. Thus violence can be seen as the structural 'dyssmetry' of this exchange. 'Now this balance can be considered as the midpoint of a spectrum, in which the end points are marked by inverse disparities between giving and receiving, depending on whether the pole of the self or that of the other predominates in the initiative of exchange.' Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 188.

[350] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 318.

[351] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 309.

[352] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 341.

[353] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 302.

'injunction' from the other as necessary to his formation of selfhood, but also considers it as more positively intersubjective, by being 'enjoined':

> To these alternatives – either Heidegger's strange(r)ness or Lévinas's externality – I shall stubbornly oppose the original and originary character of what appears to me to constitute the third modality of otherness, namely *being enjoined as the structure of selfhood.'*[354]

Thus '*being enjoined*,' the injunction from the Other, is where Ricœur pauses his reflections on the internal understanding of the otherness within the self. However, soon after this discussion, he concludes his study on a 'note of Socratic Irony,' because otherness, as otherness, cannot be discussed. Yet, considering this abrupt ending to the study, the direct connection to a strong otherness that is externally, and ethically implicated demonstrates that the evil choice lies in the diminution of 'self-esteem' into 'self-dilection.' This diminution of self-esteem affects solicitude, because of the dialogical relation between the two, and thus, in my reading, images the act of the *decidere*, the committing of violence against the self in pride, seen as this internal division. In my view, Ricœur's view of '*being enjoined* as the structure of selfhood' is too passive to the self, for the structure of otherness that is enjoined to the self, becomes self-determined and seemingly absorbed in the dialectical mediation. The self begins to be seen as expanding in otherness, not otherness affecting the self. However, to develop the function of desire more closely within this internal threefold otherness, I will turn now to *Fallible Man*, and the *thumos*, which will show how the activity of the intersubjective self in response to these three moments of otherness, demonstrate an understanding of evil in the interior to exterior thymic 'quests.'

Thumos and the Thymic Quests

If the subject is displaced into a task of understanding via the interpretations of its actions and passions, which begin in desire, then these thymic quests of 'having,' 'power,' and 'worth,' are the intersubjective domains of investigation where otherness and selfhood can be interpreted. Further, this interpretation can reveal the more concrete emergence of evil, in the intersubjective thymic quests that are ultimately driven by the restless heart, the 'primordial discord' of the *thumos*.

> No conflict between ourselves and some process susceptible of conferring upon us an assumed personality could be introjected if we were not already this disproportion of *bios* and *logos*, of living and thinking, of which our 'heart' suffers the primordial discord.[355]

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[354] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 354.

[355] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 132.

The disjunction of *bios* and *logos*, the involuntary and the voluntary, nature and freedom, is also the human situation of fallibility, and the locus of the symbolic.[356] The *thumos* is the ever-restless desire within the self that either 'fights on the side of' *epithumia*, vital desire, or *eros*, intellectual or spiritual desire. *Thumos* not only is a mediation of the two but becomes a mixture or *mélange*, with each of these forms of desire.

> It is the mode of fulfillment of *thumos*, therefore, that reveals its unstable position between the vital and the 'spiritual'…To the extent that the 'heart' is *thumos*, the heart is essentially what is restless in me. Between the finitude of pleasure, which encloses a well-delimited act and seals its repose, and the infinitude of happiness, *thumos* slips a note of indefiniteness and, along with it, the threat that clings to an endless pursuit.[357]

So, what makes *thumos*, a restless heart? Its 'mode of fulfillment' where it either mixes with the vital or the spiritual, and its aim towards the fullness of 'happiness.' In my reading, the infinitude of desire and its aim of plenitude are carried forward as the persistent theme. This theme is carried towards the entry for the evil within disproportion to emerge, 'Evil requires a specific act of preference.'[358] This act of preference, is a decision, integral to the *decidere*, that solidifies the boundaries of the divided self, and creates oppositions within the self.

When *thumos* and *epithumia* are 'mixed' we have the restless desire of the vital, characterized by sexuality. 'This is why sexuality has an uncommon position in anthropology; it is the area of tenderness, at once deeply instinctive and profoundly human. It realizes in the extreme the desire of the other's desire, jointly *epithumia* and *thumos.*'[359] In my reading, here is one of the conceptual openings that allow for the 'welcoming anew.' The desire of the other's desire as a relation in the *mélange*. The strong intersubjectivity, demonstrated in the sexual nature of the human, is not only a biological drive, or a pursuit of pleasure, but is ultimately pulled beyond into the infinitude of the 'desire of the other's desire,' the sharing and mediation of desire via intimacy with an otherness. This is further indicated as the 'soul' of *thumos*.

> The desire of desire, soul of *thumos*, proffers its objects in images and in ostensive representations to the objectless aim of happiness. Here is the source and the occasion of every mistake and all

[356] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 59.

[357] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 126.

[358] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 94-95

[359] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 129.

> illusion. But this mistake, this illusion, presupposes something more primordial that I call the affective figuration of happiness in *thumos.*[360]

The power of 'illusion,' or *méconnaissance*, is a deviation from the more primordial 'affective figuration of happiness' that animates desire's *ekstatic* movements. In my reading, it provides more detail to the mimetic drive in Girard, marked by the lack of being. It implies this 'lack of being' and the negative ontological language associated with it, and is the expression of the deviation from the inherent positivity of desire. So, not only in vital desire does *thumos* pursue the other's desire, but also in the intellectual, for the desire of desire is ultimately the core of the restless 'heart.' We also see the emergence of the illusions of desire, which directly echoes Girard's discussion of *méconnaissance* , where the fleeting objects of 'objectless' desire are replaced by others, indicated by the model that 'figures' happiness.

Ricœur's concept of *thumos* adds a reflexive or interior dimension to this restless 'heart' of the human by the innermost experience of feeling, or affectivity. Because of this reflexive opening between what is seen to be desirable 'out there' and how it manifests this feeling on the interior, it manifests the self as 'belonging' to the world and to others. What results is that feeling acknowledges and inaugurates the unity of the interhuman experience

> A reflection that would end the intersubjective constitution of the thing at the level of mutuality of seeing would remain abstract. We must add the economic, political, and cultural dimensions to objectivity; they make a human world out of the mere nature they start with… If feeling reveals my adherence to and my inherence in aspects of the world that I no longer set over and against myself as objects, it is necessary to show the new aspects of objectivity that are interiorized in the feelings of having, power, worth.[361]

To investigate and analyze *thumos* as it relates to its concrete, interhuman effects, Ricœur emphasizes that we must interpret *how* it manifests itself in its the intersubjective quests of having, power, and worth (*avoir*, *pouvoir*, and *valoir*) which are ultimately expressions of this ontological feeling, this belonging to the world. These are the specific quests of desire manifested in external objectifications and thus are a passage from the ontological to the anthropological.

> The originality of the desires of having, of power, and of worth lies in their undetermined terminus: the desire of desire has no end. A truly human situation is born as soon as a random desire is traversed by this desire of desire.[362]

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[360] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 130.

[361] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 112.

[362] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 127.

These quests of having, power, and worth concretize the abstract 'desire to be' from *Freedom and Nature*, and place it now within the frame of a hermeneutic understanding. These quests which are 'truly human' and 'properly intersubjective' become the entry point for analyzing these 'quests' as three aspects of the manifestations of desire, and thus hermeneutic moments of understanding evil's relationship to intersubjective desire.

The Thymic 'Quests': *Avoir, Pouvoir, Valoir*

In order to understand these thymic 'quests,' Ricœur wants to analyze these 'quests' as 'no longer mad and in bondage but constitutive of human praxis and the human Self.'[363] This means he dissociates these 'fallen' versions from a more 'original' formation, prior to the emergence of *fault*. In my reading 'backwards' from *Oneself as Another* to *Fallible Man*, these three forms of 'thymic quests' have as their counterparts the three forms inherent aspects of otherness explained in the tenth study of *Oneself as Another*: otherness of the flesh, the otherness of what is foreign, and the otherness of conscience or *Gewissen*.

The first 'quest' of having, *avoir*, it is not appropriation, but an intersubjective form of having that establishes both a We or Our and forms the I in association with these others.

> If man's goodness is to be possible, even as a past or future utopia, this goodness would require the innocence of a certain having. It should be possible to draw a dividing line that cuts not between being and having, but between unjust having and a just possession that would distinguish among men without mutually excluding them…Through the mediation of the 'we' and 'our,' the 'I' would again join itself to a 'mine.'[364]

The 'mine' of possession does not invalidate others but establishes identity within the intersubjective relation. Further, at a more original level, the notion of my body, or my flesh, as expressing the 'sphere of ownness' indicates this possibility for desirous quest of having an otherness internal to me, that is primordially good and necessary. The 'having' of a body and possessions can be objects of rivalry but are also the source of a proper distinction of an individual within intersubjective harmony. The thymic quest of *avoir*, in its non-fallen form, prevents the dissolution of 'mineness,' into undifferentiation, and makes intersubjective harmony an active participation, a movement towards others that are also identifiable in their self-possession.

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[363] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 111.

[364] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 115.

Pouvoir or power, which Ricœur identifies more with the political state or notion of authority over the work of others is harder to change into an idealized form.

> I can conceive of an authority which would propose to educate the individual to freedom, which would be a power without violence; in short, I can imagine the difference between power and violence; the utopia of a Kingdom of God, a City of God, and empire of minds or kingdom of ends, implies such an imagination of a non-violent power… Through this highly meaningful goal I 'endow' history, in fact, with a meaning. By means of this imagination and utopia I discover power as primordially inherent in the being of man. In turning away from this meaning, in making himself foreign and alienated from this sense of non-violent power, man becomes alienated from himself.[365]

Power indicates a 'dissymmetry' for Ricœur as the capability of an agent to commit violence to another, and thus the ethical aim of a 'just institution' requires an acknowledgement of the disproportion in the relationship of the agent to otherness it can wield its violence against.[366] We see the 'kingdom of God' as an intersubjective situation of humanity, where violence is dissociated from power. The power, here, reveals humanity as capable, but this capability requires the common, unifying aim or 'meaning.' This meaning that is 'endowed' via a positive expression of desire establishes a more communal, more intersubjective view of the self, and how desire is drive for an actualization of positive human capability when focused on this 'meaning' of the intersubjective harmony of a 'kingdom.' Further, in connection to the second form of otherness expressed in *Oneself as Another*, the foreign, the notion of *pouvoir* indicates a necessary relation to a foreign otherness, where the power of the kingdom, or the community, cannot be used to reduce or subjugate the foreign. In the malformation of this thymic quest, it is easy to show how the dissymmetry of power enacts violence, as reaction to this otherness.

Yet these two 'quests' only are not enough to fully reveal the interior constitution of the self in desire, via an innocent having or non-violent community. There still requires the constitution of the self in the esteem of the other. In *Oneself as Another*, this is the otherness of the

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[365] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 120.

[366] 'But here again, we must go further to the very forms of disesteem of self and hatred of others, in which suffering exceeds physical pain. With the decrease of the power of *acting*, experienced as a decrease of the effort of *existing*, the reign of suffering, properly speaking, commences. Most of these sufferings are inflicted on humans by humans. The result is that most of the evil in the world comes from violence among human beings. Here, the passivity belonging to the metacategory of one's own body overlaps with the passivity belonging to the category of other people; the passivity of the suffering self becomes indistinguishable from the passivity of being the victim of the other (than) self-victimization appears then as passivity's underside, casting a gloom over the "glory" of action.' Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 320.

conscience, or the dialogical relationship between self-esteem and solicitude.[367] The quest of *valoir*, or worth is externalized in 'another's opinion,'

> I expect another to convey the image of my humanity to me, to esteem me by making my humanity known to me. This fragile reflection of myself in another's opinion has the consistency of an object…[368]

This 'fragile reflection' of humanity in 'another,' held by their esteem, strengthens the intersubjective bonds with otherness, beyond that of having or power. This is the quest of desire being recognized by another self, the 'valorizing' gaze, that is not conflict, but the reflection of a mirror. The reflecting imagery appears again, where first we encountered it in the hermeneutic 'task of consciousness' that must interpret itself in the 'mirror of its acts.' In my reading, the mirror, an object that imitates, that reproduces a copy, points this reflection of *valoir*, not only back towards the function of the 'mirror' of the 'task of consciousness,' but an opening towards mimesis. The question that remains though what are these mirrors of 'humanity?'

> 'Works' of art and literature, and, in general, works of the mind, insofar as they not merely mirror an environment or an epoch but search out man's possibilities, are the true 'objects' that manifest the abstract universality of the idea of humanity through their concrete universality.[369]

These cultural 'objectifications' are 'the concrete universality' of humanity and establish an 'environment' that promotes an intersubjective formation of 'universal' selfhood to be. Thus, the moment of 'esteem' is culturally and intersubjectively preserved and concretized. The 'mirroring' of humanity in *valoir*, that is not just duplication, but an attempt to 'search out man's possibilities.' Intersubjective communion then, in the 'thymic quests' is productive, 'mimetic' (in the sense of the mirror), yet individualized by a 'restless,' divided desire.

The moment of esteem, from the external sphere, is interiorized, to become the relation of self to itself.

> Self-esteem or 'thymic' egoism is an indirect relation, mediate from myself to myself in passing through the valorizing regard of another. Because the relation to self is an interiorized relation to another, opinion and belief are the core of it; worth is neither seen nor known but believed.'[370]

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[367] 'Prior to any consideration of the justice of the exchanges, the dialectic of self-esteem and friendship can be entirely rewritten in terms of a dialectic of action and affection. In order to be the "friend of oneself"—in accordance with Aristotelian *philautia*—one must already have entered into a relation of friendship with others, as though friendship for oneself were a self affection rigorously correlative to the affection by and for the other as friend.' Ricœur, *Oneself As Another*, 330.

[368] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 123

[369] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 123.

[370] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 124.

The notion of the necessity of the other's view and other's desire in regard to myself are present in this 'valorizing regard.' The function of conscience, or *Gewissen*, from *Oneself as Another*, is relatable to this sense of being valued by the other, at an internal level, and by '*being enjoined*' to this otherness. Conscience's injunction to this 'regard' from an internal otherness also functions as an attestation or belief in our selfhood. The quest of *valoir* reflects this function of attestation and belief in our own selfhood that requires the opinion or esteem of the other.

Thus, in reading 'backwards' from the intersubjectivity of *Oneself as Another* to *Fallible Man*, Ricœur's concept of the *thumos*, as the 'restless heart' provides a more capable view of desire and selfhood, regarding the otherness, internal and external to the self. This view is more capable, because the threefold internal otherness, is discoverable in the externalized thymic quests. But in order to interpret these externalized quests, and the modality of how the 'mirroring' can be interiorized from the external sphere, and to catch sight of how these primordially good thymic quests, become 'fallen,' I will turn back to Girard's mimetic self.

Part III: A Ricœur-Girardian Hermeneutic Self? Mimesis, *Thumos*, Intersubjectivity, and Evil

At the end of the last chapter, evil was shown to be approachable through the polar structure of violence that inhabits both the interior and exterior directions into and out from the self. Mimetic desire and the '*interdividuel*' demonstrate a focus on the more exterior or the more 'objective' focus of evil. The *thumos* and its 'primal discord' reveal an interior, 'subjective' expression of desire via the thymic quests, which can be hypothetically posited as originally good, yet able to become 'fallen' by the 'restless heart' at the center of human fallibility. The 'welcoming anew' begins with the Ricœurian beginning from a self that finds its 'quests' of desiring in intersubjective objectifications. When this desire is seen as a mimetic desire of another's mimetic desire, it also must be interpreted, because these objectifications are in fact 'mirrors' of other mimetic desires. The danger that arises is that this mimetic 'mirroring' is filled with the illusions, the *méconnaissance*, in these desires of desires, which dwell in and around this imitation. The liability of the thymic quests, then to 'fall,' into violent 'quests' is seen as the dissymmetry of the self's 'power' over otherness, the dissymmetry of being a capable agent. This is seen with each of the thymic 'quests' counterparts of internal otherness: having – mineness, power - foreignness, worth – conscience. Violence then is the structure of violating and diminishing each of these internal and external forms of otherness. The welcoming of mimesis into this framework shows

that, at an anthropological level, these forms of otherness are also forms of modeling, forms of fascination, and 'objects' of desire. Mimetic desire explains how this framework can become 'evil,' by providing the modality for how these intersubjective and other mediated desires, can pass between self and other, without reducing the 'agency' of the other as well. Further, the decentering of this mimetic binding to others, makes the mimetic-thymic self one of these intersubjective objectifications of desire, to be interpreted.

Thus, the structural similarity between both Ricœur and Girard is that desire is always intersubjective and divided within its own desire. This complexity of the mixture (*mélange*) or the mediation leads to the necessity of interpreting this desire via its intersubjective objectifications, of which the self is itself one of these 'mimetic' objectifications. The mimetic-thymic self can be considered as a hermeneutic 'task' of consciousness, but its purpose is not to discover itself in the 'mirror of its acts,' but to *reclaim* itself, by refusing to 'mirror' the system of violence and *méconnaissance*. The ethical urgency, as a *praxis* of the hermeneutic self, emerges in response to the malformation of the thymic quests, preserved in culture. The understanding of intersubjectivity, and the self's mimetic composition, also takes place in the deciphering of misrecognition in the mimetic cultural institutions. The major point of agreement between Ricœur and Girard is that a pretension to a strong, foundationalist subject is one of those illusions of desire, that is in fact an act of violence to an always already mediated self. The concept of *thumos* provides insight into the dividedness within our desire and the structure of interiorization of these objectifications via our affectivity. Thus, Ricœur provides an account of an interiority to the intersubjective self, and an interiority through the phenomenological positing of thymic desire as primordially good. The concept of mimesis, when 'welcomed' into the Ricœurian frame establishes not only an intuitive account of the imitative modality of desire and its contagiousness on the anthropological plane, but the complexity and supremacy that the other can determine on what we believe to be 'our' desires, within this divided self. The directionality of the *thymic* 'quests' is shown to be reversed in the directionality of the *mimetic* 'quests.' The mimetic concept prevents the Ricœurian 'task of consciousness' from reducing these forms of otherness to a project of self-understanding, by always leaving open the mediation of mimetic desire affectively interiorized within the divided self. The internal-external relating of the mimetic and thymic intersubjective desire then is both self-constituting and community constituting.

Otherness, *Interdividuel*-ity, and Response

The focus on the 'other' as having an unavoidable yet hidden influence on the self's intersubjective composition also brings forward the concept of mimetic desire as a key towards 'unmasking' selfhood's propensity toward the 'illusions of desire' because of its necessary communal formation of the self by imitation. One can now explain the passing into the self, as not absorbed, in a Hegelian manner, but mimetically imitated, in a Girardian manner.[371] This mimetic externality of the *interdividuel* doesn't hypostatize otherness, so as to make it an object of fascination or fear (although it elaborates on how this transformation is possible), but also does not reduce it completely to an object to be absorbed in the quest for its self-understanding. Self-understanding must be an other-understanding, but not an other-understanding that must be conceptually 'exhausted' of meaning. Thus, mimetic desire as an 'explanatory hypothesis' begins with instances of this communal formation of the objective sphere, where the *interdividuel* is mimetically mediated via external mediators (literature, myth, and even institutions), which are the preservations of mimetic activity and continue to function as cultural 'mediators.' Internal mediation enters the proximal realm of the social sphere, which is thus an explanation for conflict and rivalry. But before this explanatory hypothesis can move even closer to the interior of the *interdividuel*, the suspicious attitude of interpretation leaves us with an empty self, one not possible to convert or reclaim an authentic selfhood for itself.

Thus the purely mimetic cannot be said to answer the central question, the understanding of evil, and its narrowed form regarding Ricœur's question of moral imputation by asking 'Who?' Yet, Ricœur's expression of intersubjectivity as emerging from the dividedness of the restless heart of *thumos*, provides an interior network of relations that are directly reflective of mimetic mediation of desire. By 'welcoming anew' the modality of a mimetic binding into this '*being enjoined*' to otherness, the structure of this self retains its interior division, but also a concretized relationship to otherness in a relationship of always imitating otherness. Thus, the question of understanding evil is taken to the thymic quests' original motives as reflective of the reciprocal relationship to otherness at the heart of this intersubjective self. The question of understanding evil then is a question of understanding the self who is composed in the ethical response to evil,

[371] For Ricœur's Hegelian influence, see Michel, *Ricœur and the Post-Structuralists*, 34.

yet whose moral imputation in 'the initial dissymmetry' characteristic of the agent, is called to not commit violence to the otherness in its 'wicked' heart.

Pride, *Méconnaissance*, and 'Individual Moral Integrity'

Despite the origin of evil remaining beyond the resources of this chapter, the polar representation of violence as both *suffered* and *committed*, reveals that the intersubjective self as co-extensive with this evil situation, in its free choice to commit the violence, will in turn suffer its 'own' evil. Violence is *committed* in the 'bound' free act of choosing the side of division, rather than a non-violence peace in this natural 'conflict,' that does not have to be seen as such. This division is not only within the self, but it draws its *fault* lines (to borrow Ricœur's discussion of 'fault' from *Fallible Man* and *Symbolism of Evil*) into the relationship with the other that is formative and inescapable. Thus, the self's co-extensiveness must be able to reflect the external and internal dimension of the intersubjective that is also an inward, affecting, private experience simultaneously. The violence of choosing the false interior self, the 'romantic illusion,' is a rejection of our *interdividuel*-ity, committing violence to the interior and exterior, thus representing the bi-polar moments of violence, simultaneously.

Beginning then with mimetic desire to understand evil and selfhood - it is the denial of mimesis, or imitation, as the modality of desire, where the pride of 'the romantic illusion' can assert itself as the individual, as the progenitor of the self's 'quest' for being. In my reading, the violence of humanity, the evil phenomenon par excellence, is seen as the negative internal structuring to the malformation of the thymic quests, which also is externally objectified, by the thymic movement to the 'external.' Thus, Girard's assertion, regarding humanity as always within this violent 'order of the world,' seems to even extend its 'ordering' into the divided desire of the self. As Kremplewska states, 'In other words, the apocalyptic horizon which is predicted by Girard requires a heightened individual (moral) integrity.'[372] Because of this radical interconnection of desire, the evil of pride and self-violence it inaugurates is already a violence to others, which always multiplies. It is thus *méconnaissance* , or misrecognition, of the source of desire that is not just 'a simple mistake' of ignorance but is the beginning of an entire chain of loss of difference, rivalry, violence, and thus evil in the objective sphere. It is the 'lie' at the emergence of the 'fallenness' of desire, a 'lie,' figurated as 'he who was a murderer from the

[372] The apocalyptic dimension will be discussed in chapter 5. See Kremplewska, "Erroneous Paths of the Subject," 307.

beginning.'[373] Thus the interpretation, the hermeneutic task of mimetic-thymic selfhood, has an ethical urgency to demythologize this lie in the external sphere, but also within the 'primoridal conflict' of the self. Kremplewska's point, about a 'heightened individual moral intergrity' reveals a necessity to the Girardian system that has always been a focus of Ricœur's philosophy, *l'homme capable*, who acts '*with and for others in just institutions*' while in the world of *fault*. Ricœur's attempt to postulate a 'prefallen' desire in a realized *thumos*, is necessary to show the effects of evil as a decision, or a *fault committed*, co-extensive with freedom.

An 'Enslaved' Freedom

Freedom finds itself enslaved in this situation, recalling the *servile will* from chapter 2, if it chooses a vain attempt at self-dilection. The self can only reclaim its 'true subjectivity' by a harmonization of its relationship to otherness in the participation of a We. This changes the view of the double-bind of enslaved freedom into one of harmonious dependency, a positive, yet fallible, existence. The intersubjectivity established by the fallibility of its 'enslaved freedom,' can devolve into a yearning of desire to appropriate, dominate, or become valorized above others. To pursue the fallen version of the *valoir*, is to desire to become the intersubjective center point for others. The mimetic-thymic implication of desire reveals the 'bipolar' moment of this pretension as violent, and its violence is the phenomenal emergence of evil co-extensive with this choice, this *decidere*. This choice fails in its goal to become individualized, because its bind to otherness is seen in its violence to it in both the exterior dimension and the interior dimensions. By attempting to reduce otherness, it becomes fascinated by it, scandalized by it. Healing is seen in Girard's discussion of an authentic non-violent community, where no one has to 'turn the other cheek' to violence because no one has struck first.[374] There is no intimidation or deterrence to establish this decree, but an openness to receive the other's strike, that does not come. What *thumos* and mimesis both illustrate is that this originally good potentiality of a fallible desire must necessarily harmonize an abandon, or conversion, to an otherness that is as intimate to us, as it is alien:

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[373] Girard, *I See Satan*, 86.

[374] This quote also contains an allusion to the return of freedom to the mimetic self, with the phrase 'each person separately.' 'For all violence to be destroyed, it would be sufficient for all of mankind to decide to abide by this rule. If all mankind offered the other cheek, no cheek would be struck. But for that to be possible, it would be necessary *for each person separately* and all people together to commit themselves irrevocably to the common purpose.' Emphasis mine. Girard, *Things Hidden*, 211.

> The moment of abandon is familiar to us: it comes out of the participation in an Idea, in a We, wherein we recognized the essence of spiritual desire… On the other hand, this abandon, wherein we recognized the genius of *Eros*, is connected to the restlessness peculiar to the themes of *thumos*: the impassioned man puts his whole capacity for happiness on the 'objects' in which a Self is constituted.[375]

'Abandon' to the We, or participating in a 'kingdom' indicates the demand of being and happiness, which we see can become disfigured as we 'abandon' the view of our fallibility into a romantic illusion of our spontaneous desire and egoism. We either 'abandon' in a positive sense, as a We or the kingdom, as an *ekstasis* towards true non-violent community, or we 'abandon' ourselves to the crowd, the mob, the order of violence. The positive view of the mimetic-thymic composition of desire is that it must harmonize with intersubjectivity to become individualized, so that no violence is *committed* or *suffered* which attempts to subjugate the internal or external otherness.

Conclusion

Both expressions of intersubjective desire indicate a search for the 'fullness of being' or true happiness that can only be realized when desire has reached its most intersubjective expression - in a non-violent, non-appropriative, communal existence with others and selves. Yet, after Ricœur elaborates his philosophical anthropology in *Fallible Man*, his hermeneutic self, driven by the 'task of consciousness,' moves forward into the expressions of these thymic quests in his book, *The Symbolism of Evil*, which explores the cultural and religious understanding of evil. Girard, after he elaborated mimetic desire in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, moved into an investigation of sacrifice, religion, and violence at the heart of humanity, in *Violence and the Sacred.* Thus, to 'mirror' their respective movements into the symbolic frame, the division between *bios* and *logos*, is to attempt to reveal a more concrete, more progressive understanding of humanity's evil situation, co-extensive with our malformed intersubjective desire. The mimetic-thymic self can provide a more profound understanding of evil in Ricœur and Girard's shared areas of investigation as I turn now to Part II of this dissertation: Symbol and Myth.

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[375] Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 131.

Part II

Chapter 4: Symbol and Myth

"Traditional Christian thinkers could proclaim the cleavage between Christianity and everything else, but were incapable of demonstrating it. Anti-Christian thinkers can note the continuity but they were unable to come to terms with its true nature. Among our contemporaries, only Paul Ricœur, particularly in his fine work La Symbolique du mal, is willing to argue with determination that both positions are necessary."[376]

Introduction

Now, in the beginning of Part II of this dissertation, how does one develop the hermeneutic understanding of the 'already thereness' of evil, internal and external to the self in a situation of 'enslaved freedom' via a mimetic-thymic desire? To develop an identification of this possible place of origin, where evil is first discoverable in the polar moment of violence, I will turn to how the understanding of evil can be approached in language: through symbol and the mythic narratives that place symbol in a context. In chapter 1, I discussed how Ricœur's bivalent structure of the symbol itself inaugurates the necessity for a bi-directional interpretation, seen in the 'conflict of interpretations,' due to its structural ambivalence.[377] In this chapter, the symbols of the earliest expressions of the representation of evil and violence, and their mythic narrative structure, are a historical process of the 'objectifications' by the 'fallenness' of the human condition. Thus, an investigation into the roots of symbolic representation of evil provides a potential entry towards the pre-semantic ground of symbolization from evil's 'already thereness.' By attempting to catch sight of this transition from the pre-semantic into the semantic understanding, at the dividing line between *bios* and *logos*, this investigation identifies a possible concretization, where an event of intersubjective violence, and thus, evil, is not only preserved in symbolic language, but inaugurates the power and desire for its 'redescription.' Girard's view of myth and symbol, as generated in a violent event, starts this anthropological movement that can be grafted onto the hermeneutic movement of Ricœur's interpretation of the symbol-metaphor-myth relationship.

It is important to treat symbol, myth, and later, tragedy, and testimony, not as a 'quarry to be mined' for my own 'sovereign designs' but to allow the understanding of evil to be shown as a progressive realization in anthropological-hermeneutic in the connection between the

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[376] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 445.

[377] See chapter 1, 'The Conflict of Interpretations", section entitled 'Origin in Symbol,' page 4-7.

symbol to mythic experience.[378] This anthropological dimension to the hermeneutic provides a means towards expressing the unavoidable 'historicality' of understanding of evil, demonstrating the human expression of its 'evil' situation evolves with the growth of its changing relationship to culture, violence, and selfhood. By analyzing the common mythic and anthropological texts between Ricœur and Girard, the expansion of the development of evil as emerging with the sacred, and this revelation of its violence as such, will demonstrate the evolving interpretation of humanity's existential situation in relation to evil. The mimetic-thymic self, that commits and suffers evil via the violence of its ambivalent *decidere*, will be shown as the ground that cannot spontaneously generate evil, but shares the responsibility as a co-founder, with the genesis of culture.

This hermeneutic understanding reveals a pre-historical boundary to this discovery in the mythic symbolisms of this structurally ambivalent origin and situation. With violence as the concrete emergence of this polar terror, this mythical progression enters into the 'historical.' The progression of understanding that both Ricœur and Girard indicate shows a growing movement away from violence and the bloody catharsis of sacrifice, where the obfuscation of the sacrificial origin of myth is complicit, but also the means for a critique of this ordered violence. The cultural moments of critique and self-reflection towards the border between myth and tragedy reveal the sacred as ambivalent masters both providing cultural reserves to combat this violence and prevent its spread, but ultimately by a legislation of an economy of violence. The non-violent realization is the plea for a 'defender of victims' and an escape from the 'satanic structure of "bad" mimesis,' that must arrive via an acknowledgement of our interior violence, seen in the progressive symbolic stages of guilt, from sin and defilement. The situation of bound freedom or the *servile will* requires a mimetic model that reveals the evil situation, and the path out of this polar situation of violence. The symbolic and mythic level reveal upon this 'conflict of interpretations' that the internal violence of the *decidere*, as pride or vanity, within the self, reflects the foundational movement of violence, in the generation of the 'matrix of terror,' the founding murder at the evil 'heart' of the self, community, and culture.

Structure

In part I of this chapter, I will expand the discussion of symbol for Ricœur and Girard, looking at Girard's violent origin to symbolization as comparable to Ricœur's 'matrix of terror,'

[378] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 241.

the generative violence of differentiation. This radically suspicious view will be shown to be expanded into the productive, interpretive function of symbols able to be redescribed at the metaphorical level, and thus able to structurally provide for this bidirectionality. Therefore, this paradox to humanity's evil situation reveals a necessity in the redescriptive power of metaphoric language to both reveal this violent origin to hominization, but provide a means to distance ourselves via a progressive understanding of how this origin is, in fact, evil, and respond to it. The stages of this progressive understanding will be seen in the symbolic stages of defilement, sin, and guilt from Ricœur's *Symbolism of Evil.*

In part II of this chapter, I will look at myth itself in Ricœur's *Symbolism of Evil* and Girard's *Violence and the Sacred, Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World,* and *The Scapegoat.* Myth operates as a second order symbol by placing these prior symbols within a narrative context. This narrative context attempts to represent a beginning to evil in the connection between Girard's view of generative violence in symbolization into the role of this violence for generating myth.

