



René Girard and Philosophy: An Interview with Paul Dumouchel

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Abstract

What was René Girard's attitude towards philosophy? What philosophers influenced him? What stance did he take in the philosophical debates of his time? What are the philosophical questions raised by René Girard's anthropology? In this interview, Paul Dumouchel sheds light on these issues.

Keywords

Mimetic theory; Philosophy; Hannah Arendt; Gilles Deleuze; Jacques Derrida; Michel Foucault; René Girard; Martin Heidegger; Immanuel Kant; Thomas Kuhn; Emmanuel Levinas; Charles Sanders Peirce; Karl Popper; Plato; Jean-Paul Sartre.

René Girard's "complex" and "ambiguous" attitude towards philosophy

PJCv: In 2006, René Girard told Pierre-André Boutang and Benoît Chantre that he prefers to be considered as an anthropologist rather than as a philosopher. "Philosophy, he contends, is conceptuality at its most rarefied level, that is where words have the most and the least sense" (*"La philosophie c'est la conceptualité au niveau le plus rarefié, donc là où les mots ont le plus de sens et le moins de sens."*) While for philosophers words have "forty meanings, among ethnologists they still have only three." In the same interview, Girard acknowledges that his anthropology has philosophical implications. However, it seems that philosophy, due to the peculiar quality of its concepts, eventually should occupy a relatively secondary place. Have you had the opportunity to talk with René Girard about this topic? In your words, what was his general attitude towards philosophy?

PAUL DUMOUCHEL: As a matter of fact, René Girard's attitude towards philosophy is rather complex and ambiguous. As a young man, Girard was very interested in philosophy, especially in phenomenology and in Sartre whose importance is acknowledged in *Deceit*,

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Desire and the Novel (1961)¹. An annotated exemplar of *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*² which he bought and read shortly after its publication can be found in his personal library. Besides, he has a good knowledge of the works of Martin Heidegger and sometimes quotes Jacques Derrida. Generally speaking, Girard is interested in philosophy and reads the philosophers – at least some of them, because one can hardly find in his writings references to analytic philosophy which was dominant in the USA where he lived and spent his entire career. What he reproaches philosophy as he understands it, is that it remains at the conceptual level while he aims to make a work of empirical science speaking of the world as it is and as it has been; one should not forget that he was first trained as a historian. In other words, he thinks that many philosophers tend to forget the world in favor of concepts or ideas. That being said, he was fully aware of the importance of analyzing concepts in any scientific project. Eventually, Girard's attitude towards philosophy reflects the ordinary, still current (and in my opinion erroneous) conception according to which science and philosophy are two distinct domains.

But there is another reason for Girard's reluctance towards philosophy: ethics. He thinks that ethics remain in the continuity of the scapegoat mechanism, that no moral philosophy entirely succeeds in freeing itself from this legacy and, ultimately, that truth is religious. According to him, there is a convergence of the truth of Christian Revelation and of Science, a common truth that moral philosophy cannot reach.

PJCV: René Girard frequently stated that he was more interested in the topic of identity than in the seminal postmodern theme of difference. While this attitude summarizes several aspects of his theoretical approach and his methodology, it also seems to imply a peculiar philosophical standpoint. Girard wrote his earliest essays during a period where many French philosophers and intellectuals (e.g. Gilles Deleuze³, Michel Foucault, Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan, etc.) were looking for a non-rationalizable, non-objectifiable and irreducible *Difference* in order to bypass the Hegelian dialectic. It seems that Girard always regarded this project with a critical eye: this philosophical enterprise not only appears vain to him, but he also thinks that it omits pivotal issues of violence and romantic deceit. In 1982, you wrote a quite remarkable paper on the concepts of identity and difference in Girard's works⁴. According to you, what is novel in Girard's approach to these concepts? Could we say that his standpoint occupies a special status in modern French philosophy?

PAUL DUMOUCHEL: In 1979, Vincent Descombes published an essay on French modern philosophy⁵ which argued that the issue of the relation between identity and difference holds a central, if not *the* central, place in French intellectual discussions since the end of World War II. Obviously, Girard takes part in these discussions. He tries to situate himself with respect to people like Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan or Michel Foucault. The issue of difference and the debates it occasioned influenced him. What is novel about

¹ See René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1965), 105.

² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (2 vol. London: Verso Books, 2006).

