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THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE IN MODERNITY: GIRARDIAN SACRED AND DUMOUCHEL'S SCARCITY

Teodor Hryvna
Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
Universytetska str., 1, 79000, Lviv, Ukraine
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6044-6412

This paper examines the theoretical evolution of René Girard's concept of the sacred to Paul Dumouchel's thesis of scarcity as mechanisms for managing violence in society. Through a critical comparative analysis, we explore how Dumouchel extends and transforms Girardian mimetic theory to address the specific conditions of modern market economies. While Girard identifies the scapegoat mechanism as the foundation of archaic social order, Dumouchel reconceptualizes scarcity as a "modern sacred" that functions through systemic indifference rather than ritualized sacrifice. We argue that this theoretical development offers profound insights into contemporary forms of violence while questioning Dumouchel's critique of market economies as primarily institutions of violence. Our analysis concludes that mimetic theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the economic competition and management of violence in modern societies. By examining how *méconnaissance* operates differently in modern contexts, this paper contributes to ongoing debates about the moral foundations of market systems and the persistence of sacrificial mechanisms in ostensibly secular societies. We investigate Dumouchel's most recent (2024) development of accusation theory as an extension of his work on systemic indifference, demonstrating how modern violence operates through complex mechanisms of recognition that simultaneously acknowledge victims' humanity while denying their moral equality. This conceptual evolution reveals a paradoxical tension in post-Christian societies, where the efficacy of the traditional scapegoat mechanism has been partially undermined but likely continues to operate through more diffuse, bureaucratized forms. Our methodological approach traces the intellectual genealogy from Girard's early literary criticism through his anthropological work to Dumouchel's application of these theories to economics and modern political violence. By chronologically analyzing key texts – Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* and *Violence and the Sacred*, and Dumouchel's *The Ambivalence of Scarcity* – we identify crucial theoretical developments and transformations. This genealogical analysis reveals not only how Dumouchel extends Girardian concepts but also where he8 significantly departs from them.

Key words: Mimetic theory, René Girard, Paul Dumouchel, scapegoat mechanism, violence, modernity, sacred, capitalism, mimetic desire, Christian revelation, genocide, philosophical anthropology, social institutions, culture, human existence.

Introduction. The problem of violence – its origins, management, and persistence, remains one of the central questions in social theory and philosophical anthropology. René Girard's groundbreaking work on mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism revolutionized our understanding of how violence functions in archaic societies. Through his anthropological analysis, Girard demonstrated how the sacred emerges from collective violence directed toward a scapegoat, thereby establishing cultural order. The application of this theory to modern, seemingly secular contexts presents a range of significant challenges, tackled by Girard himself and by multiple mimetic theorists who follow in his footsteps. How do contemporary societies manage violence in the absence of overtly sacrificial institutions? What replaces the sacred in containing

mimetic rivalry? Are we doomed for the apocalyptical destruction brought on ourselves by the contagion of uncontrolled mimetic rivalry?

Paul Dumouchel is a Canadian philosopher and political theorist whose current appointment is Professor of Philosophy at the Graduate School of Core Ethics and Frontier Sciences, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan. His work, particularly in The Ambivalence of Scarcity, offers a bold answer to these questions by positioning scarcity itself as a "modern sacred", a mechanism that protects against violence through violence. His reconceptualization of a fundamental economic principle through the lens of mimetic theory represents a significant extension of Girard's thought into the domain of modernity. It also raises profound questions about the moral foundations of market economies and the nature of violence in contemporary society.

The research value of this paper lies in its systematic examination of how Dumouchel transforms Girardian concepts to explain modern economic and social phenomena. By tracing the theoretical evolution from the sacred to scarcity, we show both the continuity and discontinuities between archaic and modern forms of violence management. Our comparative analysis not only deepens our understanding of mimetic theory but also offers new perspectives on persistent problems in economic and social thought. Our goals are threefold: First, to provide a comprehensive account of Dumouchel's extension of Girardian theory, particularly his concepts of homo mimeticus, the contract of mutual indifference, and accusation as the mechanism of modern violence. Second, to critically assess Dumouchel's characterization of scarcity as a "social institution of misery" against empirical evidence of market economies' success in reducing material deprivation. Third, to explore the philosophical implications of these theories for understanding how méconnaissance – the misrecognition that enables sacrifice, operates in ostensibly post-sacrificial societies.