In part III of this chapter, I will combine Girard and Ricœur's analysis of the Myth of Adam and Eve, which functions as the anthropological myth of evil par excellence. The internal-external *decidere* is mapped into the communal sphere, the mediation of the serpent, and Cain's founding fratricide of Abel. This consolidation of symbols in the figure of Adam as universal humanity, inaugurates the series of figures who reveal the progression of understanding evil, beyond the symbolic stages, as will be seen in chapter 5.

The outcome of this 'conflict of interpretations' then is that the understanding of evil has progressed through the historical configuration and reconfiguration of myths and symbols, in the urge to distance ourselves from violence, and forced its obfuscation and sublimation into institutions, the law, and bloodless scapegoating of the self in the 'hell of guilt.' Thus evil, understood as the polar moment of violence suffered and committed, can only be seen to be such, when its entanglement with our scapegoats, who are now ourselves, has the possibility of being pardoned. Evil rests on a moment of reinterpretation that must reveal the system as a cycle of accusation, a 'satanic system of bad mimesis,' a system trapped in the infinitude of the desire of desire. This system's origin in the primitive dread of retribution, plausibly acted upon as the founding murder, also simultaneously relied on the internal violence of the *decidere* in the loss of self, by the forming of crowds and their acts of violence. The culture-building mechanism, revealed in the symbolicity of the victim, as the matrix of difference, can only be revealed to be

evil, and not a necessary evil, when the impossibility of an 'external position' to the system is revealed. Therefore, evil cannot be discovered or considered to be as such, without another interpretive figure, one who testifies to the truth of victims and a path of non-violence while being within the system of 'bound' freedom.

Part I – Understanding Evil through Symbol

The function of Symbol for Girard and Ricœur

In this part I will return to the discussion of the symbol begun in chapter 1. In that chapter I discussed the function of symbol mainly from the Ricœurian perspective, and how its bivalence inaugurated a 'conflict of interpretations' as a necessary hermeneutic method. I will turn now to more closely analyze the Girardian conception of symbol. His positing of the emergence of symbolicity in the process of hominization by the founding murder, is not only a shocking, totalizing thesis about language and difference, but can be seen to be directly applicable to an aporia beyond Ricœur's view of the phenomenology of the symbol. This is the hypothesis regarding this non-semantic ground of experience that belies the symbol of defilement. By beginning with the hypothesis of the murder as the matrix of symbolicity, the Ricœurian bivalence of symbol, and its reprisal into metaphor, seen with the productive power of mythic narratives, serves as the symbolic reflection of the polar moment of evil itself, as internal and external, revealed and redescribed. The non-semantic foundation in experience, the experience of violence against violence, then anchor's the progressive understanding of Ricœur's primary symbols of evil: Defilement, Sin, and Guilt.

The Victim as the Matrix of Difference

To understand the function of symbol in Girard is to understand the generative power of violence, originating in a founding communal act of violence against a victim, establishing difference at the heart of hominization.[379] How does the explication of Girard's violence and

[379] A deeper investigation of Girard's usage of his own version of the founding murder hypothesis, of which he attributes Freud for inspiration, will not be explored in this chapter, but Ricœur's connection to this originally Freudian hypothesis will be. Freud's *Totem and Taboo* states 'The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished an identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind's earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things – of social organization, of moral restrictions, of religion.' Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo and Other Works (1913-1914)*, trans. General Editorship of James Stachey. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 13*: (Vintage, 2001) 142.

symbolicity, yield a path towards understanding this primordial violence? It is because symbolicity is possible by the 'matrix of difference' commenced with the expulsion of the victim, and the establishment of a community out of the chaos of undifferentiation. To develop a Girardian view of the symbol, I will first show how he describes the passage from the event of collective murder to the victim as 'transcendental signifier.' Here I must quote at length:

> Since the victim is a common victim it will be at that instant the focal point for the members of the community… To the extent that the new type of attention is awakened, the victim will be imbued with the emotions provoked by the crisis and its resolution. The powerful experience crystallizes around the victim… There is no need to assume that the mechanism of awakening attention works right away; one can imagine that for a considerable period it produced nothing at all, or *next to nothing*… One cannot imagine starting with a structuralist system containing two differentiated elements that have the same degree of value. There is a simpler model that is uniquely dynamic and genetic… This is the model of the exception that is still in the process of emerging, the single trait that stands out against a confused mass or still unsorted multiplicity. It is the model of drawing lots, of the short straw, or of the bean in the Epiphany cake…This is the simplest symbolic system, and yet no one considers it worthy of mention or consideration, *even though it is frequently associated with ritual.*[380]

Girard's archaeological movement sees in 'the model of the exception,' often connected with ritual, a trace of this most rudimentary form of symbolism: the one in opposition to the many. He sees at the origin of signification an event filled with emotionally charged difference. This event establishes the identity of the community as only definable as such by the exclusion of the one. The one to the many becomes the one victim to the one community. Thus the border between an

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The resemblance to Girard's founding murder is directly perceivable, but the major differences rest on the necessity of the father as the victim, for Girard, that type of victim selection is too specified and attached to the sexual rivalry, 'All the same his response is not viable. His single murder, which occurs once and for all time, cannot explain the repetition of rituals.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 25.

Ricœur's analysis of this passage from Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, in his *Freud and Philosophy*, states a similar objection to Girard's: 'By the same token, the problem of institutionalization, or social organization, reappears in full force; in mythical terms, how could the prohibition against "fratricide" arise from a "parricide"?... Of course, without the jealousy of the father of the horde, there are no prohibitions; and without the parricide there is no stopping of the jealousy. But the two ciphers, jealousy and parricide, are still ciphers of violence: parricide puts a stop to jealousy; but what puts a stop to parricide as a repeatable crime?... the true problem of the law is not parricide but fratricide; in the symbol of the brothers' covenant Freud encountered the basic requisite of analytic explanation, which was the problem of Hobbes, Spinoza, Rousseau, and Hegel – namely, the change from war to law…' Paul Ricœur, *Freud & Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage. (Yale University Press, 1970) 210-11.

Ricœur sees that Freud's founding murder hypothesis biases the hierarchic classifications inherited from Darwin's analyses, and that how can one differentiate between 'objects' of murder, fratricide or patricide, when violence as such is the primal issue for the horde. The 'change from war to law' is the principal focus of Girard's expansion and reformulation of the Freudian founding murder, into a collective, non-specific act of violence. Ricœur's objections to Freud's founding murder are directly addressed, by both expanding desire outside of its 'subjectivist' expression, into its mimetic, and the priority of violence as such for structuring hierarchies and human society, prior to a primal horde.

[380] Emphasis not mine. Girard, *Things Hidden*, 100-01.

inside of the community and the outside to the community is symbolically and violently possible, grounded in action and affectivity. This 'double transference' of positive effects —order, peace, and catharsis — and negative emotions — fear, hatred, and disorder — foreshadow the fundamental ambivalence of the primitive sacred: the loved-hated, worshipped-feared, deity. This ambivalence is directly tied to the hated-loved victim, sent forth and designated by the multiplicity, which is now an identity. Here, the description of evil as polar, *suffered* and *committed*, is seen in the ambivalent structure of victimization in this founding act of violence. Thus the victim, and the violence that structures the difference between the victim and the community, is this concrete origin to symbolization.

How does this symbolization of differentiating violence lead to the complex structures of the sacred? The fear is continued by the fact anyone of the undifferentiated multiplicity could be designated to *suffer* this violence. They could be *contaminated* by this differentiated *one*. But because the victim's guilt is assumed or never even considered in the undifferentiated chaos of the war of 'all against all,' caused by the mimetic crisis, the justification for this violence is created much later. The victim, the one, is seen to have committed the violent act of differentiation, by being blamed for the chaos. The *one* then *suffers* and *commits* the violence, causing the violent crisis and but also providing its healing. Thus, the bidirectionality of the victim, which could have been anyone from the multiplicity, contains the polar identity of violence in its symbolization — the poles of *suffering* and *committing* — now seen as the ambivalent sacred. The victim is deified and considered the founder of the community, yet the victim is lost in its earliest traces, lost in the un-witnessable, unfalsifiable, *event*.[381] Only the ritual of sacrifice and the mythic narratives remain. Girard continues expanding the role of the victim:

> Because of the victim, in so far as it seems to emerge from the community and the community seems to emerge from it, for the first time there can be something like an inside and an outside, a before and after, a community and the sacred. We have already noted that the victim appears to be simultaneously good and evil, peaceable and violent, a life that brings death and a death that guarantees life...[382]

The bidirectionality of the victim and its interpretive ambiguity echo Ricœur's exposition of the concept of the symbol explained in chapter 1.[383] Further, the 'pre-semantic' ground for the

[381] The relation of event and witness to the function of testimony will be explored in the next chapter.

[382] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 102-03.

[383] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 31.

symbol to have an archaeology, as well as the generative power for symbolicity, is given a concrete productive power and functionality. The origin of the symbol is the 'domain of action,' lived experience. This lived experience of the origin of the community is violent, yes, but also cathartic and order-generating. Out of a primordial chaos, a violent division has taken place, that is creative of the cultural order. Thus the reproduction, and later, redescription, of the symbolized victim, now generating a diversity of representations in ritual, proscriptions, hierarchies, all contain this structural ambivalence. I quote Girard again explaining the production of meaning from the victim, in relation to its role as 'the sign,' when placed in the context of ritual and the dissimulation of difference into the community.

> The sign is the reconciliatory victim. Since we understand that human beings wish to remain reconciled after the conclusion of the crisis, we can also understand their penchant for reproducing the sign, or in other words, reproducing the language of the sacred by substituting, in ritual, new victims for the original victim, in order to assure the maintenance of the miraculous peace… There is no difficulty in explaining why the ritual is repeated. Driven by sacred terror and wishing to continue life under the sign of the reconciliatory victim, men attempt to reproduce and represent this sign… The moment arrives when the original victim, rather than being signified by new victims, will be signified by something other than a victim, *by a variety of things that continue to signify the victim while at the same time progressively masking, disguising, and failing to recognize it.*[384]

The reproduction of this sign of both peace and terror, of the violent order surrounding the delicate repetition of ritual, done in order to prevent unchecked violence, grows and progresses with the culture it helps to represent. Many of the traces of a more brutal, primordial terror, is buried under the layers of *méconnaissance*, ritual, and redescription. Violence is both evil and good. Only an untangling of the whole system could yield a separation from this violent order. Only this untangling would reveal it to be evil, then, in retrospect.

To explain my reading of this elaboration of signification as within the symbolic order, I will turn to Girard's usage of 'symbolism' and 'desymbolism' from *Violence and the Sacred.*

> The term *desymbolism* is more appropriate to tragedy than is *symbolism.* It is because most of the symbols of the sacrificial crisis – in particular the symbol of the enemy brother – lend themselves so readily to *both* the tragic and ritual situations that tragedy has been able to operate, at least to some extent, within and also contrary to mythological patterns…Symbolized reality becomes, paradoxically, the loss of all symbolism; the loss of differences is necessarily betrayed by the differentiated expression of language. The process is a peculiar one, utterly foreign to our usual notions of symbolism. Only a close reading of tragedy, a radically symmetrical reading, will help us to understand the phenomenon, to penetrate the source of tragic inspiration. If the tragic poet

[384] Emphasis mine. Girard, *Things Hidden,* 103.

> touches upon the violent reciprocity underlying all myths, it is because he perceives these myths in a context of weakening distinction and growing violence.[385]

There are several points to explain here, because this excerpt encapsulates several key dimensions to understanding Girard's method and approach to language, myth, symbol, and tragedy. Symbols clearly are productions of meaning via the differentiation and substitution of victims, rituals, and eventually culture. When a culture seems to possess a capacity of internal self-critique towards its religious tenets, seen with Greek tragedy, for example, a process of 'desymbolization' is enacted. This process of desymbolization takes a reverse course through the 'sedimentation' of meaning, to borrow a phrase from Ricœur. Desymbolization, through a critique of the human-sacred relation, is attempting to represent the violence and disorder of the crisis that engendered this process, in the first place. Yet, when the language used by the tragedians becomes more untethered from its sacred sources, or radically differentiated through metaphoric and poetic combinations, there is a potential for the return of violence because the effectiveness of the collective unity that ritual and the sacred need to function effectively, is undermined by the 'weakening' effects. The collective *méconnaissance* necessary to create a cathartic ritual experience and thus mythic symbolism can only occur in a strong state of being bound to the 'lie' via collective attention and emotional identification with the scapegoating mechanism. There must be a unity of multiplicity by the crowd, or the community, for the positive benefits of scapegoating to be felt, and new gods to be made. The 'weakening' effects of desymbolization undermine the symbolic lineage of the 'signs' of the victim, seen in the cultural language of a community's sacred, and thus undermine the collective unity of the sacred rituals and the community. It this process of desymbolization, seen in the 'tragic inspiration,' that Girard seeks to emulate with his hermeneutic of suspicion.

Now, tragedy and this process of 'desymbolization' will be discussed more so in the next chapter, but as this relates to the process of differentiation, and the relation between symbol and sign for Girard, is that this view of language, as one that can be desymbolized of its sacred heritage, is only possible in an age increasingly distanced from this violent economy of ritualized meanings. Thus, in my reading, for understanding an origin to evil as such, in the phenomenal emergence of an external-internal violence, the symbol contains sedimented meanings to be revealed, but also a productive interpretive power to redescribe itself anew and weaken its tie to

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[385] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 65.

this concrete matrix of difference. Thus, in my view following Ricœur, within Girard's own theory of symbol, the practice of 'substituting' the 'sign of the victim' (consciously and unconsciously) in a culture, allows for the hermeneutic of belief, the production of meaning, and the power of this redescriptory function of language, from symbol, to begin to self-critique and move away from its violent origin. Thus, in my reading, this productive power of the symbol indicates an innate 'rejection' of violence, a fear of it. Not only does the symbol reveal a pre-semantic ground, a rootedness in experience, but it is also based in a generative matrix of difference, from the violent heart of this pre-semantic ground, to reveal that the same path back to unveiling this bound situation to the ambivalent sacred, is the same path out of the grips of *méconnaissance.*

Ricœur on Symbol – *Un retour*

To relate the Girardian view of symbol, as preserved instances of misrecognition of the inaugural violent act of differentiation, thus having a double structure, to the Ricœurian view of fundamental double-meaning, a brief return to the function of symbol for Ricœur, as well as its heritage in the multi-levels of metaphor is required. Although the Ricœurian view of symbol was mentioned in the elucidation of the structure of the conflict of interpretations in chapter 1, it is important to expand the discussion in this section, with the notion of the metaphor that was not yet apart of his analyses in *Freud and Philosophy* and *Symbolism of Evil*, which are the major sources for his 'conflict of interpretations.'[386] The expansion of his view of symbol, and its analogical companion in the structure as metaphor, supplement the Girardian notion of 'desymbolization' that is the simultaneous distancing of symbols from their violent origin, and the way towards its revelation.

To begin this movement from metaphor to the symbol, I will begin with this quote from Ricœur, 'Thus a metaphor does not exist in itself, but it exists in and through an interpretation. The metaphorical interpretation presupposes a literal interpretation which self-destructs in a significant contradiction.'[387] Ricœur argues that metaphor is a 'phenomenon of predication' so its semantic value rests at the level of the sentence and cannot be reduced to the classical idea as literary trope. Its power of relation reveals a level of semantic creation, yet also a level of literal 'self-destruction.' In Ricœur's example from Shakespeare, 'time as a beggar,' an interpretation of

[386] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*. 45.

[387] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 50.

the metaphor itself yields this power of 'redescribing' via relating a hidden similarity with a surface dissimilarity. 'Time' and 'beggars' literally cannot be related, but metaphors make a 'resolution out of semantic dissonance.' The concordance out of the dissonance by the contradiction is a 'work of meaning' or 'tells us something new about reality.'[388]

Thus, according to my hermeneutic synthesis between Ricœur and Girard, even in the positive, productive element of metaphor, we see a similar movement to the power of symbolization in Girard. The destruction of one level, yields the production of the other, simultaneously. The desymbolization of the ritual mechanism, seen in literary and theatrical portrayal of tragedy, both represent the crisis of violence, which is something that is literally 'unrepresentable.' When Ricœur now adds this productive level of the metaphorical to the structural ambivalence of the symbol, which contains a 'pre-semantic ground,' the relation between Girard and Ricœur on symbolicity shows that the 'horizontal' bivalence and the 'vertical' leveling give a full account of the symbolicity into signification process. The leveling of meaning between primary and secondary signification is productive and again illustrates the bidirectionality of 'the conflict of interpretations.'[389] Metaphors are already an interpretation, an interpretation that creates the leveling from primary to secondary, but also the primary signification is where the symbolic connects to the metaphoric.

Ricœur adds that the 'opacity of a symbol is related to the rootedness of symbols in areas of our experience that are open to different methods of investigation.'[390] For Ricœur, the symbol is found at the root of psychoanalysis, of philosophy of religion, of anthropology, of history, of all these attempts to understand the existential boundaries of humanity. Regarding the symbols of psychoanalysis, Ricœur states,

> …symbolic activity is a boundary phenomenon linked to the boundary between *desire* and *culture*… This is the boundary between primary repression – which affects the first witnesses of our impulses – and secondary repression, which is repression properly speaking – that repression which occurs after the fact and which only allows derivative offshoots, indefinite substitute signs, or signs of signs to appear.[391]

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[388] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 51,53.

[389] See Chapter 1, *The Explicit and Implicit Structure.*

[390] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 57.

[391] Emphasis mine. Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 58.

The existential result, between the phenomenological and anthropological provides what generative matrix for symbol lies at the 'boundary between desire and culture. 'Girard's hypothesis of the birth of culture, and the birth of symbolic, is itself the intersection of desire and culture with collective violence as the violent response to a crisis of mimetic rivalry. In my reading, the primary repression of the 'first witnesses,' the divinization of the hated and loved victim, becomes further symbolized in the creation of rituals, taboos, myths, and culture, as 'secondary repression.' Yet, for Ricœur, the productive power of metaphor is able to be 'purified' of this symbolic heritage.

> Metaphor occurs in the already purified universe of the *logos*, while the symbol hesitates on the dividing line between *bios* and *logos*. It testifies to the primordial rootedness of Discourse in Life. It is born where force and form coincide.[392]

Force and form, *bios* and *logos*, these structural relationships are shown to be fundamentally related in the pre-semantic ground of the symbol. Each relationship 'testifies to the primordial rootedness of Discourse in Life.' In relating Ricœur and Girard, the structural differences of linguistic signs are able to be seen as 'language games' at a certain level, but the original source of these games were sacred, and rooted in the generative power of symbolic *méconnaissance* of the source of culture.[393] The existential situation of humanity as 'fallen,' as intwined with the polar moments of violence, is then understandable via an explanation of a symbolic archaeology, on the one hand, but also an understanding of the productive, positive, donative effects of language, which is seen as an implicit desire to invent, and not to destroy. The symbolic bivalence is ultimately a tethering to 'the rootedness of Discourse in Life,' an origin to discourse in this complex human situation, but one that is in tension and bound to this origin, yet the poetic and the inventive develops the means to describe this binding and to redescribe it. The bivalence and metaphoric leveling allows for the creation and production of discourses to critique, reveal, and redescribe these discourses.

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[392] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 59.

[393] Here is Ricœur on the relation between the 'free invention of discourse' to the 'sacred universe.' 'The bound character of symbols makes all the difference between a symbol and metaphor. The latter is a free invention of discourse; the former is bound to the cosmos. Here we touch an irreducible element, an element more irreducible than the one that poetic experience uncovers. In the sacred universe the capacity to speak is founded upon the capacity of the cosmos to signify. The logic of meaning, therefore, follows from the very structure of the sacred universe.' Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 62.

Ricœur goes on to emphasize the role of discourse, namely myth, to organize the manifestations of the sacred.

> We might even say that it is always by means of discourse that this logic manifest itself for if no myth narrated how things came to be or if there were no rituals which re-enacted this process, the Sacred would remain unmanifested… Even more, symbolism only works when its structure is interpreted. In this sense a minimal hermeneutic is required for the functioning of any symbolism…The sacredness of nature reveals itself in saying itself symbolically. The revealing grounds the saying, not the reverse.[394]

The hermeneutic circle presented here, of the sacred and its *logos* as already an interpretation, can only be a non-vicious circle, if the grounding in the non-semantic, unrepresented sacred is left as the origin. With the grounding of a non-semantic origin of the symbol, 'the saying' grounds 'the revealing,' and requires a textual hermeneutic that seeks to understand this non-semantic ground. At this stage of my hermeneutic partnership, the hermeneutic method advocated by Ricœur, and expanded so far in this dissertation, takes the strength of the Girardian hermeneutic of suspicion, as one which pursues the implications of the mimetic hypothesis across methodological and disciplinary borders, into the anthropological up towards the border of signification itself.

This complexity of the non-semantic ground is continued by Ricœur's elaboration of the necessary obfuscation within the symbolic production and manifestation of sacred meaning.

> So it appears as though certain fundamental human experiences make up an immediate symbolism that presides over the most primitive metaphorical order. This originary symbolism seems to adhere to the most immutable human manner of being in the world… And, in fact, the history of words and culture would seem to indicate that if language never constitutes the most superficial layer of our symbolic experience, this deep layer only becomes accessible to us that extent it is formed and articulated at a linguistic and literary level since the most insistent metaphors hold fast to the intertwining of the symbolic infrastructure and metaphoric superstructure.[395]

This excerpt depicts a summary of the relation to the linguistic process of metaphor, as a 'superstructure' that requires the symbolic 'infrastructure,' which is rooted in the deep reservoirs of existential human meaning. These reservoirs that cannot be logically and semantically exhausted: the sacred and the psychological. The use of metaphors is the linguistic power of redescription descended ultimately from the symbolic redescription of this collective attention in the birth of the internal-external divide of the community and its other, and the symbolization of its cathartic effects carried through ritual and culture. *Méconnaissance*, its act of obfuscating,

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[394] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 63.

[395] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 65.

reveals something traumatic about the violence, to cause such an engrained, unconscious process. Yet, the 'linguistic and literary level' in fact is what allows for the return to the primordial, by placing the levels of the symbolic deposits within this process of misrecognizing.[396] Its obfuscation and redescription are what paradoxically reveals the possibility of a return course to the 'dividing line between *bios* and *logos*.'

Thus, now, we have two parallel tracts of the function of symbol and metaphor. At this stage of the 'conflict of interpretations,' Ricœur's philosophy of the symbol mirrors closely the Girardian hypothesis, yet each bring their orientations, one from phenomenology, one from anthropology, onto the border between *bios* and *logos*. These shared tension points in pushing the boundaries of their respective disciplines into contact, rest on this interpretive directionality of the symbol. The symbolic function as the functional ground for the metaphoric for Ricœur, and desymbolization of what was symbolized for Girard. The psychological and religious forms of symbolism in Ricœur's analysis, each pertain to the areas of preserved symbolic meaning in the existential situation of humanity. The psychological symbols are the internal - the self and its desires - and the external - the community and its culture. What Ricœur intuits is a fundamental, but inaccessible connection between both, a 'dividing line between *bios* and *logos*,' yet that *logos* as discourse is ultimately 'rooted in Life.' Girard's mimetic hypothesis for the founding act of difference provides such a fundamental link between '*bios* and *logos*,' but also between 'desire and culture.' This conjunction of their philosophies, at the birth of symbol in the generative power of violence, is one of the ways, how Ricœur's hermeneutics welcomes 'anew the mimetic concept.'

Original Retribution and 'Matrix of Terror'

Thus, to understand this first layer of symbolism closest to an origin of the primordial connection between desire and culture, internal and external, we must understand the fundamental ambivalence of the sacred, in its primordial 'sacred terror' or as Ricœur states the 'shadowy experience of power' at the source of symbolization.[397] So by operating with Girard's

[396] But does Girard consider the possibility of metaphor to arise from the function symbolization? In fact in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, he affirms a similar function to Ricœur, albeit grounded in the sacred, and thus intertwined with his view of symbol. 'This is why modern eroticism and the literature that deal is with it tend – beyond a certain level of intensity – to reach back to the vocabulary of the sacred. All the great lyrical metaphors derive, whether directly or indirectly, from sacred violence…' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 296.

[397] Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 69.

explanatory hypothesis, I will investigate this primordial symbol, where both Girard and Ricœur turn to the fragment of Anaximander as another 'point of contact.'

This shared interpretive symbol is the 'matrix of terror' that lies at the origin of the sacred. To understand this symbol of 'matrix of terror' and 'primitive dread,' Ricœur turns to a quote from Anaximander,

> Taken in its origin – that is to say, in its matrix of terror – this initial intuition is intuition of primordial fatality. The invincible bond between Vengeance and defilement is anterior to any institution, any intention, any decree; it is so primitive that it is anterior even to the representation of an avenging god. The automatism in the sanction that the primitive consciousness dreads and adores expresses this a priori synthesis of avenging wrath, as if the fault wounded the potency of the interdict and as if that injury ineluctably triggered the response. Man confessed this ineluctability long before he recognized the regularity of the natural order. When he first wished to express the order in the world, he began by expressing it in the language of retribution. The famous fragment of Anaximander is an example: 'The origin from which beings proceed is also the end toward which their destruction proceeds according to necessity; for they offer satisfaction and expiation to one another for their injustice according to the order of time.'[398]

The first symbol of evil that Ricœur discusses in the *Symbolism of Evil*, is defilement, which will be discussed in the following section. But before this symbol of defilement, is the 'intuition of a primordial fatality' that is an 'automatism' intertwined with the *fault* and 'interdict' relationship. The *fault* which marks the self as liable for 'Vengeance,' one able to be identified by the one who 'dreads and adores,' is seen to be coexistent with the interdiction or taboo that defines the *fault* as such. There is thus a 'primordial fatality' that expresses an 'invincible bond' between the violence of vengeance and this primary symbol of defilement, which is 'anterior to the representation of the avenging god.' This primordial experience also has a definitively ambivalent structure, for the consciousness 'dreads and adores' this structure which forms the primary and sacred 'order' of the world. It is both 'origin' and 'destruction' that is a necessary structure of the human-sacred relationship, which is a relationship that exists at the heart of primordial humanity's understanding of its existence.

To show why this 'matrix of terror' is the starting point for the bi-directional hermeneutic, I will now turn to the closing of Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*, where Girard quotes the same fragment from Anaximander,

> There is reason to believe that these symbolic sites of unification gave birth to all religious forms; it was there that the various cults were established, spatial relationships fixed, the clock of history set in motion, and the beginnings of a social life plotted out precisely as Durkheim envisioned it. There everything begins; from there everything emanates; there everything returns when discord breaks out. Surely that is the point of the only direct quotation we have of Anaximander, 'the

[398] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 30-31.

> earliest voice of Western thought.' I would like to repeat those astonishing words here, to show that such a claim is not unbelievable…'Where things are born, there too must they perish; for each in turn metes out punishment and expiation for its wickedness, each in the allotted time.'[399]

Thus, from the very depth of our most anterior symbol, closest to our aporetic origin of evil, Girard's hypothesis of the founding murder and scapegoat mechanism, which provide a hypothetical non-semantic ground for the birth of the violent sacred and the ritualized, cultural order that 'metes out punishment and expiation for its wickedness,' provides a plausible and foundational point of communion for Girard and Ricœur. In my reading, this 'order' of the world, following this violent system, emerges from Ricœur's analysis of a 'matrix of terror' that is born from the 'primitive dread of retribution,' now carried forth in symbolic permutations and *méconnaissance*. 'There everything begins' and from this opaque origin, the understanding of evil, its in polar moment of violence, could be posited as a violent event that generates the symbolic order of the sacred, the 'representation of an avenging god' in whose anteriority it is impossible to remove its structural ambivalence, as dreaded and adored, as giving order and giving terror, as internal and external, as emanating and returning. This structural bivalence, which allows for understanding of the original violence, and its polar structure, emerges from Ricœur and Girard's joint hermeneutic of this fragment. This orientation is further summarized in the emphasis Ricœur gives to the Anaximander fragment, as expressing the origin of the primordial experience of evil in the necessary order of retributive violence.

> The very idea of vengeance conceals something else; to avenge is not also to destroy but by destroying to reestablish. Along with the dread of being stricken, annihilated, there is a perception of the movement by which order – whatever order it may be – is restored. That which had been established and which has now been destroyed is re-established. By negation, order reaffirms itself.[400]

Ricœur's analysis of vengeance contains the bivalence of 'destroy' and 'reestablish,' which in Girardian terms, is the generative power of violence, seen in the scapegoat mechanism and its later function of sacrificial violence in rituals. Ricœur locates this function within the 'very idea of vengeance' as concealing 'something else.'[401] Not only can the hypothesis of the founding murder operate as the 'non-semantic ground of experience' for which his bivalent structure of symbol and metaphor depend but also describes this emanatory process in an anthropological

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[399] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 307-08.

[400] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 43.

[401] This 'something else' or 'whatever order it may be' is never directly and concretely identified by Ricœur in the *Symbolism of Evil*, but this 'order' that Ricœur has obliquely identified, is the moment I see 'to welcome anew the mimetic concept.' See Introduction, *Hermeneutic Point of Departure*.

register that Ricœur's view of symbol and metaphor describes at the level of the text. Violence, as 'order,' redescribes itself with each victim, in an attempt for a new peace. Symbol, reinterpreted and brought to the level of metaphor, redescribes itself, bringing 'concordance of meaning' and out of the 'discordance' of a surface contradiction. Evil, then, cannot be seen as such and cannot be moralized because of the polar ambiguity, seen at this stage as both suffering and committing.

