than the divine nature of Christ, an assumption that seems warranted by the evidence of his own writing. He writes as an anthropologist not a theologian.

Now what of the question of the relation of GIRARD’s thought to other world religions? Despite the direction in which his argument seems to lead, GOODHART does not want finally to say that Girardian thought is exclusively Jewish (albeit in an extended sense) any more than it is exclusively Christian. He states, on the contrary that “one can sustain a Girardian reading of the sacrificial and the mimetic, I submit, and remain a Christian, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Muslim, or a Jew.” Indeed, in consistency with his own experience, he would likely want to add that one can become a better Christian, Muslim, or Hindu through an approfondissement of faith inspired partly by GIRARD’s thought.

Perhaps the central theme of this book of essays is that mimetic theory is not an end in itself, but the doorway to an ethical vision and corresponding set of practices that are our only hope in an apocalyptic age. The author shows us that the way forward, which his own essays illustrate, lies in the cultivation of a “close, textual, literary, prophetic, anti-sacrificial reading” – not as an abstract intellectual activity, but as a form of prayer and of ethical practice. This will entail a turning, in the light of GIRARD’s thought, to the anti-sacrificial resources already there within the world religions. GOODHART insists, moreover, that this turning must entail a “translation” from the language of faith into the universal language of philosophy for the sake of communication in a religiously plural (and secular) age. In the light of GIRARD’s own affirmation, in Battling to the End, of the indispensable role of Greek reason in avoiding planetary violence, GOODHART’s proposal will appear especially timely to Girardians. His own choice of LEVINAS as “translator” of Hebrew and Girardian anti-sacrificial thinking seems entirely appropriate, and the two essays devoted especially to this thinker offer an exemplary demonstration of the benefits of an engagement of mimetic theory with philosophy. One can, moreover, think of other candidates for this role of translation, beginning with PLATO himself, whose thought can speak to Judaism (e.g. PHILO of Alexandria), Christianity (e.g. AUGUSTINE), Islam (e.g. Ibn Rushd, known also as AVERROES), and has clear affinities with the Hindu Vedanta. Not the least of the many achievements of Sandor GOODHART’S illuminating book is that it sets such an ambitious agenda for further exploration and development.

Bruce Ward

Moosbrugger, Mathias, Die Rehabilitierung des Opfers: Zum Dialog zwischen René Girard und Raymund Schwager um die Angemessenheit der Rede vom Opfer im christlichen Kontext. (Innsbrucker theologische Studien 88)

This book by Mathias MOOSBRUGGER won the 2013 Karl Rahner Prize for theological research. Uniquely situated as the cofounder of the Raymund Schwager Archive at the University of Innsbruck and the coordinator of the research project, “Raymund Schwager: Dramatic Theology,” the author covers an extraordinary breadth of relevant scholarly literature and has keen insight into the historical context of the thought-world of GIRARD and SCHWAGER. His fundamental methodology is werkgenetisch, a word difficult to translate succinctly into English. It means to follow the basic thought processes of the thinker’s career, focusing on whatever question or questions are unresolved in each stage of the career that form the problematic to be resolved at the next stage.

For GIRARD, the central concept of his first book, mimetic desire, was the function of the triangle of subject, mediator (or model), and object of desire that the great novelists he studied brought into such sharp relief in their great works. Although they did not have a critical, meta-literary category to name this dynamic structure of human interaction, they all reveal a stage ofnovelistic conversion in the life of some primary protagonist. Indeed, GIRARD ends this first work by connecting these conversions to the image in the Gospel of John of the grain of wheat that must fall into the ground and die before it bears fruit.

But the leitmotif of conversion and resurrection with which Deceit, Desire, and the Novel ends raises the question: How exactly does the force of mimetic desire work out in the history of individuals and societies? This is the generative question taken up in the next stage of GIRARD’s career, which is represented in the
master work, *Violence and the Sacred*. The answer is of course the *scapegoat mechanism*, the non-conscious working of mimesis through the process of imitation, conflict and rivalry, scandal, and collective violence. This monumental work covers a spectrum from the genesis of sacrifice, myth and ritual, the interpretations of FREUD and LEVI-STRAUSS, to the conclusion that all rituals are united in the concealment of violence through its immanent management in sacrificial rites. But as MOOSBRUGGER points out, this led GIRARD to an aporia with a twofold consequence: “The cultural-anthropological theory of sacrifice he developed stands … in no connection to his positively intended interpretation of the [Gospel] saying of the grain of wheat that dies in order to bear fruit” (183; all translations mine), which is the key metaphor capping his exposition of novelistic truth in 1961, and Girard became convinced that “any language of a positive or Christian sacrifice was to be rejected” (184).