Dumouchel's provocative thesis forces us to confront fundamental questions about the relationship between economic competition and human conflict, between prosperity and exclusion, and between individual autonomy and social solidarity. By engaging critically with both Girard and Dumouchel, we aim to develop a more nuanced, extended understanding of how mimetic desire shapes economic behavior and how economic institutions channel mimetic rivalry.

With this paper we contribute to several ongoing scholarly conversations: the application of mimetic theory to economic phenomena, we respond to the critique of market capitalism, and we grapple with the persistence of sacrificial logic in secular modernity. By this, we hope to illuminate not only the theoretical relationship between Girard and Dumouchel but also the practical implications of their ideas for addressing contemporary forms of violence and exclusion.

Mimetic Desire in Economic Theory: From Homo Economicus to Homo Mimeticus. Dumouchel takes Girard's concept of mimetic desire, the idea that human desire is not for an object but is imitated from the desire of a model, leading to rivalry, and positions it into the economic realm. He puts a *homo mimeticus* as a counterpoint to the classical *homo economicus*. While *homo economicus* is traditionally seen as a rational agent with stable, autonomous preferences, Dumouchel's *homo mimeticus* has preferences in accordance to the others, following the Girardian terminology back from Deceit, Desire and the Novel [1]. This isn't a simple imitation of consumption patterns but a deeper relation where "what (some) others want and prefer constitute for each one of us the paradigm of what we want and prefer." [2, p. 135]. This is a matter of importance, because it underscores that the very "rationality" of economic agents, including their utility functions, are the products of mimetic interactions. Dumouchel writes that "agents may at times behave as if they were autonomous, perhaps even act "as if" they were

classic economic agents... However, mimetic theory suggests that when this is the case, this particular reduction of mimetic agents to an apparent homo economicus is itself to be explained in terms of mimetic relations between agents." [2, p. 137], boldly suggesting that economic rationality itself is a mimetic construct.

Just like Girard challenges the romantic concept of autonomous desire, Dumouchel's conception of homo mimeticus fundamentally challenges the premise of economic individualism by demonstrating how our economic behavior is inherently relational rather than autonomous, distinguished not simply by a different preference structure, but by a fundamentally different ontology. This reframing has profound implications for economic theory, as it suggests that the very foundation of market behavior, the individual preference, is itself a social construct arising from mimetic interactions. We don't necessarily have to argue that Dumouchel's work undermines the classical tenets of the modern economy. To the contrary, Dumouchel's observation that "agents may at times behave as if they were autonomous, perhaps even act "as if" they were classic economic agents." [2, p. 137] unwittingly supports rather than undermines traditional economic models. If the result of mimetic interaction is behavior that approximates rational self-interest, then economic models based on homo economicus could still offer practical predictive power even if their anthropological foundations are incomplete. The "as if" defense of economic rationality would suggest that mimetic theory might complement rather than replace standard economic modeling.

Mimetic theory, through Dumouchel's contribution, offers "a general framework to analyze circumstances when such "classic economic behavior" will be the "normal" outcome of interactions between agents and circumstances, which will then lead to changes in preferences and inconsistent behavior." [2, p. 138]. The conclusion of our analysis would be that this perspective neither fully embraces nor rejects conventional economics but rather situates economic rationality within broader mimetic dynamics. Economic rationality itself emerges as a particular form of stabilized and channeled mimetic mechanism that predominates under specific institutional arrangements, particularly those of modern market economies that have instituted scarcity as their organizing principle.

Dumouchel's integration of mimetic theory with economic thought also provides a more granular understanding of preference formation that benefits the scholarly understanding of behavioral economics. Where behavioral economics has documented various departures from rational choice, mimetic theory offers a comprehensive framework explaining why preferences shift, why demand curves slope upward for positional goods, and why economic bubbles form through collective mimetic frenzy. With our interpretation, we see that homo mimeticus serves not just as a critical alternative to homo economicus, but as a theoretical foundation for integrating the empirical insights of behavioral economics into a more coherent whole.

The Scapegoat Mechanism in Modern Contexts. Girard's theory central thesis is that the scapegoat mechanism – the unanimous transfer of collective violence onto an arbitrary victim, resolves mimetic crises and founds or refounds cultural order.