Ricœur's phenomenological hermeneutic identifies the intersection of violence, retribution, taboos, and the sacred, this mysterious central point, 'anterior to the representation of an avenging god' is also the 'matrix of terror.' In my reading, Girard's view of the concrete act of violence by the community against a victim provides a fitting hypothesis to place Ricœur's analysis into an anthropological register, where such a thorough description of the surrounding, opaque, complex violent order can be brought to a continuum from generative violence, the sacred, symbol, and now towards metaphor. Further, this combined hermeneutic reveals that Ricœur's primary symbol of evil, the experience of defilement, introduces an interior experience of this situation in the symbolic register, as a designation felt by the target of violence, the victim, but also extending to the crowd that must rid themselves of this state of contagious defilement via a ritual of expiation to the sacred. This is supported by how Ricœur continues describing this 'shadow of punishment,' which indicates a 'superhuman destruction of man.' [402] So, what could be at the center of this relationship between humanity and the 'death-dealing power' of the sacred? Why is 'the death of man' also intuited alongside a 'primordial purity?' Why is both 'vengeance' and 'suffering' anticipated with 'the source of the interdictions?' The positing of Girard's founding murder hypothesis helps to clarify this, as described above, but now, in the question of understanding evil, with the polar moment of violence as *committed* and *suffered*, the entire structure of this sacred seems to be 'evil.' Yet, providing a concrete, anthropological answer to the question 'whence comes evil?' seems to immanentize the complexity of evil, which is instead an inexhaustible and non-conceptual, existential situation. In addition, if all human culture and

[402] 'If one goes back still further, the shadow of punishment extends over the whole region and over the very source of the interdictions, and darkens the experience of the sacred. Seen from the point of view of the vengeance and the suffering anticipated in the interdiction, the sacred reveals itself as superhuman destruction of man; the death of man is inscribed in primordial purity. And so, in fearing defilement, man fears the negativity of the transcendent; the transcendent is that before which man cannot stand; no one can see God – at least the god of taboos and interdicts – without dying. It is from this, from this wrath and this terror, this deadly power of retribution, that the sacred gets its character of separateness. It cannot be touched; for if it is touched – that is to say, violated – its death-dealing power is unleashed.' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 35.

language is only possible because of this ritual sacrifice-based system and the subsequent symbolic generation via violent differentiation, how could the evil of violence be anything but necessary, unavoidable, and part of our humanity? In addition, Girard states that this entire system was necessary, because primitive humans could not have survived the primeval war of 'all against all' without this 'matrix of terror.'[403] As Ricœur states in the *Symbolism of Evil*, 'Man enters the ethical world through fear and not love.'[404] Thus to understand evil and its polar representation of violence, the symbolic order that emerges from what Girard calls the 'order of the world' and its 'effacement of traces' in the bivalent structure of myth, will show a growing awareness of this violence to be, in fact, evil. The later view, where sacrificial violence is the evil heart of the 'satanic' order of accusing victims, must be progressively revealed. Even though it is the violent sacred that birthed primitive religion, and functions off the continual scapegoating of the defiled, the violators of taboos, and victims of 'Vengeance,' the interior dimensions of the symbolic, revealed in Ricœur's hermeneutic of the 'believing consciousness' shows that in this interior 'confession of sin,' humanity gradually reflects on this violent situation, and begins a 'desymbolic' or 'metaphoric' process that seeks to distance itself and understand the sacred as ultimately evil and violent, following the reverse course of its 'terror.'

Defilement and the Mark of Victimhood

The first of these primary symbols in Ricœur's phenomenological attempt at a 'believing consciousness,' is in the symbol of defilement or the 'impure.' Ricœur states that within this symbol of defilement,

> 'This breadth and this narrowness give evidence of a stage in which evil and misfortune have not been dissociated, in which the ethical order of doing ill has not been distinguished from the cosmological order of faring ill: suffering, sickness, death, failure.'[405]

The symbol of defilement points to a prior state of evil as undifferentiated from misfortune. Thus, the polar moments, as *suffering* and *committed*, have not been separated, and are deeply intertwined. One of the principal characteristics for the defiling characteristics for the spread of

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[403] What makes the violence against the one victim the only possible resolution to a violent chaos? It begins with the transition from 'acquisitive mimesis' into 'conflictual mimesis.' 'If acquisitive mimesis divides by leading two or more individuals on one and the same object with a view to appropriating it, conflictual mimesis will inevitably unify by leading two or more individuals to converge on one and the same adversary that all wish to strike down… Since the power of mimetic attraction multiplies with the number of those polarized, it is inevitable that at one moment the entire community will find itself united against a single individual.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 26.

[404] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 30.

[405] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 27.

misfortune/evil is the notion of a contagiousness to impurity.[406] Ricœur sees this as having pre-eminence in the taboos describing sexuality, but Girard's description of the mechanism of contagion sees these sexual taboos, constructed around preventing a violent mimetic contagion, as stemming from the concrete relationship to 'spilt blood.'

> Most primitive peoples take the utmost care to avoid contact with blood. Spilt blood of any origin, unless it has been associated with a sacrificial act, is considered impure. This universal attribution of impurity to spilt blood springs directly from the definition we have just proposed: wherever violence threatens, ritual impurity is present. When men are enjoying peace and security, blood is a rare sight. When violence is unloosed, however, blood appears everywhere – on the ground, underfoot, forming great pools. Its very fluidity gives form to the contagious nature of violence. Its presence proclaims murder and announces new upheavals to come. Blood stains everything it touches the color of violence and death. Its very appearance seems, as the saying goes, to 'cry out for vengeance.'[407]

In this excerpt Girard draws the causal link of the primordial fear of retribution, 'vengeance,' and the experience of defilement, 'impure,' with the practical and concrete instance of bloodletting, supported by the numerous cross-cultural taboos in association with spilt blood. Ricœur, however, does not give violence pre-eminence, but sexuality.[408] This pre-eminence to sexuality originates in Ricœur's more subject-oriented view of the 'believing consciousness,' which attempts to develop his phenomenological view from the perspective of 'a religious consciousness,' and the breaking of a sexual taboo is a violation with a relationship to an other. Girard, quite easily, reverses that emphasis of sexuality over violence, via the symbol of split blood as containing the symbolic bivalence of violence, contagion, and sexuality. As a result, Girard is able to explain more widespread primitive rituals and taboos, which include those that refer to sexuality.[409] These taboos are specific proscriptions against situations and activities that cause mimetic rivalries and later violence. Thus, Girard's more concrete identification of a possible original experience of defilement as relating to the notions of 'impure,' 'vengeance,' and 'spilt blood' encapsulates Ricœur's emphasis on the sexual taboo within the primordial experience of evil. Moreover, Girard is able to describe the transgression of taboos in his scheme of mimesis

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[406] 'The defilement of sexuality is a belief that is pre-ethical in character; it can become ethical, as the defilement of the murderer can become ethical in becoming an offense against the reciprocity of the human bond, although it precedes any ethics of the second person and is immersed in the maleficent virtues of shed blood.' Ricœur *Symbolism of Evil*, 28.

[407] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 34.

[408] "Indeed, not only does this notion remain dependent on the general imagery of contact and contagion, which it uses in speaking of the transmission of the primordial taint, but it is still magnetized by the theme of sexual defilement considered as pre-eminently the impure." Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 29.

[409] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 17.

and sacrifice, as constructed purely for preventing more contagion, the spread of 'spilt blood.' Girard's hypothesis pushes the aporetic limit, revealed by Ricœur's phenomenological hermeneutic, even further by placing defilement as the experience of impurity that is a fear over retributive violence and its contagiousness, rather than sexuality.

To close this discussion of defilement, it is important to mention that Ricœur claims this connection between suffering and defilement is the 'first sketch of causality' and is reflected in the 'explanatory, etiological value of moral evil.'[410] The connection between *suffering* evil as caused by the self in *committing* some evil, is what is later revealed as a 'stumbling block' for the understanding of evil and suffering together.[411] The stage of defilement in its symbolization shows an entry point for the non-semantic into the semantic registers, as well as the growing 'scandalization' of the rationalization and explanation of evil. This 'stumbling block' to the symbol of defilement contributes to the growing internalization of the accusation of evil, and the later internalization of the fear of vengeance from the 'matrix of terror' of the sacred. Thus, the means for the understanding of evil can be advanced to a more 'spiritualized' stage, in the separation of the quasi-physical evil of misfortune and suffering, from the spiritual evil of intention and responsibility.

Sin and the Collective State of Violence

Sin represents the communal transgression of a relationship, or a covenant.[412] Ricœur states this 'divergence' between defilement and sin is a 'phenomenological' one, which expresses a feeling of 'seizure,' 'binding,' and 'enslavement' rather that the quasi-physical symbolizations of stain and contagion.[413] Sin establishes a communal and objective experience, which indicates a semi-permanent state of existence of which the human is born into, and this state is revealed by the prophetic accusation of humanity that is not 'thought.'[414] But what is humanity accused of? It is the violation of the personal bond between humanity and the now personalized sacred,

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[410] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 31.

[411] This 'stumbling block' will be explained in Chapter 5, *Job: 'I Know my Defender Lives.'* See Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 32.

[412] 'Thus sin is a religious dimension before being ethical; it is not the transgression of an abstract rule – of a value – but the violation of a personal bond.' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 52.

[413] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 47-48.

[414] The existence of sin is presupposed and describes the situation of humanity. Thus, 'The prophet does not "reflect" *on* sin; he "prophesies" *against.*' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 54.

> It is already the personal relation to a god that determines the spiritual space where sin is distinguished from defilement; the penitent experiences the assault of demons as the counterpart of the absent god: 'An evil curse has cut the throat of this man as if he were a lamb; his god has come out of his body, his goddess has kept herself aloof.'[415]

Ricœur is quoting a passage from the Babylonian 'confession of sins,' but in my reading, here we see the state of finding oneself in sin as being placed within the possibility of a sacrificial substitution. ('An evil curse has cut the throat of this man as if he were a lamb…') Girard's view of sacrificial substitution is one development in the refinement of cultural and religious rituals to become less violent, thus an example of their progression away from the most primitive forms of scapegoating violence. Yet, the personalized god is paradoxically both closer to state the recognition of the victim who was divinized, while being a more misrecognized entity because of the mythic narratives that surround the divinity. The 'personal' god is closer to a relationship, or covenant, than the 'matrix of terror' that was the 'superhuman destruction of man.' Here, in Ricœur's elaboration of the symbol of sin, it is this introspection, where one is abandoned, excluded, liable to be sacrificed, as an effect of being responsible for a violation of this personal bond. The state of sin is the ever-present state of both being a victim and being a perpetrator of the sacrificial mechanism, for being already in a state of violation. Thus the 'penitent' realizes sin is a 'dimension of his existence' and indicative of the development of the ability to make an 'examination of conscience' and pursue 'interrogative thinking.'[416]

But what did this new development in the progression of symbolization reveal for understanding evil? Ricœur indicates the experience of sin is prior to morality, for it has a 'religious dimension before being ethical; it is not the transgression of an abstract rule – of a value – but the violation of a personal bond.'[417] The state of sin seems to reveal an evolution beyond the ritualized taboos, into an interrogative reflection on a greater, more communal, existential situation. This intermediary symbolic stage of sin is central in showing a progression away from the violent origin of culturally religious order in sacrifice, where specific taboos are created to prevent contagion, to an intuition to a collective state of humanity before a personalized sacred. The preservation of this relationship is no longer enumerated in specific taboos, but now in moral laws. This point can be seen in the growth of the 'consciousness of sin'

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[415] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 48.

[416] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 48.

[417] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 52.

as it reveals a tension between the unlimited and unfulfillable demand for perfection expressed via the finite commandment.

> The consciousness of sin reflects this tension: on the one hand, it penetrates beyond faults toward a radical evil that affects the indivisible disposition of the 'heart;' on the other hand, it is coined into multiple infractions denounced by individual commandments.[418]

In the last chapter in the discussion of the thymic-mimetic self of desire, the multidirectional 'heart' expresses itself in the intersubjective quests (*avoir*, *pouvoir*, *valoir*) which, in their 'fallen' manifestations, become an act of violence to intersubjective communion via the *decidere*. The construction of the law, from the taboos, which attempt to respond to the internal-external act of violence in pride, the *decidere*, produces violent intersubjective effects. Eventually, at this stage of the understanding of evil, these commandments are summarized into a single one against covetousness, which is identified as the reflection of this 'radical evil' at the 'heart' of the human, as the single source of this violence.

> This rhythm is visible also in the designation of 'covetousness,' article 10, as an evil disposition more internal than the forbidden modes of behavior: 'covetousness' recalls the demand that proceeds from divine holiness and that makes one's neighbor and all that belongs to him infinitely respectable.[419]

Ricœur focuses against 'covetousness' as the source of human evil. This moral law against covetousness is key step in the progression of understanding evil for both Ricœur and Girard. This source of human evil undergone by Ricœur, is directly comparable to Girard's discussion of the tenth commandment as the prohibition against covetousness which announces the evil of the mimetic concept represented as envy, jealousy, and rivalry. Girard states that,

> The tenth and last commandment is distinguished from those preceding it both by its length and its object: in place of prohibiting an act it forbids a desire… Without being actually wrong the modern translations lead readers down a false trail. The verb 'covet' suggests that an uncommon desire is prohibited, a perverse desire reserved for hardened sinners. But the Hebrew term translated as 'covet' means just simply 'desire.' This is the word that designates the desire of Eve for the prohibited fruit, the desire leading to the original sin… The desire prohibited by the tenth commandment must be the desire of all human beings – in other words, simply desire as such.[420]

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[418] The 'Radical evil' of covetousness, is not the real 'radical' evil, in my view because it is a later stage than the internalized violence against the self in the state of 'bound freedom,' seen with self-hatred. It is this self-violence, seen with despair, that seems to be the most 'radical' of evil manifestations, for all other violent acts emerge first from this internal, negative, structure of violent 'gravity.' For the quote above, see Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 58.

[419] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 59.

[420] Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 7-8.

Both Girard and Ricœur analysis of covetousness as evil at the source of the human places their analyses in concert, once again. By placing Girard's connection between covetousness and 'bad' mimetic desire, with Ricœur's phenomenological re-enactment of the believer's confession of sin, it makes another 'contact point' between Girard's mimetic anthropology at the intersubjective level, with the personal experience of sin as the first direct introspection on the malformation of the self's desire. In the third part of this chapter, the mythic explanation of the Adamic myth will further reveal the hermeneutic understanding of evil in the imitative desire of being 'like gods,' as a violation of the personal bond not to the violent sacred, but a violation towards the intersubjective communion of mimetic-thymic desire, not turned into simultaneous violence against the self and its imitative others. The symbolic order of sin supplements the discussion of the *decidere* in the mimetic and thymic desiring self by showing its discovery in the progressive understanding of evil, in the connection between 'covetousness' and its dangerousness towards the 'personal bond' in the emergence of moral law to respond to evil.

Evil, Law, and the Prophets

Throughout the *Symbolism of Evil*, Ricœur focuses on primarily the Ancient Greek, near-east 'confession of sin' in dialogue with Judeo-Christian scriptures. This preference for what is commonly referred to as the 'western tradition' is acknowledged by Ricœur, despite his insistence that these symbols are philosophically universalizable, and not bound to their contexts, simply.[421] One of the modalities in this potential for these symbols to be universalized is the translation of the Hebraic *davar* or *ruah* into the Greek *logos*, with the translation of these scriptures into the Greek Septuagint.[422] This 'projection of the Hebrew *davar* upon the Greek *logos'* allows for the hermeneutic analysis of 'the initial situation of man as God's prey' into 'the universe of discourse.'[423] This 'universe of discourse' that shows an intersection between the 'utterance of God' and the 'utterance of man' and brings out of the 'darkness of the power and the violence of

[421] 'Our philosophy is Greek by birth. Its intention and its pretension of universality are "situated." The philosopher does not speak from nowhere, but from the depths of his Greek memory, from which rises the question: τί τὸ ὀν; what is being?... Not that any culture is excluded in principle; but in this area oriented by the originally Greek question, there are relations of "proximity" and "distance" that belong inescapably to the structure of our cultural memory.' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 20.

[422] 'The *ruah* of Yahweh in the Old Testament, which we translate by Spirit for lack of a better term, designates the irrational aspect of the Covenant; but this *ruah* is also *davar*, word (parole). It is no accident that the only suitable equivalent of the Hebrew *davar* was the Greek *logos*. This translation, although approximate and inexact, was itself an important cultural event. It expresses the conviction, first, that all languages are translatable into one another, and that all cultures belong to a single humanity…' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 51.

[423] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 51.

the Spirit' into the 'light of the Word.' The Word, or *logos*, which is also the domain of metaphor, is possible in the communal intentionality seen by sharing language or by translation. In my view, this act of translating is an emergence of one of the responses to humanity's evil situation, for it increases the distance from the 'matrix of terror' itself by a progressing away from the violence of ritual and scapegoating that relies on a hostility towards those outside of the community, the strangers or ξενος.[424] The Word is seen as a bringing to language of humanity's universal existential situation and its proximity to evil, but also demonstrates a distancing away from it via the function of translating, which is also seen in the metaphoric level of a 'purified' *logos*.

The symbol of sin as it deals more with the spiritualized level of discourse, as opposed to the symbol of defilement, which is much closer in proximity to ritual and sacrifice, demonstrates this change in the passage from the prohibition to the law. What distances the law from prohibition is the figure of the prophet, who aims, rather than at the quasi-physical dimension of defilement, at the existential situation of humanity in relation to the divine. 'The prophetic moment in the consciousness of evil is the revelation in an infinite measure of the demand God addresses to man.'[425] This demand indicates a 'radical' conversion for the 'evil is radical.'[426] The prophets that Ricœur cites, such as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all introduce this radical conversion from the evil at the center of the human heart, expressed above. However, what this infinite demand indicates in the progression of the understanding of a now hyper-spiritualized, radical evil, is the inability of the law, enumerated in finite commandments, to ever respond adequately to this demand.[427] It is this failure to respond to the demand of the law, that forms another 'stumbling block' in the understanding of evil.

So how does Girard see the relationship between the prophets and the law? Girard is quite clear in their distancing from the prescriptive element of the law, and into a more uniform response to the 'heart' of humanity.

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[424] 'The more signs of a victim an individual bears, the more likely he is to attract disaster. Oedipus's infirmity, his past history of exposure as an infant, his situation as a foreigner, newcomer, and king, all make him a veritable conglomerate of victim's signs.' Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 26.

[425] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 55.

[426] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 56.

[427] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 59.

> However this may be, in the biblical context these archaic legal prescriptions are far less important than what comes after them. The inspiration of the prophets tends to eliminate all these obsessional prescriptions in favour of their true *raison d'être*, which is the maintenance of harmonious relationships within the community. What the prophets come down to saying is basically this: legal prescriptions are of little consequence so long as you keep from fighting one another, so long as you do not become enemy twins.[428]

The stage of the prophetic literature for Girard indicates a passage into the more communal state, in a relationship with God that need not be as determined in the legalistic mode, but in the 'spiritual' manner of harmony. This heightened focus on the community's situation is where the 'phenomenon of the Prophets is an original response to the crisis of Hebraic society.' The failure to measure up to the law, is seen alongside a 'sacrificial crisis' for Hebrew society. Girard, here, switches the emphasis of the interpretation to where the Hebrew kingdoms are victims of the 'Wrath of God' for their failures, or even merely victims to the neighboring empires of Babylon and Assyria. What Girard emphasizes is that they are in fact experiencing the death of their own sacrificial system.[429] It is the death of this system, the failure of ritual and the laws they produce, that can no longer bring order, and the prophets change in address to the Hebrew community sees that to escape this punishment of their own crisis, is to turn to a notion of intersubjective harmony that cannot be achieved at a ritualized or political level.

Ricœur considers this relationship, between the prophet and the law, a necessary 'ethical tension' which 'finds the root of evil in the "heart"'; however, Ricœur also sees, like Girard, that the prophetic discourse moves the pedagogical function of the law, into 'a pedagogy of historical failure.'[430] This communal state of a people in sin finds themselves condemned by the 'Wrath of God,' which forms another moment in the progression of understanding evil. Ricœur sees this as one of the key points in the departure of the prophet from the view of a political or 'tribal' god:

> It is first of all its breadth, its universal scope that is perceived. By the cipher of defeat, the prophet manifests the movement of history as a whole; the tribal god becomes more distant; Yahweh is no longer the guarantor of the historical success of his people; the consciousness of sin, through the symbol of the Day of Yahweh and an inimical history, reveals its other pole: the Lord of History.[431]

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[428] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 154–155.

[429] 'Yet these political developments are invariably interpreted by the prophets as an exclusively religious and cultural crisis, in which the sacrificial system is exhausted, and the traditional order of society dissolves into conflict.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 155.

[430] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 62.

[431] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 67.

The God of the confession of sin begins to be separate from the political order, the cultural order of the sacred, and the deities descendent from the 'matrix of terror.' This 'Lord of History' is no longer complicit with the actions of the collective state of a people in sin. In fact, a contradiction begins to appear in the stages of understanding of Yahweh, and also the understanding of evil. Where misfortune and the role of the sacred becomes more diminished, and there is an increase in a personal and communal responsibility towards a 'harmonious' relationship, the tension between the real law behind the prohibitions is opposed to the violence of the prohibitions themselves and the fear of punishment that remains between both symbolic stages. The violence of reprisal still lies behind both failures to observe either the law of harmony, and the prohibitions.

Vanity and Nothingness

The other symbols that Ricœur adds as contributing to the symbolic stage of sin, such as 'Missing the target,' 'wandering astray,' 'stiff-neckedness,' and 'revolt' depict this 'violation of a relation' as a community that has separated themselves from God, revealing the 'negative' aspect of sin.[432] This negativity or nothingness to sin is what allows its progression to the nothingness of 'vanity.'

> The existential image of 'vanity' gets blended with the image of 'idols,' which comes from a more elaborate theological reflection on false gods. It is fed not by the spectacle of unsubstantial things – vapor, exhalation, mist, wind, dust – but by the spectacle of false sacredness. From this, vanity receives its transcendent meaning: 'For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the lord made the heavens.' (Ps. 96:5)… Finally the images of breath and idol transpose their significations and blend their meanings: the vanity of breath becomes the vanity of the idol, 'by pursuing vanity they have become vanity' (Jer. 2:5)[433]

The blending of 'vanity' into 'idols' as representative of the nothingness of sin is directly echoed in the two central pillars of Girard's mimetic theory. The vanity of mimetic desire, seen in Stendahl's *vaniteux*, from *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, and the false idols of the sacred, as symbolized instances of *méconnaissance* from the scapegoat mechanism.[434] Girard's *Things Hidden* shows how both moments are instantiations of a misrecognized 'nothingness.'

> This process of transfiguration does not correspond to anything real, and yet it transforms the object into something that appears superabundantly real. Thus it could be described as metaphysical in character… To understand this notion, we have only to look at the kinship

[432] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 73-74.

[433] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 75-76.

[434] For the usage of *vaniteux*, see Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 128.

> between the mimetic structure we have discussed and the part played by notions such as honour or prestige in certain types of rivalry that are regulated by society: duels, sporting competitions, etc. These notions are in fact created by the rivalry; they have no tangible reality whatsoever… To whatever small degree these notions go beyond the invariably ritualized framework that gives them their appearance of being finite – within a world stabilized by victimage mechanisms – they will escape measures of objective control… In our world, we end up with an 'infinite' measure of desire – with what I have called ontological or metaphysical desire.[435]

The negation of intersubjectivity, seen in 'bad' mimesis, the violent *decidere*, yields the Girardian nothingness behind the illusions of *méconnaissance*. The 'kinship' between this structure and those of 'honour' reveal the inescapable role of conflict to both. Beneath both is the internal-external evil of violence, either in the *decidere* or in rivalry. Further, in many rituals, there are ritual games that Girard views as demonstrating the mimetic crisis, thus placing the vanity within the sacred.[436] The nothingness of 'honour' or 'prestige' make instantiations of mimetic desire appear 'superabundantly real' because of the misrecognition of the conflict, via a strong attention and fascination. Yet the effects of this nothingness of 'prestige,' 'vanity,' and 'honour' can prompt an outbreak of violence in the community and require the boundaries of the victimage mechanism to prevent its overflow. The 'mock combat,' the 'duel,' or the ritual sacrifice to the idol, are all varying forms of this usage of the conflict over nothingness, to use violence to prevent more violence. Returning to the prophetic accusation seen at this stage of understanding, issuing from the 'infinite demand' towards harmony reveals the dangers as these illusions in both dimensions, which are in fact intertwined. The 'heart' is liable to 'lead astray' communities by the nothingness of 'vanity' towards the 'idols' of the sacred. Yet even if these idols are instance of misrecognized nothingness, they are still creative productions, they are expressions that bear a dimension of redescription and of reconfiguration. The games themselves are 'ludic' and violent, yet they also bear this duality in the revealing and distancing from violence.

Guilt and Self-Accusation: The Internalization of Violence

The final stage of the primary symbols is the innermost experience of evil, guilt. Does it add a further dimension to this, to the subjective experience of defilement and sin, which are both now seen to be emerging from a 'matrix of terror' which evokes Girard's description of the primitive sacred? Ricœur defines it as this prior state and brings a combination of the prior symbolizations into this subjective, personal, and interior reflection.

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[435] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 296-297.

[436] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 109.

> Guilt, we have said, is the completed internalization of sin. With guilt, 'conscience' is born; a responsible agent appears, to face the prophetic call and its demand for holiness. But with the factor of 'conscience' man the measure likewise comes into being; the realism of sin, measured by the eye of God, is absorbed into the phenomenalism of the guilty conscience, which is the measure of itself.[437]

With the spiritual dimension of sin and the prophetic accusation of the 'wicked heart,' the self is now the measure also, of its own complicity with this evil 'heart.' That physical situation of defilement, turned into the communal situation of sin, is now the internal moment of the guilty conscience, and thus a 'responsible agent.'

> What is essential in guilt is already contained in the consciousness of being 'burdened,' burdened by a 'weight.' Guiltiness is nothing else other than the anticipated chastisement itself, internalized and already weighing upon consciousness; and as dread is from the beginning the way of internalization of defilement itself, in spite of the radical externality of evil, guilt is a moment contemporaneous with defilement itself.[438]

According to my interpretation, this contemporaneity of the symbol of guilt with the dread of defilement, originating from the primal 'matrix of terror' reveals an important connection with the notion of selfhood and the victim of the sacred violence, as potentially separating itself from the crowd in the moment of its accusation, its imputation of guilt by the community.

> To be guilty is only to be ready to undergo the chastisement and to make oneself the subject of the chastisement…The sociology of responsibility is very illuminating at this point; man had the consciousness of responsibility before having the consciousness of being cause, agent, actor.[439]

Guilt possesses a foundational connection to defilement, in the interior moment as the dread of retribution, the dread of a chastisement. Within the hermeneutic complementarity, this encounter of a 'responsibility' for guilt reveals that the violent moment has a role in the awakening of the self from the crowd, prior to its ability to impute itself with a 'responsibility' to act. It bears, it is accused, it is 'burdened' by the accusation of the one who began the violent crisis, before it can be aware of 'committing' the violent crisis.[440] As Ricœur states, the moment of guilt, in the understanding of evil, brings a 'veritable revolution,' for defilement is no longer the first experience of evil in the 'believing consciousness,' but 'the evil use of liberty, felt as an

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[437] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 143.

[438] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 101.

[439] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 102.

[440] This identity, of the sole actor responsible for the violent crisis, is an impossible accusation to address to one individual for Girard. The mechanism of guilt attribution will be discussed in chapter 5 with an analysis of the figures of Oedipus and Job, see section *Oedipus the 'Innocent' King*.

internal diminution of the value of the self.'[441] In my reading, this reversal reveals together the anthropological moment of the symbol of defilement, and the interior perspective of guilt, as cotemporaneous. A single internal-external event of evil is experienced by the self in an intersubjective mode that is an accusation by the others, felt as the interior 'burden,' which is connected to the feeling of 'impurity,' related to 'spilt blood.' This reflects Girard's notion that this stage of '"Individualization" marks a later, decadent stage,' where the stage of sacrifice and defilement must still pass through a progression of understanding. By defilement being brought through the communal state of sin, the understanding of evil finally reaches the path into inwardness and individual responsibility.[442] At this inward stage of the progression of understanding, my hermeneutic reveals that the community and the victim are both 'defiled' and 'guilty' by the violence of the 'matrix of terror' – the community puts the 'burden' of responsibility on the *suffering* victim for the mimetic crisis, but this misrecognition of blame is in reality, *committed* by the community itself, of which the victim was an original member.

This internal-external moment of violence in guilt's rediscovery at the heart of defilement reveals a situation of polarity in the bi-directionality of evil, that becomes much more of a divide in the symbolic stage of sin, with its communal and 'objective' description of evil.

> A new opposition arises in the consciousness of fault: according to the schema of sin, evil is a situation 'in which' mankind is caught as a single collective; according to the schema of guilt, evil is an act that each individual 'begins.' This pulverization of fault into a multiplicity of subjective guilts puts in question the 'we' of the confession of sins and makes evident in the loneliness of the guilty conscience.[443]

The loss of the communal notion of evil, that happens by way of the 'pulverization of fault' more associated with the 'decadent stage' of subjectivism, makes guilt more of a 'scandalous' experience in the Girardian understanding. This 'stumbling block' of the loneliness of guilt, separating ourselves from the communal state of sin, is where we can catch sight of the 'double-bind' represented in the experience of guilt.

> On the contrary the more this knowledge is extended and deepened, the more capable the subject becomes of causing his own unhappiness, since he carries to a further stage the consequences of the founding contradiction – the more he tightens the *double bind.*[444]

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[441] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 102.

[442] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 101.

[443] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 106-107.

[444] Emphasis not mine. Girard, *Things Hidden*, 329.

The 'double-bind' is a situation of entrapment, of paradox, where resistance to something increases the negative effects. The 'double-bind' describes much of the scandalizing phenomenon of 'bad' mimesis.[445] An occasion of this 'double-bind' is best expressed in St. Paul's critique of the flesh and the law, where the knowledge of sin is increased by the law.[446] The law is necessary as a pedagogue, but by being a pedagogue, it creates an occasion for the self-accusation of guilt. Ricœur's description of the one crushed by the burden of this 'double-bind' provides a direct relation to Girard's description of the 'Underground Man' from Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*, in his *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel.*[447]

> At this stage of desire the 'voice of conscience' is indistinguishable from the hatred aroused by the mediator. The masochist turns this hatred into duty and condemns everyone who does not hate along with him… The masochist all the more eager to destroy the delicious Evil because he believes himself incapable of piercing that impenetrable armour and reaching the divinity. Thus he has passionately renounced Evil; like the underground man he is the first to be astonished at certain displeasing phenomena which he observes in himself and which seem to contradict the whole of his moral life…He knows that Evil is destined to triumph. It is despairingly that he fights on the side of the Good…[448]

In Girard's description of 'the voice of conscience' presented here, we see Ricœur's description of the advanced stage of guilt, which begins this 'voice of conscience.' Ricœur states further that this attitude of the guilty conscience at its most extreme point is 'how the psychology of self-accusation, narcissism, and masochism explains these subtle procedures, not without itself having lost the key to them.'[449] Further, Girard's description of the 'masochist' at the most advanced stage of the 'metaphysical' or 'ontological sickness' of mimetic desire, directly echoes Ricœur's description of the advanced point of guilt as the modern experience of evil, and shows how to

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[445] Girard's usage of the term 'double-bind,' which he attributes to Gregory Bateson's work on schizophrenia, is one of the psychological terms Girard brings forth, redescribed, by his mimetic hypothesis. 'Let us take a very simple example, if you like – that of the master and his disciples. The master is delighted to see more and more disciples around him, and delighted to see that he is being taken as a model. Yet, if the imitation is too perfect, and the imitator threatens to surpass the model, the master will completely change his attitude and begin to display jealousy, mistrust and hostility… For there to be a mimetic double bind in the full sense of the term, there must be a subject who is incapable of correctly interpreting the double imperative that comes from the other person: taken as a model, imitate me; and as rival, do not imitate me.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 290-91.

[446] Ricœur also cites this critique of the law has been reprised by many figures, most notably Nietzsche. See Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 146-47.

[447] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 54-56.

[448] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 188-189.

[449] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 147.

rediscover the 'key' of the evil of guilt in the advanced stages of 'bad' mimesis, demonstrating another point of contact, this time, at the end of the symbolic progression.

