*Antigone: Mimetic violence, tragedy, and ethics**

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ABSTRACT. René Girard's mimetic theory allows for an anthropological recontextualization of ancient Greek literature against the backdrop of biblical texts. The story (epic), dialogue (drama, rhetoric) and reflection (lyric, philosophy) are the basic forms of *mythos* and *logos*, in which man translates and gives shape to his violent origin. Greek drama, which represents the 'poli-tical' crisis of human existence, offers a partial deconstruction of the scapegoat mechanism as the hidden foundation of society. On the tragic stage all protagonists are divided and united in a non-decidable dispute – a mimetic-sacrificial non-difference which is decided at the expense of the hero/scapegoat who eventually 'makes a difference.' Sophocles' Antigone resists the mythical lie of a decisive difference between the mimetic doubles and enemy brothers Eteocles and Polynices. As a prefiguration of Christ (*praefiguratio Christi*), the tragic heroine Antigone reveals the collective hatred and the unanimous violence against the scapegoat as the bloody foundation of human civilization. Antigone's ethical 'an-archy' and 'non-in-difference' remains a blind spot in Heidegger's and Lacan's philosophical and psychoanalytical interpretations.

KEYWORDS. Violent symmetry, hero/scapegoat, tragic deconstruction, prefiguration of Christ, patho-*etho*-logy, non-in-difference

Antigone is a perfectly pure being, perfectly innocent, perfectly heroic, who voluntarily gives herself up to death to preserve a guilty brother from an unhappy fate in the other world.
(Weil 1957, 10).

Isn't there always an element excluded from the system that assures the system's space of possibility?
(Derrida 1986, 162)

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The socio-drama of mimetic desire

Mimetic desire – triangular or mediated desire – is the basic intuition of the French-American cultural anthropologist and religious studies scholar René Girard. The mimetic subject copies the desire and the appropriative behaviour of an Other. Imitative desire tends to mutual rivalry. The imitating subject himself becomes the model of his model, and, in the heat of the rivalry, the meaning of the object disappears. The mimetic 'doubles' prefer the rival's defeat to possessing the desired object. The disputed object appears to be a secret route to the alleged transcendence of the Model-Rival who has something different, because he is different too, and vice versa. The desire to have what the Other has conceals the 'meta-physical' desire to be the Other.

Mimetic interdividuality characterizes human existence. 'Inter-dividuality' and not interindividuality – because one does not know what comes from oneself and what comes from the other. The central point of the 'interdividual' is situated outside himself: the Other lives underground, as an uninvited guest, within the Self. Girard's interdividual psychology and fundamental anthropology both gauge the blind spot of the mimetic non-difference and the divisive identity between the I and the Other on the one hand, and between the community and the scapegoat on the other hand. The illusion of difference between the I and the Other on the psycho-social level indeed runs parallel with the denial and misconception of the collective violence against the scapegoat at the primal scene of civilization. The interdividual human being does not recognize the rival/scapegoat as the mimetic 'counter-part' of himself.

According to Girard, the great literary masterpieces are the royal road to the anthropological and ethical truth about ourselves. The history of the novel reflects the evolution of the mimetic desire that, in the twentieth century (in Virginia Woolf's work), results in the disintegration of reality and the fragmentation of the subject. The masters of the art of novel-writing – Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Proust –

diagnose the human soul and detect, under their heroes' most 'individual' passion, the covert fascination with the Other. Dramatic art from Sophocles to Shakespeare reveals how man is engaged in a socio-drama which he wants to direct and control as a neutral spectator, without realizing that he has always been watching the 'theatre of envy' through the eyes of antagonistic fellow actors on the same stage.

The restrained hubris of the tragedians

In 5th century B.C. Athens, Greek tragedy from Aeschylus to Euripides was granted the remarkably short lifetime of merely eighty years. As a partial and biased deconstruction of the mythical accusation against the hero/scapegoat, tragedy swings between daring and fear. For just a moment, tragedy takes a peek into the abyss of civilization and confronts the polis (city-state) with the invincible crisis of human existence. The hidden truth about the violent origin of civilization appears on the horizon, but eventually the tragedy always recoils again. The immemorial violence against the scapegoat as the foundation of society may be suggested, but the arbitrary choice of the victim and the unanimous sacrificial substitution – one for all – is hidden from view (VS 129; 292; 132).[1]

Through the chorus[2] and Oedipus himself, Sophocles manages to appease the conscience of the Athenian audience. The crumbling difference between good and evil (violence) is restored in due course. As a willing victim, the king/scapegoat takes all responsibility for the catastrophe upon himself. He, and nobody else, committed the unspeakable outrages literally with his own hands (1331: αὐτόχειρ). In accordance with the cruel logic of the oracle, Oedipus identifies himself without protest with the stereotype accusation of parricide and incest.[3] The scapegoat turns out to be the only culprit of all disaster. As the ultimate sacrifice (*homo piacularis*) who exculpates Thebes, Oedipus is the religious symbol – *the "sacred difference"* (VS 291) – around whom the divided community is reunited and

reborn. In the exodus, the dramatist renounces his original tragic inspiration – the dividing identity and the *fearful symmetry* (W. Blake) of the same violence between all protagonists (antagonists) on stage.