Dumouchel applies this concept to modern, seemingly secular phenomena. In his analysis of *ijime* (school bullying in Japan), he sees a process akin to the scapegoat mechanism at work, though with a crucial difference: "the victims of ijime are scapegoats in the sense in which Girard uses the term. They are substitute victims, safety valves through which pass all the hatred, violence, and frustration that cannot be expressed or resolved otherwise." [2, p. 255]. However, he notes that in such modern instances, the sacralization of the victim, a key component of the founding power of the scapegoat in Girard's original formulation [3, p. 250–256], fails to occur. This leads him to question why some victims of collective violence are sacralized and others

are not, suggesting that the "violence of his death...precludes the positive transfiguration of the victim" in certain modern contexts, or that "not enough violence surrounds their death" for full sacralization [2, p. 267]. What makes this an important input in Girardian theory by Dumouchel, is the fact that he performs a detailed analysis of how the scapegoat mechanism operates differently, or incompletely, in desacralized societies.

Scarcity as the Modern Sacred. Dumouchel's most significant conceptual modification of mimetic theory lies in his treatment of "scarcity" itself as a modern form of the sacred, a violent means of protection against violence. Girard sees the sacred as emerging from the resolution of mimetic crises through the scapegoat. Dumouchel argues that in modern societies, "scarcity functions in the modern world in the way the sacred does in traditional societies. That is to say, it is a means of protection against violence." [2, p. 101]. He elaborates that scarcity, socially instituted through the "progressive abandoning of reciprocal obligations of solidarity," [2, p. 131] channels and contains violence. This "contract of mutual indifference" (a phrase borrowed from political theorist Norman Geras) [4, p. 181] isolates conflicts and reduces their contagious spread, but it does so violently by producing victims of poverty and social exclusion, hence constituting violence via mechanism of indifference.

The above is underscored by Dumouchel's fundamental claim that "Scarcity is a social institution and is socially instituted. It establishes the modern world just as the sacred established primitive societies." [2, p. 34]. Dumouchel's conceptualization of scarcity represents a stark departure from conventional economic understandings. Rather than viewing scarcity as a natural condition of limited resources, Dumouchel provocatively argues that scarcity is a "social institution" and claims that scarcity is "not a natural category, but, to the contrary... a social institution of scarcity." [2, p. 127].

Yet Dumouchel clarifies that his thesis is more nuanced. He acknowledges that "we live in a limited world where we are sometimes unable to reach our goals because of insufficient resources." [2, p. 128]. The core of his argument is not that resource limitations don't exist, but rather that the way modern society has elevated scarcity to a central organizing principle represents a specific historical development. As he puts it, "only the modern world has adopted the scarcity of resources as a central tenet of its social and political organization and argues that this situation forces upon us particular behaviors and decisions." [2, p. 128]. This development paradoxically coincided with unprecedented increases in wealth and material abundance.

Dumouchel's most contentious claim is that the social institution of scarcity emerged through "the progressive abandoning of reciprocal obligations of solidarity". In traditional societies, obligations of reciprocity ensured that "no one is in danger of starving unless all are.", [2, p. 131] arguing that the gradual dissolution of these bonds of solidarity transformed the social landscape, creating a world where individuals increasingly operated as autonomous agents without mutual obligations. According to Dumouchel this transformation made the limitation of resources a central social problem while simultaneously eroding the traditional mechanisms that had mitigated its effects. We consider this reconceptualization of a core economic principle through a Girardian lens of sacrificial violence to be a profound extension of Girard's thought into the heart of modernity, while not necessarily agreeing with it, as explained in the following section.

Market Economies and the Reduction of Material Scarcity. While Dumouchel's characterization of scarcity as a violent means of protection against violence provides a powerful analytical paradigm within Girardian framework, we would like to object and say that Dumouchel overemphasizes the violent aspects of scarcity while underplaying the productive channeling of mimetic desire in market economies. In these discussions we should always highlight capitalism's

achievements and emphasize that market economies have made and continue to make gargantuan leaps in reducing material scarcity, and by extension, the violence that stems from such scarcity. This view finds support in Girard himself, who, in a 1985 interview with the journal Birth of Tragedy, acknowledged the productive potential of mimetic desire when properly channeled and said that mimetic desire "affects society both in a negative and positive way, through fads and fashions, through sterile rivalries, and also through productive rivalries. When people talk about an economy of incentives, they rely on the channeling of mimetic desire into economic life." [5, p. 30]. He continued by contrasting this with socialist systems that "want to do away with mimetic desire for ethical reasons, and end up depriving economic life of all incentive." Girard concluded that "in order to become economically productive (as it is in the Western world) mimetic desire must be both very intense and severely constrained by strict rules, which I would define as elaborate post-sacrificial devices." [5, p. 30].