³ See Girard's critique of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* in René Girard, *To double business bound: Essays on Literature, Mimesis and Anthropology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 84-120.

⁴ Paul Dumouchel, "Differences and Paradoxes: Reflections on Love and Violence in Girard's works", in *The Ambivalence of Scarcity and Other Essays* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 171-180.

⁵ Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

Girard's position? Answering this question actually leads us back to the previous one on Girard's relation to philosophy as a discipline. He is not interested in the question of the relation between identity and difference taken as abstract concepts, but in the historic dynamics of differences that he paradoxically conceives as being simultaneously real and illusory. Differences are real insofar as they structure the social order, insofar as they have historical and identifiable effects; they protect society against its own violence. Differences are illusory insofar as they are deceptive; they exist only through the belief that everyone grants them, they have no other foundation than the romantic deceit and are unstable, intended to be effaced by the mimetic rivalries which propel and exacerbate them prior to their destruction. If Girard is more interested in the theme of identity than in difference it is, one might say, because for him identity is the truth of difference. Each seeks to distinguish himself from the other and it is precisely in this process that all are alike. The concern does not lie in the relation between two concepts which, for an ultimately and inevitably metaphysical reason, would determine human life, but lies in the conflictual relations between people that give shape to the identity and difference game and command it. Girard's peculiarity is that, contrary to some of his contemporaries, he does not believe in differences. That is, he does not believe that they are real in the strong sense. Moreover, he does not believe that differences motivate conflicts, but rather that identity or – to be more specific, since identity is an abstract concept – the loss of differences (undifferentiation) is a historical, empirical and real phenomenon that can be described and documented.

Mimetic theory, Science and Epistemology

PJCV: This seems to lead us back to the – according to you, erroneous – opposition of science and philosophy. One might say that the opposition maintained by Girard is not as limpid in his writings. Indeed, his intellectual career starts with the critique of the metaphysics of identity and difference (*Deceit, Desire and the Novel, Resurrection from the Underground: Feodor Dostoyevsky*) and then continues in the field of anthropology (*Violence and the Sacred*). Should we rather say that, in the end, philosophical considerations guided this scientific project? Or, to put it otherwise, it is because Girard takes a position in the philosophical debates of his time that he became able to study cultural phenomena with a fresh look rather than the reverse?

PAUL DUMOUCHEL: My first reaction would simply be to answer “no”, but this is *my* reaction with respect to *my* own conception of the relationship between science and philosophy. It is conspicuous that from the beginning, there is a philosophical dimension in Girard's works. In *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, when he aims to describe the ultimate source of triangular desire, Girard mentions a “metaphysical desire”, a “desire to be” and the idea of a “deviated transcendence”. Thus, even if it is only sketched and never explicitly introduced, a philosophical background underlying his first essay. This philosophical background is reminiscent of Plato or, to quote a more contemporary example, of Levinas. Subsequently, when mimetic theory will, so to speak, be “naturalized” and mimesis will be introduced as a biological characteristic of the species, from then on when it comes to desire, Girard no longer mentions its metaphysical dimension. This is perhaps partially due to the fact that the hypothesis of the origin of the sacred in a self-regulating social mechanism of violence, while it does not completely rule out the idea of a metaphysical “desire to be”, nonetheless contradicts all theories that look for the origins of the sacred in something like a metaphysical desire. In fact, according to Girard, this blind mechanism is at the origin of the hominization process itself (see *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*). There is nothing but animal behaviour, a social mechanism and a natural selection

process needed to explain why we become what we became. This radical naturalistic standpoint will attract criticism from Girard's friend Cesáreo Bandera who, in his last book (*A Refuge of Lies*⁶), contends that, on the contrary, a transcendent dimension must have been present at the origin of humanity. That being said, this naturalisation of the mimetic theory actually is a philosophical standpoint in itself. That is why my first reaction was to answer “no”, since the way in which the question was phrased suggested an important distinction between science and philosophy – a distinction which Girard would have skillfully achieved because, whether consciously or not, his approach already entailed a philosophical position. On the contrary, it seems to me that every scientific project is always guided by philosophical considerations. The important aspect is not whether philosophical considerations are present or not, but to see if they are fruitful. Now, in my view, these considerations will be more fruitful on the plane of knowledge if they emerge during a research with an empirical dimension rather than stemming from a “pure philosophical reflection”, so to say. In other words, it is not philosophy that guides and directs scientific research, but the confrontation with what is real which, alone, can make philosophy reliable and trustworthy.