> If the art of tragedy is to be defined in a single phrase, we might do worse than call attention to one of its most characteristic traits: the opposition of symmetrical elements…. The tragic dialogue is a debate without resolution. Each side continues to deploy the same arguments, emphases, goals; *Gleichgewicht* is Hölderlin's word for it. Tragedy is the balancing of the scale, not of justice but of violence (VS 44–45).

Aeschylus and Euripides – the great tragedians before and after Sophocles – scanned and thematicized the inviolable border of tragic intuition. To the Greek playwrights, collectivity is always the winner, the individual victim never is. The indisputable law of culture-founding lynching is represented as a divisive element in Aeschylus' tragedy *Eumenides* (458 B.C.). The goddesses of vengeance (Erinyes, also known as the Furies) who typify unanimous hatred, are 'talked round' by Pallas Athene into the Kindly Ones (Eumenides), who are given a prominent place in the centre of Athens. The tamed collective violence is incorporated as a precious healing aid into the city's bowels.

> CHORUS May **faction**, insatiate of ill, ne'er raise her loud voice within this city – this I pray; and may the dust not drink the black blood of its people and through passion work ruinous **slaughtering for vengeance** to the destruction of the State. Rather may they return for joy **in a spirit of common love**, and may they **hate with one accord**; for therein lieth the **cure of many an evil** in the world.[4]

The uproar by the people – the mimetic crisis – reaches a climax in the scapegoat mechanism as a bloody ransom for the commotion and confusion among the citizens. The vengeance that renders blood for blood is the ultimate remedy – a panacea. Aeschylus is very well aware of the necessary function of collective violence for the common good of the city-state and the continued existence of the world order. Through the

chorus, the dramatist formulates the reassuring thought that the religious power of unanimous founding violence will survive after the transformation of the Erinyes into a less wild and abhorrent but more civilized way – as in Greek theatre. "The difference is that there will be more joy and love. There will always be collective hatred" (JVP 150).

The unanimous community experiences its own bloodthirsty obsession as an overwhelming divine intrusion (JVP 139). In Euripides' *Bacchanals*, the whole wild mob (1130: ὄχλος τε πᾶς) of Theban maenads, stirred up into ecstacy by Dionysus, participate together (1093: πᾶσαί τε βάκχαι) in the dismemberment (735: σπαραγμόν: 'tearing, rending, mangling') of Pentheus, the young king, cousin, and opponent of Dionysus. Caught in a net, the 'beast' (1108: θῆρ') Pentheus is torn to pieces. As the maker of peace which he had disturbed himself in the first place, the masked Dionysus is the god of decisive mob action. The divine action is a justified revenge against sacrilegious hubris. Pentheus (< πένθος: 'grief, sorrow') is the guilty monster. The mythical difference triumphs again over tragic indifferentiation (VS 134; 129). The chorus of women from Asia Minor – adherents of Dionysus wrapped in fawn-skins – is celebrating victory.

CHORUS Lo, his earth-born lineage bewrayeth (Ant.)
Pentheus; the taint of the blood of the dragon of old he betrayeth,
The serpent that came of the seed of the earth-born Titan Echion.
It hath made him a grim-visaged **monster**, and not as a mortal's scion, 540

But as that fell giant brood that in strife with immortals stood….

Raise we to Bacchus the choral acclaim,
Shout we aloud for the fall
Of the king, of the blood of the Serpent who came,
Who arrayed him in woman's pall;
And the thyrsus-ferule he grasped – but the same
Sealed him to Hades' hall:
And a bull was his guide to a doom of shame!
O Bacchanal-maids Cadmean, 1160
Ye have gained for you glory – a victory pæan
To be drowned in lamenting and weeping.

> O **contest triumphantly won**, when a mother in blood of her son
> Her fingers is steeping![5]

The symmetrical reciprocity of the tragedy disrupts the dissymmetry of the mythical story. Before Pentheus is overwhelmed by madness himself, he manages to sense the senseless situation clearly, as an outsider, from a distance. "PENTHEUS I was just abroad and now I hear that / The city here is struck by a strange catastrophe."[6] This strange catastrophe is nothing else but the abyss and the inferno of the sacrificial crisis. Beyond the mythical meanings and the cult of Dionysus, Euripides descries the generalized conflictual symmetry, which is hidden as well as revealed, though.