> So the subject places all his faith in the impenetrable obstacle; he no longer searches for the traces of being which is capable of freeing him from his failure, except in the one which invariably causes him to fail…The process that makes desire more and more metaphysical and the process that makes it more and more 'masochistic' are one and the same, since the metaphysical element is already inseparable from violence. The world 'metaphysical' itself is a substitute for the old notion of the sacred… Pleasure ordinarily comes to a halt, falls under *interdict*, when confronted with violence done to the subject. But instead of avoiding this violence, the subject can become fixated on it, as a result of a mimetic behavior that takes the violence more and more as its object.[450]

An aspect of the 'key' for understanding the advanced stage of guilt is the notion of 'metaphysical' in Girard's reading, as it seems to be a later 'sacrificial substitution' for the 'sacred.' Thus the 'metaphysical' nature of the masochistic is the modern equivalent of the violent sacred, now internalized in the divided self. The masochist 'turns hatred into duty,' and the object of hatred is the self, the 'victim' of the self's own 'community.' This experience of evil befalls the modern individual who is trapped in state of *méconnaissance* towards the model-obstacle, which functions as the new 'sacred.'[451] In the experience of guilt we see its evolution into despair, masochism, and narcissism, as a legacy of a 'double-bind' emerging from the relationship with accusation into vengeance dynamic expressed by the law in its individual 'pulverization.'

Yet, what Ricœur states about the symbol of guilt, its 'scandalization,' in its radical interiority, that is expressible in a self-destroying double bind, needs another aspect for this 'key' to understand these stages together. With the progression of understanding mapped at these symbolic stages at the phenomenological level of the believing consciousness, and at the anthropological level of the revelation of the violent system of the sacred, the turn to mythic narratives, as the expression of humanity's own self-understanding and redescription of its 'fallen situation' can move towards the necessary direction of an ethical response to the understanding of evil. The experience of evil captured in these symbolic stages, depict moments of the interpretation of evil that, together, depict an expansive view of evil as emerging in its externality in the violent sacred as a 'matrix of terror' in the event of violence. What the progression of these stages reveals, however, is the complicity of humanity alongside this terrifying and necessary

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[450] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 332-334.

[451] Ricœur expresses a similar intuition with his notion of the self as 'its own tormentor.' 'The guilty conscience is shut in even more secretly by an obscure acquiescence in its evil, by which it makes itself its own tormentor.' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 146.

ambivalent sacred, as the 'nothingness' or 'vanity' desired by the evil 'heart' of humanity. Guilt, as the final symbolic moment, reprises sin and defilement, via an expansion into the internal 'world' that reveals a radically cotemporaneous interior origin of evil, paired with this externalized event of sacred terror. The interpretation of each stage is impossible without the mimetic reading, the hermeneutic of suspicion, revealing the anthropological ground to this progression of understanding, bridging the progression between stages in its external and internal areas of investigation. However, the phenomenological interpretive method of belief shows humanity, despite its *méconnaissance* reacting and building away from the 'terror' of this origin.

Part II: Myth– Symbols in Context

Myths as Second Order Symbols

In the metaphorical production of new meanings, language seeks to become more distant from the violent source of symbol because metaphoric production is searching towards the redemptory, the peaceful, an escape from violence, a distance from the 'matrix of terror.' Thus, myths themselves cannot just be the 'effacement of traces,' as described by the Girardian view, for that would ignore the bidirectionality of the symbols, elaborated by Ricœur, but also implicit in Girard's discussion of 'desymbolization' in Part I of this chapter. Myths, then, are placing in a narrative context of these primary symbols, and they depict a similar progression of understanding via their shared bi-directionality, or 'structural ambiguity,' which is inherited from the structure of the symbol. It is the expansion into the narrative, where a second order of symbolism, as myth and later tragedy, allows for the narrative function of understanding the 'domain of action' via a connection with metaphoric redescription, as described in Ricœur's *Time and Narrative* vol. 1.[452] When engaging with the exploration of evil, already conducted by the mythic representation of the primary symbols, is an attempt at an interpretation of an

[452] I quote Ricœur at length here to show this link in the progression to narrative from metaphor. The expansion of a discussion around Ricœur's threefold mimesis. 'The mimetic function of narrative poses a problem exactly parallel to the problem of metaphorical reference. It is, in fact, one particular application of the latter to the sphere of human action. Plot, says Aristotle, is the *mimesis* of an action… I shall distinguish at least three senses of this term *mimesis*: a reference back to the familiar pre-understanding we have of the order of action; an entry into the realm of poetic composition; and finally a new configuration by means of this poetic refiguring of the pre-understood order of action. It is through this last sense that the mimetic function of the plot rejoins metaphorical reference. And whereas metaphorical redescription reigns in the field of sensory, emotional, aesthetic, and axiological values, which make the world a habitable world, the mimetic function of plots takes place by preference in the field of action and of its temporal values.' Ricœur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, xi.

interpretation. Girard's explanatory hypothesis provides the anthropological grounding to this circle of interpretations, where Ricœur's hermeneutic of belief provides the modality for how these myths can be positively descriptive, beyond the anthropological domain.

Girard on Myth

I will begin with the Girardian reading of myth and the demythologizing direction of interpretive suspicion, before its reformulation with the Ricœurian 'remythizing' interpretation. To begin the discussion of myth from Girard's reading, we must begin with the 'generative power of violence.'

> At present we have good reason to believe that the violence directed against the surrogate victim might well be radically generative in that, by putting an end to the vicious and destructive cycle of violence, it simultaneously initiates another and constructive cycle, that of the sacrificial rite – which protects the community from that same violence and allows culture to flourish… This notion is affirmed, though in a veiled and transfigured manner, by the many etiological myths that deal with the murder of one mythological character by other mythological characters.[453]

Violent escalation must have reached an end via its own violence, or human societies themselves would not have survived a mimetic crisis. This generative power of violence creates a system bound to its own violence, in the production of sacrificial rites.[454] To transmit these significant cultural events, the mythic order is founded progressively by this distance between the shocking brutality of murder redescribed in the ritualized symbolic order. The diversity of these 'redescriptions,' from Ricœur's discussion of the metaphorical process built on symbolic ambiguity, take many shapes, but structurally contain a similar principle.

> In some cases the mythological characters are said to grant men whatever they need to live in society; in other cases they deny them the same benefits. In either case men manage to obtain what they require, sometimes by theft or by trickery, but not before one of the mythological characters has been isolated from the others and subjected to some unusual accident or misfortune. This accident may be fatal; sometimes it is merely ludicrous… Sometimes the central figure breaks away from the group and flees, taking with him the object in dispute. Generally he is overtaken and put to death; occasionally he is wounded and beaten. Sometimes it is he who demands to be beaten, and at each blow extraordinary benefits accrue, giving rise to a fertility and an abundance that assures the harmonious functioning of the cultural order.[455]

The diversity of the myths depict various intermediary stages between evil as suffering misfortune and committing an act of minor or extreme violence. So what is this similar principle

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[453] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 93.

[454] For a thorough reading of Girard's treatment of myth, see Richard J. Golsan, *René Girard and Myth: An Introduction. Theorists of Myth*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Routledge, 2002).

[455] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 93.

that unites the diversity? It is the 'outline of reciprocal violence, gradually transformed into a unanimous act.'[456] In fact, this non-semantic 'ground' is discoverable both by looking for 'tombs' of victims, yes, but also their legacy as the divinities, in the heavens.[457]

> All the elements that enter into the composition of the myth are borrowed from the reality of the crisis; nothing has been added, nothing taken away; no conscious alterations have been made. Mythological elaboration is an unconscious process based on the surrogate victim and nourished by the presence of violence. This presence is not 'repressed,' not cast off on the unconscious; rather it is detached from man and made divine.[458]

Each version of the etiological myth surveyed by Girard depicts a metamorphosis of exclusion, theft, murder, accident, befalling one mythological figure in contrast to the whole. This 'metamorphosis of violence' establishes the generation of the 'cultural order,' or as described in the previous part of this chapter, the 'matrix of terror,' the 'vengeance' at the heart of the community. Myth is the creative distancing, the production of these narratives into a less violent whole, that must be 'unmasked.'

This movement towards a unifying principle is where Girard is expanding on the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, and employs a form of his structural method, akin to his use of structural comparison in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, to identify this unifying or quasi-synchronic principle.[459] For Levi-Strauss, there exists a 'more fundamental method, which must be defined without considering the individual or collective genesis of myth. For the myth *form* takes precedence over the myth *content* of the narrative.'[460] Girard's explanatory hypothesis sees the 'generative power of violence' as this fundamental method, although Levi-Strauss has never shown agreement with Girard about his mechanism.[461] Further, Levi-Strauss sees effectiveness

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[456] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 93.

[457] 'People do not wish to know that the whole of human culture is based on the mythic process of conjuring away man's violence by endlessly projecting it upon new victims. All cultures and religions are built on this foundation, which they conceal, just as the tomb is built around the dead body that it conceals.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 164.

[458] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 136.

[459] 'My hypothesis relies on nothing historical in the critics' sense. It is purely "structural" as in our interpretation of historical representations of persecution… Without this origin it is impossible to explain why and how the same themes keep recurring in the same pattern.' Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 28.

[460] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobsen and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Basic Books Inc., 1963) 204.

[461] Girard and Levi-Strauss disagree on several points but one of the major points of disagreement that pertain to this dissertation is that for Levi-Strauss, the simple forms of myth and symbols, when they are reduced, are revealed to be the productive function of the unconscious. Girard and those who are Girardian influenced, like Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen reject a classic Freudian view of the unconscious. Rather, the productive force of *méconnaissance* is an 'unconscious process' and distancing from our own violence, not a part of an unconscious

of symbols and metaphors as an inductive and combinatory process, that in fact yield to this type of method to reveal a more common form to myths.[462]

But why must these earlier human communities redescribe their violence into a less violent myth, or less violent forms of sacrificial substitution?

> The community is both attracted and repelled by its own origins. It feels the constant need to reexperience them, albeit in veiled and transfigured form… But the true nature and real function of these forces will always elude its grasp, precisely because the source of evil is the community itself.[463]

The inability to get beyond the mythic redescription of the community is not just due to the lack of intellectual resources and synchronic methodologies, but ultimately this realization, the true violent complicity, is what destroys the effectiveness of the sacrificial mechanism itself.[464] Thus the 'double-bind' of terror and worship, of destruction and regeneration, that dwells in the ritual act, makes the violence not directly confrontable, but also makes this 'evil' a communal situation, that according to Girard's hypothesis, is necessary for survival, for culture itself.[465] Further, the

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itself. Thus, it is available to be demystified and be 'converted.' For Strauss' view of symbols and the unconscious, see Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 203-204. For Girard's view of the unconscious see Girard, *Things Hidden*, 35.

[462] Claude Levi-Strauss' influence on both of Girard's and Ricœur's readings of ancient myth and primitive societies cannot be ignored. In both *Violence and the Sacred* and *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, Girard spends chapters commending the work of Levi-Strauss in a manner similar to his appreciation of Freud or Nietzsche, where their analyses come so close to revealing the mimetic concept, but for some reason or another, they avoid this ultimate conclusion. Ricœur also sees Levi-Strauss' work as important as an 'explanation' of myth that can reveal universal synchronic structures. Yet, despite the significant role Levi-Strauss provides, and thus this reading, his analysis contains a major point of difference for both thinkers. For Girard, it is, as described just above, the inability to be one mechanism for mythic generation, and for Ricœur it is the overstatement of structuralist claims, where a certain uniqueness and reality to the diachronic. This excerpt from *Structural Anthropology* reflects a shared position with Ricœur, 'The effectiveness of symbols would consist precisely in this "inductive property," by which formally homologous structures, built out of different materials at different levels of life – organic processes, unconscious minds, rational thought – are related to one another. Poetic metaphor provides a familiar example of this inductive process…' Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*. 201-02. For Girard's reading of Levi-Strauss, see Girard, 'Levi-Strauss, Structuralism and Marriage Rites,' in *Violence and the Sacred*, 223-49; Girard, *Things Hidden*, 74-75.

[463] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 99.

[464] Girard, in his book *The Scapegoat*, expands the structure of myth to a larger category called a 'persecution text.' These affirms this 'generative violence' structure to the masking of scapegoating violence, that continues past the era of myth, into the era of history. The transition will be explained in the next chapter, but largely in the era of history, those texts cannot obfuscate the victims behind productions of the monstruous, via powerful attention of catharsis in ritualized violence. 'How can we not believe that a real victim lies behind a text, which presents him in this way and which makes us see him, on the one hand, as the persecutors generally see him, on the other hand, as he should really be to chosen by real persecutors… All the conditions are present that will automatically prompt the modern reader, as we have described for *historical* texts, to reach the same interpretation we would make of texts written from the perspective of persecutors. Why do we hesitate in the case of myths?' Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 26.

[465] 'This is why social coexistence would be impossible if no surrogate victim existed, if violence persisted beyond a certain threshold and failed to be transmuted into culture.' Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 144.

propagation of this system, of the repeatability of the generative power of sacrifice descended from the victim, depends on mimetic desire, the transference and sharing of desires throughout via a rivalry or 'violent opposition.'

> Violent opposition, then, is the signifier of ultimate desire, of divine self-sufficiency, of that 'beautiful totality' whose beauty depends on its being inaccessible and impenetrable. The victim of this violence both adores and detests it. He strives to master it by means of a mimetic counterviolence and measures his own stature in proportion to his failure.[466]

Rivalry, the mingling of violence with desire, shows itself to be inescapably fascinating if there are no communal prescriptions or taboos to prevent its overflow. The nothingness described in the previous part of this chapter at the heart of the prestige and vanity, derives its value (recall Ricœur's discussion of *valoir*, from chapter 3) from the 'Violent opposition.' Rivalry becomes the focus for the ground of the mythic narrative. The understanding of the mimetic progression into an escalation of violence, where these are a unilateral 'good' or 'evil' protagonist is narrated by the founding myths of 'warring brothers' or 'twins,' such as Romulus and Remus, Eteocles and Polynieces, or Cain and Abel. Both brothers or 'twins' identities are lost to undifferentiation, and both have lost their individuality in a mimetic doubling of the other.[467] Only violence now can reveal their attempted 're'- individualization, in the murder of the other. It is this escalation of mimetic doubles into 'monstrous doubles' that becomes the representation of monsters in myth.[468]

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[466] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 148.

[467] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 12-13.

[468] 'Under the heading monstrous double we shall group all the hallucinatory phenomena provoked at the height of the crisis by unrecognized reciprocity. The monstrous double is also to be found wherever we encounter an 'I' and an 'Other' caught up in a constant interchange of differences.' Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 163. Richard Kearney is critical of Girard on his usage of the term monstrous to describe these aspects of myth in his *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters*. What Kearney finds problematic is that 'myth itself' is scapegoated by Girard, by his critical hermeneutic method, which favors Christianity as a hermeneutic key, solely. Kearney sees the bias towards one critical viewpoint, such as Marxism or Freudianism or positivism, as ultimately closing off a productive level of interpretation. 'The question I would pose to Girard and other demythologizers, therefore, is whether all *non*-Judeo-Christian religious myths are necessarily scapegoating? Are there not at least some which might not be so, that is, which might not be based on the need to project false accusations on innocent victims?' Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (Taylor & Francis, 2002) 41. While I do agree with Kearney and (Ricœur's) resistance to the universalizing claims about myth itself as always an obfuscation of a scapegoat mechanism, it is important to see that this 'mythic' view can only be demythologized if that the Judeo-Christian myths in fact contain the same structural generative aspects. It is one of the primary implications of this dissertation, that these same myths are not only 'demythologizable' according to the Girardian critical hermeneutics, but are also productive redescriptions in themselves. To state simply the key difference between my view and Kearney's, is that, where I agree that Girard's method, by itself, is too narrow and universalizing regarding its suspicion, Ricœur's believing hermeneutic and positing of the 'conflict of interpretations' allows for an expansion of meaning from Girard's suspicious hermeneutic

Girard's sees myths as the more 'transfigured' versions of what he terms 'persecution texts.' These 'persecution texts' are akin to the narratives around the Salem Witch Trials and the attributing of the Black Death to the European Jews in the 14th century.[469] These 'persecution texts' coalesce around the function of the 'monstrous' hallucination towards murdered victims, but no longer possess the 'positive' function of deification, we see in myth.

> We can trace in myths a system of representation of persecution similar to our own but complicated by the effectiveness of the process of persecution. We are not willing to recognize the effectiveness because it scandalizes us at the level of morality and intelligence. We are able to recognize the first evil transfiguration of the victim, which seems normal, but we cannot recognize the second beneficent transfiguration…[470]

In the next chapter, I will discuss how this system no longer functions in the 'productive' direction according to Girard's thesis, but for now the 'productive' power of mythic deification is explainable by the symbolic and metaphoric function of redescription in conjunction with the Girardian notion of a collective transference of attention and catharsis. The generative power of violence at one point created myths and gods, but now it no longer functions as effectively. To understand, thus, the importance of myth, and its division between its own mode and the mode of 'persecution texts' which fail to have the same productive power, I turn now to Ricœur's analysis of the 'myths of evil,' which can rescue the Girardian theory of myth from being reduced as an obfuscation of 'traces' to humanity's evil violence.

Ricœur and the Myths of Evil

Ricœur explains the relationship between the primary level of symbols, seen as the symbolic stages of defilement, sin, and guilt, as ultimately not experienceable, in themselves, via the 'phenomenological reenactment of the believing consciousness' unless mediated in second order symbolism, the narrative structure of myth.[471] Ricœur does not wish to give an overview of all mythic narratives, but locates his discussion around the 'myths of evil.' By placing the symbols themselves within a narrative that contains a 'beginning' and an 'end,' the universality and existential dimension of myth are available to humanity for interpretation. The importance

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regarding myth that is structurally necessary to bring Girard's claims into a much more robust philosophical dialogue. In sum, Girard needs Ricœur to be less reductive, but Ricœur needs Girard to actually be critical.

[469] Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 12.

[470] Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 44.

[471] 'In order to attempt a purely semantic analysis of the expressions that best reveal the experience of fault, we have had to bracket the second-degree symbols, which are the medium for the primary symbols, which are themselves the medium for the living experience of defilement, sin, and guilt.' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 161.

then for Ricœur, is that the interpretation of myth can 'create a new *peripeteia* of the logos.' To accomplish this, Ricœur identifies three functions of myth for this 'existential' understanding: 'concrete universality,' 'temporal orientation,' and 'ontological exploration.'[472] These three functions establish Ricœur's believing hermeneutic of the myths of evil as able to describe and provide a productive meaning towards understanding *fault* by 'a way of *revealing* things that is not reducible to any translation from a language in cipher to a clear language.'[473] It is this productive power of myth, towards an existential understanding of evil, that can be grafted onto Girardian suspicion, to demonstrate myth's bivalence not just for uncovering a violent system, but its response.

First Function of Myth – Concrete Universality

This first function of myth for Ricœur shows how 'experience escapes its singularity' and 'is transmuted in its own "'archetype."'[474] This function of myth universalizes the figures ('the hero, the ancestor, the Titan, the first man, the demigod…') to be appliable to human experience in general, not to be bound solely to the culture or contexts where the myth originated. This function of 'concrete universality,' in a Girardian view, allows for the discovery of the plight of the victim as universal to all myths, and the 'generative power of violence' expressed in the dual relationship between destruction and recreation.

How does Ricœur justify a 'concrete universality' within the myths of evil? It is possible because of the 'intention' of myth to depict a 'wholeness,' a 'verbal envelope of a form of life, that is felt and lived before being formulated.'[475] This intention toward an 'inclusive mode of behavior relative to the whole of things' is never exhausted solely in myth. One has to acknowledge its companionship with ritual, as well.

> Still more fundamentally, ritual action and mythical language, taken together, point beyond themselves to a model, and archetype, which they *imitate or repeat*; imitation in gestures and verbal repetition are only the broken expressions of *a living participation in an original Act which is the common exemplar of the rite and the myth.*[476]

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[472] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 162-63.

[473] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 163.

[474] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 162.

[475] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 166.

[476] Emphasis mine, Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 166-67.

The ritual and the myth are part of one mimetic process of an 'original Act' from which they continue to participate, as an 'intention' to describe a wholeness to the 'experience of life.' Ricœur's believing hermeneutic on the myths of evil views its function of 'concrete universality' from a singular, but universally generative act to the two significant aspects of primitive sacred life: myth and ritual. In my reading, Girard's founding murder is a positing of such an archetypal exemplar for the 'hero' as the 'victim' of every myth. Ricœur's positing of a 'common' function of describing human experience, at the conjunction of myth and ritual, descends from a primordial act, of 'which they imitate or repeat,' is another link to Girard's view. This 'original Act' shows the bivalent function and possible 'grafting' point for Girard and Ricœur's interpretation of myth, and thus symbols, together.

Myth and Narration

To further emphasize this significant 'grafting point' between Girard and Ricœur and the possible transfer point between suspicion and belief in the interpretation of myth, the notion of the 'whole' that myth and rite seek to describe, needs to be clarified for Ricœur.

> What, in fact, is the ultimate significance of this mythical structure? It indicates, we are told, the intimate accord of the man of cult and myth with the whole of being; it signifies an indivisible plenitude, in which the supernatural, the natural, and the psychological are not yet torn apart…It is only in intention that the myth restores some wholeness… Hence the myth can only be an intentional restoration or reinstatement and in this sense already symbolical.[477]

For Girard, this indivisible plenitude is the mass of undifferentiation, prior to the sacred violence, from which is the establishment of the first community' by an act of difference. Ricœur's description of the function of myth's 'concrete universality reveals that the 'mythical structure' itself is an attempt for primitive human consciousness to make sense of this undifferentiated origin.[478] And for Ricœur, the function of narration is the human function from the symbolic, of making 'concordance' out of 'discordance' via the making of plot.[479] The 'conflict of interpretations' here, sees Girard's description of primordial violence and the violence of the sacred to make order out of disorder, reflects at the anthropological level Ricœur's view of the function of emplotment at the mythic level.

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[477] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 167.

[478] For an expansion of Ricœur's hermeneutic reading of myth and symbol as an attempt to approach the sacred origins to representation, see David M Rasmussen, *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology: A Constructive Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Ricœur* (Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

[479] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative vol. 1*, 31.

> Narration and rites, then, are needed to consecrate the contours of the signs of the sacred…If the plentitude were experienced, it would be everywhere in space and time; but because it is only aimed at symbolically, it requires special signs and a discourse on signs; their heterogeneity bears witness to a significant whole by its contingent outcroppings. Hence, the myth has the function of guarding the finite contours of the signs of which, in their turn, refer to the plenitude, that man aims at rather than experiences.[480]

The creating of 'contours' of the sacred via symbols and their retelling in mythic narratives 'guard' the community from this 'plenitude.' The production of the diversity of myths, despite their many similarities to a singular structure seen with Girard's explanatory hypothesis, illustrate the generative power of violence, and the ritual and narrative efforts taken by human communities to build order around this 'matrix of terror.'[481] Ricœur also indicates that this 'plenitude that the myths point to symbolically' is 'reestablished dangerously' and 'painfully.' Thus this signification of the plenitude is 'through a combat.'[482] In my reading, the violence required, in the making of order out of disorder, seen in the symbolic and mythic redescriptions of the plenitude beyond the sacred, synthesizes with the Girardian thesis in an anthropological mode, for it provides an expansion of the suspicion element, into the need for narrative redescription of the undifferentiated violence beyond myths and their symbols. The concrete universal function of myths by an imitated and redescribed archetype is shown to be even more 'concrete' and more 'universal' when paired with the explanatory hypothesis.

Second Function of Myth – Temporal Orientation

The narrative function of myth also allows for this second function, its temporal orientation or its relation to an 'ideal history' of a 'beginning and end.' As seen in the sections on symbols for Girard and Ricœur, the notion of the temporality to interpretation is significant for understanding evil in a hermeneutic mode. This is because in order not to make evil merely a conceptual or abstract reduction, the progression of understanding of the phenomenal emergence of violence, our understanding of its ethical consequences, and humanity's resistance to its appearance, shows that the understanding of evil is an evolution. The myths themselves, by demonstrating a temporal function within their narratival structure, demonstrate that not only has evil emerged in humanity's existential situation, but there exists an 'end' to it as well, an 'eschatological' end.

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[480] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 169.

[481] See Chapter 1, *Violence as Mimetic Response – Ricœur and Mimetic Theory.*

[482] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 169-70.

How is temporality to myth expressed? It is because not only is it a narrative function for Ricœur, but it is also a 'drama.'

> It is, in fact, because that which is ultimately signified by every myth is itself in the form of a drama that the narrations in which the mythical consciousness is fragmented are themselves woven of happenings and personages; because its paradigm is dramatic, the myth itself is a tissue of events and is found nowhere except in the plastic form of narration.[483]

The 'happenings and personages' that complete the dramatic structure of the myth image the process of understanding of evil, in the suspicious direction as the staged combat or calamity that represents the mimetic crisis, turning to the expulsion of the victim, or the act of the hero destroying the monster, becoming a divinity, or founding a new community out of the disorder. Yet, in the believing direction, the dramatic movement is more than entertaining for its later readers, but our own narrative self-understanding can become redescribed in the act of reading.[484] The positive direction of this temporal movement sees that the myths show a response to evil that leads to an 'End' to it. When brought into conjunction with the first function of myth, its 'concrete universality,' this 'drama' images a universal human drama in response to violence, in response to evil.

> Experience is no longer reduced to a present experience; this present was only an instantaneous cross-section in an evolution stretching from an origin to a fulfillment, from a 'Genesis' to an 'Apocalypse.' [485]

In the first chapter, when discussing the 'conflict of interpretations' between Ricœur and Girard, I mentioned that the 'teleological' aspects of the hermeneutic of belief, seen also in Ricœur's presentation of *thumos* in chapter 3, now can be seen to be overcome by the eschatological interpretation of myth. This possibility can now be posited for the believing interpretation but cannot by concretized until the next and final chapter, where the eschatological interpretations of the Christ figure for the understanding of evil, will be presented.

Third Function of Myth – Ontological Exploration

To explore this last function of myth, the 'ontological interpretation,' and relate it to Girard's hermeneutic of myth, Ricœur organizes these 'myths of evil' into four typologies that

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[483] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 169.

[484] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative vol 1.*, 77.

[485] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 163.

consolidate some of the structures and themes relating to an 'origin' and 'end' of evil.[486] So how does this reorganization of these typologies reveal the function of an 'ontological exploration' of humanity and its relationship to violence? It is because these typologies, when overlaid into the progression of understanding evil reveal a 'dynamics that has its task the discovery of the latent life of the myths and the play of their secret affinities.'[487] The 'ontological exploration' of these myths reveal, through passing through each stage, that evil inhabits the ontological situation as both co-extensive and prior to the human. Either in the first typology, the 'ritual vision of the world,' evil is seen as the 'past,' a primordial chaos, and the creation of the order of the world is the overcoming of this evil. Humanity continues this anterior evil when it turns to chaos. In the tragic typology (discussed in the next chapter) where there is a 'non-distinction between the divine and the diabolical,' these ontological exploration show the growing realization of human responsibility or entrapment to an evil situation.[488] At this contact point of the 'conflict of interpretations,' the aporia of evil, as seen in the symbolic condensation in Ricœur's *servile will* or in Girard's violent sacred at the heart of hominization, evil seems to be attached to freedom's 'intersubjective' mimetic bonds with others, that is intertwined in violent order as response to violent disorder. Thus, the 'ontological exploration' of myth points towards an eschatological direction in 'response' to evil, either in a salvific 'creation' of order, or in a tragic 'aesthetic deliverance.' The polar moment of violence in its concrete externality and in its internality of an always already divided desire, must ultimately be a conversion away from an ontological event

[486] I must give a brief overview of Ricœur's usage of the 'typology' of the myths of evil. The first of the typologies is the 'drama of creation,' where 'the origin of evil is coextensive with the origin of things; it is the "chaos" with the creative act of the god struggles.' The 'End' of this typology is the 'creative act itself.' The second typology is the 'idea of a "fall" of man that arises as an irrational event in a creation already completed.' The 'End' of this type is the symbol of 'salvation,' which is a 'new peripeteia.' The third typology is 'the tragic vision of man' where humanity is already 'guilty' and there seems to be a form of 'aesthetic deliverance' in the interaction between 'freedom' and 'necessity.' The fourth typology, which contains little significance for this understanding of evil, is the 'myth of the exiled soul' seen in the Orphic Myth of Greek philosophy. Following my hermeneutic pairing Ricœur and Girard, the Girardian hermeneutic allows for a reorganization of these typologies into the progression of understanding, that also follows Ricœur's progression of understanding in the symbolic stages of defilement, sin and guilt. This reorganization shows the first typology of myth to be the most ancient, most proximal to the discovery of the founding murder and the creation of a violent order, as the creative act over and against the chaos. The second typology is a later stage, for it begins to perceive the complicity of humanity in this violent structure. In the final part of this chapter, the Adamic myth, as the anthropological myth, par excellence, will be explored as the best expression not only of this typology, but commence the understanding of evil into an origin of evil's 'already thereness' and its 'eschatological' understanding. The third typology, is a major stage in this progression of understanding in that it establishes the 'tragic insight' for Girard. It is for this reason that the tragic myths and the 'tragic insight' will be discussed in the following chapter for its ability to reveal and respond to the violent order, and they move away from obfuscating redescription of myth, into the revealing mode of tragedy.

[487] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 174.

[488] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 214.

of evil, which is seen to be a 'wandering astray' in a selfhood in exclusion of the 'other,' the victim. The last typology of myth I will discuss, the Adamic myth, reveals, at the anthropological and hermeneutic level, that a prior ontological 'goodness' as being created in intersubjective harmony, in non-violence, is in the status of unverifiability, yet plausible, as the founding murder at the birth of hominization. To demonstrate this final, synthesized ontological exploration of myth, I turn to a combined hermeneutic of the Adamic myth.

Part III: The Adamic Myth in Paul Ricœur and René Girard

Thus, to conclude this chapter's progression of evil, I now turn to the myth of Adam and Eve, as explored through the readings of Girard and Ricœur, for it captures the paradox of evil as both internal and external to humanity, and provides a path forward to an expanded understanding of evil. The interpretation of the Adamic myth in the progression of understanding transitions from revealing the ontological moment of violence as 'covetousness' and later as fratricide at the foundation of the first human community. Thus, evil, in its polar simultaneity of suffering and committing, can be understood at each of the symbolic levels that attempt to convey this complex, bivalent event in language and narrative. Furthermore, as a narrative, it transcends merely the progression of understanding towards evil, introducing a necessarily eschatological response to this evil.

Ricœur states that the Adamic myth is the anthropological myth *par excellence*, for it places the origin of evil as 'co-extensive with man' and not via some primordial external chaos of which man is a victim.[489] 'Our problem will be to understand what the 'Adamic myth' adds to those first symbols.'[490] Yet, in the companionship with Girard, this primordial chaos is also seen to be contained in the expansion of this myth, in the concrete origin of human community in violence. Ricœur leaves the 'already there,' 'interhuman,' and 'transmitted' character of evil opaque. This can be demonstrated in Girard's analysis of the figure of the serpent as representative of Girard's figure of Satan, who is the mimetic *skandalon* and the subject of the structure of the 'bad' mimetic system which infects humanity from within and without via his intersubjective composition in imitation. The expansion of the Adamic myth to include the first 'community,' Cain and Abel,

[489] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 232.

[490] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 237.

shows also the dual pillars of Girard's explanatory hypothesis as foundational to the anthropological myth par excellence. This complementary reading of Girard and Ricœur continues their hermeneutic partnership for the understanding of primordial evil, an intertwining of bi-directional desire and violence.

Anthropological Myth Par Excellence

Ricœur's analysis of the adamic myth is given anthropological significance because it places the origin of evil within humanity's freedom, as opposed to other etiological myths which either places humankind as the victim of said evil origin or is tragically the plaything of the gods. This shows it is already an attempt to dissolve the 'theogonic' conception of evil.