Dumouchel counters this argument by underscoring that the prosperity exists alongside and because of a system that produces victims through indifference – precisely the violent protection against violence that characterizes his conception of scarcity as the modern sacred, and emphasize that market economies, despite their productive capacity, still operate through the same mechanism he identifies – the abandonment of solidarity obligations. In response to this, we'd strongly argue that "victims" and scarcity are not a central, essential or innate characteristic of a market system, but conversely, a part of work that is not finished just yet, but which surely is on the list of problems to be solved in the future by the market mechanisms.

We are convinced that Dumouchel's characterization of scarcity as a "social institution of misery" [2, p. 49] shifts the focus too much from the fact that competitive market systems, while not eradicating inequalities, have generated unprecedented material abundance and broadly distributed prosperity. The "contract of mutual indifference" that Dumouchel criticizes, at the very least, might alternatively be viewed as a necessary condition for the productive channeling of mimetic energies, the "elaborate post-sacrificial devices", that constrain mimetic competition without eliminating its generative potential. This raises a fundamental question: how much scarcity in modern capitalist societies is analogous to the sacred in archaic societies and if it *truly* could be a modern analogue of the sacred? Is scarcity a mechanism that produces victims through indifference while simultaneously reducing absolute material deprivation through productive competition, or the character and suffering of victims is not sacred in a Girardian meaning and not unique to the modern economic systems, but a casualty of innate mimetic dynamics which at some point would be present in any social system, but the Kingdom of God.

Philosophically, the tension at the heart of Dumouchel's analysis remains unresolved and perhaps unresolvable, if only by empirical means of technological progress. Can we accept the benefits of the "social institution of scarcity" while mitigating its violent aspects? Or does the very mechanism that produces abundance necessarily produce victims through indifference? Dumouchel's provocative thesis forces us to confront these questions about the moral foundations of modern economic systems, even if we remain skeptical of his characterization of scarcity as fundamentally a social institution rather than a natural condition modified by social arrangements.

Technology, Desire, and Capitalism. In the discourse of capitalism and modernity, the question of technology is inevitable and ever present. In "Desiring Machines" (2021), Dumouchel makes a detailed analysis of our relationship with technology and analyzes capitalism's technological solutions to scarcity. He states that machines function as powerful models that simultaneously attract and repel us: "The machine appears to realize the inaccessible model, the one that shows the most perfect indifference toward us, asserting thereby his autonomy and absolute invulnerability." [6, p. 105]. With this, Dumouchel tries to help us understand how

capitalism has succeeded in reducing material scarcity while creating new forms of mimetic desire. The technological solutions to scarcity that capitalism celebrates reflect a desire to imitate "the model of the model", (which is a machine) leading not to true human flourishing but to "a rejection of all that makes our life, and constitutes a refusal of the contingency and vulnerability that characterize human existence" [6, p. 105]. Our philosophical and research intuition is that maybe in this understanding lays the explanation why capitalism's undeniable success in reducing material scarcity has not necessarily diminished the experience of relative, social scarcity that drives mimetic conflict and the subsequent misery of human condition.