The poet emphasizes the dissolution of all differences between man and god, man and woman, man and animal, the relatives Pentheus and Dionysus. The disappearance of the sexual difference in the ritual bacchanal – as a celebration of universal love and harmonious 'brother- and sisterhood' (*adelphity*) – turns over during the tragic action into antagonistic (de)duplication. "As far as the overall plot of the play is concerned, the difference between man and god is never lost sight of; in fact, it is strongly proclaimed at the beginning and end of the tragedy. Yet in the middle all differences mingle and dissolve, including the distinction between human and divine" (VS 129). Soon all the people in the land are dancing (114: γᾶ πᾶσα χορεύσει), led and lured by the seductive and deceptive Dionysus. The 'monstrous double' is the deluding hallucination of Pentheus who sees it all double and believes he can recognize a human, a god and … a bull in his rival Dionysus. "PENTHEUS Well … this is strange; it is as if I see two suns / And twice Thebes' seven-gated fortified city (δύο μὲν ἡλίους δοκῶ, / δισσὰς δὲ Θήβας). / It is, now I am watching you, as if a bull is my companion / And as if horns have grown, there on your head…. DIONYSUS So now you see, as you should see (ὁρᾷς ἃ χρή σὸ ὁρᾶν)."[7]

The scapegoat mechanism, religion, the ritual, and its multiform substitutions and deductions (such as the theatre) can only protect humanity from the threat of violence sufficiently by denial and misunderstanding of

the secret truth and law of expelled and sacralized violence. "[I]t is by the infinite play of substitutions, modifications, subtle transfigurations and wily inversions that the scapegoat system has succeeded in enduring until now and still dominates our thought today, even as it convinces us that it is non-existent" (JVP 152). The antimythical 'an-archy' of the dramatist who has the nerve and is for a moment about to dig up the origin and foundation (ἀρχή) of civilization is consequently a life-threatening form of hubris and blasphemous trespassing. In *Bacchanals* Euripides himself – through the chorus – seems to postulate the sacred Interdiction of the fearful and destructive knowledge of the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (VS 135).

> O, **not with knowledge is Wisdom bought**;
> And **the spirit that soareth too high for mortals**
> Shall see few days: whosoever hath caught
> At the **things too great for a man's attaining**,
> Even blessings assured shall he lose in the gaining.
> Such paths as this, meseemeth, be sought 400
> Of the witless folly that roves distraught….
>
> **We may not**, in the heart's thought or the act,
> **Set us above the law of use and wont**.
>
> Little it costs, faith's precious heritage,
> To trust that whatsoe'er **from Heaven** is **sent**
> Hath **sovereign sway**, whate'er through age on age
> Hath gathered **sanction by** our **nature's bent**.[8]

Human excess

In the famous first stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone* (441 B.C.), the chorus of Theban elderly men is considering for a while the tragic enormity and ambiguity of the human genius. The 'literate revolution' – the invention of the written alphabet – brings about an increasing capacity of abstraction and critical-reflexive distance. To Sophocles man is becoming the theme of an anthropological reflection on the present – the most

appropriate tense for lyrical-philosophical consideration. For the time being, however, exactly what 'man' means is not yet conceptually defined. Moreover, the verb 'is' (333: πέλει still keeps the Homeric connotation of 'to move.' The chorus sings the praise of what the human being does at all times in an associative series of dynamic-dramatical events and actions – some thirteen achievements and characteristics in strong visual images (Havelock 1986, 103–106).

CHORUS Wonders are many, and **none is** (πέλει)
more wonderful (δεινότερον) **than man** (ἀνθρώπου); the
power that crosses the white sea,
driven by the stormy south-wind,
making a path under surges that
threaten to engulf him; and
Earth, the eldest of the gods, the
immortal, the unwearied, doth the
wear, turning the soil with the
offspring of horses, as the ploughs
go to and fro from year to year. 340

And the light-hearted race of
birds, and the tribes of savage
beasts, and the sea-brood of the
deep, he snares in the meshes of
his woven toils, he leads captive,
man excellent in wit. And he
masters by his arts the beast
whose lair is in the wilds, who
roams the hills; he tames the
horse of shaggy mane, he puts 350
the yoke upon its neck, he tames
the tireless mountain bull.

And speech, and wind-swift
thought, and all the moods that
mould a state, hath he taught
himself; and how to flee the
arrows of the frost, when 'tis
hard lodging under the clear sky,

and the arrows of the rushing
rain; yea, he hath **resource for**
all (παντοπόρος); **without resource** (ἄπορος) he meets 360
nothing that must come: only
against Death (Ἅιδα) shall he **call for aid**
in vain; but from baffling
maladies he hath devised escapes.

Cunning **beyond fancy's dream** (ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ') is
the fertile **skill** (τέχνας) which brings him,
now to evil, now to good. When
he honours the laws of the land,
and that **justice** (δίκαν) which he hath
sworn by the **gods** (θεῶν) to uphold,
proudly stands his city (ὑψίπολις): **no city** 370
hath he (ἄπολις) who, for his **rashness** (τόλμας),
dwells with sin. **Never may he**
share my hearth, never think my
thoughts (ἴσον φρονῶν), who doth these things![9]

The explosion of the archaic space-time ensures that the *homo techno-politicus* – the inventive and expansive man of the 'poli-tical' world – widens his boundaries and 'ex-ceeds' in a creative way the ritual patterns of life which restrict destructive violence.[10] Imposing and maintaining order by means of boundaries and differences in nature and culture demands man's utmost power. 'Trans-(s)cendence' – i.e., going beyond and surpassing – overwhelming and uncontrollable powers of nature leads the Promethean man to transgression and excess (333: δεινό-τερον). The human genius surpasses all expectations (365: τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ' ἔχων).[11]

The fascinating double being 'man' – a neutral and virtually dehumanized *monstre sacré* (δεινόν) – is omnipotence and impotence simultaneously (360: παντοπόρος· ἄπορος). Similarly there is no strict separation within the isonomous city-state between 'king' (here, citizen) and 'scapegoat' (370: ὑψίπολις· ἄπολις), between civilization and barbarism, between earthly and godly laws. In spite of contemporary sophistic optimism about the unlimited possibilities of the art of politics, technical skills cannot

protect man from the confusion of good and evil (Oudemans & Lardinois 1987, 118–131). Human finiteness and mortality (361: Ἅιδα) are in an ethically unmediated relation of tension to divine Justice (368: δίκαν). The distrust of the Other as equal and threatening *alter ego* (373: ἴσον φρονῶν) is the complement of one's own fear of the infinite hubris-violence (371: τόλμας).