> Conflicts and crimes, trickery and adultery are expelled from the sphere of the divine: animal headed gods, demigods, titans, giants, and heroes are ruthlessly excluded from the field of religious consciousness.[491]

Ricœur identifies how the Adamic myth then moves beyond what Girard would view as the monstruous hallucinations that mask the plight of the victim and reveal the human role in violence. Further it establishes a dissociation between a 'historical starting point of evil' from the 'ontological' beginning of 'creation.'[492] This human ontological moment of evil, already there and for which we are responsible reveals an 'evil "heart" of *each'* which is also 'the evil "heart" of *all.*'[493] Thus this evil source, the divided 'heart' of desire, is 'an evil root that is both individual and collective.'[494] This evil, seen in the 'concrete universal' of Adam as representing all of humanity, is also seen to be 'a single act – in short, in a unique event.'[495] The event of evil then changes creation and establishes a new *logos* for humanity – a new existential situation. This moment of evil ends 'a time of innocence' and 'begins a time of malediction.'[496] This signifies the evil moment as a loss of 'a prior mode of being' and re-establishment of humanity in a new, violent, way of being. What seems to emerge in this passage between modes of being are a new set of 'cultural aptitudes,' such as 'intelligence, work, and sexuality' which are now seen to be 'flowers of evil.' Ricœur sees this emergence of the properly human mode of being-in-the-world as 'stamped with

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[491] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 239.

[492] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 241.

[493] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 241.

[494] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 241.

[495] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 243.

[496] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 244.

the twofold mark of being destined for the good and inclined toward evil.'[497] Thus for Ricœur 'the greatness of man and the guilt of man are inextricably mingled.'[498] The expression of the heart of humanity as internally divided, and the vectors of its mimetic-thymic desire demonstrate this bivalence, where its intersubjective directionality can be towards violence or harmony.

Yet, in the viewing of the 'drama' of the myth, the several personages that play out in the event, each embody universal 'archetypes.' As Adam symbolizes the 'concrete universal' of all humanity, so too does Eve as his 'Other' and as 'Life' itself, which thus emphasizes the communal aspect of this act, this event of evil. The Serpent, 'as a figure of transition' expresses the 'already thereness' of evil as the radical 'chthonic' origin, that is coextensive with humanity. It transmits this 'bad' vocation of internally divided desire.

> 'Has God truly said…?' Now the question is an interrogation concerning the *Interdict*; it is a question that seizes upon the interdiction and transforms it into an occasion for falling; or rather, if our analysis of the creative limit is exact, the question makes the limit suddenly appear as an interdiction… Floating at a distance from me, the commandment becomes insupportable; the creative limit becomes hostile negativity and, as such, problematic…At the same time as the meaning of the ethical limit becomes hazy, the meaning of finiteness is obscured. A 'desire' has sprung up, the desire for infinity; but that infinity is not the infinity of reason or happiness… it is the infinity of desire itself; it is the desire of desire, taking possession of knowing, of willing, of doing, and of being: 'Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.'… The soul of the serpent's question is the evil infinite,' which simultaneously perverts the meaning of the limit by which freedom was oriented and the meaning of finiteness of the freedom thus oriented by the limit.[499]

If we recall Ricœur's discussion of fallibility being the dialectic between the voluntary – freedom - and the involuntary – finitude - the primitive 'prohibition' or 'taboo' issued by God to not eat the fruit of the garden is seen to be a challenge to the infinite capability of the will, that rejects the finite, createdness. The ontological moment of *fault* is inaugurated by this 'irrationality of the Instant,' where we act according to the 'bad infinite' of desire desiring itself. If we recall the discussion of vanity from the section on sin, it is ultimately the desiring of an illusion, of a lie, which is shown to be the lie of the Serpent, who 'was a liar from the beginning.'[500] The intersubjective communion, positing as an original goodness or innocence, is lost in the 'lie' of

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[497] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 246.

[498] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 247.

[499] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 253.

[500] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 161.

'bad' desire. Girard agrees here with Ricœur that the serpent is the figural embodiment of the infinitude of bad desire, or covetousness, or the symbol of the *ouroboros*.

> The serpent is mimetic or mediated desire. In a way, mimetic desire is infinite; it's in circles… The serpent is the *ouroboros*, the embodiment of the circle of mimetic desire, from a literary point of view. The serpent is always already mimetic desire turning upon itself and influencing itself…The couple disobeys God. They disobey God through mimetic desire when they shift to another god. They shift to another god that is mimetic desire, which is the serpent, which is this mutual influencing… Disobedience then is the desire to be creatures that owe nothing to anyone except themselves, which cannot be the case since humans have to have a model. I say exactly what the text says, that desire cannot appear spontaneously.[501]

In the Girardian reading, Adam mimetically copies Eve's desire, who copied it from the serpent, which is interpreted by Girard as mimesis, itself. These mimetic connections illustrate an 'archetypal' intersubjective formation via the mimetic triangle: Eve's desire, Adam's desire, and the Serpent's desire. This 'metaphysical object' of the Serpent's desire, is seen in Girard's discussion of the 'romantic lie,' discussed in chapter 2, which promises an illusion of autonomy, or pride. This 'lie' is at the foundation of all 'bad' mimesis, attempts to sever the potentially positive formation of mimetic desire, which is an intersubjective sharing and communion via imitation. This lie leads to rivalry and dispute between the self and its other, or Adam to Eve and Eve to the Serpent.[502] The expulsion from the Garden indicates the connection of this infinitude of 'bad' mimesis as with the distinction between man and the sacred, the 'division' between humanity and its 'death-dealing power.'

Yet, Girard's analysis does not halt with the triangular structure of mimetic desire, seen with Adam, Eve, and the Serpent. He also extends his analysis into the 'first human community' that includes their sons, or 'warring brothers,' who are the first 'monstruous doubles,' Cain and Abel. The mimetic lie of rivalry over a nothingness, or a 'vanity,' is carried into the dispute between Cain and Abel, and the primitive dread of retributive violence at the origin of society.

> But look at the result of mimetic desire… The story of Cain and Abel should be included in the definition of original sin. As a matter of fact, it's the main event; it's the story of the founding murder. Now, you will immediately observe that it's not a collective murder but, if you look at the text closely, you will see that it can be interpreted as a collective murder. Cain says, 'Now that I have killed my brother, everybody will kill me.' In other words, the law against murder, the implicit

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[501] René Girard, *Reading the Bible with René Girard: Conversations with Steven E. Berry*, ed. Michael Hardin (JDL Press, 2015), 73.

[502] "Eve, then, does not stand for women in the sense of the 'second sex.' Every woman and every man are Adam; every man and every woman are Eve; every woman sins 'in' Adam; every man is seduced 'in' Eve." Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 255.

> law against murder has been broken… The first consequence of the murder of the brother is also the law against murder… To say that murder is forbidden is to say that we have a society.[503]

Mimetic desire, as covetousness, is intertwined with violence, which is the collective sin of all before God, the evil 'heart' of humanity. This collective state of 'sin,' then is concretized in a founding murder that establishes the first human community.[504] Girard responds to the potential question about an over-interpretation of this text by turning to Cain's response, '… everybody will kill me.' Does 'everybody' really refer to his parents, Adam and Eve, or is there a fluidity in the representation of the myth as Cain as another archetypal figure, a figure who represents a community or tribe? In relating Ricœur with Girard, the founding murder, and the subsequent prohibition alongside a certain 'terror' regarding the 'violation of the interdict' hearkens back to the discussion of defilement and the primitive symbol as 'aiming at' a description of a founding, violent situation to the division between humanity and the sacred.

The expansion of the Adamic myth to include the fratricide of Cain and Abel is also indicated in Ricœur's reading.

> … it is not certain that Adam bears the responsibility for the evil in the world; he is perhaps only the first example of evil. In any case the story of Adam should not be separated from the ensemble of the first eleven chapters which, through the legends of Abel and Cain, of Babel, of Noah, the supreme threat – the Flood, - and the supreme promise – the regeneration beyond the waters, - lead to the election of Abraham, father of believers.[505]

The expansion of responsibility for the 'first' sin, or the place where evil emerges into the world is not attributable to Adam alone, but in his 'concrete universality' this singularity is expanded

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[503] Girard, *Reading the Bible*, 75-76.

[504] So, with the above discussion about the anthropological myth, par excellence, with the analysis of Adam, Eve, the Serpent, and also, Cain and Abel, the question of 'original sin' must be briefly addressed. Both Ricœur and Girard resist the theological implications of their arguments, but they both do comment on a re-reading of 'original sin.' Ricœur sees it as one of the problems of an overly gnostic reading of evil, reversing direction to a quasi-physical entity. See Paul Ricœur, "Evil: A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology" in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark I. Wallace, (Fortress Press, 1995) 253-54. Also, Ricœur, "Original Sin: Study in Meaning" in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*. trans. Peter McCormick and ed. Don Ihde, (Northwestern University Press, 1974) 269-86. However, Ricœur most strong reading of 'Original sin' occurs in *the Symbolism of Evil*. 'With even more reason, original sin, being a rationalization of second degree, is only a false column. The harm that has been done to souls, during the centuries of Christianity, first by the literal interpretation of the story of Adam, and then by the confusion of this myth, treated as history, with later speculations, principally Augustinian, about original sin, will never be adequately told.' See Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 239.

Girard sees 'original sin' as the 'bad' mimesis into the founding murder structure: covetousness and murder, together. See Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lighting*, 7. For theological perspectives on 'Original Sin' read in a Girardian manner, see Raymund Schwager, *Banished from Eden: Original Sin and Evolutionary Theory in the Drama of Salvation*, trans. James G. Williams (Gracewing Publishing, 2006). Also see James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin through Easter Eyes* (Crossroad Herder, 1996).

[505] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 238.

into a multiplicity of expressions of the same evil. Thus there is an 'ontological exploration' that depicts the evolving understanding of evil carrying through the rest of the figures in Genesis, who are also archetypal moments of the progressive of understanding. Girard sees this expansion to the myths of Noah and Abraham as also depicting different moments in this understanding of the role of evil in the cultural orders that they either seek to change or begin anew, such as the critique of sacrifice with Abraham's almost murder of his son, Isaac, and the mimetic crisis symbolized as the flood of undifferentiation.[506]

But since the Adamic myth is a second order symbol, and possesses an end to the narrative that informs the whole of the symbolic progression, how does humanity escape the 'double bind' of this 'satanic' structure? The 'eschatological' direction of the myth of Adam, and the other figures of Genesis expand the understanding of evil from the placing of the primary symbols in a narrative, into the development of a 'salvation,' 'conversion' or 'pardon' from the evil that is a violent that is internal to humanity's freedom and external to it in the mimetic violence at origin of a human situation. We see this intersubjective composition of humanity, from the positing of a 'prior state of innocence,' as a participatory 'creation' in an intersubjective harmony of 'good' mimesis. This 'paradise,' within the capability of humanity's ontological formation, is lost by the shift towards the desire of the infinite, which ignores the polar structure to our fallibility. The 'covetousness,' at its core, is a desire of the negative infinite, the nothingness of vanity, that becomes the nothingness behind the 'idols' of the sacred.

Conclusion -Towards the Figure of Non-Violence

By following the progression of understanding the primary symbols, defilement, sin, and guilt, and the second-order symbolic mythic narrative of Adam, alongside Girard's mimetic anthropological method, the subjective experiences brought to language in these symbolic interpretations are brought into the external world of a more concrete anthropology. Ricœur's hermeneutic was able to reach the contours of the primordial origin of evil in the dread of retribution, but only via the subjective perspective of 'the believing consciousness.' In my reading, Ricœur's 'believing consciousness' adds an essential development to this perspective of the victim, and that is the hidden complicity with this ambivalent structure of scapegoating violence, and 'enslaved freedom' of the *servile will*. For Ricœur, it is within the context of both

[506] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 142-43.

the emergence of evil and the evolving hope of 'pardon' from this experience that the entire symbolic schema of his *servile will* can be understood as the 'subjective' experience of the 'religious consciousness.' This state of bound complicity with the 'matrix of terror' behind the interdiction is fully explained in the most modern symbol of evil for Ricœur: guilt, or self-accusation. To fully contextualize this phenomenological hermeneutic method, the 'believing consciousness' can be related in Girardian terms as the perspective of the victim.[507] For Girard, evil emerges in a mimetic contagion surrounding the first widespread mimetic rivalry. The violence of this rivalry is perpetuated by our *méconnaissance*, which functions as the misrecognition of our collective complicity and proclivity towards our violence and scapegoating, which continues after the collective murder of the first victim, whose catharsis has inaugurated a bloody cultural order. It is this *méconnaissance* regarding the 'double-edged' nature of our mimetic desire that contributes to the future of this desire-violence relationship, which seems inextricable from our human situation. Girard's hypothesis reveals that victimhood is not a permanent position. Our ability to be scapegoated, or suffer from the existential dread of retribution, is mixed-in with the complicity of being the persecutors, of being a member of the crowd, as standing with the community an accusation against from the individual prophet, or another potential victim, who does not remain silent about the violence. The combination, then, of the 'believer's consciousness of sin, of being a part of this mysteriously evil situation, with the victim-perpetrator cycle of humanity, concretizes the polar moment of evil as violence to oneself and violence to another.[508]

The 'event' of evil then blends the infinite desire, covetousness, with the violence of a founding murder, which functions as a destructively creative violence that establishes this multi-level and multi-directional symbolism, which can be understood through the 'conflict of interpretations.' To fully understand the eschatological direction that is now opened to this method is to understand the use of the figural interpretation that we see with St. Paul.[509] The myth itself, which is already an interpretation, is interpreted again by St. Paul, who sees Adam as the 'old man' that is redeemed by the 'new man,' the figure of Christ. This reinterpretation

[507] The perspective of the victim is only possible after the testimonial event of the Christ figure and the bi-directional revelation of the mythological mechanism of the effacement of traces. This will be the key theme of the next chapter.

[508] Job, Oedipus, the 'Suffering Servant,' and the Christ Figure, are the key figural examples of this change in the view of victimhood.

[509] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 238.

also places a retrospective emphasis on Adam's role as a foundational human who is overcome.[510] However, before we can reach the eschatological moment of the Christ figure in interpreting a response to evil, we must demonstrate the evolution of the figural moments after Adam, but still before St. Paul's reinterpretation. In the next and final chapter, the function of Oedipus in Greek Tragedy and Job from the Hebrew scriptures foreshadow these retrospective 'reinterpretations' of which Adam is the primary model. Thus, this figure of non-violence becomes the anchor for the replacement of myth by tragedy, but in its most modern reinterpretation of evil, it is replaced by the function of 'testimony,' for it attests to the innocence of victims, rather than their obfuscation, emerging from the creativity of *méconnaissance*.

[510] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 238.

Chapter 5: From Tragedy to Testimony – The Figure of Christ

> *The world is such that personalized substantive divine goodness cannot be secure against ignorance and misrecognition; worse still, it is the very fact that personalized divine goodness is present that triggers misrecognition. So different is actual divinity from its representations that it can only appear as the enemy of God. Yet at the same time, only in working out of this misrecognition can recognition occur: the narrative of the ultimate catastrophe in which truth is displayed as the victim of the world we know is the precondition of seeing that the world we know is indeed lethally contingent.* – Rowan Williams[511]

In chapter 1, I developed a hermeneutic methodology that goes beyond a comparison of Ricœur's and Girard's works, towards a productive 'conflict of interpretations' that moves in the direction of a creative hermeneutic synthesis, where Ricœur's philosophy 'welcomes anew the mimetic concept,' thereby mutually enlightening the insights of both members of the interpretation. In chapter 2, I discussed this symbolic 'key' for Ricœur as the situation of the *servile will* and bound freedom, as both *committing* and *suffering* the evil of violence. In chapter 3, the mimetic-thymic composition of selfhood in an intersubjective and imitative desire allows for a self and community to understand the modality by how its 'fallenness' can be characterized as this *servile will*, and be seen as *violence*. At this stage of the hermeneutic understanding of evil, we now move into the other side of the revelation of the founding mechanism, the 'crisis' for Ricœur, which dissociates the age of myth from the age of history.[512] In this chapter, I will argue that the 'Christ event' is this 'crisis' separating the age of myth from the age of history by its ability to demythologize the myths of evil, and become the testimony par excellence, which continues this demythologization under the figure of the paraclete. Unlike chapter 4, where I examined the symbol-metaphor-myth progression of obfuscating the traces of violence, in chapter 5, I will now analyze the critique of the violent system in tragedy and the response made possible by the testimonial function. The roles of the interpretive figures of Oedipus, Job, Suffering Servant, and Christ will illustrate these firm shifts that progressively unveil the violence of the scapegoating

[511] Rowan Williams, *The Tragic Imagination*, (Oxford University Press, 2016) 121.

[512] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 161-62.

system, yet build a path towards a response to violence by testifying to the innocence of the victims of the internal-external situation of evil, who are both our others and ourselves.[513]

The chapter is organized into three parts. Part I is the Critique of Myth, where the prophetic inspiration, Oedipus, and Job are discussed, as the tragic understanding of evil forms a scandalization of humanity's situation, rendering it devoid of hope and undermining a response to evil. Following Job's critique of this situation we turn to Part II which is the central moment of the Christ figure, who effectively reveals the polarity in violence, the dissymmetry between *suffering* and *committing*, in his condemnation of the 'pharisees' who are also archetypal figures that describe the legacy of religion and culture effacing the traces of victims in building their 'tombs.' Furthermore, Christ, as the ideal mimetic mediator, establishes a form of response to evil through the non-violent mediation of an imitative logos that was not recognized by the world. The final point is his role as the scapegoat par excellence, where he consolidates the functions of the figure of the 'Suffering Servant,' the 'Son of Man,' and the just judge, which inaugurates the eschatological import of understanding evil. In part III, I turn to the function of testimony, which is the textual antithesis to myth. Further, Christ is recognized as the testimonial event par excellence, in addition to the innocent victim. This anthropological and hermeneutic consolidation of testimony and scapegoat reveals the suspicion/belief structure underlying all testimony that has animated this entire 'conflict of interpretations.' The function of testimony is to be both a 'poison' and a 'remedy' by exposing the 'lie' of the myth-making *méconnaissance* on our violence, while also providing a form of non-violent response through the positive mimetic modeling of innocence. Yet, exposing this lie makes order through violent misrecognition untenable for humanity, thus a new form of 'order' through non-violence is necessary. This encapsulates the same dual function and polarity of evil as internal-external phenomena. Thus, the role of hope in the continued movement of the paraclete brings an eschatological bearing on the understanding of evil and its now-included response, where the testimonial act, attesting to the event of non-violence, requires both suspicion and belief. Still, the poison to the ability of our violence to stop our violence heightens the gravity of each testimonial act, revealing an eschatological urgency to the fallibly free choice between the violent 'order of the world' and the non-violent 'kingdom of God.'

[513] See note #62 in Introduction.

Part I - The Critique of Myth

From Prophetic Accusation to Tragic Inspiration

In the previous chapter, the beginnings of the critiques of the sacrificial system are seen with the prophetic accusation, at the symbolic stage of sin, where the provincial, tribal god, is dissociated from the one whose personal bonds we have transgressed, of which we are first guilty of 'breaking' at the communal level, and later, becomes a self-accusation. This progression of understanding evil is promoted, in part, because the culture failed to address new mimetic crises, as belief in the sacrificial efficacy begins to wane. Upon comparing Girard and Ricœur, Girard's view of this progressive understanding of evil is evident in his reading of the prophets, which depicts a similar transposition of meaning that Ricœur identifies in his primary symbols of evil, which we covered in the last chapter.

> Throughout the Old Testament, a work of exegesis is in progress, operating in precisely the opposite direction to the usual dynamics of mythology and culture… Even in the most advanced texts, such as the fourth 'Song of the Servant,' there is still some ambiguity regarding the role of Yahweh. Even if the human community is, on several occasions, presented as being responsible for the death of the victim, God himself is presented as the principal instigator of the persecution… In prophetic books, this conception tends to be increasingly divested of the violent characteristic of primitive deities. Although vengeance is increasingly still attributed to Yahweh, a number of expressions show that, in reality, mimetic and reciprocal violence is festering more and more as the old cultural forms tend to dissolve.[514]

The 'Song of the Servant' will be discussed later in the chapter, but the dissociation of the image of Yahweh as the violent or provincial god becomes a theme of this stage. This tension between the images of God contained in each of these symbolic stages of sin reveals a turn towards the interior, the emergence of the self who is responsible for its actions, and the previous images of the sacred deities do not reflect a certain ethical quality, reflected in the laws, formerly taboos, that the sacred was originally responsible for maintaining. Girard claims that this prophetic 'inspiration' is due to the awareness of the cultural violence underlying the sacred. Greek tragedy operates similarly as an internal critique of a failing religious and violent system with a flawed cultural theology.

> Tragic and prophetic inspiration does not draw strength from historical or philological sources, but from a direct, intuitive grasp of the role played by violence in the cultural order and in disorder, as well as in mythology and the sacrificial crisis.[515]

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[514] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 157.

[515] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 66.

This 'direct, intuitive grasp' focuses on critiquing violence, and Greek tragedy transforms the ambivalent character of violence into a more distinct opposition. Ricœur sees the transformation between the 'theogonic' and tragic in one of the earliest Greek playwrights, Aeschylus.

> Nevertheless, the Promethean myth, at least in Hesiod, is not completely emancipated from its theogonic matrix… It was Aeschylus who transformed Prometheus into a 'tragic' figure. While he keeps the theogonic setting, he really makes Prometheus the vis-à-vis of Zeus, who himself becomes the hidden god, or the κακὸς δαίμων; and so Prometheus becomes the 'Hero' pursued by the wrath of the god.[516]

Here, I see a parallel to the nature of the 'prophetic accusation.' In Aeschylus' retelling of the Promethean myth, a god of violence is not worshipped but resisted for the sake of humanity's survival. An opposition emerges between the suffering of self-sacrifice for others, and the κακὸς δαίμόν or 'wicked spirit' that afflicts and causes this suffering.[517] The tragic theme, then, where humanity is the plaything of the gods and potential victims of this sacral system, seems to have an inescapable 'predestination to evil,' this evil being an inescapable misfortune or an inescapable punishment.[518] I find that it is this 'scandalous theology' in Ricœur's reading of tragedy that connects to the Girardian reading, where the central figure, Oedipus, is the ultimate victim of the accusation of ὑβρις, pride or vanity, precipitating a rivalry. This reading is supplemented by how Ricœur emphasizes that the tragic sin of hubris is due to the divine φτόνος, a divine 'jealousy,' where the gods cannot endure the competition of a human 'overweening' greatness.[519]

This tragic conflict now reveals humanity as doomed victims of an evil sacred, a 'theology' that is ultimately shown to be 'evil.' This 'evil' opposition undermines the necessary ambivalence for the functioning of the sacred order, seen in myth. The opacity and potential benefits of the sacrificial system are perceived at this stage as false promises. Thus, in my reading, as humanity advances through the progression of understanding, now in the transitional stage from sin to guilt, the figure of the tragic hero reveals a vocation of 'victimhood,' an unescapable and unredeemable state of being, as the vocation of human existence.

> The tragic properly so called does not appear until the theme of predestination to evil – to call it by its name – comes up against the theme of heroic greatness; fate must first feel the resistance of freedom, rebound (so to speak) from the hardness of the hero, and finally crush him… Tragedy

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[516] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 209.

[517] My translation.

[518] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 212.

[519] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 217.

> was the result of magnifying to the breaking point a two-fold set of problems; those concerning the 'wicked god,' and those concerning the 'hero'… the exegesis of moral evil is so much a part of its theological exegesis that the hero is shielded from moral condemnation and offered as an object of pity to the chorus and the spectator.[520]

This 'breaking point' is a sense of hopelessness, an inescapable fate, where the human is the object of divine violence, caused by becoming a possible rival to the gods. Mimetic rivalry manifests itself again as the precipitating cause for inescapable violence. The tragic view, where humanity and the sacred are caught in an evil 'predestination,' is indeed scandalous, and sharpens the dramatic situation in which humanity must respond to this violence, where violence is personified in a 'wicked spirit' prompted by a rivalry over 'vanity.' The 'pity' aroused in the chorus by the plight of the hero lays the seeds, however, for the growing understanding of humanity's evil situation.

Oedipus the 'Innocent' King

To understand this tragic critique of the violent sacred and its seemingly hopeless situation of humanity's 'predestination to evil,' I turn now to Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, who is possibly the most 'sympathetic' and scandalous figure for the tragic critique. Ricœur calls this play a 'tragedy of truth,' and that is precisely what it is for Girard. It forms one of the key figural edifices in his interpretive hermeneutic of the violent sacred and the system of accusing innocent victims.[521]

Girard's analysis focuses on the 'violent reciprocity' that drives much of the tragedy, which immediately reflects the discussion of the role of 'warring brothers.'

> Each protagonist in turn occupies the same position regarding the same object… At first each of the protagonists believes that he can quell the violence; at the end each succumbs to it. All are drawn unwittingly into the structure of violent reciprocity – which they always think they are outside of...[522]

Here, there is a difference in the nature of the opposition of Aeschylean tragedy, seen in *Prometheus Unbound* or *Persians*. The hero is no longer in a hubristic rivalry with a wicked god, but the difference is in a 'human' opposition, a rivalry over who knows how to deal best with the plague befalling Thebes. Girard's reading reveals this 'tragic theology' to be more of a 'tragic anthropology.' The human crisis is, in fact, prior to the role of divine fate, which is a product of

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[520] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 218-19.

[521] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 225.

[522] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 69.

méconnaissance. This 'illusion of superiority' or 'hubris' is still the progenitor of the rivalry, now at the human level, among Oedipus, Creon, and Tiresias. But is not Tiresias an inspired prophet who knows the secret truth? This hidden truth is, of course, Oedipus' guilt, where he has single-handedly brought a plague to the city by killing his father and marrying his mother (the impossibility of this causal relationship is precisely one of Girard's key points). Girard dismisses that this is the original 'truth' of Tiresias,

> Tiresias himself rejects the traditional interpretation of his role, the very one proposed by the chorus. In reply to Oedipus, who has questioned him derisively on the origins of his prophetic gifts, Tiresias denies that he possesses any truth except the truth conferred on him by Oedipus himself:
>
> > *Oedipus*: Who taught you truth? Was it part of your training as a prophet?
> > *Tiresias*: You taught me, in forcing me to speak against my will.
>
> …The accusation is simply an act of reprisal arising from the hostile exchange of a tragic debate.[523]

Here, the 'tragedy of truth' is not that Oedipus cannot escape the fate of the 'wicked spirits.' It is, rather, in the violent reciprocity of angry accusations, where Tiresias hurls the accusation that Oedipus first addressed to him — namely, that he had a role in Laius' murder — directly back at Oedipus. The rivalry dissolves the differences between the characters, revealing that all that is evident in these exchanges is their hubris and reciprocal accusatory violence toward each other. The truth of the accusation of guilt for causing the city's crisis is impossible. Girard argues that the plague is one of the mythic tropes for representing the naturality of a sacrificial and mimetic crisis. Thus, the collective burden placed on an individual for such a crisis is, in fact, the burden of the community itself.

> To accuse the other of Laius's murder is to attribute to him sole responsibility for the sacrificial crisis; but as we have seen, everybody shares equal responsibility, because everybody participates in the destruction of a cultural order. The blows exchanged by enemy brothers may not always land on their mark, but every one of them deals a staggering blow to the institutions of monarchy and religion.[524]

The rivalry of false accusations and their escalating repetitions reveals a lack of structural integrity in the institutions of order. The institutions created by this violent order—monarchy and religion—are now being undermined by the erosion of distinction through the emptiness of hubris. This eroding of order is what characterizes this sacrificial crisis, represented as the plague.

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[523] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 70-71.

[524] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 71.

But how does Girard argue that Oedipus is the innocent victim of the tragedy, and the scapegoat exiled for the sake of Thebes, when he in fact accepts his guilt? Girard unpacks the seriousness of the charges and their role within the prevention of a mimetic contagion by stating, 'between parricide and incest, the abolition of all family differences is achieved.'[525] The most mimetically foundational relationship to a self's ability to commune with others —the positive mimetic modeling of a family —is brutally subverted, unleashing mimetic undifferentiation and contagion into the community. Oedipus is accused of being a *monster*.[526] Yet, what is opposed to this is the contagious nature of a collective crisis, described in the mythic plague motif,

> Vital aspects of the sacrificial crisis are apparent in both symbolic presentations, but they are differently distributed. The plague motif illuminates but a single aspect: the collective character of the disaster, its universally contagious nature. This motif ignores violence and the nondifferential character of the crisis. With the parricide/incest motif, on the other hand, violence and nondifference are presented in magnified and highly concentrated form, but limited to a single individual.[527]

The combination of these motifs reveals the potential for responsibility to shift to the one victim and be 'misplaced.'[528] Oedipus then becomes the victim-perpetrator of this crisis, bearing a 'tragic' responsibility —the guilt of a crisis he did not, and could not have, caused. The tragic 'moment' illustrates that this system relies on a single individual accepting this level of guilt, this responsibility, where the collective appears motivated as if by 'wicked spirits' or fate. This misrecognition of guilt, in which Oedipus participates by believing the accusation against himself, is because 'men cannot confront the naked truth of their own violence without the risk of abandoning themselves to it entirely.'[529] The sacrificial system requires a *violent unanimity* to save the city.

So, how is the tragedy of Oedipus a 'critique' of this system, if there are clues but no real strong rejection of the sacrificial? It is the role of *Oedipus at Colonus*, the return of the quasi-deified, venerated figure, for both Ricœur and Girard, that signals the passage to another level of tragic inspiration. Ricœur states that Theseus, the 'royal sacrificer,' brings Oedipus to the

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[525] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 74.

[526] 'The crimes of Oedipus signify the abolishment of differences, but because nondifference is attributed to a particular individual, it is transformed into a new distinction, signifying the monstrosity of Oedipus's situation.' Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 76.

[527] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 76-77.

[528] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 77.

[529] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 82.

boundary of the 'sacred city.'[530] By being expelled to the boundary, the dividing place, the now worshipped and divinized victim-perpetrator again illustrates that the 'end' of tragedy is 'understanding' through 'suffering.'

> In truth, salvation, in the tragic vision, is not outside the tragic but within it. This is the meaning of the tragic φρονεῖν, of that 'suffering for that sake of understanding'…[531]

This interpretive role clarifies the 'tragic inspiration' that advances the understanding of evil through suffering. Oedipus has become 'sacred' by being the victim-perpetrator and undergoing the successful scapegoating process. Girard's reading of *Oedipus at Colonus* supplements this point.

> The beneficial *Oedipus at Colonus* supersedes the earlier, evil Oedipus, but he does not negate him. How could he negate him, since it was the expulsion of a *guilty* Oedipus that prompted the departure of violence? The peaceful outcome of his expulsion confirms the justice of the sentence passed on him, his unanimous conviction for patricide and incest. If Oedipus is indeed the savior of the community, it is because he is a patricidal and incestuous son.[532]

The juxtaposition between the two Oedipus's demonstrates that the sacrificial mechanism relies on a bivalent relationship between victim and perpetrator. However, by sequencing this progression, and attempting to dramatize its stages, the pity aroused in the connection with Oedipus makes this archetypal hero one that elicits a 'scandalous' view of the violent sacred. The sympathy for Oedipus as a victim of fate and misfortune makes him a victim of the violent pole of evil that he suffers. Yet, the other pole, of violence *committed*, is also preserved in Oedipus, for not only did he murder and commit incest, but he also judged, expelled, and blinded himself. What Girard's suspicion reveals is that the 'tragic theology' is a tragic anthropology of mimetic violence against victims, for the 'wicked spirits' who are rivalrous with humanity, are none other than the community, its sacred, and internal rivalry. In my reading, Girard's hermeneutic dissolves the scandalous, tragic theology by returning to Oedipus his innocence. By dividing the ambiguity of the role of victim from the role of perpetrator, humanity is not doomed to this violent cycle by the 'fate' of punishment for an inescapable, unknown crime. The opposition between the 'wicked spirits' and the society of Thebes, which unite in opposition against the hero, is singled out as a human rivalry. This rivalry has been metaphorically transmuted into a symbol for the cause of violent undifferentiation, the contagious plague. What remains, then, at this

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[530] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 229.

