

A monadic prelate without divine rival. On Girard's bifurcated focus.

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Introduction

Girard counts as a Durkheimian for viewing religion as the social force that underpins society's cultural institutions. A basic difference, though, is to be heeded. No doubt, he argues that the bloody solution of the originary mimetic crisis initiated traditions of sacrificial rituals with mythical justifications that crystallized in society's legal codes, ethical rules, and cultural habits, on which daily events of scapegoating rely. But, if this suggests that religion's basic aim is to be a buttress of the cultural order, it must be noticed that Girard's core conviction points in a different direction by a curious ambiguity, which asks for a seldom effectuated two-thronged analysis. In fact, his crucial concept of *méconnaissance* postulates a basic awareness that precedes all religious constructs and gainsays their basic logic, even if it provides their fuel. Our analysis of religion should, therefore, follow a two-edged strategy that holds the critique of the cultural institutions to be no less important a role of religion than its serving as their buttress. This study may be called schismanalysis in respect of the etymology that derives *religio* from the Latin *re-legere* (re-reading).¹

Girard's 1972 book on the role of violence in religion was indeed widely welcomed for its apparent support of Nietzsche's and Freud's critique of religion as society's tool to curtail people's natural ambitions. Yet, the book contained a clear rebuttal of these 'masters of suspicion'. So, the enthusiasm soon faded, when his next book appeared to uphold the opposite view by pointing to an underlying thrust that had come to the surface in Judeo-Christian prophetic traditions. But how does this *religio* work?

The coming pages do not pretend to outline in detail the method *méconnaissance* advocates for religious studies, but rather to give a tentative application of it to an area that Girard wrestled with in his controversy with Nietzsche over the rise of the Western individual. In the process, it will appear that a basic aspect of the Christian tradition was unjustifiably ignored and that Leibniz' version of metaphysics seems to offer an undervalued answer to this topic of the basic question on the origin of evil, the Fall and its redemption.

While reminding the reader that this is a contribution in the 2019-COV&R theme of

the conference at Innsbruck titled: “*On imagining the Other*”, I shall take my starting point in an episcopal consecration and its ritual.

An episcopal consecration

The new Dutch bishop Smeets was ordained on December 8, 2019. The ceremony was a liturgical gem; spiritually uplifting for both the aging faithful and the agnostic sympathizers for whom rituals retain a nostalgic ring. With Dutch Catholicism and its ministry in steep decline, the cathedral pews filled to the brim and long lines of clerics made the episcopal consecration into a long abided feast. Still, its liturgy was not without raising questions. While the choice for the diocesan patron's feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception was fitting and its liturgy was well performed, still it sounded a nasty discord exposing the roots of the Church's demise. A furtive bias showed, as a nun, the only woman in the liturgical plot, came to read Eden's story of the Fall. She was followed by a deacon reading the Gospel of the Annunciation. Since public ears have come to grasp the Immaculate Conception as referring to Mary's virginal pregnancy, countering humanity's sinful state after Eve's *faux pas*, many an eyebrow was raised. Even though the iconography and the liturgy's symbolism stressed Mary's graced state from birth, it was her undoing of Eve's Fall that stood out in people's mind. At the same time, the all-male liturgy proclaimed the usual texts about Christ's sacrificial blood undoing mankind's sin of revolt against the Almighty. The new prelate is given the mandate, as Christ's proxy, to distribute the graces earned on the Cross. Thus the liturgy inadvertently exposed a dogmatic quandary, brought about by Satan's trick to let man view rivalry with the Creator as the base of the individual person's esteem. Applying Girard's mimetic scheme I will reexamine this quandary and its ensuing heterophobia.ⁱⁱ This will lead us to a crucial, yet generally ignored mediation, which Leibniz envisaged some three centuries ago, in his search to remedy Europe's devastating crisis of religious essence, and its spreading global impact.

We first focus on this global influence of the redemptive scheme with its two logical lines, linked via a disputable formality. The new prelate's male ministry of distributing the graces Christ earned by his sacrificial death is said to reverse Adam's Fall. Yet, the liturgical readings present it as Eve's guilt being redressed by Mary's acceptance of virginal motherhood in abiding sexual innocence. These jarring logical lines blend in the common concept of submission to counter the first couple's disobedient rivalry

with the divine might, as the serpent had mischievously worded it. After noticing the dire effects of the demonic twist of that event, we shall turn to Girard's view of its drama. Following Schwager, he tackled that flaw head on. Yet, while fiercely denying Christ's Cross to be a sacrifice to still God's wrath, they both uphold a disturbing aspect of the scheme, the effects of which we cannot ignore. There is no overstating the impact that the dominant view of Christian salvation has had on Europe and on world history, ever since Constantine made Christianity the State religion and pledged to bring in all 'others', who were still in Satan's clutches, awaiting to be washed in Christ's blood. This is not the place to survey all the effects of this political twist. But we shall focus on some remarkable facets of its 2nd millennium trail, after Pope Gregory had vowed to ensure the spiritual's supremacy over the political domain, thus galvanizing an endemic rivalry in all areas, running from politics to science and arts. Recalling the Crusades, the Apartheid imperialism, and ultimately the Shoah, as fallouts of the urge to prove one's own excellence and election over the unbelieving 'others', we observe that the internal rivalries were thus exuded abroad.