Below we quote a striking parallel but contrastive text to the first stasimon in Sophocles' *Antigone*. The text, written in the inclusive first person plural, is based on the same bottomless fear of man's unbridled dynamism. However, lack of self-confidence and feelings of inferiority are out of place and unjustified in the biblical, ethical-religious perspective of man as the child of a non-envious or non-vindictive God. God's greatness and glory is indeed the human being who is fully alive.[12] Every man is called and chosen to exude God's glory in his soul without scruples or misanthropy, as a contagious and liberating light which others can in turn reflect.

> Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.[13]

Born to share love

Sophocles' creative power does not have its hands tied by the scapegoat mechanism (JVP 86). The ethical alterity which Antigone incorporates is of a different kind than the madness (μανία) and the destructive

non-identity of Dionysus as a master seducer, destroyer of the difference and manipulator of life and death. Antigone reveals and radically rejects the violence and common hatred as the hidden cornerstone of society. At the same time, all characters in Sophocles' *Antigone* are – in spite of the presence of a scapegoat and in spite of, or rather due to, their noblest intentions and objectives – like reflected figures united with and against each other in an undecidable mimetic non-difference.[14] "Everything in that tragedy hinges on a scapegoat operation that is a little too visible to succeed in playing its role…. Thus is tragic discord perpetuated: this is, in fact, what happens in *Antigone*; the failure of the scapegoating process constitute the tragic action" (JVP 113–114).

In the legend cycle about the Cadmean dynasty, Sophocles' *Antigone* – the crisis of culture and society – follows the tragedy of identity of Oedipus and the tragedy of power in Aeschylus' *The Seven against Thebes*. Both cursed sons of Oedipus, Eteocles and Polynices, have killed each other "with a brother's hand"[15] near the seventh gate of their hometown in a shameless man-to-man fight. To resist the sacrificial crisis, Creon throws in all the weight of his power and authority.[16] Like the high priest Caiaphas in Jesus' passion and death, Creon represents common sense and decisive judgment.[17] Evidently, it is much better for one man to die for the people than for the whole people to perish (John 11,50). Judging by the different meaning of their names, Creon hopes to make a distinction that is sufficiently clear and final to all between hero and monster, between good and evil, between the dead body of Eteocles ('True Glory') and the dead body of Polynices ('Much Strife'). The 'de-composition' of the unburied bodies of the *enemy brothers* (*frères ennemis*) represents the desymbolization of the differentiated cultural order and the destruction of the sacred Difference. The noble freedom fighter Eteocles – symbol of regained identity of the city – will be buried with the "most holy ritual" (196). The traitor Polynices' cadaver, on the other hand, is to remain unburied (205: ἄθαπτον) as a prey to vultures and dogs – "a spectacle of disfigurement" (206). "TIRESIAS And all thy neighbour States are leagued

to avenge (Ἔχθρᾳ δὲ πᾶσαι συνταράσσονται πόλεις), / Their mangled warriors who have found a grave / I' the maw of wolf or hound, or wingèd bird / That flying homewards taints their city's air."[18]

Quite rightly, Creon is defending the existing order and the *reasons of State* as protection from endless revenge and violence. By her subversive action and her appeal to ancient divine law, which has it that all are equal in death, Antigone inevitably frustrates Creon's legitimate purpose. The 'an-archistic' Antigone fulfils a "holy duty" (74) which clashes with state interest. All protagonists (antagonists) in the grasp of the mimetic loyalty conflict contribute involuntarily to the destruction of the cultural order which they, according to each other's example, obstinately and by all means are trying to defend. Creon and Antigone both dispute the claims of authority of the Other and blame each other mutually for hubris.

> CREON And yet wert bold enough **to break the law**?
> ANTIGONE Yea, for these laws were not ordained of Zeus, 450
> And she who sits enthroned with gods below,
> Justice, enacted not these human laws.
> Nor did I deem that thou, a mortal man,
> Could'st by a breath **annul** and **override**
> The immutable unwritten **laws of Heaven**.[19]

Antigone's uncompromising protest keeps the memory alive of the blind hate between two hostile brothers and identical mimetic *doubles*. Antigone's action thus disturbs the mythical lie of the unifying and culture-founding Difference. "By showing that Polynices is no different from Eteocles, his fraternal enemy; by demanding funerals for both of them, Antigone prevents the sacrificial resolution Creon wanted. She prevents the hollowing out of a mythical difference" (JVP 113).

