

Rene Girard's mimetic desire seen through the "Great Beast" of Simone Weil

Rene Girard's expansive comments apropos Simone Weil to a French journalist in 1987 give food for exploring intertwining of themes in the thought of Girard and Weil, whom he considered one of the greatest intellects of her time. I plan to expand those concepts of Weil that he admired: mimetic desire, reciprocal violence, collective victimization, Christ as the Truth, and *caritas*, while testing their limits, and suggest divergences of thought: on historical progress; disdain for the Old Testament, despite her Jewish ancestry; and the Revelation in respect to non-Christian societies.

In the concept of mimetic desire, Girard applauded Simone Weil's horror of the "Great Beast" mentality, which she found even in the Church. He praises her insights into Christ's parable of the adulterous woman for its mimetic group behavior but also for its implied concepts of punishment. The mimetic rivalry that holds primacy in her "The Iliad: A Poem of Force," impelling the Greeks and the Trojans to destroy each other, had a decisive influence on Girard.

Girard prized Simone Weil's "theory of the human condition," illuminated by the Gospels: Christ incarnates the Truth; to pursue the Truth implies always going toward Him. Loving God and loving the order of the world are one, and love of neighbor must govern social decisions. Weil selflessly spent her early activist energies on encouraging marginalized workers to improve their inhuman working conditions. Weil's concept of decreation has its model in Christ, i.e., He is the innocent, pure, victim, a model of selflessness, free consent to God's love, and total obedience. In the Bhagavad Gita, Weil found corroboration of her ideas for minimizing violence and its contagion.

The two principal Girard texts for my presentation will be: Violence and the Sacred, and Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre.

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