On the ensuing 'heterophobia', the 2019 Innsbruck COV&R-conference has sought to apply the mimetic theory. Even though recent studies have come to link the images of the divine 'Other' and the victimized 'other' society tends to expel,ⁱⁱⁱ it is undeniable that the Christian salvation story has most often caused individual believers to locate themselves between the Almighty and the 'other', as they were anxiously seeking the narrow gate to salvation. Still, reducing the faith's effect to the fueling of heterophobia is evidently no more tenable than defining it as a mere curtailment of the will to power, the sexual drive or the material striving in the manner of Nietzsche, Freud or Marx. The mimetic theory rather proposes a bifurcated approach that acknowledges these developments, while going a weighty step forward.

The liturgical setting of the prelate's consecration reveals that the salvation dogma has been framed in terms of the serpent's deceitful twist of God's words, placing humans into a rivalry with both God and the neighbor. This Satanic take on the original sin as the vertical rivalry between humans and God's prerogatives has arguably provoked a fierce animosity, because it painted the moral rules ever more darkly as His assault on human justified desires. It was sure to cause the atheists' Promethean revolt and, what Girard terms, the obsessive drive of Western scientists to tackle biblical views. Having been politicized through the clerical claim of supremacy of the spiritual over the material, this vertical rivalry with the divine soon pervaded all social sectors. Still,

Girard also hails secularism as the fruit of gospel values. While rejecting Nietzsche's Dionysian choice, he fully shares the latter's vision of the *ressentiment* that colored the believers' responses to God's demands of obedience and submission to the eternal schemes. He thus stresses its twofold impact. This suggests an apparent paradox that urges a second look at his mimetic theory in respect of Christianity's dealing with the Eden event and its effects on interpersonal relations, notably on the rapport with the other as other.

Girard's theory openly shares the postmodern critique of modernity's claims of having liberated the individual from medieval heteronomy. But to fully value his theory's novelty, we should note some neglected sides of Europe's view of the individual in relation to the Eden story. Actually, the rise of the subject as an individual was not alien, but rather inherent to the medieval developments that rested on the Augustinian heritage and pivoted in the 11th century's Gregorian revolution. From its very onset, the 2nd millennium paved the route of the individual's emancipation in a remarkable hate/love relation between humans and the divine realm. Girard has often praised Augustine's genius for spotting the role of mimetic patterns in the process of human emancipation, but he rejects the habit of linking the birth of the subject to a sexualized reading of sin and of the fall in Eden that the bishop of Hippo had advanced. This rejection of the sexual link, however, resulted mainly from his criticism of the role sexuality had come to play in the Freudian and Levi-Straussian anthropological schemes. But thereby, he ignored an aspect of these two interrelated themes of the fall and sexuality that deserves our closer look, as we shall see further on.

Modernity's blind revolt

Modernists' scorn of the dark ages and of medieval heteronomy has been unmasked as myopic for willfully ignoring the birth of the individual. The latter was due to numerous social and economic causes, like the rapidly growing urbanization, but also to the monastic spiritual respect for each person's individual calling. Anselm's doctrine of redemption by Christ's self-sacrificial death clearly boosted this sense of personal identity. But so did also the moral anxieties that Nietzsche came to lambast as the source and sign of a devastating slave morality. Since Adam's sin was viewed as an act of disobedience and Christ's saving act as the obedient submission to God's sacrificial scheme, God featured increasingly as man's chief rival, provoking an ever

more rebellious reaction, which came to serve as a seedbed for the individual's claims of free selfhood. Europe's 2nd millennium became marked by a relentless hubris, as an overcompensation of the slave morality, and by the 'murder of God' that Nietzsche sincerely decried and bemoaned. Thus, there is a double root of the European success story that needs our scrutiny. Yet, Girard's rejection of Nietzsche's Dionysian option, even though he values his critique, risks getting muddled as long as his analysis follows the current definition of the original sin as rivalry with God.

Before looking at the obfuscated prophetic message in the Eden-drama, we must shortly study this social-religious revolt as being both valued and decried. In regard of the Renaissance, a remarkable contradiction stands out, exemplified by the famous Copernican revolution. The new heliocentric view is hailed as a turn away from the medieval habit of placing the human planet and its salvation by God's intervention at the center. Just as the Gothic art's habit of placing items in their relation to the salvation story came to be restructured via the central perspective – where man's and no longer God's eye is the deciding factor – the astronomic perspective was also inverted. The change, however, was much more subtle and ambiguous than pretended. For the human person stood not less but rather more in the center, albeit no longer as object of God's saving act, but now merely as an autonomous individual. Rather than being shifted to the universe's periphery, the human reality became ever more its prime focus, as nominalism followed by Kant and idealist philosophy profess. Thus, the intellectual change was minimal, since both actually put the human reality first. It explains why devoted believers and early agnostics could work side by side in their research using similar methods. And it shows the religious factor itself to be mainly of political nature, based on the serpent's false reading of the Eden decree in terms of a vertical rivalry and the demand of submission, as we shall discuss later.^{iv}