We can read in Aeschylus that loving and hating unanimously saves the mortals a lot of suffering.[20] Antigone's anti-sacrificial reply is: "It is not my nature to hate *together* (523: συν-έχθειν), but to love *mutually* (συμ-φιλεῖν)." As a prefiguration of Christ (*praefiguratio Christi*) Antigone reveals and rejects the collective hatred and the false difference – the presentation

of unanimous persecution – as the foundation of humanity (THFW 244–245).[21]

> ANTIGONE Natheless the realms below these rites require.
> CREON Not that the base should fare as do the brave. 520
> ANTIGONE Who knows if this world's crimes are virtues there?
> CREON Not even death can make a foe a friend.
> ANTIGONE **My nature is for mutual love, not hate**.
> CREON Die then, and love the dead if love thou must,
> No woman shall be master while I live.[22]

In the Old Testament story of Salomon's wise judgment (1 Kings 3, 16–28), the good prostitute takes the place of the potential victim. As a *figura Christi*, she sacrifices her own desire so as to save her infant's life.[23] The other woman is quite willing to sacrifice the contested object – the living baby – to her envy. "It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it." True justice is aimed at the helpless victim's life. "Then the king answered and said, 'Give the living child (τὸ παιδίον, *infantem vivum*) to the first woman, and by no means slay it (θανάτῳ μὴ θανατώσητε αὐτόν)'" (1 Kings 3, 26–27). It is no coincidence that in André Chouraqui's translation (1989, 621), which is close to the Hebrew, the word: *vivant* (living) features no less than seven times. Antigone's willingness to self-sacrifice, on the other hand, is on behalf of a dead brother in the context of the burial ritual which Creon denies Polynices. That is why Sophocles' magnificent text does not have quite the same anti-sacrificial power of revelation as the Bible and the Gospel. "The Gospels clearly define what makes the tragic text somewhat inferior to the biblical texts when they say: *Leave the dead to bury their dead* (Matthew 8, 22)" (THFW 245).

PATHO-*ETHO*-LOGY

In his interpretation of Sophocles' famous line about man as "the uncanniest" (*das Unheimlichste*),[24] Heidegger mentions the mysterious, violent,

and overwhelming inception of existence. "*The inception is what is most uncanny and mightest*" (Heidegger 2000, 159; 165). Later in his Freiburg lecture on *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister,"* Heidegger (1996, 104) will call Antigone herself "the most unhomely human being, and thus the most uncanny of all that is most uncanny." The tragic heroine "accommodates herself to," "takes upon herself" and "belongs to" the necessity of an inordinate and frightening manifestation of being (96: πάθειν τὸ δεινὸν τοῦτο), which breaks up the familiar world and all human meanings and possibilities with the most powerful supremacy (Van Haute 1997, 174–176).

Heidegger's onto-*patho*-logy shows an unmistakable binary basic pattern. *Dasein* appears to be caught in the freedom of a dual involvement into being without constitutive mediation of a third term.

> This whole sphere <between *the* man and the great whole…, that in-between, where men exist in their plurality: the many who differ from one other >…, disappears in Heidegger's *Dasein* panorama…. That we have to live with the fact that we are surrounded by people who differ from us, whom we do not understand or whom we understand all too well, whom we love or hate, who are indifferent to us or who are enigmas to us, from whom we are separated by a gulf or by nothing at all – this whole universe of possible relationships is disregarded by Heidegger and is not included by him among his 'existentials.' Heidegger, the inventor of 'ontological difference,' never conceived the idea of developing an 'ontology of difference.'… An ontology of difference would mean accepting the philosophical challenge of the disparity of people and the difficulties or opportunities arising as a result (Safranski 1999, 265).

In Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theory (1986, 285–333) on the essence of tragedy, Antigone's pathology is pushed to extremes and utterly magnified into a basic feature of human existence. In the most literal sense, Antigone is suffering from a strange and cruel desire *beyond good and evil*. The anti-heroine falls victim to the blindness (ἄτη) of a ruthless urge – an inhuman 'pathos' without 'etho-logical' embedding in object-ivity. The fixation on an unconditional desire that has broken loose is "*absolute singularization, radical isolation, and solitude*" (Moyaert 1995, 179).

The existential solipsism and the tragic unicity of Antigone to Heidegger and Lacan is, in Girard's terms, a romantic lie (*mensonge romantique*), attributed to an isolated hero "in a terrifying vacuum" (Knox 1983, 5). As a creature of imitation, rivalry, and violence the *homo imitans/necans* is indeed involved in an ambiguous being-with-and-against-each other. This 'inter-dividual' reality is stated sharply by Heidegger, yet at the same time also safely banned to the domain of 'the one' (*das Man*) and of the decline or fallenness (*Verfallenheit*) as the opposite of properly being oneself.[25] "Being-with-one another (*Miteinandersein*) in the they is not at all a self-contained, indifferent side-by-sideness, but a tense, ambiguous keeping track of each other, a secretive, reciprocal listening-in. Under the mask of the for-one-other (*Füreinander*), the against-one-another (*Gegeneinander*) is at play."[26]