PJCV: Even if René Girard never mentions philosophers such as Charles Sanders Peirce or Peter Lipton, abduction (i.e., inference to the best explanation) often appears as a privileged method for vindicating his hypotheses. In your introduction to *The Ambivalence of Scarcity*, you state that the explanatory power and simplicity of the mimetic theory should be assessed through its ability to account for phenomena that do not fall within its initial field of application⁷. You also add that your work is part of what Thomas Kuhn called “normal science”. Could you please tell us more about these epistemological aspects?

PAUL DUMOUCHEL: While, to my knowledge, Girard never mentions Charles Sanders Pierce and the epistemological tradition related to him, it is true that in order to defend his fundamental hypothesis, he often introduces the idea of inference to the best explanation and explanatory power: the simplicity of a theory rests on its ability to explain more with less. Following the thoughts of Karl Popper, the more the theory is informative, the more its fundamental hypothesis is improbable. I have no idea of the extent of Girard's knowledge of these philosophers. However, one thing is certain: these are the epistemic criteria that, starting with *Violence and the Sacred*, Girard will put against his opponents. There is a strategic dimension in this position. When *Violence and the Sacred* is published, and especially afterwards with *Things Hidden*, he becomes criticized for showing a disproportionate ambition regarding his theories. Arguments against him state that it is impossible to have a general theory in human sciences and that complex phenomena require complex explanations. By invoking these epistemic criteria Girard replies “no”; the aim of science is to propose general theories and it progresses by discovering simple explanations of complex phenomena – a classic example of this approach is Charles Darwin's theory that unites an immense multitude of phenomena (all living beings) under a single hypothesis and which, despite its simplicity, accounts for the most complex facts⁸. In some sense, by invoking these epistemic criteria Girard pleads guilty to what he is accused of, but in doing

⁶ Cesáreo Bandera, *A Refuge of Lies: Reflections on Faith and Fiction* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013).

⁷ Paul Dumouchel, *The Ambivalence of Scarcity and Other Essays* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015), xxi.

⁸ For the epistemic parallel between Darwinism and Mimetic theory see René Girard, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origin of Culture* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2008).

so says to his opponents “If you accuse me it is because you do not really understand what a scientific approach is”. By defining my own works inspired by Girard as “normal science” in Kuhn’s sense, I accept and defend the idea that Girard’s approach is scientific, and I add that, in my view, Girard’s contribution pretty much resembles what Kuhn calls a paradigm. That is to say, a scientific achievement which is sufficiently exemplary to attract supporters, sufficiently specific to give research orientations and sufficiently open to allow those who adopt it to invent, create, innovate and to be original while remaining within the defined framework. I also believe, like Kuhn, that one cannot falsify a paradigm but that, in the long run, it will be shown as being fruitful or not. In my opinion, this is precisely the current situation of mimetic theory.

Philosophical considerations on the social and historical underpinnings of Girard’s anthropology

PJCV: Much of your work explores and supports one of the pivotal ideas of Girard’s mimetic theory, namely the slow but inevitable loss of our sacrificial foundations initiated by Christianity. However, you add that this historical process must be explained from a practical rather than a cognitive perspective: it is above all through the introduction of “a new moral ecology of human relations”⁹ – and not through the promotion of a new anthropological knowledge – that Christianity gradually undermines our possibilities to contain violence by means of violence. This hypothesis has interesting and multiple implications since it enables you to account for contemporary phenomena such as terrorism or genocidal violence ..