Related to the political and moral wrangling that arose from late medieval society, where Girard saw the individual starting to take center stage in the writings of Cervantes and Shakespeare, we must also consider the symptomatic development in the arts that was affected by the central perspective. In a recent study on Cusanus' reply to the development of the central or linear perspective, in the early 15th century Florentine school of painting around Brunelleschi, Johannes Hoff has emphasized the link between this artistic devise and the growing stress on the human subject. It not only fostered the romantic narcissism Girard's mimetic studies have so effectively unraveled, but already signaled a hazardous link to more recent infatuations with the

virtual reality and the postmodern disorientation contemporary anthropologists have spelled out.^v Additionally, and referring to the Innsbruck COV&R-theme, it appears that parallel to the auto-referential focus of the central perspective in painting, Europe also developed an imperialist grip on the 'other' via its colonial explorations and occupations, including an intense missionary program. This religious superiority over the pagans was clearly expressed in the 1506 papal partition of the globe and its allotment to the two rivaling empires of Spain and Portugal. Meanwhile painters offered a new interpretation of the popular theme of the Adoration of the Magi, symbolizing all nations' submission, where black Africa sits in the lowest position.^{vi}

A dubious cluster of emotions surfaces here, both on the collective and personal level. The substitution of the Jewish election by the Christian nation and its right to reign globally had largely solidified in people's mind ever since Constantine and his erection of the Cross into the emblem of victory. The rather mediocre results of the Crusades against Muslims and Jews, followed by various internal conflicts had only strengthened the collective resolve to go out and christianize the 'other' globally. Nietzsche rightly surmised this to be driven less by a healthy will to power than by submission to a divine order and the anxiety to secure one's own eternal salvation, as controlled by clerical rules and rites. And what applies to collective impulses counts on personal level even more intensely. While great strides were made in all arts and sciences, with splendid exploits from astronomy to architecture and music, the conceited pride over one's achievements was openly tempered by the very same motivation that urged them to arise, namely the anxiety to comply with God's will. Distinguishing oneself from the other by all sorts of skills was given a religious aura, but it also stood under the constant urge of a heavenly must that put the self between the Other above and the 'other' nearby. This was the time of the soul-searching moral uncertainties, so perspicuously analyzed by Jean Delumeau, where the confessional obtained its crucial role in society and individuals increasingly became spiritual strangers to one another.^{vii}

Before examining how this ambivalent condition became crucial for the emergence of the self-conscious individual, we must first consider the second element of the medieval emancipation of the person, in which the moral anxieties and the Eden story played an even more ambivalent role.

The gender enfranchisement

The second medieval innovation of anthropological importance was the Church's revolutionary act of replacing the common marital exchange patterns by a codified evangelic formula and thus to sacramentalize the Genesis ideal of a free bonding of husband and wife. While arranged marriages and women-exchange were the worldwide prevailing habit, the Church codified a sacramental nuptial bond between two baptized persons, acting as autonomous individuals. We need to ponder the ensuing social struggle to let this marital novelty take root in society, since the Bible urges the man to leave home and adhere to his wife. The popular gabs about Eve's fall needing to be saving by Christ's sacrificial bloodshed, and the massive casuistry about sin and pardon surrounding the penitential sacrament with an unparalleled sophistry of moral and juridical decrees in sexual matters, illustrate a grave cultural turmoil that urges in-depth analysis. This is especially needed, given the role these factors played in provoking the Reformation's artful redefinition of the human self and the subsequent series of Europe's social-political conflicts. What is proposed here is a revision in mimetic terms of the popular reading of the Eden scene, which clearly featured God as man's rival, who formulated stern moral rules on sexual conduct and which made Eve anything but the ally Adam had been hoping for.

The first part of Genesis' creation story culminates in ch.2 by depicting the harmony between two sexualized equals, living shamelessly in a naked union. By contrast, Gen 3 ends in a sour discord of two genders, wearing clothes to mark the difference they love to hate. Leaving aside for now how this disorder got transferred to later generations, we must reexamine the event, starting with God telling Adam to avoid the tree by the name of 'knowledge of good and evil'. This name is readily blurred by the serpent telling Eve that it is all about the knowledge that gives equality to God's might. For ages commentators have strangely neglected the satanic fallacy. No doubt, many of them, including Schwager and Girard, with the Innsbruck school of mimetic theologians, have explicitly remarked that Eve followed the serpent's version. But even where mimetic rivalry was identified as the basic evil, the prophetic content of the biblical name was ignored. Instead, man's vertical rivalry and rejection of God's bonding was made to translate that evil, in the manner the Torah appears to teach us. For social anthropologists using Girard's mimetic theory it is the effects of that vision, notably on sin and gender that demands special attention.^{viii}

Let us recall that God's word in Gen 2:17 does not mean to ban humans from some

Promethean mastery or know-how. Rather it is a warning to avoid the 'knowledge of good and evil', which in daily life means the tool of discrimination and scapegoating. After eating the fruit, unsurprisingly, Adam is eager to cover his nakedness, allegedly for shame, but in actual fact to mark his differentiating superiority over the reviled partner, whom he blames for upsetting God's plans. He disowns her as his detested, yet much desired rival. The fake debate whether it were Adam or Eve who bore the drama's real guilt got a bogus answer by defining sin as disobedience in Paulinian sense, i.e. breaking the law, the *nomos*. Anselm, then, further coated this in feudality's legal terms as an affront of the Almighty Suzerain. And thus, all axiological contents of the command dissipates, preparing Luther's *sola fide* and Kant's categorical imperative, emptying morality of its roots in reality, as Max Scheler has pointed out. Morality, henceforth, is reduced to the mere submission in faith to earn the bliss that shows in material prowess and lets the European subject qualify as the imperial lord of progress and salvation over the 'other'.^{ix}

