

SCAPEGOATS, KINGS AND SACRIFICE

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE IDEAS OF
RENÉ GIRARD**

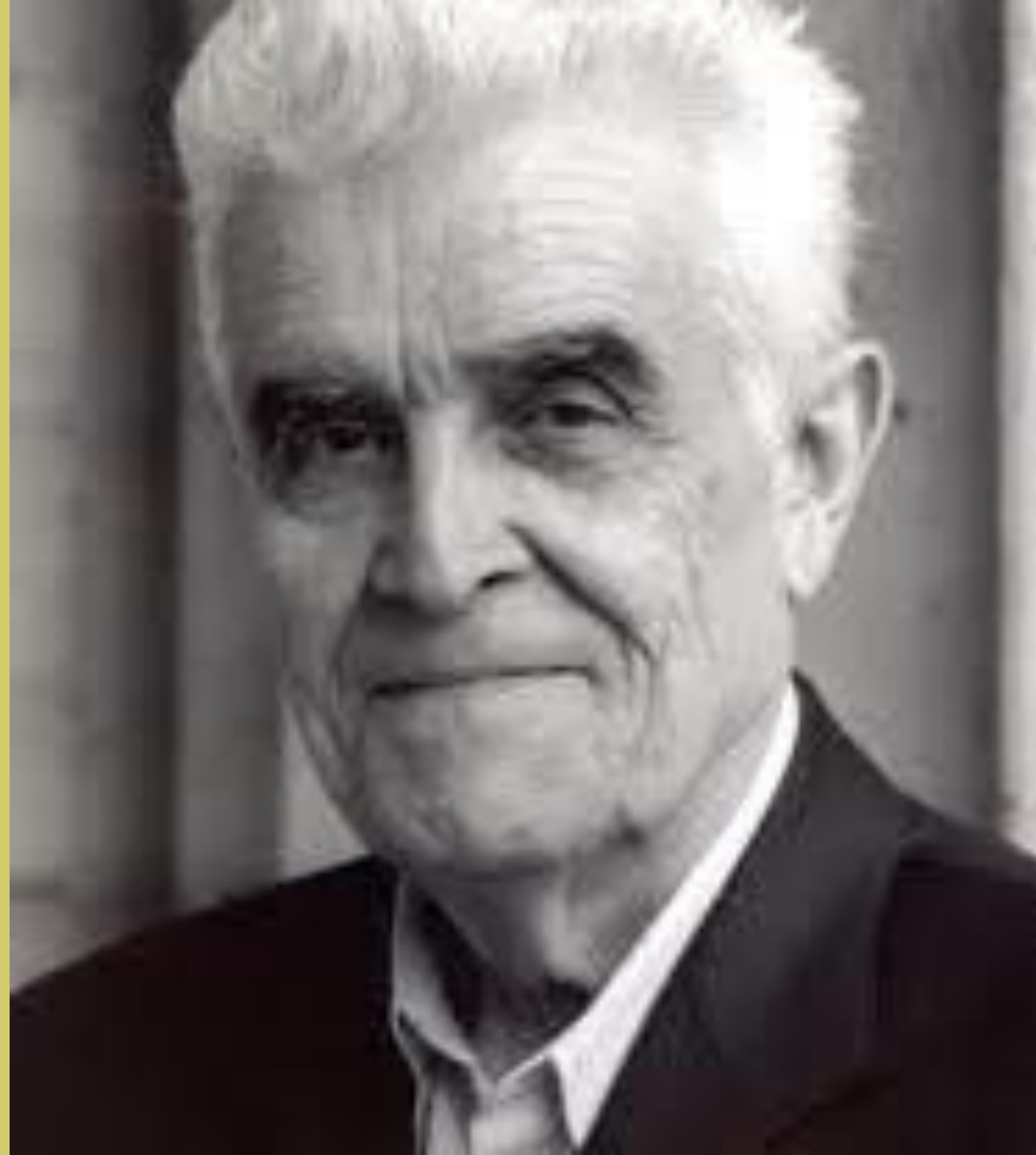
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Philosophy SIG London 3rd September 2019