The evolution of these Girardian ideas in Dumouchel's work becomes clearly visible by examining his intellectual trajectory. Girard's path led him from literary criticism ("Deceit, Desire, and the Novel") to anthropology and religious studies ("Violence and the Sacred", "Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World"). Dumouchel explicitly acknowledges this foundation. His early engagement, as seen in essay The Ambivalence of Scarcity, originally published in collaboration with Jean-Pierre Dupuy in 1979 as part of "L"enfer des choses", was a direct attempt to apply Girard's then freshly developed theories of mimetic desire and the sacred to the institution of the modern market economy, continuing the interdisciplinary trajectory of Girard's inquiries [7]. Girard himself had never extensively written on economics, focusing solely on anthropological matters, making Dumouchel along with Dupuy the pioneers in this application. Dumouchel's later essays, such as "Mimetism and Genocides" and "Inside Out: Political Violence in the Age of Globalization," later included in the book Ambivalence of Scarcity, highlight his continued engagement with Girard's core ideas and apply them to increasingly complex and contemporary forms of violence. With this, we see a genealogical development where the initial Girardian model of crisis-resolution-order is tested against modern phenomena that resist such neat closure. Dumouchel's analysis of "indifference" as a key component of modern violence can be seen as an evolution from Girard's focus on active mimetic conflict. While Girard acknowledges the misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) inherent in the scapegoat mechanism [8, p. 61], Dumouchel explores how this *méconnaissance* manifests in modern systems not just as ignorance of the victim's innocence, but as a pervasive, institutionalized indifference that itself becomes a form of violence.

The concept of *méconnaissance* undergoes a subtle evolution from Girard to Dumouchel. For Girard, *méconnaissance* is crucial for the scapegoat mechanism to function; the persecutors must believe in the victim's guilt for the sacrifice to be restorative. Dumouchel, in his essay *De la méconnaissance* goes into the epistemological implications stating that *méconnaissance* is not just a false belief but an "active form of "not-knowing'" that can paradoxically enable certain kinds of cultural "knowledge" or functioning to persist [2, p. 209–227]. He argues, contra Girard, that Christian Revelation "does not so much do away with misrecognition as displaces it," leading to a culture that "functions fundamentally as a critique of culture" [2, p. xvii], constituting a serious development of Girard's idea that revelation undermines sacrificial systems. This analysis of an actively violent role of nominally third parties gets one more substantive addition, in the latest work of Dumouchel, which we'll explore more closely in the next section of our research.

Accusation as the Mechanism of Modern Violence. In his most recent work, Dumouchel provides a significant development of his analysis of violence. In "Violence and Accusation," Dumouchel establishes accusation as a core mechanism through which collective violence operates in modern contexts. Unlike a simple triadic relation, Dumouchel reveals accusation as "a complex quadratic relation that assembles an accuser, an accused, and third parties around an object, a fault, to which all three are related differently, and the accusation necessarily alludes to a norm." [9, p. 18]. This directly connects to his earlier analysis of scarcity as a modern

sacred. Where Girard focused on the scapegoat mechanism as the community versus the victim, Dumouchel's work on accusation emphasizes that modern violence always involves the crucial role of third parties or "bystanders." These third parties are never merely spectators but become implicated through their response (or the lack of) to accusations.

The paradox Dumouchel identifies is particularly relevant to our understanding of the modern forms of exclusion: "The accuser wants them [third parties, added by me] to adopt toward the accused the same relation of conflict that he has. What the accuser aims at through his accusation is for him and the third parties to become the same, to become doubles in their opposition to the accused." [9, p. 18]. This argument significantly reinforces his earlier conception of the "contract of mutual indifference" where systemic violence operates not through direct persecution but through the collective abandonment of victims. We should also draw the line and contrast this approach to theories of dehumanization that suggest violence occurs when victims are seen as non-human, because Dumouchel argues that accusation specifically recognizes the humanity of victims while attributing moral inferiority to them. "An accusation does not dehumanize its target – to the contrary, the accusation clearly recognizes the accused as a moral agent. It makes him or her responsible for some action, and it is that responsibility... that justifies the violence that is exerted or encouraged against the accused." [9, p. 23]. With this development, Dumouchel significantly extends Girard's conception of méconnaissance. Rather than victims being misrecognized through dehumanization, modern violence operates through a complex form of recognition that simultaneously acknowledges the victim's humanity while denying their moral equality, representing a conceptual evolution of how the sacrificial mechanism functions in societies influenced by Christian revelation, where direct scapegoating has been partially undermined but continues to operate through more diffuse forms of indifference and accusation.