Concerning this interrelated emergence of the personal individuality and gender parity it is crucial to scrutinize the effect of the dogmatic scheme of the Fall in terms of disobedience and the saving act by the Crucified. The most striking development in medieval society is arguably the sacramental order of forgiveness administered by a mighty hierarchical class of celibate clerics, forming a social estate. On both these scores of the individual's autonomy and of gender parity we cannot fail to note a basic paradox. The constant stress on man's all-pervading need of forgiveness created a sense of dependence that seems to contradict the religious message of individual enfranchisement of each person through Christ's grace. But it is easy to see that the two sides of this paradox, namely God's saving love for each individual and the irritating need to submit to His command, actually strengthen the basic sense of each one's personal identity.

The same may seem less easy to discern in the second paradox concerning the gender parity, as it was engrained in the sacramental matrimony and its novel marital rule of autonomous bonding. Since the penitential form stressed each person's need to submit to the divine in the Church's sacramental mediation and as its contents increasingly centered on sexual matters and their regulations, the question of their true goal arises. The huge body of rules on chastity and marital rights, paralleled by an emphasis on the superior state of celibacy, rather appeared to gainsay the gender enfranchisement in the nuptial sacrament. The increasing anxiety provoked by the confessional and its

penitential practices, undoubtedly aggravated Eve's sinful image and it caused her seductive fault to epitomize the Eden affair. Yet, it is beyond doubt that this debatable development led the attention to the issues of gender parity and complementarity. When the clerical grip on this penitential construct turned unbearable and the simony of commercialized indulgences provoked the Reformers' revolt, plunging Europe into its religious wars, the two aspects of this double paradox continued their path, even where the sacramental forms of the confessional and of matrimony were abandoned.^x

Méconnaissance of the 'other'

Girard's notion of *méconnaissance* proclaims that the real social mechanism behind the religious rituals, although known, is actually obfuscated without being annulled. Collective offers are approved of to salvage a greater value, just as the group's survival was the value, for which the price was paid at the original killing. His theory convincingly explains this as a basic framework that constantly modifies its application to allow the hiding of mimetic strategies and scapegoating in daily life. The emergence of the individual subject in medieval times was a value made possible by the numerous religious regulations that society needed so as to handle that novelty. The penitential framework based on the Anselmian reading of the Fall and its redemption was thus of prime importance. Similarly, the sexual focus in the casuistry concerning sin, often referring to the threat of seduction that Eve embodied, is to be understood in relation to the novelty of partner parity in matrimony.

As said above, Girard's felicitous insight into the double-edged workings of religion, which is part of his notion of *méconnaissance*, urges a new method of social analysis. This all-pervasive principle implies that the prophetic way of the Judeo-Christian tradition – unmasking the basic lie about God preferring sacrifices over justice – actually confirms Isaiah writing that His thoughts are different from human thoughts (Is 55:8). At the same time, Girard regularly explicated that even the most enlightened Christian institutions, like all religious systems, is bound to use mythic procedures and texts. This means that, albeit less explicitly, he also concedes that all religions must be presumed to embody some mechanism of giving heed to the hidden insight. As for the theology of interreligious relations, wrestling with Christian claims of exclusivism and the substitution of the Jew's election, this offers openness from his stand, notably to review the implications of the current reading of the Fall and its

redemption. If the Christian tradition built on the sacrificial redemption has actually served to let the sense of each person's individual value emerge, it means that any disdain of the unbelieving other comes in for critique, even though it seemed an integral part of that tradition and its missionary drive to make oneself the model the 'other' should emulate. Although Girard's censure of the sacrificial theory of salvation may clearly not be enough to unnerve the Western habit of posing as the model for 'others', we shall investigate how even this habit may be redeemed.^{xi}

A comparable issue arises in the related area of gender parity. Above we have noted that the religious forms Western Christianity developed to let society cope with the emergence the autonomous ego received a distinct edge in the realm of sexual rulings. These were arguably meant to help society deal with the novel position of women as subjects of divine grace and as autonomous agents in nuptial bonds. Feminist authors have justly criticized these forms that often referred to Eve's guilt in the Eden-myth. They argue that women have been presented as the prime (sinful) 'other' due to a biased use of the ambiguous Paulinian texts in Romans and the first letter to Titus. But the two-edged approach Girard initiated may help us grasp the factual growth of gender parity that relied on an alternative, prophetic reading of the Fall. For that to become visible we need to grasp the dramatic side of this process both in the case of gender parity and the birth of the individual.