PAUL DUMOUCHEL: To me, the mimetic theory has always seemed to be marked by what one could describe as a void or a missing central piece. Indeed, the mimetic explanation “jumps”, so to speak, from segmented and stateless societies of the ancient world to the present. The whole history between these points of departure and arrival gains meaning through, as you said, the progressive loss of efficacy of sacrificial mechanisms. But this history is never analysed in detail. This “emptiness” or missing piece is not only a chronological, but also a theoretical matter. Because if Girard’s analyses of traditional societies and of the role and function of the mimetic mechanisms within them are correct, how could a society like ours where these institutions have disappeared be possible? And if one accepts Girard’s reading of the Christian revelation according to which it gradually undermines the efficacy of all the institutions resulting from scapegoat mechanisms, this issue is all the more worth raising. From my first essay, “The Ambivalence of Scarcity” (i.e. the second part of *L’enfer des choses*, the first essay in this book, “Le Signe et L’envie” was written by Jean-Pierre Dupuy), I tried to solve this difficulty. It is true that Girard, in *Violence and the Sacred*, already suggested an answer which is simply that the judicial system prevents the return of the mimetic crisis because it confiscates the right to private revenge. This answer is mainly correct, but it is also incomplete because it does not take into account the necessary conditions with respect to the establishment of a judicial system and because it overlooks another fundamental issue. If Girard is right, modern societies must also offer an escape from violence, but in the absence of sacrificial mechanisms, how do they succeed? Both in “The Ambivalence of Scarcity” and in *The Barren Sacrifice*¹⁰, I tried to describe the transformation of the moral ecology of human relationships that accounts for these

⁹ Paul Dumouchel, “Girard et le politique”, *Cités* 53 (2013): 29.

¹⁰ Paul Dumouchel, *The Barren Sacrifice: An Essay on Political Violence* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015).

historical changes and the ways in which modern societies deflect their violence towards “sacrificeable” victims.

That being said, you are right when you state that I distance myself from the role that Girard attaches to the emergence of a new anthropological knowledge. In fact, both in his analysis of violent phenomena and of literary texts, Girard places more importance on what agents do than on what they think they do – or what they believe the reasons of their actions to be. At the core of Girard's explanatory approach, there is the idea that agents are frequently mistaken about the reasons for their own actions, that very often they do not know what they are doing. Now, in the case of Christian revelation, he lays emphasis solely on what agents think or believe. That is, he stresses the cognitive or intellectual dimension of the Christian revelation. The reason why is probably that, for Girard, this revelation is absolutely true; it cannot deceive those who put their trust in it, contrary to what is the case with other agents' beliefs. In any case, from this intellectualist approach of revelation, two important consequences arise. First, this subjects Girard's theory to simplistic objections like: “It is not enough to tell the actors of a lynching mob that their victim is innocent to put an end to their violence.” The issue here is that the cause of their violence is not simply the fact that they have false information about their victim. The second consequence is that it exempts Girard from analysing the social conditions through which the Christian message becomes historically effective. But in the absence of such an analysis, it is impossible to understand how this anthropological transformation took place. The difference between those who believe and those who do not is all that is left.

For my part, I have sought to understand and analyse the effects of this slow loss of efficacy of the scapegoat mechanisms, which partly explains the birth of the modern state and modern economy, but also modern genocides and shows how all phenomena are linked.

PJCV: Through your approach, it is possible to observe the correlation between the transformation of solidarity links and the general effects of collective violence. In *The Barren Sacrifice*, you notice a progressive desacralization of both executioners and victims. On this occasion, you also add new philosophical insights on Hannah Arendt's notion of the “Banality of Evil”¹¹ or on the figure of the traitor in Jean-Paul Sartre's works¹². Could you expand on that a little bit?

PAUL DUMOUCHEL: It seems to me that one of the important aspects of Arendt's “banality of evil” thesis is what one might call the experience of the executioner's insignificance. Spontaneously and for all of us, it seems that those who commit horrific crimes have an extraordinarily wickedness or, put otherwise, that doing such things cannot happen to everyone and anyone. But when she goes to Jerusalem to attend Eichmann's trial as a journalist for the *New Yorker*, Arendt discovers that this man who is responsible for the deaths of millions of people is a banal and uninteresting human being, that this senior Nazi official is in fact a petty bureaucrat, jealous of his peers and solely interested in making a career. The idea of the banality of evil proceeds from this discovery of the tremendous disproportion between the criminal and his crime. It is a matter of a desacralization and, one might say, of a democratization of the executioner. Extraordinary crimes no longer are the prerogative of extraordinary beings, they are now accessible to everyone – which is, in my view, clearly illustrated by the recent terrorist attacks in Europe and elsewhere – but it also indicates that crime and violence nowadays fails to sacralize the executioner. I believe that

¹¹ Ibid., 15-23.