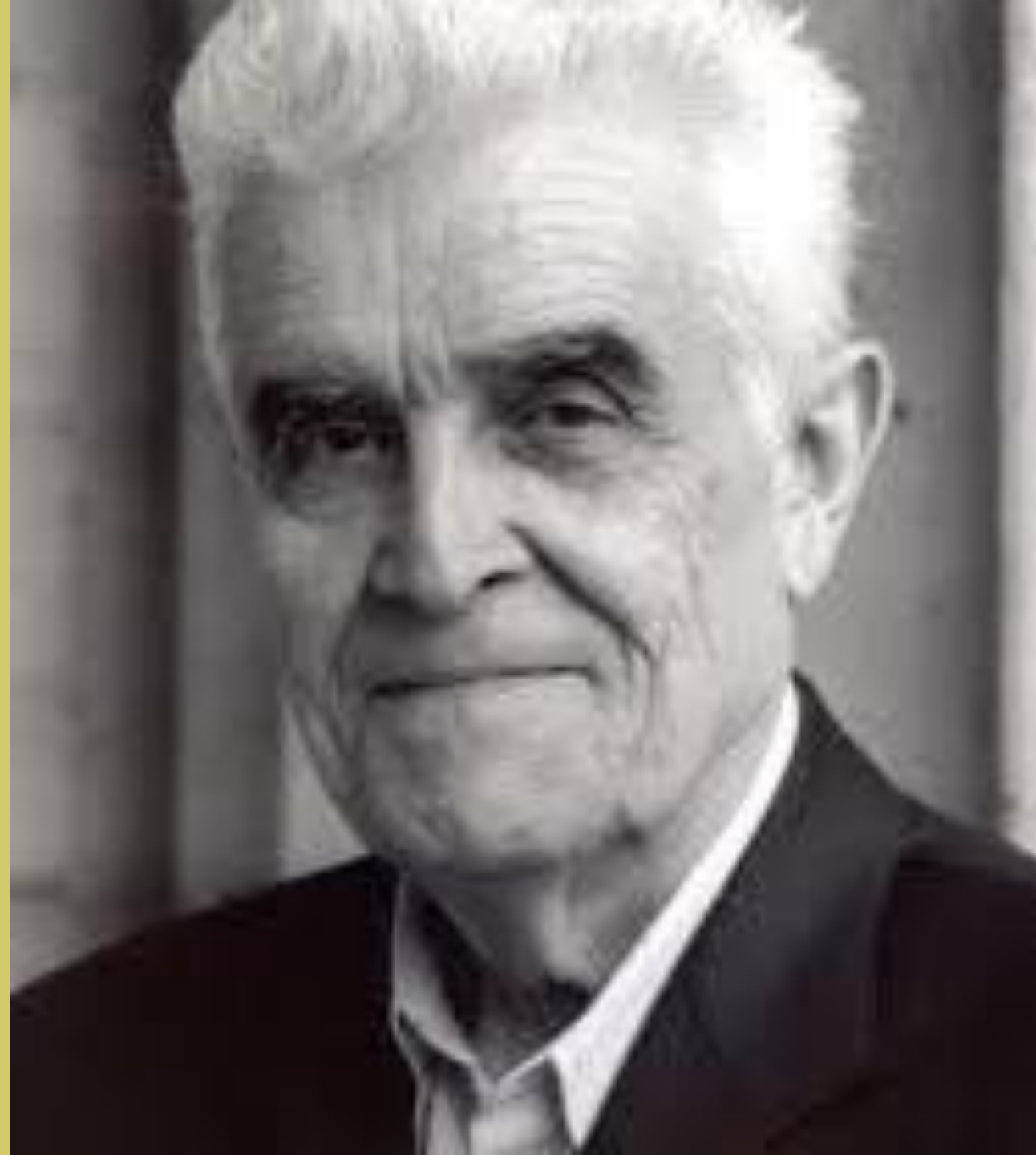
RENÉ GIRARD
1923 - 2015

**“THE DARWIN OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES”**

- Michel Serres



RENÉ GIRARD
1923 - 2015



RENÉ GIRARD (1923 - 2015)

- 1923 Born Avignon, France
- 1947 Graduated from Ecole des Chartres, Paris; Thesis; *“Private Life in Avignon in the second half of the XV century”*
- 1950 PhD in History from Indiana University, US; Thesis; *“American Opinion of France, 1940 – 1943”*
- 1950 Taught French Literature in US
- 1957 Professor of French Literature, John Hopkins University, Baltimore,
- 1966 International Symposium; *“The Languages of Criticism and the Science of Man”* Derrida, Lacan et al
- 1968 Professor of Literature, Buffalo, New York
- 1981 Professor of French Language, Literature and Civilisation, Stanford University, CA
- 2005 Received into the Académie Française