In Europe's history, the upshot of the salvation dogma's definition in terms of vertical rivalry and of (dis)obeying the Almighty's commands has indeed been most dramatic. Controversies over the priority of the spiritual have been rife. The cleric's sacramental mediation of penance has provoked an ever-fiercer resistance, leading to the various attempts of reform and even to prolonged religious wars. When the Westphalian peace deal of 1648 agreed to rather submit the spiritual to the political, the imagery of Eden's drama turned a quip for self-certain regimes to bolster their appeal by hyping up public's *desirabilia* and mocking the deity as a distant rival. It effectively led to the Hegelian State's hubris, claiming divine rights, whether or not on grounds of an electoral mandate, and to the focus on capital growth as proof of their transcendental predestination with imperial rights on global scale. Nietzsche's brilliance pointedly exposed this sham, which deepened the *ressentiment* of subordinates within Europe's specious hegemonies and let the Eden verdict bring males to a hypocritical lip-service to the eternal feminine.^{xii}

At the dawn of a century of total wars, amidst anxious soul-searching over the decline

of the West (Spengler), while the political influence strove for ever more cultural globalization, Nietzsche's sarcasm could not but urge a review of the two medieval innovations, which a faulty reading of the Fall and its salvation had all but robbed of their true contents. Irrespective of its bogus effects, Anselm's notion of the sacrificial redemption had expressed God's pity of any individual's plight as a victim of satanic tricks; as such, it had applied explicitly to the ousted 'other', and notably to women, whose enfranchisement by the nuptial code still suffered a severe backlash. But in line with the Girardian notion of *méconnaissance*, the claim of these pages has been that this relied on an insight in the true prophetic base of the Eden story that was blurred when the serpent's reading was followed and the vertical relation of obedience to God's design was placed at the center. It argues that the Bible's prophetic voice sounded eloquently at that initial stage to show God as the caring Father who warned Adam against the deadly effects of that tool of rivalry which is the judgmental knowledge of good and evil.

In other words, here, it is argued that recognition of the individual, gender parity, and eventually also the concern for the stranger have grown due to an insight that opposed the religious forms that apparently upheld a contrary vision. Girard's theory thus helps us grasp how scapegoating the divine as a rival has favored the rise of the Western subject, and how stringent moral rules, meant to hem in sexual individuation that was likely to cause anxieties, actually shaped the conditions that allowed respect of gender parity to grow.^{xiii}

While various contributions from the Innsbruck conference analyze in detail the victimization of the 'other' due to this vertical rivalry with the divine, I wish to consider a historical voice that sought a mediation not only by tackling the basic flaw underneath that explosive ambiance of rivalry with an allegedly vindictive divinity, but also by integrating the above prophetic alternative into a rational system that took account of the latest scientific findings in worldwide perspective. Without pretending to capture and recount his huge output, which is still partly unpublished, I shall look at Leibniz' far-sighted perspective that may arguably count as a remote source of Girard's own conversion, even though he rather seems to offer a vision that opposes the latter's mimetic theory when describing reality as made up of units, called monads, 'without windows'.^{xiv}

A monadic perspective on positive mimetism

In 1642, as the war over the dogmas of sin and redemption wreaked its worst havoc, there was born a scholar who, in keeping with his first name Gottfried (God's peace), devoted himself to a diplomatic life seeking to remedy Christianity's rifts. Summing up insights that had grown since his earliest law studies and rejecting the image of the menacing divine Lord, his old age's theodicy – literally a justification of God – sets out with a denial that man's original sin might force God to damn unbaptized infants. This metaphysical study, however, was no more an academic discourse than were his responses to Descartes' dualism or Spinoza's monism, which he deemed to uphold that debilitating imagery of the Absolute. On purely rational grounds he sought to combat this imagery that had plunged Europe into an abysmal chaos, while he defended the Trinitarian faith against the Socian Unitarianism. His learned exploits in all areas, from law and math to mechanics and philosophy, pivoted on the issue of man's relation to the Ultimate, much in line with Cusanus' neo-Platonism of pondering a supreme *coincidentia oppositorum*. Convinced of reality's ultimate interrelation, yet refusing Spinoza's monism, he adopted the idea of spiritual monads as units that, albeit in a limited way and even in rivalry with one another, shared in God's universal knowledge and unique will to shape reality as the best of all possible worlds. As competitive monads that need no windows because, in Heidegger's words, they share in God's universal insight, all individuals are preformationed in the sense that they also partake in the insights and choices of each other. This actually means that all persons partake in Adam's option for a discriminatory logic, which, counter to God's warning, he applied against the prime 'other', disowning his mate.^{xv}

This monadic theory, while yet retaining the notions of guilt and salvation, offered Leibniz an apt reply to the lie of God as the divine rival that caused the mentioned anxiety and hubris. It has us view redemption from the original sin and its transmission in line with the Paulinian and Augustinian approach that, as stated in Eph 2:14, God reconciled with mankind in Jesus who in the flesh broke down Adam's walls of rivaling enmity. Although Paul primarily refers to the rivalry between Jewish claims and the non-circumcised, Christ's action “in his own flesh” evidently concerns all discriminatory walls, starting with the one initiated in Eden's story, namely the gender divide in which all differentiation originated.^{xvi}

Leibniz' vision of the bond between the monads, especially between the human and the divine, is too complex to be briefly summarized here, but it is important to note

that it sees them as free agents that are able to choose due to knowledge of each other. In human terms this means either to opt for one bond with the first or with the second Adam. In other words, either a refusal to heed God's warning against discriminatory powers or to break down the judgmental walls.