[531] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 229.

[532] Emphasis not mine. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 86.

stage, is that suffering is the response to evil, for it reveals an understanding; however, the violent system requires the victims not to be seen as innocent. The tragic mode provides an occasion for sympathy with the victim-perpetrators, who must become part of the violent unanimity and inflict pain on themselves for the sacrificial cycle to continue. By focusing on the plight of the victim-perpetrator, who in fact seems more unfortunate, more victim-like, than in myth, the 'tragic inspiration' is seen to be a stage of 'demythologization' of violence.

Job: 'I know my defender lives.'

The tragedy of Job is the only answer to the seeming hopelessness of the tragic view of humanity, bound to the violent opposition between the community and its sacred. Before turning to Girard's radical rereading of Job as a more-than-Oedipal figure, I will examine Ricœur's reading, in which he views Job's situation as achieving a similar disjunction in the understanding of evil that tragedy reveals. It is precisely this weakness in the connection between the symbol of defilement that Job's self-critique unveils.

> That is why it required nothing less than the calling into question of this first rationalization and the crisis of which the Babylonian Job and the Hebrew Job were the admirable witnesses to dissociate the ethical world of sin from the physical world of suffering. This dissociation has been one of the greatest sources of anguish for the human conscience, for suffering has had to become absurd and scandalous in order that sin might acquire its strictly spiritual meaning… The price to be paid was the loss of a first rationalization, a first explanation of suffering. Suffering had to become inexplicable, a scandalous evil, in order that the evil of defilement might become the evil of fault. The figure of the just man suffering, image and type of unjust suffering, constituted the stumbling block against which the premature rationalizations of misfortune were shattered.[533]

In the previous chapter, defilement, as reflected in its connection to suffering, begins to break down, with the progressive understanding of evil, by various scandalizations, or 'stumbling blocks.'[534] The symbolic reservoir of defilement, seen as impurity or stain, and the rituals and interdictions created around addressing the sacralized situation are redescribed from the

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[533] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 32.

[534] Yet, the rationalization itself of evil is shown to be an occasion of its scandalization, and Girard's notion of the *skandalon*, or 'stumbling block, helps to understand the failure of the primitive rationalization. Yet, the interpretation of evil, is not a rationalization, thus the ability for defilement to become interpretable. The anthropological reading of *skandalon* and 'stumbling block' provide a hermeneutic insight into the understanding of evil, where the attempts to explain it, without an attempt to understand its non-conceptual, inherent aspects to both the internal and external experiences of the human situation, which paradoxically contribute to its *méconnaissance*. Here is Girard's view of the *skandalon* as revelatory mechanism of the intersection of mimetic desire and violence. '*Skandalon* is usually as "scandal", "obstacle", "stumbling block", or "snare" lying in wait… The *skandalon* is the obstacle/model of mimetic rivalry; it is the model insofar as he works counter to the undertakings of the disciple and so becomes an inexhaustible source of morbid fascination.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 416.

anthropological register into the spiritualized. How? Job is innocent, but still suffers radical misfortune. The figure of Job and his 'tragic' situation dissociates the ethical from the cosmic, and shows suffering to be 'inexplicable,' an already there, irrational, aspect of evil in humanity's situation.

Girard's reading delves deeper into this separation and highlights the central problem in analyzing the book of Job.

> The Book of Job forces us to choose between the moral and the metaphysical analysis of the problem of evil, based on the one hand on the reading contained in the prologue, and on the other on the recognition of this formidable relationship between violence and the sacred, which is not consciously articulated by the friends but is consciously rejected by the scapegoat. The hypothesis of victimization allows the texts to emerge from the silence that surrounds them and frees them from the metaphysical and moral trap that prohibits their interpretation.[535]

This 'metaphysical' and 'moral' issue occurs because the 'scandalous' understanding of evil shows God in this text to be more akin to the tragic, rivalrous gods of tragedy. Girard's method dissociates the prologue (and the epilogue) from the message of the dialogues, where the friends are seen to be the beginning of a 'lynch mob' who criticize Job's fallen state as deserved because of his hubris.[536] They foretell his destruction by various mythic forces, and their accusations image the escalating violence.

> Words, too, form a crowd; countless, they swirl about the head of the victim, gathering to deliver the *coup de grâce*. The three speeches are like volleys of arrows aimed at the enemy of God. The accusations descend on Job like so many adversaries, intent upon the destruction of some friend. Their hostile speeches are not merely an image of collective violence, they are a form of active participation in it. Job is well aware of this, and denounces the verbal dismemberment to which he is subjected… The speeches of the friends reflect the sacred fury that takes hold of lynchers as the lynching draws near. From Dionysiac *mania* to Polynesian *amok*, there are a thousand different ways of indicating a collective trance that is also found in Greek tragedy. These inflammatory tirades are like those of the tragic chorus in the moments that precede the destruction of the victim, such as the murder of Pentheus in *The Bacchae* and the discovery of the 'culprit' in *Oedipus Rex*.[537]

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[535] René Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Stanford University Press, 1987), 30.

[536] Girard's reading of the Book of Job is controversial because of the juxtaposition between the various parts of the texts, against each other, and choosing what he sees is the correct version that matches his hypothesis. Further, he is employing historical biblical criticism regarding these sources being from different epochs (which is well supported); however, his usage of biblical historical criticism is not consistent throughout his readings of scripture, namely when he sees that they support his insight. This all being said regarding the seemingly methodological inconsistency of Girard's reading, the significance remains, for my own reading, in the difficulties of positing metaphysical evil prior to the hermeneutics of its development, thus the series of scandalizations that have been covered in the attempted rationalization of the problem of evil. For biblical criticism of the different parts of Job see, Carol Ann Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

[537] Girard, *Job*, 26-27.

In my reading, the violence of these speeches against the innocent Job reflects the Ricœurian view that no narrative contains an ethically neutral character.[538] The escalation and the mania are seen with the epic, grandiose claims of supernatural destruction of Job if he persists in his hubris.[539] This dynamic is also directly connected to Greek tragedy, in both the *diasparagmos* of Pentheus, and in the back-and-forth tempo of the chorus from Oedipus, mentioned above. Rhythm and mimetic escalation, even in the textual sphere, further cement the textual order as a participant in the accusation process.[540] Further, Girard sees the Dialogues in Job, as a conflict between two 'visions in counterpoint.' These 'visions' are the revelatory texts, seen by those who do not attempt to hide the victim's innocence, and myth, those that obfuscate the traces of the violence. As Girard states, 'The sacred lie of the friends is contrasted with the true realism of Job.'[541]

Girard furthers the contrast between Job and Oedipus, for the key difference that emerges is the protest of innocence, for Job's protests never relent and succumb to the crowd pressure, thus denying a violent unanimity.

> Oedipus is a successful scapegoat, because he is never recognized as such. Job is a failed scapegoat. He derails the mythology that is meant to envelop him, by maintaining his point of view in the face of the formidable unanimity surrounding him. By remaining faithful to the truth revealed by the victim, Job is the true hero of knowledge rather than Oedipus, who is perceived as such in the philosophical tradition. The victim must participate if there is to be perfect unanimity.[542]

This difference, the protest of innocence, is the seminal difference for Girard between Job and tragedy, where the horror we as readers receive of this evil situation is what Ricœur terms the tragic φόβος, or fear, where we feel pity over the inescapably doomed situation. Job's protest of innocence pushes further in the direction of that reaction, where instead of hoping for a later divination and a return to esteem by being the one to bear the violence and disorder of the

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[538] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 140.

[539] 'All the characters are talking about the same violence… "But that's impossible," someone will protest. The grandiose, cosmic drama of the three friends cannot be reduced to the sordid persecution that Job denounces. Does not the divine vengeance unleash all the elements, the winds and storms, thunder and lightning, floods, droughts and savage beasts? True, but let us look more closely, All these forces converge *simultaneously* on the enemy of God. The norms of verisimilitude may not be met, but as a result the *all against one* of the scapegoat mechanism stans out all the more clearly.' Emphasis not mine. Girard, *Job*, 24.

[540] A comparison to this textual violence against the victim could be seen in the contemporary age of online discourse, where the accusations of the online mob escalate the more the comments drive a certain, mimetic contagion of an algorithm in the ethical sphere.

[541] Girard, *Job*, 32.

[542] Girard, *Job*, 35.

community, like in *Oedpius at Colonus*, Job interrupts the tragic process, and defends his innocence against the claim he is guilty of some hidden tragic fault like hubris.[543] Job's protest undoes the 'tragic theology' in which humans are the rivals of 'wicked spirits' by advocating that suffering is, in fact, evil. Humanity is responsible for committing evil, and attributing this evil to 'metaphysical' causes is a misrecognition, a tragic 'blindness' regarding the human situation.

Yet, the final interpretive question remains, how does Girard reconcile this reading of the dialogues of Job, as separate and before the prologue, ultimately with the dialogue with God at the end of the book? This critique of the divine in Job cannot be explored in a theological register here but will suffice to remain at the level of the hermeneutic understanding of evil. Girard traces the beginning of Job's 'lapses' in his protests, as he becomes wearied under collective pressure. It is at these moments that the reappearance of the God of judgment, the God of the crowd, occurs, and Job strives to dissociate the mechanism from the work of God.[544] It is this attempted dissociation that leads to the critique of the injustice of God,

> Instead of seeing justice everywhere in the world, as Eliphaz does in the long passage on retribution quoted above, Job sees injustice everywhere. He reverses the schema of the social God. This reversal is easily explained within the framework of the tremendous attack, an attack that is sometimes both hasty and confused, mounted by Job against the entire system of victimization…[545]

But after these accusations (Job 21:7-13), the reversal of the view of the divine occurs.[546] Now, with the words 'Henceforth I have a witness in heaven,' the tragic, hopeless situation becomes one of hope, where there is 'an advocate for the defense' alongside the victim. The dichotomy that arises now, in response to this change in the characterization of the deity, is the God who answers Job 'from the heart of the tempest.'

> The God who finally breaks silence and answers Job 'from the heart of the tempest' does not make the slightest allusion to questions posed in these two passages, or to Job's protestations of innocence… He lectures Job at length on what used to be called natural history. A little astronomy, a little meteorology, and a lot of zoology. This God loves animals… The poetry of this bestiary should not conceal from us that it constitutes a display of irresistible power. This God demonstrates his strength so as not to have to use it. He resorts to cunning and wins his case: Job is finally docile and silent, full of terrified admiration for the ostrich and the Leviathan…[547]

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[543] Girard, *Job*, 15.

[544] Girard, *Job*, 134-35.

[545] Girard, *Job*, 135.

[546] All biblical citations are from the *New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition.*

[547] Girard, *Job*, 141.

The God that answers Job is a later transmutation of the sacrificial god, which dissociates its violence from the community and attributes it to natural forces. In my reading, this God is the God of *suffering* evil; he does not intentionally commit any against the innocent Job, but provides no concrete response to it, 'directly.' But Girard is key to point out this God's sacrificial connections by loving 'animals' and the monstrous. It is a display of 'irresistible power' that Job is now confronted with for critiquing the plight of his suffering, for being abandoned. It is now this level of transfer that becomes a more difficult question for Girard, for the God that answers Job with a 'bestiary' seems to be between the violence of the friends, but is also not his 'defender.'

> Job's speeches are transformed into that pitfall of the question of Evil which has remained the focus of universal exegesis for thousands of years… This sort of showman who passes for God has nothing in common with the Defender to whom Job appeals… [548]

The role of this opposition between Job and the God of nature, or a 'showman' as Girard unflinchingly addresses this figure as, reveals a hermeneutic insight. This speech is meant to 'silence' Job via bloodless violence. It returns Job's critiques and protests back towards the 'tragic theology' of fate and suffering. Further, this hermeneutic reveal that the parts of the Book of Job that are disconcertingly contrary in message to the Dialogues are necessary to show the contrast in the message among the three sections, and ultimately to 'protect' the core message from censure, for its nature was too radical for its time. Yet, there remains one clue in the epilogue to Girard's reading, and that is the address of the 'showman' God to Job's friends, the would-be persecutors.

> This God's speeches are as foreign to the true grandeur of Job as the prologue and the conclusion… By concealing Job's subversive power, the mystifying additions have made the text accessible to ordinary devotion and, at the same time, prevented it from being rejected in horror, or so completely censored, changed and mutilated that its meaning would be lost forever… The epilogue drowns the scapegoat in the puerile acts of a Hollywood success story. It is worth little more than the prologue, and yet contains one remarkable sentence. After speaking severely to the three friends God adds that, in consideration of Job's merits, he would not refuse to relent towards them or inflict his disfavour on them 'for not speaking truthfully about me as my servant Job has done' (42:8).[549]

Job's persistence in his own innocence and critique of the 'showman' God, is acknowledged by the figure to be truthful. In Girard's words, this sentence renders 'homage' to the true meaning of the Dialogues, over against its 'protective' coating. Thus this God of suffering evil, does not

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[548] Girard, *Job*, 142.

[549] Girard, *Job*, 141-44.

demean Job's protests of innocence, in fact the God of suffering permits them and indirectly affirms them.

Ricœur's analysis of Job leans into this distinction between the God as 'legislator' and the God as 'creator,' where over and against both forms, Job appeals to the 'defender,'

> It is not the tragic God that Job discovers again? the inscrutable God of terror?... We must never lose sight of Job's plaint, even when it seems to be destroying the basis of any dialogal relation between God and man, does not cease to move in the field of invocation. It is to God that Job appeals against God…[550]

The radical shifting that the book of Job accomplishes between understandings of the sacred, from myth, tragedy, and even the violent monotheistic, is all critiqued and brought to reflection in this progression of understanding, the 'work of exegesis' in process. Further, Job is considered, even his protests, for 'speaking rightly' against God, or one of these forms of sacred and their associated understandings of evil, by appealing to God as defender against God as violent terror.

The point of focus in this hermeneutic 'conflict,' then, for the understanding of evil in the combination of tragic inspiration and Job's protestation of innocence, reveals a certain dissociation between *suffering* and *committing* violence. In my reading, the bivalence and simultaneity of internal-external violence are separated by the protestation of innocence, where suffering may be accidental and unfortunate. Still, it is not a cause for collective or self-induced violence that is physical or psychological. In the presence of accusations, self-doubt, and even the 'God of nature,' the protestation of innocence serves a certain 'testimonial' function as a response. The emergence of this response to the evil situation occurs where *suffering* and *committing* can be dissociated. Either in the scandal of tragedy by the 'wicked spirits' of violence and accusation or from the 'God' of nature's indignance, the hope of humanity rests in a 'defender' of victims for rescue from an unfortunate and rivalrous evil situation. As Ricœur states at the end of his *Symbolism of Evil*,

> On the one hand, the evil that is *committed*, deserves a just exile; that is what the figure of Adam represents. On the other hand, the evil that is *suffered* leads to an unjust deprivation; that is what the figure of Job represents… Only a third figure could announce the transcending of the contradiction, and that would be the figure of the 'Suffering Servant,' who would make of suffering, of the evil that is undergone, an *action* capable of redeeming the evil that is committed.[551]

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[550] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 319.

[551] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 324.

Part II – Christ: The Anthropological Figure of Testimony

The 'Suffering Servant'

It is now time to turn to the most significant figure for the hermeneutic understanding of evil: Christ. This is also the central point of agreement for Ricœur and Girard, who recognize each other's analyses because the figure of Christ demythologizes all religions, even Christianity.[552] Ricœur states, 'It is Girard who has accurately seen the singular nature of the Gospels, present already in the Hebraic Bible starting with Second Isaiah.'[553] To unpack this central point of understanding evil, between revelation and response, I will begin this section with Girard's analysis of Second Isaiah to catch sight of Ricœur's agreement.[554]

> In the first place, the Servant appears within the context of the prophetic crisis for the purpose of resolving it. He becomes, as a result of God's own action, the receptacle for all violence; he takes the place of all the members of the community:
>
> > All we like sheep have gone astray;
> > we have turned every one to his own way;
> > and the Lord has laid on him
> > the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53, 6)
>
> All the traits attributed to the Servant predispose him to the role of a veritable human scapegoat.
>
> > For he grew up before him like a young plant,
> > and like a root out of dry ground;
> > he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him,
> > and no beauty that we should desire him.
> > He was despised and rejected by men;
> > a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
> > and as one from whom men hide their faces
> > he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isaiah 53, 2-3)[555]

Girard's quotation of these passages directly images the qualities of the innocent victim, before the hallucinatory *méconnaissance* transfigures them into a monstrous enemy or hero. The juxtaposition of a radical innocence alongside the 'iniquity' of the collective, the universal state of humanity, again reminds us of the internal-external situation of evil integral to hominization.

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[552] Girard advocates the anthropological reading of Christ as necessary to concretely affirm a truly nonviolent form of Christianity, which historically had not been the case. Girard, *Things Hidden*, 251-62.

[553] Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with Francois Azouvi and Marc De Launay*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Columbia University Press, 1998) 160.

[554] Both Girard and Ricœur pull from the same verses of Second Isaiah. 'This enigmatic figure is the celebrated by the Second Isaiah in the four "songs of the Servant of Yahweh" (Is. 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12)' Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 324. and 'These are the four "Songs of the Servant of Yahweh" interpolated in the "Book of the Consolation of Israel" in the second part of Isaiah, perhaps the most grandiose of all the prophetic books, (they are located at Isaiah 42, 1-4; 49, 1-6; 50, 4-11; 52, 12-13;53,1-12.)' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 155-56.

[555] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 156.

Girard immediately compares this figure from Isaiah with the figure of the *pharmakos*, from Greek religion, with one central difference.[556] It is not a repeated ritual act that is described here, but an 'historical event, which has at once a collective and a legal character and is sanctioned by the authorities.'[557]

In Ricœur's view, the 'Suffering Servant' establishes a new relation to guilt and judgment, where 'a suffering which would free itself from the legal-mindedness of retribution and submit voluntarily to the iron law, in order to suppress it by fulfilling it… Then guilt gets a new horizon: not that of Judgment, but of Mercy.'[558] The transition from 'Judgment' to 'Mercy' is possible because of the freely offered self-sacrifice, thus fulfilling the infinite demand unfulfillable by the legalizations discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, the scandalous suffering of Job, where even the appearance of his defender is seemingly answered with an admonishment, is surpassed further by this figure that becomes the revealer, sufferer, and thus redeemer of humanity's violent situation through a radical juxtaposition of violence, freedom, and innocence. The defender of victims then is not a 'God of victims' in the sacred sense, where it is vengeance on behalf of victims, but is an ultimate representation of a universal acceptance of suffering on behalf of the universal humanity, freely chosen and not a self-misrecognition, or 'blindness' in the case of Oedipus.

Yet, the role of Yahweh in this picture, according to Girard, is ambiguous because it has not fully emerged from the sacrificial views of violence.[559] It is a God that requires this 'Suffering Servant' to bear a collective punishment. It is only the turn to the New Testament, and the consolidation of the figure of the 'Suffering Servant' with the figure of Christ, that achieves this central position for the understanding of evil, the opposition of a radical non-violence over against the violent 'order of the world,' where the response to guilt, is the judgement of mercy.

Christ as Figure

To begin this discussion of the Christ figure as the consolidation and surpassing of prior textual figures in the understanding of evil, we must indicate how the Christ figure directly reveals the 'satanic structure of bad mimesis' and also how his example provides the means for

[556] See note #585, in this chapter.

[557] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 156.

[558] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 325.

[559] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 157.

understanding an eschatological response to this 'tragic' situation of evil that afflicts and is perpetuated by humanity.

The gospel text of the Passion reveals Christ as the scapegoat *par excellence*, for he is the incarnate anti-violent victim, in word and deed, who has to be destroyed by the 'principalities and powers' who were generated and governed by this logos of violence and sacrifice.[560] The gospels as texts do not function as myths, because they are texts that, while they proclaim Christ's divinity, it is not the crowd who proclaims him as such, but a rejected minority that *testifies* to his supreme innocence and to the path of non-violent mediation. They are, in fact, *testimonies*. The gospel texts proclaim the pure injustice of this violence, and thus we can never return to a pre-Christ state of primitive, sacrificial religion. After the death of Christ, violence can never have the same culture-building effects, as seen with the failure of the martyrdom of Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles, attributed to the authorship of Luke, immediately after the gospel testimonies. [561] In order to connect these cross-textual references, Girard shows how Jesus makes connections to the Old Testament, as the ultimate revelation of the scapegoat mechanism and culmination of the 'work of exegesis' in progress.

> After telling the parable of the labourers in the vineyard who *all came together to drive out* the envoys of the Master and then finally to kill his son so that they would be the sole proprietors, Christ offers his audience a problem in Old Testament exegesis:
>
> > But he looked at them and said, 'What then is this that is written: "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" '(Luke 20, 17).
>
> …The words from Psalm 118 thus have a remarkable epistemological value; they require an interpretation for which Christ himself ironically calls, knowing very well that he alone is capable of giving it in the process of having himself rejected, of himself becoming the rejected stone, with the aim of showing that this stone has always formed a concealed foundation. And now the stone is revealed and can no longer form a foundation, or, rather, it will found something that is radically different.[562]

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[560] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 209.

[561] Some follow Girard's thesis, which argues quite convincingly that the exclusivity of the Christian message of non-violence, especially the person of Christ, is not necessarily the 'only' figure of non-violence preserved in cultural texts, and in fact Girard has accepted some of these clarifications. In an interview in 2002, he is careful to distinguish Christ as the premier demythologizer, but insofar as these other cultural figures emulate his anti-violence message and supreme victimhood, there could be other figural interpreters of primitive religion, and different cultures may possess certain insights into this structure of sacrificial religion. Thus, Christ as a supremely universal non-violent figure can be held in a position, but one that possesses structural similarities to other figures. See René Girard and Sandor Goodhart, "Mimesis, Sacrifice, and the Bible: A Conversation with Sandor Goodhart," in *Sacrifice, Scripture, and Substitution: Readings in Ancient Judaism and Christianity*, eds. Ann W. Astell and Sandor Goodhart (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 64.

[562] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 178.

Girard uses the 'stone which the builders rejected' as an interpretive, hermeneutic principle that is anthropologically reflected in the scapegoating death of Christ. The Christ figure is an interpreter of this principle in word and action. This 'radically different' foundation is the non-violent logos, that establishes the possibility of a new path of mimetic mediation, where if everyone 'turned the other cheek' there would be no more reason to do so, for violence's imitative and reciprocal identity would be undone at its source.[563]

> It is absolute fidelity to the principle defined in his own preaching that condemns Jesus. There is no other cause for his death than the love of one's neighbour lived to the very end, with an infinitely intelligent grasp of the constraints it imposes. 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15, 13)… If violence is genuinely the ruling factor in all cultural orders, and if circumstances at the time of the preaching of the Gospel are as the text proclaims them to be-involving, that is to say, the paroxysm of paroxysms within one single vast prophetic crisis experienced by Judaic society-then the refusal of the Kingdom by Jesus' listeners will logically impel them to turn against him. Moreover, this refusal will issue in the choice of him as a scapegoat, and in apocalyptic violence, by virtue of the fact that this last of victims, despite having been killed by unanimous consent, will not produce the beneficial effects that were produced before.[564]

The Christ figure, then, serves the demythologizer of both rivalrous mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism, the revealer of violence internal to the self as a *decidere*, and external to the self in violence against the other. Further, Girard establishes that the entire 'bad' mimetic system is the Satanic system, revealed by the Christ figure to be evil.[565] It is the mechanization of accusation that continually 'lied' about the guilt of the sacrificed, mythic victims, where now a 'defender' the paraclete, inaugurated by Christ and the testimonial function, attesting to event of his innocence, provides a new 'order of the world,' the 'Kingdom of God.'[566] This figural 'consolidation' of textual symbols, interpretation, and historical event makes Christ's acts the concrete event of the understanding of evil, the mediator of 'good' mimesis, and the innocent victim par excellence.

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[563] 'For all violence to be destroyed, it would be sufficient for all of mankind to decide to abide by this rule. If all mankind offered the other cheek, no cheek would be struck. But for that to be possible, it would be necessary for each person separately and all people together to commit themselves irrevocably to the common purpose.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 211.

[564] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 211-12.

[565] 'I would reply to your first question by reminding you that violence, in every cultural order, is always the true *subject* of every ritual or institutional structure. From the moment when the sacrificial order begins to come apart, this subject can no longer be anything but the *adversary par excellence*, which combats the installation of the Kingdom of God. This is the devil known to us from tradition-Satan himself, of whom some theologians tell us that he is both subject and not subject at once.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 210.

[566] The paraclete in connection with testimony will be discussed in the section, *Paracleitos*.

To expand on this claim, I will now turn to Ricœur's reading of the Christ figure in *The Symbolism of Evil.* Ricœur speaks less about Christ in the Gospels in his *Symbolism of Evil*, but emphasizes his role from the Pauline perspective, as a symbolic consolidation. He places Christ as the retroactive symbolic cipher to the myth of Adam in the relation from the 'old man' to the 'new man.'[567] How is Christ this symbolic cipher of the Adam myth, and thus the other creation myths? In the previous chapter, Ricœur states that the Adamic myth is the anthropological myth par excellence, situating man in relation to evil as its co-origin in the event of a free, 'rivalrous' choice. Adam, as a symbol of universal humanity, is brought to the forefront in the Epistles of St. Paul.[568] Thus, Christ is given the figural identity of the 'new man' in contraposition to the 'old man.' The next symbolic consolidation that Ricœur employs is the figure of the 'Son of Man,'

> Thus the true meaning of present humanity is revealed, so to say, in the light of what lies ahead, starting from that true Man who 'is coming'… We can see what the idea of 'pardon' receives from its contact with the figure of the Son of Man. The figure of the Suffering Servant had contributed the idea of a substitutive suffering that is voluntary in character; the figure of the Son of Man at first accentuates the heavenly or transcendent character of that initiative to such a degree that, in the tradition of Judaism, this figure does not seem susceptible of incarnation; but at the same time it confirms the belief that what is highest above man is what is most inward to him.[569]

Humanity itself, through these figures, is shown to have a calling or an identity that transcends this evil existential situation. These figures represent an understanding of evil as a response, being 'pardon,' and voluntary self-sacrifice. According to my hermeneutic comparison up to this point, this recreation, or 'new man,' entails a new *logos* by which humanity can exist, according to the original aim of the thymic quests. This 'pardon' seems to be reflected in the ultimate 'inwardness,' the place of a possible existential 'healing' of the 'wicked heart' discussed in chapter 4.[570] Furthermore, this Son of Man is associated with the eschatological functions of 'pardon' and 'advocate,' as well as the roles of a cosmic 'Judge' and a 'victim.' Here I must quote at length:

> The Judge of men is identical with men insofar as they come face to face in action and insofar as they are crushed by the 'greater' ones. This 'mystery' is augmented by another one, to which we have already alluded: in the great act of Justification, the Son of Man figures at the same time as judge and as witness, *Parakletos* and *Kategoros*, while Satan is the *Antidikos*, the Adversary—an astonishing end for the figure of the Serpent who, from Tempter, becomes, within the juridical framework of the cosmic judgment, the prosecuting attorney, while the Judge becomes the intercessor; and he becomes the intercessor because he is also the substituted victim. This series

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[567] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 238.

[568] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 238.

[569] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 269-70.

[570] A further discussion of pardon will take place in the Conclusion, *Between Paraclete and Adversary.*

> of equivalences is the result of the identification of the Son of Man, judge and king at the End, with the suffering servant: 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). Whether this verse be a saying of Jesus, an interpretation by the Palestinian church, or a gloss of the Hellenistic church, it expresses completely the fusion of the two figures—the servant of the Eternal and the Son of Man. At the same time, this fusion introduces a new note of tragedy: 'How is it written of the Son of Man that he must suffer many things and be set at nought?' (Mark 9:12). The new note of tragedy is that the King is the Victim, 'must' (3e) be the Victim. That is "the mystery of Jesus."[571]

The entire figural matrix is mapped out here. Christ is the composite figure of the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant, the King, the Judge, the Paraclete, and the Victim. Following my hermeneutic, the recreation of humanity through the freely non-violent model also reverses the sacrificial matrix of kingship.[572] The servant judge, who instead defends victims, does so by becoming the scapegoat, the innocent victim.[573] Why does this affect such a reversal? Through breaking the polarity of violence, completely, where innocent suffering breaks the polar relation, seen from the very beginning of the 'matrix of terror,' where humanity is complicit in the violence against one of its own, but it is too distant, too misrecognized by either shame or fear. *Suffering* evil is not a result of the *committing* of evil by the self, there is innocent, scandalous, evil suffering. What this reversal allows, in separating the poles of committing and suffering, is the reciprocal, internal violence of self-accusation, can be halted by the judgment of mercy, that attestation of innocence, despite existing within the structure of violence and desire. This figural consolidation establishes an understanding of evil through its non-violent response; the non-violent logos fosters a new understanding of humanity's evil situation. Each bivalent symbol illustrates the same internal-external description that has emerged with each interpretation throughout this hermeneutic. The willingly suffering servant, who functions as the victim for the collective iniquities, human violence, and its *méconnaissance*, completes the symbolic beginning of Adam's first violation of freedom, through another free choice. As Ricœur states, 'it was Christology that consolidated Adamology.'[574] The Christ symbol completes the mythical event of the Adam

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[571] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 270-71.

[572] Recall Girard's analysis of kingship as stemming from the power of the victim prior to their sacrifice. See Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 104-8.

[573] A non-violent view of this servant judge at work is seen in John 8:1-11, where Christ does not join in with the condemnation of the woman caught in adultery – thus judgment is redescribed into mercy. For a discussion of Girard's interpretation of this gospel episode, see Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 54-61.

[574] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 238.

symbol, which also serves as the symbolic matrix for all myths of evil, and provides a new opening, a new path to understanding the evil situation, through non-violent response.

Christ the Figure and Theology

It is essential to note that both Girard and Ricœur distance themselves from making theological claims in these analyses of Christ.[575] In Ricœur's phenomenological hermeneutic, he does not affirm this to be more than a textual figure, who in the span of the Judeo-Christian scriptures, identifies himself with the textual symbols of the Son of Man, Suffering Servant, and the new Adam, as the historical, supra-textual Jesus Christ, for that is a question for theology.