In the next major work, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, which is set forth in the central part of a three-part work like the central tableau of a triptych, is GIRARD’s response to the human condition as depicted in *Violence and the Sacred*. His answer, however, presents another disconnect with his prior interpretation. That Jesus is the forgiving victim who exposes the victimary mechanism and takes away the sins of the world is affirmed, but how this could occur, given his previous conclusion concerning the all-determining power of the collective scapegoat mechanism, is not addressed. Yet he could not be comfortable with an act of God, a *deus ex machina*, that provides no space for human freedom. And how could he completely side-step the Gospel language of sacrifice and completely deny the validity of the letter to the Hebrews because of its sacrificial imagery? His understanding of sacrifice as developed in *Violence and the Sacred* seemed to leave him no other choice. Conceiving the death of Jesus as sacrificial could not fall within his purview. “Only the dialogue with Raymund Schwager, who was trying to achieve elucidation of this specifically Christian mode of thought, which in the Christian tradition had by no means been sufficiently clarified, would bring about a turning point” (129).

For many if not most of us, the most important new knowledge that MOOSBRUGGER brings to light is the contribution that SCHWAGER brings to the dialogue with GIRARD as a thinker in his own right. The Swiss theologian had already laid the groundwork for understanding and applying the mimetic scapegoat theory when he first encountered *Violence and the Sacred* in 1974, and he was prepared to modify it for the better in the pastoral and spiritual dimensions of his work. His first published work stemmed from his dissertation, *Das dramatische Kirchenverständnis bei Ignatius von Loyola* (Zürich/Einsiedeln/Köln, 1970). In focusing on IGNATIUS’s ecclesiology, which actually encompasses explicitly or implicitly all basic aspects of his theology, SCHWAGER offers an appreciative critique. He highlights IGNATIUS’s respect for tradition, including the imitation of saintly models, his emphasis on personal religious experience (which often seems to lack integration with the communal aspect of Christian life), and the basis of the Society of Jesus, the apostolate to produce “greater fruit” for God in the world. The Cross as the sacrifice of Christ for humans and personal self-sacrifice were important for him, and he energetically instructed individuals to internalize the saying of Jesus about the grain of wheat that must die. However, his point of view was typically fixed on externals and the quantitative dimension of “greater fruit.” “He could never completely harmonize his efforts for ‘greater fruit’ with the demand for Christian humility and finally with the foolishness of the Cross” (Schwager, *Kirchenverständnis*, 183, partially quoted on 178).

The famous Spiritual Exercises of IGNATIUS are important for understanding his ideas and assumptions about the individual’s relation to God; yet they “reflect …a juridically determined and persistently external relation to the church” (153). IGNATIUS was formerly a knight, and he viewed the church in a militaristic manner. Its commander in the world, the pope, was to be venerated, its discipline was necessarily strict. Likewise he viewed its mission in a more or less quantitative sense: the “greater fruit” of his apostolate meant winning new members, though he did not really try to relate this evangelization to the meaning of the Cross. He thus thought of the Christian apostolate as “a sacrifice in a military sense” (185).
SCHWAGER deeply appreciates the dynamic, “dramatic” quality of IGNATIUS’s understanding of the church, and in fact we see the beginning of SCHWAGER’s dramatic approach to salvation history, particularly the Gospels’ account of Jesus’s life, in this first book (cf. especially Schwager, Kirchenverständnis, 186 and Moosbrugger, 158-160 and nn. 48, 49). To understand IGNATIUS, SCHWAGER thought that the idea of drama best integrated the truth of divine revelation in history and subjective religious experience; it was the best existential mode to bring together reason, emotion, and the relative freedom of the human will. However, he sharply opposes IGNATIUS’s individualistic concept of the individual in relation to God and the church. Moreover, he is critical of IGNATIUS’s view of the church primarily in terms of its hierarchy and official representatives and numbers in the world. It is rather an assembly of communion whose members are called to live in light of the sacrifice of the Cross, but this can occur only in the context of a freedom that is not under the sway of collective powers, either societal or ecclesiastical. This concern for the freedom of faith led him to follow up on his dissertation with a closely related monograph, Jesus-Nachfolge. Woraus lebt der Glaube? (Freiburg i. Breisgau: Herder, 1973). This was a pastoral work in constructive theology that was widely discussed, reviewed, and eventually translated into French and Italian (185-186). In this short volume he placed sharply in question any kind of collective or militaristic logic of the relation of individuals to the whole.

Holding the revelation in Jesus as unique, SCHWAGER engages in an analysis of faith; but faith in the Christian sense, he argues, must begin with the faith of Christ. Summarily considered, he undertakes an analysis fidei Christi. Theologizing on the basis of the faith of Christ has many antecedents in the Christian tradition but has been largely neglected in more recent theology. For how can “God”—the Son of God—have faith given that he is the object of faith? From the standpoint of SCHWAGER, as also of Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, who influenced him, this objection is a misunderstanding of Jesus and the Trinity.