While scientific methods grew ever more empiricist, shunning the questions on metaphysical truth, in rivalry with the Transcendent, and as Adam's drive for supremacy in social matters was fiercely stirred up, Leibniz' monadism intimated the alternative of a preformationed sharing in Christ's solidarity with the ousted 'other'. This implies a radically different rapport to the divine, in which rivalry with both the 'Other above' and the 'other nearby' dissipates and the satanic reading of the Eden challenge is in fact reversed.

Applying Girard's anti-discriminatory understanding of the Bible's core prophetic message to its very beginnings, we may follow Leibniz' lead and discern a Trinitarian analogy between God's action and the human monadic sharing in it. Genesis opens with God's creative gesture, described in terms of separations or the establishment of distinctions. Similarly, any human creative act and any cognitive thought necessarily establish some differentiation, and therefore discrimination. A carpenter cutting wood to shape a table has chips falling by the side and tells people to sit *at* it, and not *on* it. But sitting on it is very well possible, and the discarded chips are of the same essence as the table's wood. All creative acts, therefore, both artisan and linguistic, consist in discarding aspects that are devalued. But the Bible's prophetic line connects God's creative act to the equally basic redemptive choice of undoing all discriminatory views on the ousted reality. Warning not to touch the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in fact, envisages this second determination. After enabling Adam to co-create reality, God warns against discrimination and calls for solidarity.

In Trinitarian terms this presents God as the spiritual unity of both creating and a radical solidarity with the ousted reality. The Father of all being, and the kenotic Son, who descends into hell to save the victims of life's discriminatory forces are in union. The Spirit uniting the two sides and proceeding from the two, is named Paraclete, a term that Girard reads as the advocate siding with the victim. But more specifically it may be taken in line with Augustine, who is admired by Leibniz and Girard alike, as he instructs his monks in a particular version of what may be called positive mimesis. For, having recognized the ravages of mimetic desire in his early life, Augustine comments on Paul's letter to the Galatians as he formulated a guiding rule of spiritual

leadership in Peter's style. Like the chosen prelate that he himself was soon going to be, each monk was to live as a model, accepting to be imitated, but only in total devotion to the other's glory, rather than to his own.^{xvii}

Thus, an inner oscillation is to enable the human monad to outdo all hostility by a positive mimesis and have the opposites coalesce. Leibniz' theodicy hinges on this Augustinian view of the mind's preformed share in God's triple act of: creating distinct entities, yet showing solidarity with the ousted, and harmonizing this in a Trinitarian way of mutual self-giving. Via a mediating metaphysics that shuns mystic claims, Leibniz thus tried to salvage the two gains of medieval Christianity that had gone sour due to the serpent's deceptive presentation of God as man's supreme rival. Girard's mimetic theory may also help redress that flaw by taking the knowledge of good and evil for what it truly is: a tool of discrimination that God warned mankind against, but which came to scaffold gender rivalry and a heterophobic drive to prove ego's superiority over the other in the Almighty's eyes. The nakedly crucified male, giving himself in *kenosis* as food to eat, came to undo this in his flesh, thus enacting a word hidden since the origin.

The ordained prelate is to follow Augustine's lead, who reluctantly took on the office of spearheading the faithful's union with him who, bearing the pains of the mimetic rivalry, embodied the triple sharing in the divine creative and caring nature in offering himself for mimesis. He is to love the ego's monad, its conatus, and invest in its depth so as to invert its vertical rivalry and serve the 'other' beyond any heterophobia, any aversion of the 'other', in the common procreation of harmony.^{xviii} In its Trinitarian denotation, this joins Girard's concept of *méconnaissance* and the conviction that anyone deep down acknowledges the personal value of whom he or she rivals with. Giving grace for the mimetic force that allows the other to benefit from my own creative exploits is the positive mimetism of the Spirit that enlivened the mother of him, who took the sham of rivalry to the cross and inverted the serpent's deceit. The faithful at the ordination justly wondered which form this might take in a future Christianity and its impact on the present worldwide mimesis.

ⁱ Theories that derive *religio* from *re-ligare* overlook the linguistic rule that Latin verbs of 1st conjugation and their derivatives always retain the root *a* (as in *ligamen*). Underlying them is an ideological trend to highlight a link with the divine. That etymology was favored by the Church Fathers

such as Tertullian, whereas Cicero had pointed to *relegere*. We shall study the dangers involved in that theory, and relate *re-legere* (re-reading) to the basic ambiguity Girard noted. He recognized religion as the violent means to avoid total violence. Thereby he advocates what I have called a *schismanalysis*: a method of reading religious facts from opposite angles. An example of how religion may oppose the social set-up that itself causes to emerge we find in Max Weber's classic study of Calvinism's ideals of modesty, inner-worldly ascetics and work ethics fostering a massive capital accumulation and growth of wealth.

ii Heterophobia is more than xenophobia. It implies fear of sexual difference, but only to the extent that the notion of the other has arisen within the novel condition when life's non-sexual procreation by mere cell-division changed to a sexualized order with divided roles, where organisms depend on a differentiated other for their self-perpetuation. This brought anxious tensions, rivalry, and hetero-phobia: fear of the 'other'. Although the females had an obvious priority, males have come to dominate among most mammals. In human society the idea of 'otherness' has adopted a much wider sense, while also referring to the sexual tensions.