Despite their alleged 'mono-mania,' Antigone and Creon both appear to share the same 'ill counsel' (δυσβουλία) and the same mimetic misunderstanding that simultaneously connect and separate them.[27] On the one hand, tragedy means the beginning of the revelation of violence (Girard 1973, 545). On the other hand, Greek tragedy is already on its way to philosophical (and psychoanalytical) contemplation and 'misunderstanding' of the – mimetic and violent – human condition.[28] The "rational viewer" watches in the opposite direction of the tragic poet and tends to disguise the undifferentiated violence (VS 303; 293). Thus, Plato's rejection of tragic violence will result in a new sacrificial substitution: the violent expulsion of the poet as the disowned *double* and enemy brother of the philosopher. "Philosophy, like tragedy, can at certain levels serve as an attempt at expulsion, an attempt perpetually renewed because never wholly successful" (VS 296).

Knowledge and differentiation are the same thing (DBB 169). Unlike tragic inspiration, separative thinking focuses on the symbolical order of society and the system of socio-cultural differences. To rationalist and humanist criticism (VS 293), not only the undifferentiated violence[29] but paradoxically also non-violent 'non-indifference' remains a blind spot.

Antigone's ethical 'non-in-difference'[30] is the absolute difference which escapes the sacrificial cycle of crisis and violent solution. In this respect, we beg to differ with Lacan's 'mythicizing' view (1992, 277). Antigone does not resist Creon's order "in the name of the most radically chthonian of relations that are blood relations." "Only the necessity for unanimity can explain the importance of Antigone's rebellion in Creon's eyes. Neither the young woman's personality nor her relationship with Polynices gives weight to her disobedience, but rather *the break in unanimity*" (JVP 13). The true difference is the 'an-archistic' law of love which reveals violence – the false difference between the hero Eteocles and the scapegoat Polynices – on behalf of the victim. "Love makes no distinctions between beings…. Like violence, love abolishes differences" (THFW 216; 270). The perfect reciprocity of love counteracts the differences, but not *in the way* violence does.[31]

The non-recognition of the perverted reciprocity has long characterized human reason (*ratio*). Our consciousness bears the mark of a structural impotence to face the sacralized violence and to acknowledge the victim's innocence. The evolution of civilization can be read as a continuous process of transformation and regeneration – the constant effort at averting, controlling, and rewording the original violence.[32] The 'patho-*etho*-logy' in Aristotle's system of rhetoric offers, in this respect, an unexpectedly fertile cultural-historical model of interpretation for a number of aspects and questions about the human condition. As we know, the three sources of rhetoric argumentation are the moral character of the speaker (*ethos*), the emotions of the audience (*pathos*), and the argumentation (*logos*) (*Rhetoric* bk II). This ternary configuration can be seen in anthropological-ethical perspective. The ever-temporary order (*logos*) of civilization can only resist the permanent threat of violence and disorder (*pathos*) thanks to the creative play or 'margin' of relative order (*ethos*).

As the figure of (re)construction (*logos*), King Creon relies on political reason – the logic of the scapegoat[33] – against destruction (*pathos*) of the sacral Difference which every ordering of a community establishes and

maintains. Antigone on the other hand appeals to the transcendent Law that all the dead, without any discrimination, deserve respect. "For not now or yesterday does this law exist, / but for eternity (ἀεί ποτε), and none who knows where it comes from."[34] Antigone incorporates the – critical and vulnerable – ethical 'de-construction'[35] (*ethos*) and thus prefigures the evangelical *Logos* of love – the surrender and ultimate sacrifice of Christ who once and for good has revealed the bloody foundation of civilized society.

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Notes

1. We refer by means of the following sigla to the quoted principal works by René Girard. DBB: *To Double Business Bound: Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology*, 1978. JVP: *Job the Victim of his People*, 1987 (= *La route antique des hommes pervers*, 1985). QC: *Quand ces choses commenceront…* [When these things will begin…], 1994. SG: *The Scapegoat*, 1986 (= *Le bouc émissaire*, 1982). THFW: *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 1987 (= *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde*, 1978). VS: *Violence and the Sacred*, 1988 (= *La Violence et le Sacré*, 1972).

2. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 1297–1306: "CHORUS Woeful sight! (δεινὸν ἰδεῖν πάθος)! more woeful none / These sad eyes have looked upon. / Whence this madness? None can tell / Who did cast on thee his spell, / Prowling all thy life around, / Leaping with a demon bound. / Hapless wretch! how can I brook / On thy misery to look? / Though to gaze on thee I yearn, / Much to question, much to learn, / Horror-struck away I turn."

3. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 1436–1437; 1440–1441: "OEDIPUS Forth from thy borders thrust me with all speed; / Set me within some vasty desert where / No mortal voice shall greet me any more…. His will <of the god> was set forth fully – to destroy / The parricide, the scoundrel (τὸν πατροφόντην, τὸν ἀσεβῆ); and I am he."

4. Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 976–987.

5. Euripides, *Bacchanals* 538–544; 1153–1164.

6. Euripides, *Bacchanals* 215–216.

7. Euripides, *Bacchanals* 114–115; 918–921; 924. – The monstrous double takes the place of everything which fascinated the antagonists in the previous less fierce stages of the crisis; he replaces everything which everybody wants to assimilate and destroy at the same time.