Jesus as human being manifests the way of faith, showing how humans can become liberated from imprisonment in the mechanisms of sociological processes. His self-consciousness integrated the awareness of being the Son of Man, that is, the human, and it was in this connection that he accepted his divine nature. (This is developed narratively in SCHWAGER’s Jesus of Nazareth: How He Understood His Life.) For understanding this way it is necessary to follow the Gospel narratives; therein the central act of faith is his self-offering, his Hingabe, on the Cross. Schwager thus emphasizes the freedom of Jesus, a freedom that his faith potentially mediates to all who encounter his offering of himself. “Jesus could even defeat the ‘anxiety in face of death,’ this ‘greatest enemy of freedom,’ in the power of [his] faith on the Cross and thus show ‘his special freedom’” (209, citing Schwager, Jesus-Nachfolge, 42, 43).

As for the initial correspondence between SCHWAGER and GIRARD, their first meeting, and the total course of their correspondence and friendship, much has been written about these topics, including articles in Contagion. Here I will restrict my comments to a few crucial highlights from MOOSBRUGGER’s study.

I have already noted GIRARD’s social-scientific interpretation of the sacred, including the all-pervasive reach and force of the scapegoat mechanism, which stands in tension with the tenor of his great work on the novel and led him to deny that the gospel message was one of “sacrifice.” For him the life and death of Jesus offered a revelation exposing and judging the victimary mechanism leading to scapegoating and sacrifice and it provided a divine model of compassion and forgiveness (the “good contagion” of which he speaks in Things Hidden). For SCHWAGER, as we have seen, his perspective on the meaning of Christ was centered on the faith of Jesus, whereby he freely gave himself over to death in obedient communion with the Father. He lived out the parabolic saying about the grain of wheat that must die in order to bear fruit. Thus there was a clear heuristic difference between GIRARD and SCHWAGER. GIRARD has often said and written that his approach is “scientific,” although its motor is commitment to the meaning and power of the biblical revelation. Therefore his point of view methodologically was that of the external observer. SCHWAGER’s approach is theologically and social-scientifically well informed (witness his Banished from Eden!), but its basic stance is...
that of the eyes of faith looking into the faith of Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2). He holds, as MOOSBRUGGER says, “that Jesus himself gave his death [the] meaning [of atonement],” and “that the significance of Jesus’s death on the Cross is to be inferred from the inner perspective of Jesus—out of his trusting faith in his Father even in the Passion—and not from outside” (250).

The exchange of messages ranges from 1974 to 1991. Basic differences appeared in the letters in the early years. One way to put the most basic difference was that GIRARD understood the unveiling of the collective violence stemming from the victimary mechanism as the center of Jesus’s proclamation, whereas SCHWAGER proceeded on the conviction that his self-consciousness of Sonship is the center of his words and deeds (cf. 293, n. 540.) But these differences and the later open disagreement over sacrifice did not induce SCHWAGER to denigrate or discredit GIRARD’s work. He discerned the importance of his anthropological breakthrough, he valued his friendship, and so he continued patiently to engage in dialogue. Likewise GIRARD, in his own way, held to the notion that they had a fundamental agreement that enfolded their particular “désaccord” within it.

Their controversy in the narrower sense broke into the open in 1978 when they both published major books. GIRARD’s Things Hidden came out a few weeks before SCHWAGER’s Brauchen wir einen Sündenbock? Schwager wrote Girard a letter on March 29, 1978, before he had even finished reading the book. He congratulates GIRARD, but he raises a number of important questions. He questions GIRARD for arguing that the crucifixion of Jesus is a source of knowledge. He states that most theologians will view it as a source of life. As we have seen, SCHWAGER would be one of these, for he sees the Cross as the salvific event whose source is Jesus’s obedient Sonship. He mildly reproves GIRARD for not mentioning the Holy Spirit, then returns to the Cross as source of life in that Jesus remains faithful to his Father in not wishing or calling for violence on his persecutors and the Father responds to their violence by sending the Holy Spirit.

SCHWAGER objects at length to his friend’s interpretation of the letter to the Hebrews, and this objection is all of a piece with his previous criticisms. He emphasizes the difference between the Old Testament sacrifices and the death of Jesus, points out that the primary positive significance of the Old Testament in Hebrews is the litany of great predecessors in faith, and states that the believer is one who bears persecution in imitation of Jesus. He is concerned that interpreters would use GIRARD’s position on sacrificial language in Hebrews to argue that GIRARD was wrong, as the whole New Testament should be construed sacrificially. In a later message of August 19, 1979, he distinguishes between collective violence in which a mob or a gang transfers its violence onto a victim and the victim who willingly offers himself for the sake of others. The latter is the sacrifice of Jesus and the authentic meaning of Christian sacrifice.