iii Amidst the soul-searching over the Christian role in the Shoah-catastrophe rabbinic studies and the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas on the notion of the 'other' were widely welcomed. I specifically note the Innsbruck PhD-study by Ulrike Greiner, who reflects on both Levinas and Girard in an effort to frame a new religious pedagogy that relates the love of the Absolute Other to that of society's victimized 'other', See: Ulrike Greiner, *Der Spur des Anderen folgen?: Religionspädagogik zwischen Theologie und Humanwissenschaften*. (Münster 2000).

iv Long before Galileo, Cusanus proclaimed the heliocentric vision without getting into the same problems, due to his different political stand. The monk George Mendel could apply the same intellectual rigor as Darwin, without experiencing anxieties over incurring the divine wrath in speaking of the evolution of species. As for Kant's focus on the subject, following the Cartesian *Cogito*, he clearly meant to sideline the role of metaphysics. See the recent study by Béatrice Longuenesse, *I, Me, Mine: Back to Kant and Back Again*. (Oxford, 2017).

v See Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn, Rethinking Modernity with Nicholas of Cusa*, (Cambridge U.K. 2013) and Idem, 'The Visibility of the Invisible. From Nicholas of Cusa to Late-Modernity and Beyond', in: *Heythrop College Publication*, (and on line: http://publications.heythrop.ac.uk/2168/1/The_Visibility_of_the_Invisible.pdf accessed August 1, 2019). The postmodern effects of the infatuation with the virtual reality and social media have been the object of numerous anthropological analyses. Beside the groundbreaking work by Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virillo's, we note especially Marc Augé's, *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. (London 2009, original title *Non-Lieux*, Paris 1992).

vi The two rivaling Iberian empires beefed up their claims by their missionary efforts, which Rome eventually honored on January 24th 1506 as a referee in their disputes. After their own Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 had failed, Rome drew a demarcation line between their sphere of influence. In those days, the Epiphany imagery of the *Adoration of the Magi*, was a favorite pictorial theme that stressed the need for all humans to come to Christ. The three gifts quoted in Matthew's gospel (Mt 2:11) have been recognized, following George Dumézil's studies on the Indo-European tripartite mental frame, as an expression of the three domains (spiritual, political, economic), but also of the three ages in people's life and in the history of the Gospel's acceptance, with Africa featuring as the youngest, after Asia and Europe.

vii See Jean Delumeau: *Le Péché et la peur: La Culpabilisation en Occident (XIII-XVIII siècles)* Paris 1983 and *L'Aveu et le Pardon Les difficultés de la confession. (XIII-XVIII siècles)*, Paris 1990. In over thirty well-documented studies, Delumeau depicts the ambivalent moral scenery in Europe, which Nietzsche has analyzed as the effect of *ressentiment*, but which played a crucial role in the growth of individual awareness. See Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Mass., 1989. Note that in the same year 1506, Julius II not only divided the globe into two by the Spanish-Portuguese demarcation line, but also launched the operation to build St. Peter's basilica, for which sales of indulgences were organized via the confessionals, eventually provoking Luther's reformation. To exemplify individuals rising from very humble origins to a high status one might think of Johann Burchard, the chronicler of the Renaissance, having come from the Alsace to

become papal Master of Ceremonies and reporter of the Vatican in this period.

viii Nathan O'Halloran in *Contagion* (2018 Vol. 25 p. 27-48) and in *The Heythrop Journal* of 2014 has applied Girard's views to the issue of original sin. Following Reuven Kimelmans, he puts much emphasis on Eve's succumbing to the serpent's fallacy. But to blame her, rather than the subsequent misreading of the Torah as a set of laws and interdictions, succumbs to the same age-old discrimination. Of course, to identify the Torah with the Law rather than with the prophetic critique has old credentials. The Pentateuch translated the Torah mostly by the Greek *nomos*, whose tradition was readily introduced into Christianity by the Pharisee Paul, even though he ranked it lower than the faith in Christ. (See Gutbrod in G. Kittel *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, 1942 Band IV 1016 ff).

ix Max Scheler not only criticised the formalism of Kant's categorical imperative, but also modified the Nietzschean notion of *ressentiment*. The enlightening *Ressentiment. Reflections on Mimetic Desire and Society* (East Lansing 2015) by Stefano Tomelleri rightly notes that Scheler differs from Nietzsche, since he blames the bourgeois mentality rather than Judeo-Christian attitudes for it. But if we accept that Nietzsche's famed aphorism 125 on the God-murder implies his approval of the Crucified's authentic message, i.e. the resistance to a submissive act of faith in vertical rivalry with God, their position seems consistent and urges a review of the starting point of the salvation drama.

x Even though it abandoned the sacramental confession and matrimony, the Reformation reinforced rather than weakened both the faithful's mental dependence on the Crucified's saving grace and the novel marital form of monogamy. While the status of the humanist ego has declined in the postmodern setting and the call for non-heterosexual marriages has gained impetus, the "amazing grace" of Christ's self-giving, "shedding his blood for my wretched soul" remains an imagery that strikes a chord worldwide. It suggests, therefore, that another reading of the Christian salvation is gaining ground.