Comparative Analysis of Mechanisms of Violence in Archaic and Modern Societies. A central point of comparison between Girard and Dumouchel lies in their understanding of the mechanisms of violence in different societal contexts. Girard's primary model, developed in "Violence and the Sacred," and subsequently in "Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World" explains how archaic societies manage violence through the spontaneous, unanimous expulsion of a scapegoat, which then becomes the basis for ritual and prohibition [3, p. 10]. This mechanism is fundamentally religious and aims to restore order by sacralizing the victim. Dumouchel, while fully endorsing this model for archaic societies, extends and transforms it when analyzing modern societies. He observes that in the modern world, particularly in economic and political spheres, the full scapegoat mechanism with its sacralizing outcome often fails to complete itself. As he notes in his analysis of suicide in *ijime* and Sudanese regicides, "victims of collective unanimous violence are not sacralized." [2, p. 272]. Dumouchel's analysis suggests that this is not necessarily due to the Christian revelation undermining the mechanism (as Girard argues for the modern West), but can occur because there isn't "enough violence" or because the victims are perceived as "losers" rather than powerful, ambivalent figures capable of embodying the sacred [2, p. 267, 270–271]. This is a highly significant distinction between the two theorists. For Girard, the intensity of the mimetic crisis and the subsequent unanimous violence are what generate the sacred power attributed to the victim, Dumouchel's analysis is leaning towards the argument that modern forms of collective violence might be too diffuse, too bureaucratized, or their victims too obviously powerless, to trigger the full sacralizing effect. The argument of active indifference, discussed in the previous sections, also forms a significant departure of Dumouchel's theory from Girard in the context of archaic vs modern societies. Girard's archaic societies are protected by the *active* expulsion of a victim whose death *reconciles*. Dumouchel's modern society is protected by a *passive* indifference that *isolates* conflicts and simultaneously

creates new victims of neglect and exclusion, with the modern violence being less about frenzied, unanimous killing and more about systemic abandonment. "Scarcity is the social construction of indifference to the misfortunes of others." [2, p. 51].

This leads us to a different understanding of how violence is managed. Girard's archaic systems use ritual to periodically purge violence [3, p. 92–93]. Dumouchel's modern economic system, structured by scarcity, doesn't have overt rituals of purgation. Instead, the sacrifice is ongoing and diffuse, manifesting as the marginalization and suffering of those who fail within the system.

Concluding our comparative analysis we should say that while Dumouchel uses Girard's foundational insights into mimesis and scapegoating, he adapts them to explain the specific (and often less overtly ritualized) mechanisms of violence and social order in modern, secularized, and market-driven societies. The core idea of violence being managed through a sacrificial logic persists, but the form and outcome of that logic are transformed. Girard's has his own reading of modernity which well deserves a separate article on its own, yet in regard to the context of this section, and omitting the brilliant eschatological vector of Girard's work, we should probably look at one of his later essay's, *Anorexia and Mimetic Desire*, where Girard identifies the persistence of sacrificial mechanisms through internalized mimetic rivalries, as seen in anorexia's "sacrificial escalation" of competitive self-starvation. This contrasts with Dumouchel's focus on how modern economic structures institutionalize sacrifice through systemic indifference. For Girard, modern sacrifice maintains its unanimity but operates unconsciously, with victims paradoxically participating in their own immolation through mimetic desire. The anorexic becomes both sacrificer and sacrificed, driven by a cultural imperative that functions as a "unanimous" social demand. This represents what Girard calls an "alarming return to the archaic" despite our supposed enlightenment via Gospels revelation (which is discussed in the following sections) [11]. Dumouchel, conversely, emphasizes how modern sacrifice has become diffused and bureaucratized, embedded within economic structures that construct scarcity and normalize indifference to others' suffering. His victims are not sacralized but simply abandoned, reflecting a system where violence manifests not through frenzied unanimous killing but through calculated neglect.

The Dialectic of Scapegoating in Post-Christian Revelation Societies. One of the central dialectical tensions in applying Girard's theory to the modern world revolves around the efficacy and nature of the scapegoat mechanism in a context heavily influenced by Christian revelation. Girard argues in "Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World" that the Gospels reveal the innocence of the victim and the arbitrary nature of the scapegoat mechanism, thereby progressively undermining its power to found and maintain cultural order [10, p. 158–167]. This revelation, for Girard, leads to an increase in mimetic crises that can no longer be resolved by traditional sacrificial means, pushing humanity towards either apocalyptic violence or a renunciation of mimetic rivalry by following the model of Jesus Christ. Dumouchel grapples with this. If Christian revelation has indeed made the old scapegoat mechanism inefficient, how do modern societies continue to manage violence and maintain order? His concept of "scarcity" as a modern, secularized mechanism of protection against violence is a clear attempt to address this. Scarcity, by fostering individualism and a "contract of mutual indifference," [2, p. 104] limits the contagion of violence not by unanimous expulsion of a sacred victim, but by isolating conflicts. However, this creates a tension: Is scarcity a truly *new* mechanism, or a transformed, attenuated version of the old one, still operating on a sacrificial logic, albeit one where the victims (the poor, the excluded) are not sacralized but simply abandoned? Dumouchel himself seems to lean towards the latter, proposing that scarcity is "a violent way of protecting ourselves