¹² Ibid., 91-95.

this desacralization of the executioner explains in large part the scandal generated by Arendt's notion. To say that the person responsible for the deaths of millions of Jews was a man of little interest who committed his crimes thoughtlessly, and almost without realizing it seems scandalous to us; it's an affront to the memory and honour of the victims. We want criminals to be equal to the crimes they commit, otherwise it seems to be a way of excusing them. In fact, by desacralizing the executioner Arendt deprives the crime of its meaning. To the question "what is the meaning of all this senseless violence?" Arendt precisely replies that there is no meaning and that is why the idea of the banality of evil caused scandal.

Arendt considers that "thoughtlessness" was characteristic of Eichmann and that would explain his failure to realize the monstrosity of the enterprise of which he was a central figure. I believe that this thoughtlessness reflects what I have called "indifference." This indifference should not be conceived as a psychological characteristic of certain agents, but as a social phenomenon resulting from the transformation of solidarity bonds. By detaching us from any particular obligation towards other agents, except those to which we are closely connected, the transformation of solidarity bonds implies a disinterest for the fate of others. We are thrown into a world where nothing exists but what Kant called imperfect obligations. When misfortune hits others, everyone wonders why it would be up to them to help them. We can regret what happens to others, but as long as we have no special obligation to help them, we can look away. This was what Eichmann was doing when he recalled that he had never killed anyone. The banality of evil also is this indifference which consists of statements like: "I organized train schedules, the rest was not my business." The banality of evil is the banality of the executioner who commits evil more out of indifference and disinterest for the fate of others than out of hatred. If this idea is uncomfortable and disturbing it is because it makes it impossible to imagine that there is a tremendous difference between us and the executioners.

The figure of the traitor in Sartre, at least as it appears in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, can be seen as a means to fight against this indifference engendered by the transformation of solidarity bonds. Sartre, however, does not conceive this indifference as a disinterest in the fate of other people fate, but rather as a weakening of the political commitment of the group members. According to Sartre, the collective murder of the traitor – whether he betrayed or simply is suspected of it (which means that, for Sartre, the issue of the guilt or innocence of the victim remained secondary) – restores the solidarity bond uniting the members of the group, a solidarity bond which is inseparable from enmity towards external enemies whose presence is recalled through the traitor's "violent sacrifice." In Sartre, the traitor is the figure of the internal enemy who is even more dangerous than the external enemy. But this is not a mere philosophical speculation since this figure, as I have tried to show, is to be found in both Stalinist purges and trials and at the heart of the genocide of the Khmer Rouge. The traitor is the ultimate figure of the sacrificial victim throughout the twentieth century; the victims of these sacrifices have become useless.

Philosophy, Ethics and the question of the sacred

PJCV: The 2nd of January 1987, René Girard addressed at letter to Raymund Schwager in which he somehow praises Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism. In this letter, he writes that he would like to "demonstrate that philosophy is a direct extension of the structures of the sacred." The textual mechanisms of philosophy, as he explains, appear analogous to "*sacrificial mechanisms*". The "absolute" of the philosophers would mainly rest on "the

exclusion of all that threatens" their "systems from within"¹³." What do you think of this remark?

PAUL DUMOUCHEL: In fact, I think that in this excerpt Girard mainly thinks of "Plato's Pharmacy"¹⁴ where Derrida shows that in Plato's text the notion of *pharmakon* taken as both remedy and poison plays the same role as the *pharmakos*, that is the victim of public sacrifice in ancient Greece. Moreover, in his analysis of Plato, Derrida always tends to assert that the structure he deconstructs is perpetuated throughout the history of philosophy. We are not obliged to take Derrida at his word. What is true of Plato may not be true of the whole history of philosophy ... I do not have Girard's text in front of me, but, at first glance, it seems to me that how one should understand this passage is not entirely clear. Should we see here an accusation against philosophy? Should we take this as another proof of a pivotal thesis of mimetic theory according to which all human institutions derive from the scapegoat mechanism? Or, should we identify here the idea that outside of the Christian revelation men never completely succeed to free themselves from the sacred and the sacrificial; this could be suggested by the context of a letter to Raymund Schwager. These interpretations are not mutually-exclusive, but depending on whether one insists on the first or the second, one will not attribute the same meaning to this remark.