xi Despite his rejection of a sacrificial reading of the Cross, Girard still holds on to the idea of the link to the divine that tends to make the believer pose as a model, who has risen above the realm of sin. His rehabilitation of the idea of self-sacrifice in the Innsbruck contributions to the mimetic theory called 'Mimetic theory and theology' may be read in this sense (in: Joseph Niewiadomski and Wolfgang Palaver [Hg.], *Vom Fluch und Segen der Sündböcke*, Innsbruck 1995, pp. 15-29). The question remains how the imitation of Christ's self-sacrifice can avoid suggesting a bonding to God that both degrades the unbelieving 'other' and inflames mimetic rivalry. The etymology of 'Opfer; offer', the Germanic equivalent of sacrifice, may shed light on Girard's reading of the Father's work that Jesus came to do (because it is likely related to the Latin *opus* rather than *offerre*).

xii Nietzsche's notorious misogyny has increasingly been viewed as a sarcastic comment on the fake glorification of female grandeur, notably in Wagner's music, which he came to detest as a sham of Christian ideals amidst the belligerent interstate rivalries, where humans rapidly lost any inner value as totalitarian regimes imitated the old divine privileges.

xiii Notwithstanding the numerous mystics fostering a loving relation to the heavenly Father, popular spirituality in and outside the Reformation remained gripped by fear of the awesome Judge heralded in the *Dies Irae* of the funeral liturgy. Although interpreters are right to point at the power relations behind the religious forms, an extra effort is needed to discern society's deeper goals and avoid simplistic conclusions.

xiv The German, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz wrote much in French and became an inspiring figure for opponents to the Cartesian type of positivism, such as Maine de Biran or Blondel. Anti-Sartrean forms in French phenomenology and evolutionary theorists like Bergson and Alfred North Whitehead in England with his school of Process Philosophy built largely on Leibniz' work. In French post-modernist circles Giles Deleuze's intriguing *Le Pli, Leibniz, et le Baroque* (Paris 1988) became influential. Leibniz himself got much interested in the Chinese Confucian traditions, via an intense correspondence with Jesuit missionaries; but we now also note a growing interest in his work among Muslim thinkers, both followers of the mystic Rumi and also champions of Muslim revivalism, such as Sir Muhammad Iqbal.

xv Preformationism is an old theory with roots in pre-Platonic philosophy, holding not only that a miniature form of the individual is present from its embryonic start, but even that this contains aspects of the preceding biological heritage. The theory received a new impetus in Leibniz' time through microscope technology that revealed how embryos go through phases reminiscent of previous species. These discoveries did not lead him to a deterministic view, but made him conclude that all monads take note of all other seminal forms in a creative, albeit selective urge. Thus his complex type of metaphysics, which obviously cannot be summarized here, seems to leave room for the principles of Girard's mimetic theory.

xvi When life's self- perpetuation was no more restricted to reduplication by cell division and cells became dependent on one another's contribution, a complex process of differentiation and rivalry set in. Then the female priority gradually became subject to male dominance for various reasons, such as the prolonged nurturing time that caused the need of male protection and involvement. Elsewhere I have argued that the biblical redemption needs to be envisaged in this context. Cf. my 'The gender of the Crucified' in *Verbum SVD* vol. 38 (1997) 3, p. 267-287 and "Me too, I am a memetic horror". On mimetic kenosis' in Magdalena Złocka-Dabrowska and Beata Gaj (eds), *Generative Anthropology and Transdisciplinary Inquiry: Religion, Science, Language & Culture*, Warsaw 2018, p. 134-157.

xvii Paul's letter to the Galatians is the sole biblical book that Augustine commented on in its entirety. Rather than treating it as a summary of Paul's doctrine on salvation by the faith rather than observance of the law, Augustine reads it as inspiration for his brother-monks, for whom he was formulating the monastic rule. His focus is on Peter who offers leadership, at the same time humbly admitting his weakness. See Eric Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, Oxford, 2003. This clearly is not what Nietzsche criticizes as "slave morality". Enrichment of one's own identity for the benefit of the other, who may profit by its effects, is a reply to postmodernism that Jean-Luc Marion terms the "excess of the self over itself" in his study of Augustine's *Confessions*, in: *Au lieu de soi*, Paris 2008.

xviii The notion of an ultimate 'other', subsuming and yet facing all reality, I encountered in the Banda traditions in the Central-African Republic (RCA), that I analysed in my *Peuple d'Autrui* (Brussels, 1976). Although they speak of this semi-personal ultimate as the indefinable 'it', there is neither a sanctuary nor a priest (or 'mother') for 'it'. A priest is called 'mother' following the Banda principle that all control and ownership is viewed as 'mother', or 'the feminine'. Despite their strictly patrilineal kinship system, they name a priest 'mother' to a healing deity, just as I am 'mother' of my bike, the smith is 'mother' of the 'house of fire', and the controlling big drum is 'mother' of the drum ensemble. (See my 'The Banda Infanta. On Gender's Unspeakable Truth' in *Studia Gdańska* 42 (2018) p. 189-206.) In religious exchanges this fact cannot be ignored by Christians reflecting on Gen. 2-3).