> It is the problem of the theologian, not of the philosopher, to understand what can be meant by the following two affirmations from the New Testament; at first Jesus refers to himself in the third person by the title of the Son of Man, and consequently the theme of the Son of Man gives the clew to the first Christology, that of Jesus himself; afterwards Jesus for the first time unites the idea of suffering and death, which had previously pertained to the figure of the Servant of Yahweh, with the figure of the Son of Man; thus he makes the theology of glory follow the road of the theology of the Cross… That Jesus could be the point of convergence of all the figures without himself being a 'figure' is an Event that exceeds the resources of our phenomenology of images.[576]

I agree with Ricœur that the consolidation 'exceeds the resources' of his approach, by it being an 'Event.' Yet, considering that one of the purposes of relating Ricœur and Girard in this hermeneutic of evil was to provide an understanding for concrete, committed violence, which is anchored in the '(anti)event' of violence at the beginning of hominization, I have already exceeded 'the resources' by contributing the anthropological anchorage to the pre-semantic ground of symbol as this generative violence.[577] Still, this anthropological direction does not become

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[575] Girard's 'distancing' from a theological claim is not a distancing in the Ricœurian sense. In fact, Girard's emphasis on the anthropological relevance of the Gospels and the Christ figure could be seen more as an expansion of these texts beyond their previously segregated theological heritage. That being said, despite Girard's claims on the divinity of Christ, he affirms that he is not a theologian, but sees no contradiction between what he views as an anthropological grounding for Christianity. For Girard's anthropological reading of the divinity of Christ, see Girard, *Things Hidden*, 214-20.

[576] Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 259.

[577] What do I mean by 'event' in the shifting modes of 'historical,' 'textual,' and 'anthropological'? To expand on the 'Key Terms' section of the introduction to this thesis, I draw on two aspects of Ricœur's view of 'event' and relate them to the Girardian view. The first view is as an 'instance of discourse,' which refers to the innovative act of 'saying something about something.' Ricœur states drawing from Emile Benveniste, 'For discourse has an *act* as its mode of presence— the instance of discourse, which, as such, is of the nature of an event. To speak is a present event, a transitory, vanishing act… Discourse consists in a series of *choices* by which certain meanings are selected and others excluded…The last trait of the instance of discourse: the event, choice, innovation, reference also imply a specific manner of designating the subject of discourse. Someone speaks to someone —that is the essence of the act of communication.' Ricœur, "Structure, Word, Event" in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 87-88.

The second aspect from Ricœur is from his *Time and Narrative, vol. 1*, in relation to emplotment. 'In this respect we may say equivalently that it draws a meaningful story from a diversity of events or incidents (Aristotle's *pragmata*) or that it transforms the events or incidents into a story.' Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*, trans.

theological, despite the fact Girard affirms that the textual Christ is the historical Christ, as the incarnate logos of good mimesis and the ideal mediator.[578] It is thus in a 'downward' direction that this hermeneutic anchors the figure of Christ as the revealer of non-violence, in the historical event of his death.[579] Girard's emphasis on the historical reality of Jesus, who is also the textual figure that consolidates the 'images' described above, is that the anthropological dimension provides the final concrete element to expand the implications of Ricœur's theory of symbol, which emerges at the conjunction of '*bios* and *logos*.'[580] Thus, this anthropological bearing, placed on the expansion of Ricœur's hermeneutic by Girard's mimetic theory, is a way to 'welcome anew the mimetic concept.' I repeat the quote from the beginning of this dissertation,

> As I have said before, after an initial phase in which I had welcomed what is essential in this thesis, I resisted what appeared to me, rightly or wrongly, to be a psychological reductionism. But now I see, as I consider what seems to me lacking in my own interpretation, the opportunity to *welcome anew the mimetic concept*… I want to say in closing, therefore, that my agreement with René Girard extends to the point where he interprets the Christ figure as laying bare, denouncing, and dismantling the system of exclusion of the scapegoat.[581]

By 'welcoming' or 'hosting,' (*accueillir*) Ricœur's method, expanded according to my hermeneutic synthesis, allows for Girard's mimetic concept, for if the 'scapegoat' is a victim of real violence, Christ's demythologization of this 'system of exclusion' has a bearing on an understanding of real violence, and thus, real evil.[582]

But how does this consolidation of images in the concrete figure of Christ provide a response to real violence today? If the Ricœur-Girard hermeneutic on the figure of Christ, where

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Kathleen McLaughlin, (University of Chicago Press, 1990) 65. Thus, the event of meaning is brought to discourse as an action that can be interpreted, for it forms the real referent to the linguistic production of meaning. The events of the founding murder, as the pre-linguistic event par excellence for Girard, are this productive innovation of the possibility of language, via the founding act of difference. Thus, it is a positing of an almost 'anti' event that cannot be witnessed. Still, its boundaries can be highlighted in the traces within the symbols and myths of evil. In contrast, the central quality of the Christ event is its testimonial function, its 'witnessing' to the victim's innocence.

[578] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 215-20.

[579] Ricœur hints at the notion of salvation via the Christian idea of sacrifice and suffering, which emerges in again toward the end of *Symbolism of Evil* and his essay "Freedom in the Light of Hope" A breakdown of this view of sacrifice as selfless gift. 'Sacrifice is the dramatic form that, in a catastrophe, takes on the heart's transcendence; sacrifice attest that, at the limit of life, to give one' life for a friend and to die for an idea is the same thing. Sacrifice shows the fundamental unity of two schemata of belonging, the schema of friendship and schema of devotion (or loyalty). Friendship is to another what devotion is to the idea, and the two together make up the view – the *Aussicht*- 'into an order in which, alone, we can continue to exist.'" Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 104.

[580] See Chapter 4, *Ricœur on Symbol – Un retour.*

[581] Emphasis mine, Ricœur, "Religion and Symbolic Violence",10.

[582] See Introduction, *Hermeneutic Point of Departure.*

the tripartite interpretive domains of anthropology, phenomenology, and symbol, can be hermeneutically investigated, how does this Christ figure, as an expanded, concretized figure, affect a contemporary response? The answer lies in the 'testimonial' function of response, as the concretization of the *paracleitos* that provides a positive mimetic model for the continued practice of non-violence. This *paracleitos*, or paraclete, has continued to progress via this testimonial function in the continual advocacy for victims, scapegoats, and offers the only source for response, an eschatological response, to the evil of violence we see in the contemporary world.

Part III – Our Response to the Understanding of Evil

Testimony

How is the consolidation of the anthropological and symbolical levels of the Christ figure possible, and how does this consolidation contribute to the understanding of evil? To support this claim, I will draw on the understanding of the Gospels as a testimony, which constitutes the textual mode of the 'anti' myth. Thus, in this section, I will first define what testimony is according to Ricœur, its connection to the paraclete, as seen from Ricœur to Girard, and the eschatological moment of fallible freedom it urgently presses upon the self. Ricœur states in his *Memory, History, and Forgetting*, that,

> Testimony takes us with one bound to the formal conditions of the 'things of the past '(*praeterita*), the conditions of possibility of the actual process of the historiographical operation. With testimony opens an epistemological process that departs from declared memory, passes through the archive and documents, and finds its fulfillment in documentary proof…it reappears at the end of the epistemological inquiry at the level of the representation of the past through narrative, rhetorical devices, and images.[583]

The term 'testimony,' in its fundamental sense, refers to the act of retelling an experienced event or '*praeterita*.' Ricœur unpacks the levels of this retelling, where there is an inherent faithfulness to the memory, an author, and an addressee, and an implied defense of its validity through the relationship marked by potential questioning between the addressee and the author. The pure oral form of testimony is the most limited, yet the most ideal for the historian, because the *témoin*, or witness, is present to attest to the truth of the event being retold.[584] However, in the passage

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[583] Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. David Pellauer and Kathleen Blamey (University of Chicago Press, 2004) 161.

[584] It is also a further point of interest that the notion of a martyr, is in fact integrally related to the witness. Ricœur argues that attesting to the truth is the antecedent before aspect of violence or zealousness that the term martyr, evokes. 'A man becomes a martyr because he is first a witness. But that a man could become a martyr, if he must be a witness until the end, that cannot be derived by a purely judicial reflection; for, in a trial, it is not the witness that risks his life, but the accused.' Translation mine. Original : 'Un homme devient un martyr parce que d'abord il est

from oral testimony to written testimony, Ricœur affirms that this codification into writing changes not only the audience from the purely dialogical, vocal addressee to 'anyone who knows how to read.' Then, the *témoin* cannot come to the defense of the *témoignage*. Thus, in the act of writing, the testimony is now an 'orphan,' following the critique of writing from the *Phaedrus*.[585]

In my reading, this need to 'come to the defense of testimony' further roots the intersubjective function of testimony. Testimony anchors community building and the intersubjective dimension of social relations, via establishing a form of trust in communication. In addition, in relating this function to Girardian terms, true testimony is an integral occasion for positive mimetic mediation. This community-building effect, driven by the intention of testimony and its written preservation, descends from a 'faithfulness' to the past lived experience that is attested to. This is how testimony forms the ground of an institution, in a Ricœurian sense.

> What makes it an institution is, first of all, the stability of testimony ready to be reiterated, and next the contribution of the trustworthiness of each testimony to the security of the social bond inasmuch as this rests on confidence in what other people say. More and more, this bond of trustworthiness extends to include every exchange, contract, and agreement, and constitutes assent to others' word, the principle of the social bond, to the point that it becomes a habitus of any community considered, even a prudential rule.[586]

As a 'habitus' of a community, it grounds the social intersubjective bond. It is due to this communal intention of being faithful to the truth of memory, and the act of writing as preserving this 'habitus,' that perpetuates a social bond into history, as the testimony has the aspect of attesting to an 'event.' In this preservation and even objectification of testimony, it is displaced from the original author, but its 'foster care' is resumed by the community of its reception. However, the dual nature of written history as a *pharmakon* is centered on the community of reception of the testimony, where the faithfulness of the truth of the event itself can be displaced

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un témoin. Mais qu'un homme puisse devenir un martyr, s'il doit être témoin jusqu'au bout, cela ne peut être dérivé d'une réflexion purement juridique ; car, dans un procès, ce n'est pas le témoin qui risque sa vie, mais l'accusé.' Paul Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage » dans *Lectures 3: Aux Frontières De La Philosophie*, (Éditions du Seuil, 1994) 116.

[585] So, who or what can come to the aid of orphaned testimony? Ricœur answers that the defense of testimony, the core of the historical problem, must travel via the movement across three levels: the historical representation in writing, and all the narrative and textual challenges contained within, the interpretive balance of explanation/understanding, and the documentary proof in the archive itself. Further, it is this critique of writing that brings in the notion of the testimony as comparable to the pharmakon of writing, as both poison and remedy. This connection will be expanded in the following section. Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting.*, 169.

[586] Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting.*, 165.

by an attestation to the truth of the testimony.[587] The situation's fragility and its potential as a poison to the community begin to present themselves. Not only is there an urgent ethical need, inherent to the function of testimony, but the distance to the event, or even the inability to fully stand for something that is unrepresentable in its horror, like the atrocities of the 20th century, makes the testimonial function so foundational and so fragile. Further, the risk of a community that has formed a social bond via the operation of testimony exists because of this perceived 'faithfulness' to the truth of the *praeterita*, even though a testimony could be false. So, although the witness of Christ, as testimony par excellence, and inaugurating the ethical response to humanity's evil situation, the appropriation of the testimony does not solve the problem of mimetic rivalry and reception. The revelation of the violence behind the text reveals the power of testimony to advocate. However, as Girard says in his last work, *Battling to the End*, we still continue to scapegoat others, but this time in the name of those we identify as victims.[588]

This view of testimony relates to the present question: How does testimony bridge the Christ event as symbol with the historical Jesus and the implications for the anthropological hermeneutic? Paradoxically, this is revealed by moving into the depths of one of its challenges: the moral and ethical function of testimony.

> This is why we may speak of a crisis of testimony. To be received, a testimony must be appropriated, that is, divested as much as possible of the absolute foreignness that horror engenders. This drastic condition is not satisfied in the case of survivors' testimonies. A further reason for the difficulty in communicating has to do with the fact that the witness himself had no distance on the events; he was a 'participant,' without being the agent, the actor; he was their victim. How 'relate one's own death?' asks Primo Levi.[589]

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[587] The *pharmakos* as a figural representation and the *pharmakon* in testimony bears the same duality, where it is both victim of a historical process of scapegoating, but also the celebrated, beloved figure for the community, who is absolved of guilt. The concretization of the duality in the anthropological dimension further highlights the duality of faithful testimony, where both poison, as protest, and remedy, as attest, are dialectically intertwined. The representation of the force of the community, in the justice of the 'bonds of necessity' with the 'bonds of the imagination' albeit steeped in the Girardian sacrificial logic, heighten the paradox of historical testimony, and the notion of faithfulness. The institutionalization of testimony then possesses bivalent power, and the figure of the *Pharmakos*, as anthropological *pharmakon*, reveals this interrelatedness. Regarding Girard's interpretive method, the *pharmakos* is in fact a remedy, for its existence demonstrates a maturation of the sacrificial mechanism and its institutionalization. The blindness of the murderous *méconnaissance* that creates scapegoats and sacrifices is only able to escape the event of the crowd in the written trace. The *pharmakon* of written historical testimony is both a remedy and poison to revealing and obfuscating the plight of its anthropological source, the *pharmakos*. This analysis demonstrates that testimony, despite its essential role in addressing humanity's violent situation, necessitates a similar dialectical interpretive process, one that operates within a polar relationship between suspicion and belief.

[588] Girard, *Battling to the End*, 102.

[589] Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting.*, 176.

The aspects of testimonial witness through contact and victimhood reveal the testimonial intent to be, at its core, a challenge to the challengers to testimony on the grounds of the real or *praeterita*. The composite of witness testimony, as it is enmeshed in the lived experience before its preservation in memory and later writing, becomes not merely a means to demonstrate the lack of testimony to represent such an experience. Instead, it illustrates its power, role, and significance, as the only way to 'stand for' the event.[590] The perspective of the victim or the participant is impossible without the testimonial function. The effects of the Christ 'event' would be impossible to effect such a revolutionary change to the system of culture and violence, without being written down in symbolized language, in words containing *mécconnaissance*. One of the implications of this hermeneutic relating between Ricœur and Girard, is that although structural or textual theorists may suspend the authorial intent, and the testimony, when written, loses its defensibility or 'parentage,' the subject matter and its ethical implications, as related by a participant or victim, break into the theoretical discussion with existential and anthropological implications. As Ricœur states,

> It is against this background of assumed confidence that the solitude of those 'historical witnesses' tragically stands out, whose extraordinary experiences stymie the capacity for average, ordinary understanding. But there are also witnesses who never encounter an audience capable of listening to them or hearing what they have to say.[591]

This notion of the silent witness to history is a powerful complement to the ethical command for faithfulness to a lived experience within the intention of testimony. The subjective and experiential elements of testimony are, in fact, what make it testimony as such, for the demand for 'faithfulness' encompasses both the need to be heard and its reciprocal response. To suspend the real referent of the text of testimony is to deny its ethical and, thus, anthropological significance, according to Ricœur.

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[590] This function of 'standing for' is the moment when the intellectual responsibility of the historian is merged, and even surpassed, by the ethical demands of the citizen, as indicated by the function of the 'as if.' 'Standing for' condenses within itself all the expectations, the exigencies, and the aporias linked to what I have elsewhere spoken of as the historian's intention or intentionality.' Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting.*, 276.

This function of the 'as if,' related in *The Rule of Metaphor*, does not devalue this representation, but in fact expands its relation to the historical and the literary. For Ricœur's investigation of the metaphoric function of the 'as if' see, Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin, and John Costello. (University of Toronto Press, 1977) For a creative expansion of the implications of Ricœur's view of metaphoric function, see Sean Donovan Driscoll, "Metaphor as Lexis: Ricœur on Derrida on Aristotle." *Etudes Ricœuriennes/ Ricœur Studies* 11, no. 1 (2020): 3.

[591] Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 166.

Testimony and The Gospels

To connect the discussion of testimony above to the Gospels, I quote a central line in one of Ricœur's lectures, entitled *L'Hermeneutique du témoignage*, where he states,

> Testimony, each singular time, confers the sanction of reality on ideas, ideals, ways of being, that the symbol depicts and uncovers to us only as our very own possibilities.[592]

This difference between symbol, as a function of the productive imagination and the 'giving to thought,' is seen by the anchoring of testimony in the event and the real. Symbols, although grounded in a pre-semantic reality, become distant and imaginative redescriptions through their production of meaning in metaphor. For this reason, they can assist in investigating and understanding something as ahistorical and mythical as the origin of evil but are not directly anchored to their *praeterita*. Testimony is foundational to the recording of history, where symbols serve more as a trace to the age of myth. However, the Christ figure's function and the gospels' subsequent testimonial act as an inauguration of a *nouvelle signification* for testimony.[593] This new signification is '*La confession que Jésus est le Christ constitue le témoignage par excellence.*'[594] What does this mean? It means that the testimony par excellence is the belief that Jesus is the Christ; it is the act of relating the historical figure of Jesus with the Christ, who we have already stated is the symbolic consolidation of the figures of the Suffering Servant, Son of Man, the New Man, the King, the Judge, and the Victim. Each gospel narrative, while still being a narrative, is also a testimony, where each attest to a different aspect of the testimonial function. The amalgamation of the gospel's views of the Jesus to Christ relation, contributes to this 'confession' as the testimony par excellence. For Ricœur, Luke's gospel is about the 'things seen and heard,' a testimony of the past experiences, a narrative. John's gospel is a witness of 'things to come,' a confession or avowal into the functions of the Christ to Jesus relation.[595] The combination of both poles of testimony—narration and confession—is unified by the Christ event.

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[592] My translation. Original text : 'Le témoignage chaque fois singulier confère la sanction de la réalité à des idées, des idéaux, des manières d'être, que le symbole nous dépeint et nous découvre seulement comme nos possibles les plus propres.' Paul Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage » dans *Lectures 3: Aux Frontières De La Philosophie* (Éditions du Seuil, 1994) 109.

[593] Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage », 110.

[594] To support this, Ricœur also quotes Acts 1 :7-8, 'He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."' (NRCSV) Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage », 121.

[595] Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage », 121.

> The notion of an eyewitness is thus profoundly overwhelmed by the double theme of Christ, faithful witness, and of testimony, testimony to the light. The two themes are linked from elsewhere, in the fact that Christ, faithful witness, himself came 'to render testimony.' This is what the Johannine Christ declares before Pilate, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'[596]

These testimonies about Jesus as the Christ, have the function of the testimonial act itself, one of their explicit themes. This is seen in the trial of Christ before Pilate, which highlights the juridical function of testimony, where the background antithesis of the paraclete and adversary, is imaged. In my reading, the reversal of the violent judge, into the victim judge, further demonstrates the thesis regarding the radical non-violence for which Christ testifies one behalf of, a reversal of the institutions of the world.

> The Christ is witness par excellence because he provokes the 'crisis,' the judgement of the works of the world : ' I testify against it that its works are evil.' (John 7:7) The function of the witness heralds itself here to this level of the Judge of the End. The Judge is the light; he makes the light. By a strange reversal, the accused of the earthly trial is also the judge of the eschatological trial. For the Christ, to be the witness is to join this two roles of earthly accused and heavenly judge ; this is also to be according to the confession of Pilate.[597]

If you recall the notion of crisis that relates to testimony itself, the crisis between myth and history, this crisis is the testimony of the Christ event. The witnessing of the non-violent logos and the demythologization of the 'works of the world' as 'evil.' Accused is the 'heavenly judge,' the non-violent judge, who does not wish for sacrifices, but instead testifies against the 'works of the world.' The mythic process is dissolved and can no longer function because this testimony is on behalf of victims. What is attested to are the things 'seen and heard,' Christ's nonviolent and anti-rivalrous preaching and healing, and the 'things to come,' which are the moments of eschatological witnessing to the truth of non-violence in history. Thus, according to my hermeneutic, the testimony par excellence, with its dual function of narration and confession, heralds the Christ figure as the scapegoat par excellence —the supremely innocent victim —and

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[596] Translation mine. Biblical citation (NRCSV). Original : 'La notion de témoin oculaire est ainsi profondément bouleversée par le double thème du Christ, témoin fidèle, et du témoignage, témoignage à la lumière. Les deux thèmes sont d'ailleurs liés, en ceci que le Christ, témoin fidèle, est lui-même venu « pour rendre le témoignage ». C'est ce que déclare le Christ johannique devant Pilate : « Tu le dis, je suis Roi. Voici pourquoi je suis né et pourquoi je suis venu dans le monde, pour rendre témoignage à la vérité » (Jn 18,37).' Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage », 124.

[597]Translation mine. Original : 'Le Christ est témoin par excellence, parce qu'il suscite la « crise », le jugement des oeuvres du monde : « Il témoigne au sujet du monde que ses oeuvres sont mauvaises » (Jn 7,7). La fonction du témoin se hausse ici au niveau de celle du Juge de la Fin. Le Juge est la lumière ; il fait la lumière. Par un étrange renversement, l'accusé du procès terrestre est aussi le juge du procès eschatologique. Pour le Christ, être témoin c'est joindre ces deux rôles d'accusé terrestre et de juge céleste ; c'est aussi être roi selon l'aveu à Pilate.' Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage », 127.

the testimonial act par excellence. This figural and historical relation then joins the Girardian anthropological demythologization of the 'works of the world.' The 'archaeological movement of interpretation' of the demythologization of 'things seen and heard' is supplemented by the now 'eschatological movement,' the testifying to the innocence of victims against the polar moments of violence. Thus, as the anti-myth, the testimonial act provides a textual and historical consolidation of the prior symbols in the ethical act of a response to violence, which functions as an eschatological event, 'each singular time.'

What is this progressive movement of the testimonial act, which highlights the innocence of victims and the 'works of the world' as 'evil?' In my reading, this movement can be attributed to the mimetic repetition of not just testifying to the truth of non-violence, but also the recording and promulgation of the testimony itself. We see recorded in Acts of the Apostles that it is the witness of Stephen where the testimony of Christ's positive mimetic effects takes hold.[598] This is also Girard's point that the major difference between the recording of the death of Christ and the myth is that it has an effective agency on behalf of the victims and 'de-culturizing' effects. The testimonial act itself is then the response to this evil of *méconnaissance* and the effacing of the traces of scapegoated victims, for it positively models a new 'order of the world.' One that seeks intersubjective harmony and non-rivalrous imitation.

> Here now is the text from Luke that also defines the precise function of this *martyrdom* which is indeed one of *witness*. Dying in the same way as Jesus died, for the same reasons as he did, the martyrs multiply the revelation of the founding violence:
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> > Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation ... (Luke 11, 49-50).
>
> This particular text must not be interpreted in a narrow fashion. It does not say that the only innocent victims, from now on, are to be the 'confessors of the faith' in the dogmatic, theological sense used historically by the Christian church. It means that there will be no more victims from now on who are persecuted unjustly but those persecuted will not eventually be recognized as unjust. For no further sacralization is possible. No more myths can be produced to cover up the fact of persecution. The Gospels make all forms of 'mythologizing' impossible since, by revealing

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[598] 'Paul does not preach on the apparitions, still less the "private" apparition with which he was gratified; he preaches the Christ Crucified; but, of the cross, he was not a witness. And when Paul evokes the memory of Steven whom he had persecuted, he says, addressing to Christ himself: 'And while the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing by…' (Acts 22:20)(NCRSV)

Translation mine. Original : 'Paul ne prêche pas les apparitions, encore moins l'apparition « privée » dont il fut gratifié ; il prêche le Christ crucifié ; or, de la croix, il n'a pas été témoin. Et quand Paul évoque la mémoire d'Étienne qu'il persécuta, il dit, s'adressant au Christ lui-même : « Et quand on répandait le sang d'Étienne, ton témoin, j'étais là moi aussi» (Ac 22,20).' Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage », 123.

> the founding mechanism, they stop it from functioning. That is why we have fewer and fewer myths all the time, in our universe dominated by the Gospels, and more and more texts bearing on persecution.[599]

With the deaths of the apostles and other scapegoats throughout the 'age of history,' released from the age of myth in a Girardian sense, collective acts of violence still continue against innocent victims, but no mythic unanimity, because their innocence, and identification with the universal scapegoat par excellence of the Christ figure, and the subsequent attesting and witnessing to the message, is perpetuated.

Paracleitos

This innocence proclaimed in the Gospel testimonial accounts began this movement of the *paraclete*, or the defender of victims.[600] This movement of the paraclete is one of the major themes Girard employs to explain this process, where humanity is able to be moved, gradually from the age of the primitive, violent sacred, into our contemporary society.

> During the course of Western history representation of persecution from the persecutor's perspective gradually weaken and disappear. There are not necessarily fewer or less intense acts of violence; but it does mean that the persecutors could no longer permanently impose their own perspective on those around them. Centuries were needed to demystify medieval persecutions; a few years suffice to discredit contemporary persecutors.[601]

The speed of demythologization is facilitated by the mimetic 'snowballing' effect of the perspective of testimony, which is a possibility in contemporary society, and even in modern science.[602] These are the effects of the demythologization of persecution, the revelation of the innocence of victims, made possible by the mimetic transmission of the effects of gospel testimonies.[603] The community-building effects of the 'testimonial' institution, then, began to take

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[599] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 174.

[600] '*Parakleitos*, in Greek, is the exact equivalent of advocate or the latin *ad-vocatus*. The Paraclete is called on behalf of the prisoner, the victim, to speak in his place and in his name, to act in his defense. The Paraclete is the universal advocate, the chief defender of all innocent victims, *the destroyer of every representation of persecution*. He is truly the spirit of truth that dissipates the fog of mythology.' Emphasis not mine, Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 207.

[601] Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 201.

[602] 'The invention of science is not the reason there are no longer witch-hunts, but the fact that there are no longer witch-hunts is the reason that science has been invented.' Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 204.

[603] Girard's reading of the passages from John also has the aim of disconnecting what he calls 'historical Christianity' and their usage of these texts to scapegoat the Jewish people and, in fact, engage in the reciprocal violence of Antisemitism. To misrecognize the universality of the Gospel message, to address our own 'myths of persecution' that each person has of their others, is ultimately why we perceive the Gospels themselves as an enemy to charity. 'It is the ultimate irony that the gospel text should be condemned by public opinion in the name of charity. Face to face with a world that is, as we well know, today overflowing with charity, the text appears to be disconcertingly

root in human culture, in contraposition to the legacy of institutions birthed in the violent sacred, But the revelation of this paraclete, via a certain scandalization of the cross, illustrates the same dual poison-remedy function for historical testimony as the *pharmakon*, because it does not end violence, by stopping violent act of persecution, because that would require retributive violence, instead it sharpens the divide between persecutors, communities, and victims, by showing their acts as *evil*, as violence against victims.[604] In my reading, what remains then is the freedom of the self to choose between these 'ways of being,' the separation between two logoi, one whose situation is one that *suffers* evil and seeks not to *commit* evil, and the other, whose *committing* evil increases the *suffering* of itself and others. Thus, the understanding of evil is, in fact, only possible through this historical progression of understanding, a hermeneutic understanding of the 'work of exegesis,' seen figurally represented by the paraclete.

The Eschatological Moment of Testimony

What about the eschatological function of testimony as a response to the understanding of evil? To answer this question, I turn back to Ricœur, who sees that this testimonial function is connected to the witness of the paraclete, in history.

> If we do not connect thus the testimony of the spirit to the eschatological trial, we cannot hardly understand why this one here is called the Paraclete "When the Advocate comes…" (John 15:26-27) The Paraclete is the symmetrical figure of the accuser. The same Paraclete, who 'will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.' (John 16 :8) will make himself the advocate of believers when Satan will have become the accuser.[605]

The figure of the paraclete, then, is the one who reveals the network of meaning regarding 'sin' and 'righteousness' as a shift from the previous understanding, as seen in the progression of understanding in chapter 4. This paraclete 'proves the world wrong,' which means it undoes the logic of 'the world' – the order of violence. According to Girard, it is the opposition to the logic of the accuser, the mimetic system of Satan, that creates rivalry into violence, at the heart of the

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harsh.' Girard, *Things Hidden*, 175. For Girard on the reading of antisemitism in John, see Girard, The *Scapegoat*, 210-11.

[604] 'While the world is still intact it cannot understand that which transcends the representation of persecution; it can neither see the Paraclete nor know him. The disciples themselves are still encumbered with illusions that only history can destroy by the deepening influence of the Passion.' Girard, The *Scapegoat*, 209.

[605]Translation mine. Biblical citations (NCRSV) Original : 'Si l'on ne reliait pas ainsi au procès eschatologique le témoignage de l'Esprit, on ne comprendrait guère pourquoi celui-ci est appelé le Paraclet (« Quand viendra le Paraclet... », I Jn 15,26-27). Le Paraclet, c'est la figure symétrique de celle de l'accusateur. Le même Paraclet, qui « confondra le monde en matière de péché, de justice et de jugement » (Jn 16,7), se fera l'avocat des croyants quand Satan en sera devenu l'accusateur. Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage », 128.

sacred, that is radically opposed by the 'symmetrical' figure of the paraclete. This revelatory function then continues to demythologize the sedimented, sacred meanings, and places the testimony of non-violence instead. Thus, according to my hermeneutic, the radicality of this opposition is eschatological, and thus the mimetic 'order' or logos of which we imitate, as a 'way of being' is a moment of decision, a 'bound freedom,' between these oppositions. Thus, for both Girard and Ricœur, the innocence of the victim par excellence —the Christ figure —can be seen as the *praeterita* for the testimonial function as a response to evil, the connection between the recorded, 'historical' inscription, and the 'event' that opens the hope, the possibility of a release from the violent order. The textual, anthropological trace and the ethico-moral demand for interpretation are revealed in the latter figure, the paraclete, whose testimony centers the 'defense' of victims as testimony's primary role.

In my reading, what emerges with the connection to anthropology is that the testimony itself contains the recurrence of the structural bivalence, seen in symbol, myth, metaphor, and the figures. The testimonial function provides the hermeneutic source for understanding evil as both internal and external to the human situation by being, language, action, and institution. This is accomplished through the mimetic ability to share this testimony in the concrete, anthropological, and ethical domain, by the 'witness' in the activity of non-violence.

> At the same time we also understand that the testimony, at the human level, is double: it is the interior testimony, the seal of conviction; but it is also the testimony of works, that is to say, on the model of the Passion of Christ, the testimony of suffering: the vision of the apocalypse continues thus: 'But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.' (Rev 12:11) It is thus still the perspective of the trial that the martyr designates the supreme seal of testimony.'[606]

In my reading, the 'supreme seal of testimony' is seen as the 'things to come' that consolidates the internal-external response to the understanding of evil, the non-violent persistence of innocence in the face of persecution, this testimonial act continues the mimetic modeling in a – (de)symmetrical counter position to the false accusation of the bad mimetic system. These 'works' and 'conviction' symmetrically reflect 'violence' and 'covetousness,' which are instances of the internal-external understanding of evil as the polar moment of violence. The 'hope' that no cheek

[606] Translation mine. Original : 'Du même coup on comprend aussi que le témoignage, au niveau humain, soit double : il est le témoignage intérieur, le sceau de la conviction ; mais il est aussi le témoignage des oeuvres, c'est-à-dire, sur le modèle de la Passion du Christ, le témoignage de la souffrance : la vision de l'Apocalypse se continue ainsi : « Eux-mêmes l'ont vaincu grâce au sang de l'Agneau et grâce au témoignage de leur martyre, car ils ont méprisé leur vie jusqu'à mourir» (Ap 12,11). C'est donc encore dans la perspective du procès que le martyre désigne le sceau suprême du témoignage.' Ricœur, « L'herméneutique du témoignage », 128.

is struck, when you offer your own to the other. Yet, it is important to emphasize that this non-violent persistence implies a confrontation with the 'internalized' state of guilt, the violence against the self. The reversal of the adversarial judge, into the 'heavenly judge,' the advocate, shows guilt, the internalized state of self-punishment, to also be testified against. The testimonial act applies to the internal, divided, mimetic self, where mercy is the verdict and not punishment.