8. Euripides, *Bacchanals* 395–401; 890–896. – Cf. Dodds 1974, 189: "Those who regard Eur. as a purely destructive thinker overlook the many passages where the ultimate validity of νόμος and the danger of intellectual arrogance are dwelt upon the Choruses or by sympathetic

characters." – Cf. Euripides, *Hecuba* 798–805: "HECUBA And I – a slave I may be, haply weak; / Yet are the Gods strong, and their ruler strong, / Even Law (νόμος); for by this Law we know Gods are, / We live, we make division of wrong and right (ἄδικα καὶ δίκαι' ὡρισμένοι); / And if this at thy bar be disannulled, / And they shall render not account which slay / Guests, or dare rifle God's holy things, / Then among men is there no righteousness."

9. Sophocles, *Antigone* 332–375 (transl. Oudemans & Lardinois 1987, 120–121).

10. Cf. QC 81: "Contrairement à ce que pourraient laisser penser son apparente monotonie, ses répétitions, le rite est créateur sur le plan culturel parce qu'il inclut du désordre un peu ordonné ou de l'ordre un peu désordonné. Le rite est fondateur des techniques, parce qu'il permet de mélanger les choses que les interdits séparent."

11. Cf. Sophocles, *Antigone* 1347–1348: "Of happiness the chiefest part / Is a wise heart (φρονεῖν)." – Euripides, *Bacchanals* 1150–1152: "MESSENGER Ay, self-restraint, and reverence for the Gods/ Are best, I ween; 'tis wisest (σοφώτατον) far for men / To get these in possession, and cleave thereto." – The practical wisdom (φρόνησις) will become the leitmotiv of Aristotle's 'practical philosophy' (Van Coillie 2000, 138–142).

12. Irenaeus Lugdunensis, *Adversus Haereses* [*Against Heresies*] IV, 20, 7: "Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei" (*the glory of God is the living man; man's life consists in the vision of God*).

13. According to a widespread internet legend, the quotation is from the *Inauguration Speech* which the South-African president Nelson Mandela held twice, in Cape Town and officially in Pretoria, on May 9 and 10, 1994 respectively. Actually, the text is an extract from Marianne Williamson 1992, 165.

14. Steiner 1986, 184–185: "Are they <Creon and Antigone> not, in fact, profoundly similar? Are their characters not hewn to precisely the same 'sharp edges'? Does Antigone's treatment of hapless Ismene not closely correspond to Creon's treatment of herself and of Haemon? The polemic intimacy between Creon and Antigone results from a clash of 'existential freedoms,' poised, as it were, to a nicety. Neither can yield without falsifying his essential being. Each reads himself in the other, and the language of the play points to this fatal symmetry. Both Creon and Antigone are *auto-nomists*, human beings who have taken the law into their own keeping. Their respective enunciations of justice are, in the given local case, irreconcilable. But in their obsession with law, they come very close to being *mirror-images* [our italics]." – Cf. Lacan 1992, 320: "In Sophocles you will encounter again the dance between Creon and Antigone."

15. Aeschylus, *The Seven Against Thebes* 811.

16. Sophocles, *Antigone* 170–177: "CREON Now that his two sons perished in one day, / Brother by brother murderously slain, / By right of kinship to the Princes dead, / I claim and hold the throne and sovereignty (ἐγὼ κράτη δὴ πάντα καὶ θρόνους ἔχω). / Yet 'tis no easy matter to discern / The temper of a man, his mind and will, / Till he be proved by exercise of power (ἀρχαῖς τε καὶ νόμοισιν)."

17. Cf. Sophocles, *Antigone* 563–565: "ISMENE Yea, so it falls, sire, when misfortune comes, / The wisest even lose their mother wit (νοῦς). / CREON I' faith thy wit forsook thee when thou mad'st / Thy choice with evil-doers to do ill."

18. Sophocles, *Antigone* 1080–1083.

19. Sophocles, *Antigone* 449–455. – Cf. Sophocles, *Antigone* 744–745: “CREON And am I wrong, if I maintain my rights (τὰς ἐμὰς ἀρχὰς)? / HAEMON Talk not of rights; thou spurn’st the due of Heaven (τιμάς … γε τὰς θεῶν).”

20. Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 985–987: “May joy be exchanged for joy / in a common love / and may we hate with a single soul (κοινοφιλεῖ διανοίᾳ, / καὶ στυγεῖν μιᾷ φρενί): / For this is man’s great remedy” (transl. JVP 150).

21. The arrest of Antigone prefigures, as it were, the apprehension, the interrogation and the nonviolent resistance of Jesus in the Sanhedrin. The verb θηράω: ‘to hunt, chase; catch, capture’ characterizes the hunt of the scapegoat. Sophocles, *Antigone* 432–436: “GUARD We at the sight swooped down on her and seized (θηρώμεθὸ) / Our quarry. Undismayed she stood, and when / We taxed her with the former crime and this, / She disowned nothing (ἄπαρνος δὸ οὐδενὸς). I was glad – and grieved.”