In a letter dated April 17, 1978 GIRARD responds to SCHWAGER’s letter of March 29. He concedes there is a “slight difference” (léger écart) between their respective proposals. To the central question that would engage them for another 13 years, he also concedes that perhaps he has been intransigent on the question, but goes on to say the main thing is to “perceive the abyss between the gospel perspective and that of the persecutors.” He also defends his position about the Cross as a source of knowledge as well as a source of life. Concerning the Spirit, he informs his friend that he concludes Things Hidden with a quotation of Ezekiel 37:1-10, although this reference to the Spirit does not represent a theme informing his whole view of the New Testament. In a later book, The Scapegoat, he has a chapter dealing with the Spirit as Paraclete or advocate in the Gospel of John. However, he does not mention the work of the Spirit as liberating victims internally through the influx of grace sparking the freedom given to every person, but as “the chief defender of all victims, the destroyer of every representation of persecution” (The Scapegoat, 207).

The constraints on the length of this review permit me to go no further. There is much more to say concerning the exchanges between SCHWAGER and GIRARD, who each maintained mutual respect and gratitude for the other’s friendship throughout their controversy. GIRARD eventually accepted his friend’s understanding
of sacrifice based on the *Hingabe*, the self-offering of Christ. He was also indebted to him for helping him to rethink the quandary of the overwhelming determinism of the sacrificial mechanism. Eventually both men “saw their concerns basically affirmed” (362). Whether GIRARD completely internalized and preserved the insights of his Innsbruck friend, who died in 2004, is a question that this book could not pursue.

MOOSBRUGGER’s work provides both extensive, often new information and rich insights. It is an outstanding volume of research and writing that should be a key work of reference for scholars concerned with the mimetic theory, especially in its theological ramifications, for a long time to come. It would be highly desirable to make it available in English translation.

James G. Williams


In *Phantom of the Ego*, Nidesh LAWTOO breathes new life into the study of mimesis and the modern subject with a rereading of several 19th and 20th century authors not necessarily known as mimetic theorists. If mimesis is that unconscious communication that spreads contagiously from one being to another, where do we now stand in our theorizing and discourse about the human “boundaries of individuation” in a post-Nietzschian, Girardian world? If, as NIETZSCHE suggested, there is a phantom “in our head” determining who we are, where does this phantom originate and what is its role in self-other communication? To what life-negating or life-generating properties does it contribute? LAWTOO uses these guiding questions and a reassessment of the pre-Freudian unconscious to uncover a structural framework for the modern identity.

Structural analyses of the modernist subject have not generally been a predominant focus for students of GIRARD’s mimetic theory. Since his work with OUGHOURLIAN and LEFORT on “interindividuality”—an intersubjectivity informed by mimesis, GIRARD himself, has generally avoided discussions of identity so as not to slip into a [Freudian] psychology of the subject. OUGHOURLIAN’s theorizing since then, informed by a historical rendering of “otherness,” has been aimed primarily at the acceptance of the mimetic primacy of the ego as the lynchpin of a mimetic psychotherapy. Eugene WEBB’s work toward a deeply relational “self-between” drew on several French thinkers including GIRARD and Jean-Pierre DUPUY, to give further constitution to this malleable, other-dependent self. Andrew O’SHEA has offered a serious critique of the modern subject by putting GIRARD in conversation with Charles TAYLOR. Still others operating out of the mimetic theory framework have wrestled with various aspects of the self-other, interior-exterior, origin-copy dichotomies of mimetic theory, but few have drilled down into these messy entanglements at the ontological level.

LAWTOO does so using the work of NIETZSCHE, CONRAD, LAWRENCE, and especially, BATAILLE, authors with extensive personal and familial histories of what he calls “mimetic sickness,” and brings unique sensitivity to an understanding of the individual in the midst of a “socius.” He further embarks on crowd psychology, contagion research, and hypnotic suggestion by pre-Freudian psychologists, like Pierre JANET, whose theoretical inclinations LAWTOO finds justified by current research in infant psychology.

As a scholar of comparative literature, LAWTOO bravely ventures into infant research to support philosophical and literary theorists who show that we come into the world with a psycho-physiological property awaiting mimetic stimulation from the other. Access to an-other’s psychic life, available due to “involuntary communicative reflexes … not under volitional control of consciousness,” offers our initial connection to the larger world of understanding. With this suggestion that consciousness or ego *follows* mimetic communication, LAWTOO sees reason to question whether we are dealing with a “phantom of the ego” or more accurately, an “ego of the phantom.”

Much emphasis in this book is placed on subject formation or genesis of the self because LAWTOO, following BATAILLE, sees it as linked to our tendency toward mimetic contagion throughout life. The property or reflex present