against our own violence." [2, p. 101]. The "victims of scarcity are in many cases not the victims of anyone in particular... mainly, they are the victims of everyone's indifference." [2, p. xiii]. Theoretically, this resolves the Girardian problem of how order is maintained post-revelation by creating a *transformed* sacrificial system, one that operates through diffuse indifference rather than acute, ritualized crisis and expulsion. The *méconnaissance* shifts from belief in the victim's guilt and sacred power to a societal blindness regarding the violent consequences of systemic indifference. Yet, this resolution is not without its own problems. If this modern mechanism still produces victims and merely represents a more insidious, less recognized form of scapegoating, how do we deal with the fact that scarcity is a fundamental driver of progress in human society, an argument which has been very clearly argued for many times in history, starting with Plato in The Republic, stating that "our need will be the real creator" [12, 3:82 "Notes"]. *This leaves us in a good place to reiterate our perspective of advocates of free market economies: while Dumouchel emphasizes scarcity's role in producing "victims of everyone's indifference," this claim doesn't acknowledge enough capitalism's unprecedented success in reducing material scarcity. The "victims" produced by modern market systems exist alongside and most of the time are beneficiaries of massive reductions in poverty, increases in life expectancy, and improvements in material conditions that would have been unimaginable in pre-capitalist or communist societies. The productive mimesis of capitalism has demonstrably reduced the very conditions of material lack that drive mimetic violence.* A further tension arises in Dumouchel's analysis of modern political violence, such as genocides. He notes, "modern political violence is marked by the failure of the scapegoat mechanism. These are crises without resolution." [2, p. 288]. This aligns with Girard's understanding of the failing sacrificial system in the modern era. However, Dumouchel's analysis of Midlarsky's work on genocides also highlights elements that strongly resemble the scapegoat mechanism: "Midlarsky describes the victims of genocides as scapegoats, neither more nor less... In order for genocide to occur, the victims also have to be sacrificable; they have to be good scapegoats in Girard's sense." [2, p. 296]. The tension here is whether genocides represent the *failure* of the scapegoat mechanism to bring about reconciliation and order, or its *perverse continuation* where victims are systematically eliminated without achieving the traditional sacralizing and unifying effect. Dumouchel suggests the latter, stating, "Genocides resemble sacrifices because they are performed by designated officiants... Genocides resemble rituals, staged scenes the purpose of which is to bring order back into society." [2, p. 299]. But he immediately adds, "However, these "sacrifices" occur outside of any ritual framework... This is why it has no end, no natural term but total consummation." [2, p. 300, The Ambivalence of Scarcity, Dumouchel].

This presents a dialectical problem: If the scapegoat mechanism is truly revealed and thus failing (as per Girard's thesis on Christian revelation), how can its structure persist so clearly in phenomena like genocide? And if it does persist, why does it fail to produce the traditional outcome of (sacrificial) order? Dumouchel doesn't fully resolve this tension but points towards the idea that modern political violence operates with a *partial* scapegoat logic: the designation and elimination of victims, but lacks the crucial element of collective *méconnaissance* that leads to sacralization and lasting (albeit sacrificial) peace. The "closure of misrepresentation" is incomplete [2, p. 268]. The violence is too rationalized, too bureaucratized, and perhaps the victims too de-humanized rather than ambivalently sacralized, for the ancient mechanism to fully play out its founding role. Here Dumouchel concords with Girard: the Christian revelation, in this light, might not have eliminated scapegoating, but rather stripped it of its capacity to generate stable sacred orders, leaving behind a more naked, and potentially more destructive, form of persecution. Dumouchel's work explores Girard's theory into these uncomfortable modern

realities, revealing that the "end of sacrifice" is not a simple event but a complex, ongoing, and violent transformation of how human societies deal with their internal antagonisms.