MAIN IDEAS

1. MIMESIS

2. RIVALRY & VIOLENCE

3. SCAPEGOAT MECHANISM



4. MODERNITY

MIMESIS

MEDIATOR

Mimetic Desire

SUBJECT

OBJECT

METAPHYSICAL DESIRE

CONTAGION

“GOOD” MIMESIS and “BAD” MIMESIS

RIVALRY AND VIOLENCE

“IMITATION CHANNELS NOT ONLY
KNOWLEDGE BUT ALSO VIOLENCE”

René Girard (EC) 2007

RIVALRY AND VIOLENCE

REVENGE (Tit for Tat Blood Feuds)

MIMETIC CRISIS

RIVALRY AND VIOLENCE

“Beyond a certain threshold of mimetic power, animal societies become impossible”

René Girard (TH) 1987

(“Beyond a certain threshold of cooperative reciprocity, social hierarchies become unstable”)

SCAPEGOAT MECHANISM

ALL AGAINST ALL



ALL AGAINST ONE



SCAPEGOAT MECHANISM

MISRECOGNITION & DOUBLE TRANSFERENCE

TRANSCENDENTAL SIGNIFIER

SACRED

MISSUNDERSTOOD

SCAPEGOAT MECHANISM and RELIGION; PREVENTION

MYTH

PROHIBITION

RITUAL

ANY CRISIS

*“THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD DO NOT INVENT THEIR GODS.
THEY DEIFY THEIR VICTIMS”*

René Girard (SF) 1999

SOME PRODUCTS OF THE SCAPEGOAT MECHANISM

FUNERARY PRACTICES

HUMAN SACRIFICE → OTHER SACRIFICE → GIFT GIVING → ECONOMICS

DOMESTICATION OF ANIMALS / AGRICULTURE

KINGSHIP

ALL CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

MODERNITY ?



TEXTS OF PERSECUTION



20th century

Rx;

SCAPEGOATS

INCREASE DOSE
AND REPEAT AS REQUIRED

CRITIQUE

HUMANITIES OR SCIENCE ?

SELECTIVE EXAMPLES - LACKS SCIENTIFIC RIGOUR

GRAND THEORY OF EVERYTHING

APOCALYPTIC PREDICTIONS

POTENTIAL APPLICATION TO PSYCHIATRY AND POLITICS

INTERDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

PERSONAL AUTONOMY

SCAPEGOATS KINGS AND SACRIFICE (The Scapegoat in Politics)

SCAPEGOAT IN PSYCHIATRY

SCAPEGOAT IN PSYCHIATRY



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Medical Hypotheses

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Mimetic Theory and the evolutionary paradox of schizophrenia: The archetypal scapegoat hypothesis



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ABSTRACT

Schizophrenia poses an evolutionary paradox, being genetically mediated yet associated with reduced fecundity. Numerous hypotheses have attempted to address this, but few describe how the schizophrenic phenotype itself might constitute an evolutionary adaptation. This paper draws on René Girard's theory on human origins, which claims that humans evolved a tendency to mimic both the desires and the behaviours of each other (mimetic theory). This would have promoted social cohesion and co-operation, but at the cost of intra-group rivalry and conflict. The mimetic dynamic would have escalated such conflicts into reciprocal internecine violence, threatening the survival of the entire group. Girard theorised that the "scapegoat mechanism" emerged, by which means such violence was curtailed by the unanimity of "all against one", thus allowing the mimetic impulse to safely evolve further, making language and complex social behaviours possible. Whereas scapegoating may have emerged in the entire population, and any member of a community could be scapegoated if necessary, this paper proposes that the scapegoat

GRIVOIS, H. (1999). ADOLESCENCE, INDIFFERENTIATION, AND THE ONSET OF PSYCHOSIS. *CONTAGION: JOURNAL OF VIOLENCE, MIMESIS, AND CULTURE*, 6(1), 104-121.

ADOLESCENCE, INDIFFERENTIATION, AND THE ONSET OF PSYCHOSIS

Henri Grivois
Hôtel-Dieu, Paris

The onset of psychosis happens, by definition, only once. The first psychotic episode is unforeseeable and risks being overlooked. Left to itself its future is uncertain, and the prognosis is potentially unfavorable. The variety of its manifestations as well as its thymic and cognitive instability explains why so little is written on this subject. The psychiatric literature, by its almost exclusive reference to evolved psychoses, has not distinguished the qualities peculiar to the onset of psychosis (nascent psychosis). Yet recent research reflects an interest in early diagnosis of psychosis to secure qualitative improvements and the chance of a favorable outcome for patients.