In my case, I tend to favour the second interpretation. The fact that one can find traces of the sacred within philosophy is not surprising in itself. Should we see in it a condemnation of the whole philosophical enterprise? I do not think so. Was not Derrida a philosopher himself? I rather think that we must understand this excerpt as the condemnation of a certain way of making philosophy. Such a condemnation of philosophy by philosophy can be considered as a fundamental philosophical move since philosophy exists. That being said, the reference to the philosophical absolute in some form or another (being, nature, subject or man) shows what is Girard's target here. For him it's about reaffirming the idea that there is no other absolute than the sacred which is violence, or the God of Christian revelation which is love. Between the former and the latter, there is no other figure of the absolute. Should we say that the whole history of philosophy is reduced to the search for these two absolutes? I do not think so.

PJCV: At the beginning of this interview you mentioned that, for Girard, ethics "remains in the continuity of the scapegoat mechanism." Do you share this point of view? What, in your opinion, could be the place or function of moral philosophy within mimetic theory?

PAUL DUMOUCHEL: Do I share this viewpoint? To my knowledge, what Girard has always refused, is the idea of an independent source of moral authority, that is to say, a source which would neither be sacrificial nor Christian. So, it is not a rejection of moral reflection as such. Is this what I think? I do not know. Depending on how one interprets the Christian character of the theories in question, I think that for the West the thesis proves to be quite powerful. Whether it is in Plato, Aristotle or the in Stoics, I believe that

¹³ "I would like to demonstrate that philosophy is a direct extension of the structures of the sacred, and that its defense of the absolute (being, nature, the subject, man), can never guard itself from the internal disintegration of its own concepts [*la désagrégation interne de ses propres concepts*], except by the exclusion of all that threatens these systems from within." René Girard, Raymund Schwager, *Correspondence 1974-1991* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 158.

¹⁴ See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 61-172.

we remain in a universe significantly marked by the sacred, whereas in Kant we are in a Christian universe and with utilitarianism we return to the sacred or, at least, to the sacrificial world.

What is the place of moral philosophy within mimetic theory? It is clear that Girard's reflections are stimulated and even guided by very clear moral positions. To refuse sacrifice is to refuse that it would be better for one person to die if it meant the whole nation must be saved. This is a very strong and debatable moral position. To me, it seems that the issue is not so much about the place of moral philosophy within mimetic theory, but about the fact that this theory raises important moral questions. It raises important problems because, firstly, Girard adopts moral positions taken for granted and which are not necessarily justified and because, secondly, if we aim to find some support for these positions, it takes us back to the heart of mimetic theory, that is, to the scapegoat mechanism taken as the first foundation and origin of human moral behaviour. In other words, the question is not really "what is the place of moral philosophy within mimetic theory?", but "what are the consequences for moral philosophy of the hypothesis of a self-regulating mechanism of violence which is at the root of human culture?"

PJCV: There are currently a number of internal debates on mimetic theory. You already mentioned that the naturalization of the theory can be a matter of discussion. Moreover, in his recent essay on Jealousy, Jean-Pierre Dupuy put into question the universality of mimetic desire¹⁵. Some authors, such as Olivier Rey¹⁶ and Martha Reineke¹⁷, also propose new links between Girard's works and psychoanalysis. What is your standpoint regarding these debates?

PAUL DUMOUCHEL: I think that all these debates are *a priori* a good thing and tend to prove the vitality of mimetic theory. For my part, I am not convinced by Jean-Pierre Dupuy's thesis. I do not believe that jealousy is a more fundamental figure than mimicry, or that mimetic theory fails to account for it. That being said, even if I do not agree with him, I think that what Jean-Pierre writes is always intelligent and that you always learn something by reading him. This is why such debates seem important and useful to me. I do not know well Martha Reineke's or Olivier Rey's standpoints, but the idea of new links between mimetic theory and psychoanalysis does not surprise me. On the one hand, Girard's attitude towards Freud was rather complex. He severely criticized Freud, but also expressed great admiration for him. On the other hand, between the early 1970s - when Girard wrote *Violence and the Sacred* which contains two very critical chapters of Freud - and today psychoanalysis has changed a lot.

Translation from French by Andreas Wilmes

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¹⁵ Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *La Jalousie : une géométrie du désir* (Paris : Seuil, 2016).

¹⁶ Olivier Rey, "L'arrière-pays du désir", in *ibid.*, 145-176.

¹⁷ Martha J. Reineke, *Intimate Domain: Desire, Trauma, and Mimetic Theory* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014).

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