



The Political Theology of René Girard

Professor: Michał Łuczewski

I. DESCRIPTION

René Girard is one of the most influential thinkers of our time. Over the years, in the course of developing and extending his theory, he came to recognize it as a powerful tool of Christian apologetics, which provoked his own conversion. As a consequence of his intellectual conversion he underwent a subsequent spiritual conversion and became an ardent follower of the Catholic Church. Purely secular mimetic theory has turned out to be – as Girard puts it – the anthropology of the cross.

Since his classic study, "Violence and the Sacred" (1972), Girard has explored the relation between violence and religion or – more broadly – the constitution of humanity. Whereas mythical religions put their violent roots behind a veil, Christianity, the only true religion, exposes the founding murders that constitute human culture. The goal of this seminar is a critical engagement with Girard's thought and an in-depth scrutiny of his political and theological insights. The strength and originality of his thought is best seen when it is juxtaposed against key papal encyclicals: *Fides et Ratio*, *Evangelium vitae* and *Redemptor hominis*.

II. CONTENTS

Session 1: The Anthropology of the Cross

- a. R. Girard, The Anthropology of the Cross
- b. *Redemptor hominis*

Session 2: Violence and Culture

- a. R. Girard, Triangular desire; Scapegoat
- b. *Evangelium vitae*

Session 3: The Violence of Myth and the Truth of the Bible

- a. R. Girard, Are the Gospels mythical?
- b. *Fides et ratio*

Session 4: Forgiveness and Atonement

- a. R. Girard, Violence and the Lamb Slain
- b. *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*

Session 5: The apocalyptic Enlightenment

- a. R. Girard, Nietzsche versus the Crucified, Christianity will be victorious
- b. Ecclesia in Europa

III. METHODOLOGY

Seminar discussion
Commentary of texts

IV. EVALUATION

Participation in the discussion
Final examination

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- John Paul II, Ecclesia in Europa
- John Paul II, Fides et ratio
- John Paul II, Evangelium vitae
- John Paul II, Redemptor hominis
- John Paul II, Reconciliatio et paenitentia
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Michał Łuczewski – deputy director of the Centre for Thought of John Paul II (Warsaw), assistant professor (Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw), visiting scholar at the Centre for Social Studies (Warsaw), Columbia University (NY, Fulbright) and the Institute for Human Sciences (Vienna), an editor-in-chief of a scholarly, "antidisciplinary" journal "Stan Rzeczy/State of Things" and an editor of "44/Forty and four. An Apocalyptic Magazine". He is co-/author of the following books: "Culture of remembrance in Poland and Germany" (2011), "Landscape value" (2011), "Eternal Nation. Pole and Catholic in the village of Żmiąca" (2012).