22. Sophocles, *Antigone* 519–525.

23. John 15, 13: “Greater love (ἀγάπην, *dilectionem*) hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life (ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ θῆ, *animam suam … ponat*) for his friends.”

24. Sophocles, *Antigone* 332–333. – Heidegger 2000, 156: “Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing / uncannier than man bestirs itself, rising up beyond him.”

25. Cf. Girard 2004, 59–60: “Martin Heidegger se croit étranger au mimétisme ambiant, au «*Das Man*», c’est-à-dire au suivisme de ces gens qui croient et désirent tout ce que «on» croit et désire autour d’eux. Et pourtant, au moment où «on» était nazi autour de lui, Heidegger, lui aussi, était nazi.”

26. Heidegger 1996, 163 (§37). – Cf. Heidegger 1996^{b}, 165 (§27): “Everyone is the other, and no one is himself.” – In “The Other and psychosis” [“L’Autre et la psychose,” 1955] Lacan mentions “[t]his rivalrous and competitive ground for the foundation of the object” as the basis of the primary identification in the mirror stage. Lacan 1993, 39: “A primitive otherness is included in the object, insofar as primitively it’s the object of rivalry and competition. It’s of interest only as the object of the other’s desire.”

27. Sophocles, *Antigone* 95–96: “ANTIGONE Say I am mad and give my madness rein (τὴν ἐξ ἐμοῦ δυσβουλίαν) / To wreck itself.” – Sophocles, *Antigone* 1267–1269: “CREON Alas, my son, / Life scarce begun, / Thou wast undone. / The fault was mine, mine only (ἐμαῖς οὐδὲ σαῖσι δυσβουλίαις), O my son!” – The rare compositum δυσβουλία in classic Greek literature seems almost restricted to the genre of tragedy. Its meaning is opposed diametrically to that in the substantive εὐβουλία: ‘good counsel, soundness of judgement, prudence,’ which on the other hand frequently appears across all literary genre boundaries (Chantraine 1990, I s.v. εὐβουλία). The lexicographer Hesychius mentions as synonyms: κακοβουλία: ‘ill-advisedness’ and ἀφροσύνη: ‘folly, thoughtlessness.’ – To Aristotle ‘good counsel’ (εὐβουλία) is an intellectual eminence which is linked inextricably to the atmosphere of ‘prudence’ or ‘practical wisdom’ (φρόνησις) as practical-political intelligence (Aubenque 1986, 116–118). ‘Deliberative excellence’ (εὐβουλία) is “correctness of deliberation as regards what is advantageous, arriving at the right conclusion on the right grounds at the right time” (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 10, 1142 b 27–28).

28. Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe 1975, 266: “La tragédie est *déjà* philosophique: cette banalité qui ne date pas d’hier, mais au moins des années 1800, est irréfutable.” – Thoen 1992, 257: “Die

Philosophie bewegt sich zwischen dem *Pol des Dramatischen*, der seinen Ursprung und seine Nahrung bildet in einer Gesellschaft, die es wagt, sich in allen ihren unbestimmten Widersprüchen zu sehen und zu hören, und dem *Pol des Dogmatischen*, wo sie in einer solch vollständigen Klarheit ruht, die sie blind macht und den Kontakt mit der Vieldeutigkeit der konkreten Erfahrungen zerstört" [our italics].

29. Orsini 1982, 35: "La critique littéraire et les sciences de la culture recouvrent toujours de leur propre réseau de différences l'indifférenciation relative des antagonismes tragiques."

30. Cf. Levinas 1996, 6: "What I call the non-in-difference of Saying is, below the double negation, still difference, behind which no commonality arises in the form of an entity. Thus there is both relation and rupture, and thus awakening: awakening of the Self by the Other, of me by the Stranger, of me by the stateless person, that is, by the neighbor who is only nearby. An awakening… signifying a responsibility for the other, the other who must be fed and clothed – my substitution for the other, my expiation for the suffering, and no doubt for the wrongdoing of the other."

31. Cf. Beauchamp & Vasse 1991, 52a: "Car en définitive, il n'y a qu'une violence, celle de l'Esprit d'amour dont la haine n'est que la perversion. Il n'est pas d'autre voie pour guérir la violence de haine que la libération de la violence d'amour. Car il n'y a en tout et pour tout qu'une seule violence et qu'une seule vie, ou bien pervertie ou bien convertie."

32. Cf. QC: "L'histoire ne progresse que par une série d'échecs humains qui sont toujours compensés par de nouveaux efforts de Dieu pour faire entendre ce que réellement Il est."

33. SG 113: "Caiaphas is stating the same political reason we have given for the scapegoat: to limit violence as much as possible but to turn to it, if necessary, as a last resort *to avoid an even greater violence*. Caiaphas is the incarnation of politics at its best, not its worst. No one has ever been a better politician" [our italics].

34. Sophocles, *Antigone* 457–458.

35. Cf. Derrida 1988, 147: "And the "de-" of *de*construction signifies not the demolition of what is constructing itself, but rather *what remains to be thought* beyond the constructivist or destructionist scheme" [our italics].