The eschatological moment, then, is the decision of non-violence as a choice of mediator, as seen in figures such as the paraclete or the adversary. Each is connected to either the 'event' of non-violence, Christ as testimony par excellence, or to the *anti* 'event' of violence, the literally untestifiable founding murder. In chapter 1, where I outlined the 'teleological' aspect of the hermeneutic of belief, this teleological aspect of the 'conflict of interpretations,' further seen in Ricœur's discussion of *thumos* in chapter 3, now is seen as 'broken open' into this eschatological moment, where this act of non-violence does not achieve a victory, a closure, of the human situation, but remains an act of hope, a hope for an intersubjective mimetic communion with others.[607] These acts of hope are each a mimetic 'event' by creating a new discourse, a new possibility of non-violence and mimetic freedom. The eschatological moment of 'participation in a kingdom of We' is this possibility. Humanity's violent origins are seen to be redeemed by a proclamation, a testimony of human innocence, for if all of humanity shares a collective *fault*, they also share a collective possibility of mercy, by the inversion of the figure of judge that the accuser does not sway, but in fact is now an advocate. This boundary of the hermeneutic understanding of evil is thus not a closure, a final answer to the question 'what then is evil,' but an acknowledgement and investigation of the depths of violence internal and external to a self that is always mimetically mediated by culture and selves.

Yet, the failure to engage in positive mimesis is an urgent failure, for the 'escalation to extremes' of violence without the resources of the sacred to channel it or the hierarchies of culture to prevent rivalry through constraint and force is the other possibility.[608] This urgent escalation to extremes is also 'apocalyptic.' As Girard states in his *Battling to the End*,

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[607] 'Between a philosophy of hope and this kind of nonconclusive dialectic, there is not only a relation of correspondence, which still remains a static relation, but a dynamic relation, which I call a relation of approximation. By approximation I mean the effort of thought to come closer and closer to the eschatological event that constitutes the center of a theology of hope.' Ricœur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems," in *Figuring the Sacred*, 216.

[608] Girard, *Battling to the End*, 63.

> We have to think of reconciliation not as a consequence but as the reverse of the escalation to extremes. It is a real possibility, but no one wants to see it. The Kingdom is already here, but human violence will increasingly mask it. This is the paradox of our world. Apocalyptic thought is thus contrary to the wisdom that believes that peaceful identity and fraternity is accessible on the purely human level. It is also contrary to all the reactionary forms of thought that want to restore differences and see identity as only a form of destructive uniformity or leveling conformity. Apocalyptic thought recognizes the source of conflict in identity, but it also sees in it the hidden presence of the thought of "the neighbor as yourself" which can certainly not triumph, but is secretly active, secretly dominant under the sound and fury on the surface. Peaceful identity lies at the heart of violent identity as its most secret possibility. This is the secret strength of eschatology.[609]

This quote encapsulates the dynamic between positive mimesis and, thus, a positive harmonious imitation that yields a certain 'reconciliation' of difference; however, the difficulty for this reconciliation, this identity, is that it usually leads to rivalry and violence, for the loss of difference is the fundamental engine for mimetic crises. Thus Girard's 'apocalyptic thought' is driven by the seemingly impossible 'possibility' of the 'peaceful identity' being possible at a 'human level.' What does Girard mean by this? Is there a way to surpass this 'purely human level'? Girard is quite clearly affirming that only a mediation of the non-violence of Christ who is a mediator that allows closeness without rivalry, individuality, and sameness. Yet, as I mentioned above, this hermeneutic understanding of evil is more preoccupied with the 'downward' elements of interpretation, violence, desire, and its dwelling in the ethical-textual domain. To expand on the boundaries of this 'purely human level,' I supplement Girard's reading with an analysis of the 'Kingdom of God' from Ricœur's essay 'The Bible and the Imagination.' Here I must quote at length:

> The expression 'kingdom of God' is, in turn, referred to by the movement of transgressing the narrative. Without this movement, these expressions risk falling to the rank of frozen religious representations. In this way, the expression 'kingdom of God' left to itself could become nothing more than a dead image with some vague political content. It is the extravagance of the narrative that, by bursting out of the mundane meaning of the narrative, attests that 'my kingdom is not of this world,' *that is does not belong to the specific project of human action* and remains, in the strong sense of the word, impractical like some utopia. The expression-enigma, under the pressure of the extravagance of the narrative, thus becomes a limit-expression that breaks open the closed representations… These limit-expressions, in effect, would be nothing more than hollow words if, on the one hand, human beings did not have some experience of limit-situations such as evil and death and the strong desire to be freed from them.[610]

The 'movement' that 'transgresses the narrative' is the larger 'narrative' of which the symbol of the 'kingdom of God' is embedded. This larger 'narrative' has a relationship of 'intersignification' with the embedded narratives, such as the parables concerning the 'kingdom of God,' where the

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[609] Girard, *Battling to the End*, 46.

[610] Emphasis mine. Ricœur, "The Bible and the Imagination" in *Figuring the Sacred*, 165.

narrator, Jesus, gives the meaning to the embedded narratives, which in turn refer to himself as the Christ, or as Ricœur states, 'the Gospel is the recognition of Jesus as being the Christ.'[611] Thus this 'extravagance' of the Gospel narrative makes the 'kingdom of God' a proper 'limit-expression' that indicates an 'impractical' ideal for humanity, yet is not a 'specific project of human action.' But this 'limit-expression' of the kingdom is met on the opposite side by the 'limit-situations' of evil and death, which in fact animate the opposition between these two limits.

My interpretation then is that the 'kingdom of God,' the properly positively mimetic, intersubjective 'secret possibility' for humanity, is in fact a creative limit for this hermeneutic understanding of evil. This 'apocalyptic' urgency compels the mimetically free choice between the logoi, the order of this world, and the order 'not of this world.' Girard's apocalyptic direction, prompted by the failure of humanity not becoming Christ-like, is the final 'limit' for this hermeneutic understanding of evil, and the theoretical boundary is the 'kingdom of God,' for it is not possible according to a 'purely human level.' [612]

This dividing line between violent human apocalypse and the eschatological event of non-violence is also seen with 'narration' and 'confession,' in the duality of testimony. The testimonial act requires an attesting to, a hoping for, the 'secret possibility' of humanity. Yet in this testimonial, a new institution is formed, built on hope and 'faithfulness,' not violence and exclusion. This 'hope' and 'confession' in non-violence is not a theological position, but it is also not an 'anti-theological' one. To declare for either is to misrecognize the violence of the 'purely human level' and to push the hermeneutic understanding of evil towards a 'totalization.' The hermeneutic understanding of evil is an attempt to understand humanity's evil situation in the concrete preservation of violence and exclusion in cultural memory, through the texts that attempt to address this question. Thus, the apocalyptic direction, surpassing the eschatological moment of a decision in the choice of mediator is a forecasting the 'exceeds the resources' of this interpretation; however, human action in the hope of this 'secret possibility' for a positive mimetic contagion of non-violence is ultimately the 'desire' of this hermeneutic synthesis.

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[611] Ricœur, "The Bible and the Imagination," 162.

[612] '…one may note in Girard's defense that the tension in question is not at all incongruent with the vision of Christianity held by the French thinker – as an otherworldly, destabilizing element, one that disorganizes any earthly structure, without ever promising any terrestrial paradise. Moreover, the process of hominization and its (apocalyptic) horizon elude rational thinking. Thus, it is legitimate to let paradox in and leave certain questions unresolved, which, rather than undermining the value of ideas like those of Girard, the critical and hermeneutic power of which is an achievement in itself, constitutes a challenge to question, reinterpret or amend them.' Kremplewska, "Erroneous Paths of the Human Subject," 17.

Conclusion: Hope in the Logic of Non-violence

Thus, at the conclusion of this chapter, the understanding of evil has now been brought to the possible response by the testimonial function as a mimetic event to the event of Christ. The Christ event now is also the event of the demythologization of the 'order of the world,' providing the central moment of transition for humanity's 'work of exegesis' in progress. Humanity's misrecognized evil situation, now seen as the mimesis of violence, both internal and external to the self, prompts the eschatological act of freedom through an act of mimetic modeling that reflects an understanding of these figures of non-violence. Oedipus, Job, the Suffering Servant, are just three examples of this human 'conflict of interpretations' – an interpretive suspicion about evil and violence, and a believing attempt to escape, change, redescribe, endure, their situation. But there exist other figures, in other cultures, who also image this grappling with an understanding of evil.[613] These figures are preserved in language – symbols, myth, metaphors, testimonies, and narratives – and communicate a universal 'bound' situation to evil.

The posited moments of this hermeneutic approach—the origin of the sacred as a founding violent act, the *decidere* of covetousness that prompted the original mimetic crisis, the creation and promulgation of the testimony of the innocence of Christ, and the continued demythologization of this previous 'way of being' as one of violence *suffered* and *committed*—reveal the eschatological dimension in the act of response, where a new boundary to the understanding is pressed upon the self as hope or destruction. The urgency of this eschatological moment is the 'event' of each testimony, where the fallible freedom of the mimetic self chooses to testify to this violence and to mimetically reflect the figure par excellence of non-violence. Thus, the eschatological element of this response lies in the choice between two logos: the logos of violence and the logos of non-violence. To act, to choose between these is to mimetically conform our desires with our innate intersubjective capacities, the primordial goodness, of the quests of *having*, *power*, and *worth*. Yet, to act in this way requires positive mimetic models, so it is to act in accordance with the hope that the modeling of this positive and unifying culture-building effect of peaceful, non-rivalrous mimesis can be disseminated. However, these choices, these models,

[613] For a relation between Mahatma Gandhi and Mimetic Theory, see Wolfgang Palaver, "Peace in Times of War: Girard's Mimetic Theory Complemented by Gandhi's Ethics of Nonviolence." *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze* XIII, no. 2 (2022): 6. https://doi.org/ https://doi.org/10.18290/rkult22131.6.

these testimonies are never absolute. They require an interpretation, an attitude of suspicion and of explanation, but also an attitude of hope and of redescription.

Conclusion

Hope is not a theme that comes after other themes, an idea that closes the system, but an impulse that opens the system, that breaks the closure of the system; it is a way of reopening what was unduly closed. In that sense it belongs to the structure of the system as such.[614]

Evil Re-Understood: Holding Together Question and Response

What is evil? How do we know what experiences are, in fact, evil? What do we do when confronted with these experiences? These questions guided the 'conflict of interpretations' through a series of hermeneutic investigations, between the polarities of suspicion and belief, anthropology and phenomenology, myth and testimony, symbol and violence. The answers achieved through the progression in these moments of interpretive tension do not seek to finalize the understanding of evil, but instead to develop an interpretive framework that argues that an understanding of evil cannot be approached without a response to it. The 'task' of humanity, then, is to understand the existential situation through the symbolic acts of concealing and revealing, which do not yield mastery. Still, instead, there is a hope for a non-violent response, one that fosters intersubjective harmony, which does not participate in the structures of violence and misplaced desire. This 'conflict of interpretations' sought to make the 'theoretical' bear and enact a 'practical' responsibility, and the 'practical' to provide a 'theoretical' reframing of the problem of evil. By itself being already situated within a 'fallen' or evil situation, and at the same time not remaining disinterested to this evil situation, this 'conflict of interpretations' was able to demonstrate the testimonial function of hope and conviction as the symbolic expressions of this response, in the mimetic, intersubjective, violent, and fallible structure of human existence. René Girard and Paul Ricœur have both been recognized as thinkers and philosophers who recognize the inextricable link between understanding and response.

So then, what is evil? Evil, as evil, is 'the challenge' to thought, the *fault* of humanity, the 'terror' that generates misrecognition that discolors our finitude as also 'fallen,' and the violence we do to ourselves and others. The metaphysical modes of approaching this question directly cannot be pursued because we operate within the structures of generative violence, of *méconnaissance*. Thus, from the response to evil, the response to this violent structure, which is the concrete phenomenon of evil par excellence, has always already unconsciously and

[614] Ricœur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems," in *Figuring the Sacred*, 211.

consciously characterized the human situation as 'bound.' With the necessity of having two responses, either in *méconnaissance* or in an understanding of this *méconnaissance*, humanity has always possessed an innate desire to distance itself, to cover, to *bury* this disquietude, this trauma, this 'superhuman' structure. Yet in its distancing, humanity has left traces, tombs, and symbols of this structure of violence. Thus, violence, its polar structure of *suffering* and *committing*, is the entry point for approaching evil, something so distant, so misrecognized, so scandalous, yet so omnipresent in the human situation. Violence erupts into the world as a more 'conscious,' more actualized structure of this 'dissymmetry,' of 'disproportion.' Thus, this dissertation, through the twofold hermeneutic of Ricœur and Girard, of phenomenology and anthropology, of *logos* and *bios*, seeks to understand the existential situation of evil in the concrete experience of being affected by it and to respond to it urgently.

The imprint of this generative structure of violence is evident in the situation of fallibility and the *servile will*. The *servile will* is the symbolic consolidation of the 'bound freedom' of the self that finds itself inescapably fallen, its freedom restricted by the 'evil history' that lies before its acts, and whose acts both begin and join this 'evil history.' It is the symbolic representation of the 'ontological disproportion' that makes evil existentially possible through *fault*, the tension within the self between its freedom and its nature. The anthropological view of violence, as the human response to chaos, to rivalry, to loss of identity, then places this *servile will* as symbol, in a concrete 'history,' into the intersubjective, as the tension between freedom, that cannot be genuinely free, and nature, the mimetic composition of the self. This anthropological view shows *fault* as *systemic*, to be a mechanism of cultural order, based on violence to prevent more undifferentiated violence. It is misrecognized, symbolized, and mythologized, but it is never successfully extricated from humanity's *servile will*. It is a state of binding, of mimetic interdependence on the order of violence. Yet, this necessary interdependence is also the strength of fallibility: mimetic binding to otherness is not necessarily such a 'challenge' to selfhood, self-possession, and individuality, as in its understanding lies the chance to a testimonial response that interrupts the continuation of evil. Evil is thus promoting our blindness to this real situation, the real intersubjective, thymic vocation of human existence.

The Existential Hermeneutic of 'Welcoming Anew'

To accomplish this, the conceptual framework of a 'conflict of interpretations' was explained, concerning both its contradictory and paradoxically reflective hermeneutic

dispositions. Belief, on the one hand, follows the 'letting appear' of phenomenology, and suspicion, on the other, involves investigation and demythologization through anthropology. In attempting to understand evil and its relationship in human existence, both dispositions were necessary, and both were reflected in the means to understand this existential situation through the symbol. The symbol is the path, the opening towards the phenomenological and the anthropological, the dividing line between *logos* and *bios*. By developing an approach towards the existential understanding opened through the symbol, the interrelation between a series of poles illustrates the continuum of understanding: from origin to end. This '3rd-level synthesis' between the archaeological and the 'teleological' movements of interpreting the symbol revealed a structural complementarity to Girard and Ricœur, in the 'mutuality' of their interpretive directions. Yet this complementarity does not dissolve their differences but instead images the complexity of the various levels of human existence throughout which the situation of evil is present. This dialectical expansion between suspicion and belief, anthropology and phenomenology, can still be 'synthesized' but not in the manner of absorption, but in the mode of 'welcoming anew' of 'hosting.' This 'welcoming,' this 'hosting,' allows exchange, allows common ground, but is not a relation of dominance, of violence. Each method, when brought to participation in this synthesized mode, is changed, is expanded by this encounter, but not reduced.

The guiding question of this complementarity was the understanding of evil, which became more visible and framed the constellation of several points of contact between Ricœur and Girard. These points of contact were violence, the *servile will*, desire, covetousness, and the symbol-myth-testimony relationship. The polar moments of violence emerge as both internal and external to the 'bound' freedom, which is 'bound' by its *decidere*, its violence to self, which is simultaneously the violence to its other. This phenomenal emergence of the polar moment of violence within the self paradoxically cannot be inaugurated by the self 'alone.' It arrives via its mimetic openness to the other's desire, which further opens a communal reception to this violence, by mimetic contagion. What is imitated internally is externally applied. The interior violence of the *decidere* is also the external violence against otherness, where it suffers the other's violence as well. Thus, the phenomenal emergence of violence inhabits the existential space of inside and outside the intersubjective self, and is representable in the symbol, the dividing line between *bios* and *logos*.

Violence, Desire, and the Task of the Mimetic-Thymic Self

As a result, the Ricœurian subject as hermeneutic 'task' was mimetically recalibrated. Thereby, the 'task' of a mimetic-thymic intersubjective self is pressed by an urgent existential hermeneutic of evil, where the *méconnaissance* that dwells in and around desire and violence requires a *praxis*, shown to be the testimonial response. The self in this conception is intersubjective, constituted by the models of its desire, but also has agency and responsibility for its role in perpetuating and imitating violence. Thus, this self has the freedom not to commit evil, albeit a heavily constrained freedom, which makes not committing evil a form of resistance to the collective inertia of the system of violence and desire. This freedom does not remove the self from outside of its mediated context, but allows it to choose between mediators, from within. This 'model choice' is only possible by the freedom to interpret within its bound situation, to discover where and how this freedom is tethered to otherness. The thymic aspect of the self, when phenomenologically posited, is the primordially good desire for otherness, an existential framing towards otherness at the interior and exterior of selfhood. The integral key to the hermeneutic of the self's evil situation, its *méconnaissance* and unreflective imitative violence, is the positive model of the Christ figure, who provides a model for imitation and a model for demythologization, for *understanding*.

The generative structure of violence, interpreted via the suspicion regarding the generation of the cultural order descended from ritualized sacrifice by the positing of a symbolized descendant of an original scene of violence, demonstrates the fundamental ambivalence in the 'dreaded and adored' sacred, that is preserved in symbol's 'overdeterminancy.' This 'overdeterminancy' or structural ambiguity contains a bi-directional structure, where the ground of a non-semantic experience is symbolized on the first level, and the redescription of this experience into language via interpretation is the productive element: the 'giving' to thought. The 'sacred terror' behind the fundamental symbol of defilement demonstrates that it is this 'sacred terror' that is a 'matrix' of terror. The generative violent structure is also the generative symbolic structure. The concept of *méconnaissance* suggests the sedimented meaning of the symbol, which is a trace of this structure, and thereby not only provides the occasion for suspicion but is also foundational to the human relationship with violence, and thus to evil. Evil is both 'all-too human' and all-too 'superhuman.' Evil seems to inhabit the primordial origin that humanity unconsciously redescribes and hides, in the unconscious need to hide the violence, to hide oneself from this matrix. Thus, *méconnaissance* is the trace of this existential movement of

the symbolization of evil, the concealing of evil, because of the matrix of 'terror' and the unconscious reaction of humanity to it in the affective horror of violence, now revealed to in fact be a representation of a greater 'evil' that surpasses both suspicion and belief.

To understand *méconnaissance* as integral to humanity's inability to see its originary violence is also to understand the traces of violence as progressively resisted and unmasked in a series of 'suffering' figures, who have revealed the polar structure of evil to be a disproportion of power, of capability, against a *sufferer*. These figures each provide a 'scandal' to the rationalization of evil. This concept involves the notion that when suffering and committing are divided, stretched, and viewed through the lens of an 'innocent' agent – a 'suffering' figure – the suffering is left outside of its direct responsibility. However, what remains of the evil situation becomes a tragic situation. The prophetic accusation and the tragic inspiration reveal this seemingly hopeless, bound situation. Humanity, as a guilty victim of its violence, makes self-accusation of this guilt, which, however paradoxically, is a participating act of reciprocal violence, in response to the *decidere*, the act of self-violence, the 'cutting' of one's own throat. A consequent intensification of self-accusation creates the 'hell of guilt,' and the interiorization of this violent 'sacrificial system,' that may no longer be steeped in the sacred, but becomes internalized in a network of self-scapegoating (one's internal otherness), and self-violence. Oedipus, Job, and the Suffering Servant all contribute to the revelation of this mechanism as evil, through exemplifying that *suffering* is not always bound to one's *committing* of violence. However, they do not provide a full response to humanity's tragic existential situation.

Thus, it is the Christ figure that can respond now, to the polarity of violence, where *suffering* and *committing* both are seen as instances of evil, but responsibility can only be assigned to the latter, whereas 'tragedy' ought to be ascribed to the former. How does hope return via the Christ figure? The answer lies in the Christ figure's dual function of both demythologizer and judge. As demythologizer, this figure fosters the visibility of the externalized *system* as a system of scapegoating that operates under a 'lie' as evil, at the same time, in its function of judge, reversing the paradigm of the 'adversarial' judgment of the human to one of 'mercy.' *Suffering* is not merely the causal punishment for evil or existing, but is the occasion for reclaimed freedom, 'redeemed' through hope and mercy. This does not make evil less scandalous or suffering 'good,' but instead of rationalizing evil, it shows that the scandal of evil can only be understood in the face of this modeled response, which consists of an activity grounded in the hope of non-violent

mediation. This hope seeks to decrease the amount of violence in the world, which, as Ricœur states, would, in turn, reduce the amount of *committing* and *suffering*, and thus, evil.

Yet, to transmit this function of the reversal of judgment, the innocence of the victims, both ourselves and others, must be attested. Symbol, now able to be demythologized, must be applied to defend victims, rather than being abused as an accomplice in their obfuscation. The 'matrix of terror' now has as its opposition the matrix of hope: the hope in the innocence of victims, for positive mediation of non-violence. Myths, which hide the innocence of victims, have become testimonies that reveal their innocence. This dynamic enables acts of ethical 'redescription' which are also acts of non-violence. As such, they do not consist in being passive to the system of accusing victims and letting oneself suffer for others, merely, but –to the contrary – in the 'defense' of victims, not through violence, but through 'witness.'

Testimony as Non-violent Praxis

This testimonial response cannot be absolute, but it exists through a hope, belief, and a witness to an event of forgiveness that is as radical as the scandalous suffering that would seem to contradict it. However, this hope is not naïve. It submits the testimonial function to the historical process, to the 'war of testimonies.' The integral function of testimony to the historical process, in addition to separating the 'age of myth' from the 'age of history,' is also the creation of an institution not descended from the violence of the cultural mechanism. It is a communal institution that fosters an ethic of non-violence, an institution of trust in language, and not of misrecognition. The mimetic mediation of the testimonial function also allows for the promulgation of the 'event' of the Christ figure, able to be shared outside of the first-hand witnesses, in its submission to the textual interpretive process of belief and suspicion. It is this tension, the attesting to innocence, that cannot be the cause of reciprocal violence, that makes the 'conflict of testimonies' also an urgent problem for the understanding of evil. The testimonial function bears an eschatological dimension as a mimetic act to the testimonial 'event' of the Christ figure because it operates outside of the usual anthropological and violent structure and impels the self to choose between ways of being, between mediators. It breaks in upon *méconnaissance*, and within the now 'desacralized' system removes the claims to unanimity, thereby undermining any further 'successful' obfuscation of violence. Yet, by being inscribed, by being placed within the system of violence, desire, and misrecognition that inhabits humanity's existential situation, it does not break in from 'without' the system, but 'within.' This eschatological break with the

system of violence via the testimonial function 'each singular time,' does not ensure peaceful, orderly affects, because it robs the system of its unanimity, its strong identity formation in the accusatory 'lie.' Thus, Girard's notion of the apocalyptic effects of Christ's demythologization of the 'principalities and powers' results in the destabilized mimetic tension between the logos of violence and the logos of non-violence that cannot stop the growth of humanity's undifferentiating violence, because of the innocence of victims and the promulgation of the scandalization of suffering.

Implications

Freedom, when seen as always already mediated and 'bound' to an evil history that lies prior to my acts, is now seen to be the locus par excellence of the problem of evil. It is paradoxically 'bound' to a state of mimetic dependence, but also by the responsibility to understand that it is dependent. However, within the framework that has been developed, a vision of this dependency, this finite framing of freedom, has emerged as not a constraint, but a challenge. It is for this reason that the mimetic, 'bound' freedom is seemingly reclaimed and individualized when it participates in intersubjective harmony. By acknowledging its framing, its relationality to otherness. Freedom is the center point of responsibility and innocence but also guilt and blindness.

The responsibility to non-violence is not solely directed towards others for the sake of their safety from physical or non-physical violence. It is also oriented towards the self: the borderline between its readiness for participation in violence or non-violence is intrinsic to the complex structuration of thymic desire and the potential from its primal discord, in its internalization of the scapegoat mechanism within its divided structure. So, what is at stake for the self in living up to this responsibility is either to wage or not to wage reciprocal violence on itself, thereby losing its freedom and individuality to the crowd or pride. This strong sense of intersubjectivity, which is not only externalized but also simultaneously internalized through the permeability of mimetic-thymic desire, makes the responsibility and liability of freedom dependent on an understanding of this bound situation.

The praxis that emerges as the ethical 'task' of interpreting this mimetic-thymic dependence, is to interpret the symbols that represent this desire in the 'interhuman' sphere. The works of culture, of art, of literature, of mediation at the intersubjective level, all have this violent heritage. Yet this violent heritage is not a necessary cause for continued violence. What also

emerges is that violence may be deeply intertwined with humanity, but its role in hominization need not be the destiny of humanity. In fact, the experience of 'fallenness' that animates *méconnaissance*, the symbolic-metaphoric process, by its enabling the altered response of understanding and testifying to the necessity of non-violence—the self's understanding both as and towards a praxis of non-violence —is more human than the violence that allowed for the emergence of the human community.

This dissertation, through the dialectical companionship of Girard and Ricœur, provides a rereading of philosophical anthropology in the praxis of non-violence as a non-relativistic, hermeneutic praxis. It is a highly intersubjective philosophical anthropology that ventures into the interior of the divided self and into the realm of language and action.

Questions

In this section, I will raise and comment on a series of challenges to this dissertation. I begin first with the methodology, the 'conflict of interpretations.' Although the complementarity has been successful, the expansion of the dialectical combination between Girard and Ricœur does, in fact, contain explicit and implicit criticisms of each thinker, which is evident in the need for a fruitful dialogue in the first place. The need for dialogue between phenomenology and anthropology implied that neither method, by itself, was sufficient to understand evil.

Thus, the first criticism that will be explored is in relation to Girard and the question of freedom in the context of mimetic mediation, which this hermeneutic synthesis attempts to preserve in some manner. As mentioned primarily in Chapter 3, freedom bound to mediators makes it difficult to attribute responsibility for an evil act to an individual. What is deficient in Girard's account is not only the challenge of mimetically mediated freedom, but first and foremost, how this freedom suddenly reclaims its subjectivity in the act of converting, of choosing a new model. Girard's silence on the modality of freedom is the central reason the pairing with Ricœur can explain how a mediated freedom could function, and how evil, then, could be seen to exist prior to its moralization.

The second challenge is the hermeneutic sourcing from the Western tradition, which, though having been universalized by the function of the myths, may gain even greater nuance when other traditions are brought alongside in dialogue on the question of desire, the self,

symbol, and violence. This is a fair challenge.[615] Due to the limitations of this dissertation (concerning word count and format) and the choice of working in the otherwise advantageous mode of an exegesis of the primary works of Girard and Ricœur, meeting this challenge by incorporating other traditions, ones not directly covered by Girard and Ricœur, occurred as a complex logistical problem and exceeded what was possible within this project, despite the merits for the argument. I consider it necessary and worthwhile to work towards applying this mimetic-thymic existential hermeneutic, utilizing the structures of symbol, myth, and metaphor, to examine the texts of other cultures and evaluate their capacity to expand our understanding of evil.

The third challenge – one that remains unresolved – is the metaphysical framing of the 'kingdom of God' and the hope in the logic of non-violence, as well as the 'mystery of evil' that remains open to further exploration. As mentioned previously, this work does not operate within a metaphysical framework or aim. Still, it does not preclude the possibility of a metaphysics or the theological claims that could be associated with my conclusions. The terms of eschatology, hope, and mercy have a theological or metaphysical bearing. Still, in my usage, they are descriptors related to the ethical response as potentialities that emerge from understanding evil in an anthropological and phenomenological register. They show that although evil is scandalous for rationalization, it should not paralyze a praxis of non-violence.

It is for this reason that this 'conflict of interpretations' does not yield a teleology but an eschatology, which is marked by the described dynamics of welcoming anew, a hosting. Thus, it is intended to continue as a dialogue, evolving into a synthesis, as each viewpoint is influenced by the other. This dialogical process must represent the ongoing response to evil, which persists in the human existential situation. It's Ricœur-Girardian view, along with the established concepts of the self, desire, symbol, and testimony, provides an interpretive framework by which to explore the existential dimensions of understanding in the ethical and cultural domain.

Between Paraclete and Adversary – A Human Situation of Forgiveness

The human existential situation has been described, through the applied framework, as one beset by 'fallenness,' the evil of violence, and the evil of *méconnaissance*. Despite this situation, in which human freedom is bound to not just its finitude, but the *fault* of ourselves and others,

[615] See Introduction, *Objections*.

does the response of 'hope' really provide a satisfying response? Is it not again the return of an 'after worldliness' to make this world bearable? In this dissertation, such dichotomy is overcome through its concept of hope for the innocence of victims, and for positive mediation in a 'Kingdom' of non-violent intersubjectivity, being ultimately a concrete hope, one which is not deferred to a distant, metaphysical future, but already present within the 'interhuman' sphere of culture, desire, and violence. This hope is rooted in the paraclete, understood through the progression of understanding, which calls upon the positive mimetic force of modeling non-violence in a world of adversaries, as expressed in the concept of the accuser. This set of polar antinomies, in which the human existential situation is bound, is not a 'conflict of doubles' or of 'warring twins.' The relationship of 'hostility' in this framing, between paraclete and adversary, between defender and accuser, is not a courtroom drama, where humanity stands waiting to be convicted or acquitted depending on the whims of the interpersonal forces. This 'conflict' is not just an externalized war of 'good' and 'evil,' like in the prologue of Job, but it is an internalized 'conflict' as well. While the adversary may use violence and rivalry as its tools of division, the paraclete uses *forgiveness*: 'Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'(Luke 23:34) The understanding of evil, by including the testimonial response within this hermeneutic approach, requires this statement to gain a greater insight. A truly human existential situation is one caught between innocence and guilt, suffering and committing, belief and suspicion. However, the active mode of human participation in the world need not be violence, a diminishment of ourselves and others through our activity. It can instead be a positive, creative activity, with hope, with forgiveness of ourselves and others, where instead of dissymmetry in the capability of the human to diminish itself or another in the act of violence, the dissymmetry of forgiveness is to return the agency to oneself and another. This activity of forgiveness is, thus, also a hermeneutic activity, for forgiveness cannot arrive at its other outside of language, outside of action. It is the testimonial function that, by attesting to the innocence of the victim, by witnessing to the *praeterita*, enables this positive textual mimetic model, that shows a recognition of the other and myself as within the same existential situation of 'fallenness,' over and against the misrecognition that this other one is a rival, is violent, is imitating my desire. This decision of forgiveness is thus a healing, eschatological decision, an *anti-decidere*, for it inaugurates a new capability of the other, a new mimetic opening of freedom by 'loosening the binds' of violence and rivalry. Thus, the 'kingdom' of intersubjective communion is neither a failure nor an apocalyptic moment in the distant future, but an active, creative limit to model forgiveness against violence. The hermeneutic

understanding of evil, in the mode of 'welcoming anew,' sought to ground its understanding within the framework of praxis —a response to evil. It succeeded in showing that this *praxis* and understanding demonstrate that hope in the world is the response to evil, but that without hope, evil is not just scandalous, it is violence.

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