A Special approach must be used for patients during the stage of nascent psychosis. Something must be done, but early treatment is not enough. Psychotropic medication has no more than a sedative effect and there are few specifics at this stage (Swain 175). Further, one risks obliterating the patient's lived experience. The entire battery of interventions, above all the first consultations, must follow from a rigorously organized and intensive strategy to directly engage with this subjective experience. For many years

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The social utility of community treatment orders: Applying Girard's mimetic theory to community-based mandated mental health care

[Fiona Jager RN, PhD](#)

[Amélie Perron RN, PhD](#)

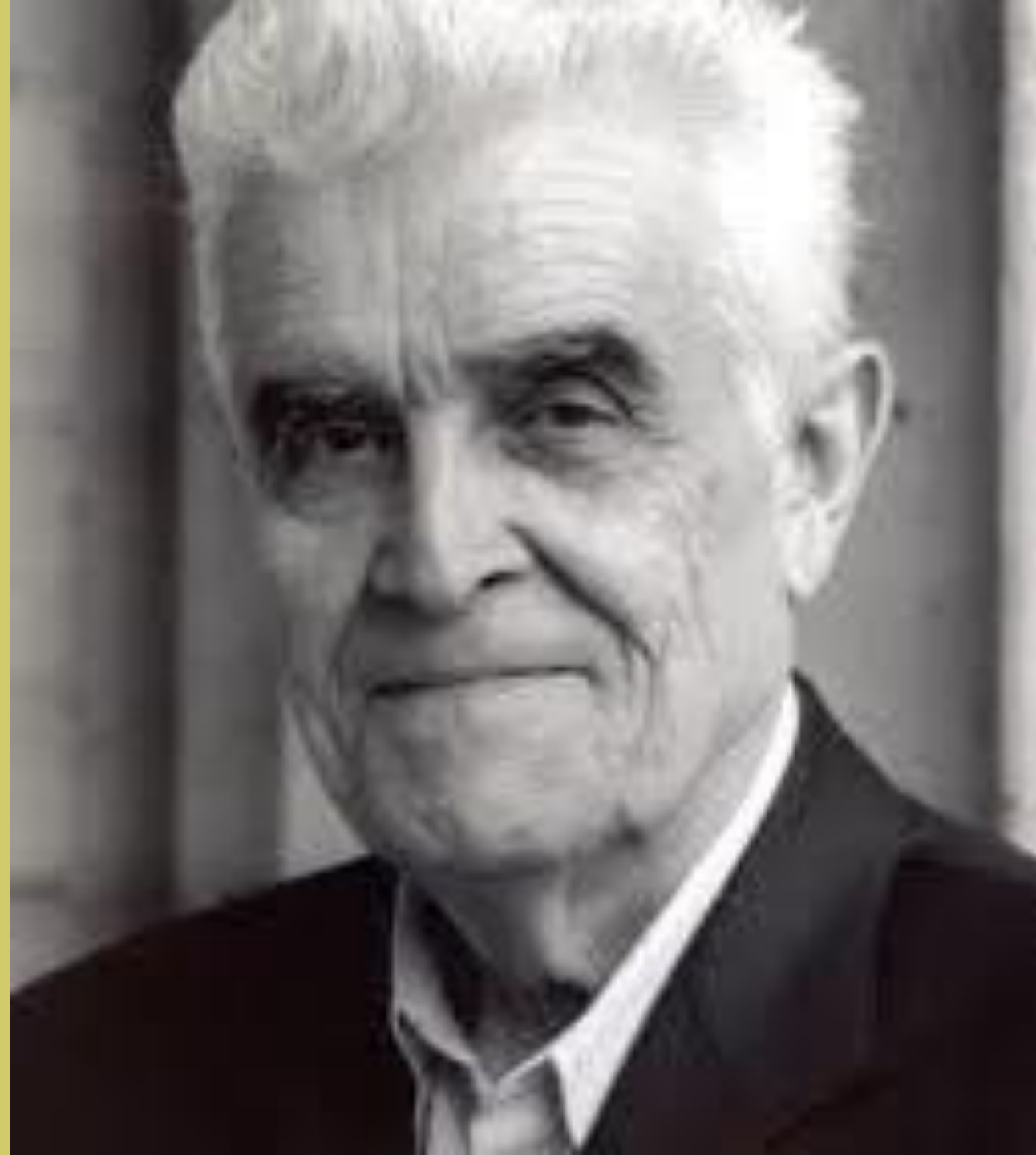
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1923 - 2015

**“What people call the
partisan spirit is nothing
but choosing the same
scapegoat as everybody
else”**

René Girard (EC) 2007



THANK YOU