The problem of *méconnaissance* in a world supposedly enlightened by Christian revelation is a persistent dialectical point. Girard states, "The Gospels make all forms of "mythologizing" impossible since, by revealing the founding mechanism, they stop it from functioning." [10, p. 174]. Yet, Dumouchel's analyses consistently show *méconnaissance* at play in modern economic and political systems. For instance, the "invisibility of violence" that allows the victims of scarcity to be blamed for their own plight [2, p. 52–53] is a form of *méconnaissance*. Dumouchel attempts to bridge this by suggesting that "Christian Revelation does not so much do away with misrecognition as displaces it." [2, p. xvii]. This displacement means that while the old myths of sacred victims might be untenable, new forms of blindness emerge that allow sacrificial logics to persist and for sacrificial *logos* prosper. The *méconnaissance* shifts from a belief in sacred powers to a belief in the "naturalness" or "inevitability" of economic laws that produce victims, or the "justness" of political violence against designated enemies. This is a crucial dialectical move of Dumouchel: the revelation of one layer of *méconnaissance* (the sacred victim) does not lead to total transparency, but to the formation of new, perhaps more subtle, layers of societal self-deception.

Dumouchel continues tackling this issue in his more recent, 2020 paper "After-Truth," where he extends his analysis of mimetic relations by examining how lying and self-deception operate in our contemporary "post-truth" environment. Dumouchel argues that "liars, whether they are guardians of a higher truth or merely seek their own advantage, do not know the truth. To put it otherwise, they lie to themselves as they lie to others." [13, p. 3]. This deepens our understanding of how mimetic desire functions within a framework of mutual indifference that characterizes modern scarcity. The subject who deceives himself "imitates the judgment that condemns him – in other words, the non-desire of which he is the victim – and yearns to capture the autonomy of his judge." [13, p. 8]. When this model then rejects the subject, the subject feels he has been lied to and now must lie in return, making lying, as Dumouchel sees via Rousseau lense, "a normal part of the fabric of the world." [3, p. 8]. Dumouchel significantly extended his earlier work on scarcity by revealing how the "contract of mutual indifference" which we discussed earlier, is perpetuated through complex patterns of mimetic self-deception that become institutionalized in our social relations.

Conclusion. This paper has traced the theoretical evolution from René Girard's concept of the sacred to Paul Dumouchel's thesis of scarcity as mechanisms for managing violence in society. Through our comparative analysis, we have demonstrated how Dumouchel extends Girardian mimetic theory to address the specific conditions of modern market economies while preserving its core insights about violence and social order. Dumouchel's reconceptualization of scarcity as a "modern sacred" that functions through systemic indifference rather than ritualized sacrifice represents a significant advancement of mimetic theory into contemporary contexts. His introduction of concepts such as the contract of mutual indifference, homo mimeticus, and most recently, accusation as a mechanism of modern violence, provides a sophisticated framework for understanding how *méconnaissance* continues to operate in ostensibly post-sacrificial societies.

Our critical engagement with Dumouchel's characterization of scarcity as a "social institution of misery" has revealed an important tension between his critique of market systems and their empirical success in reducing material deprivation. While acknowledging the social problems of modern economies, we have argued that the productive channeling of mimetic desire within market systems has generated unprecedented material abundance that cannot be dismissed. The dialectical tension between Girard's emphasis on Christian revelation undermining sacrificial

systems and Dumouchel's observation that *méconnaissance* is displaced rather than eliminated illuminates the complex, ongoing nature of humanity's struggle with mimetic violence. Rather than a simple progression from sacred to secular, modern society experiences a transformation of sacrificial mechanisms into more diffuse, bureaucratized, and often unrecognized forms. Our theoretical development offers improved understanding of contemporary forms of exclusion, economic competition, and violence. Mimetic theory, as extended by Dumouchel, continues to provide a valuable interpretive framework for examining the moral foundations of market systems and the persistence of sacrificial mechanisms in our ostensibly rational, desacralized world.

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ПРОБЛЕМА НАСИЛЬСТВА У СУЧАСНОСТІ: САКРАЛЬНЕ ЖИРАРА ТА РІДКІСНІСТЬ ДЮМУШЕЛЯ

Теодор Гривна
Львівський національний університет імені Івана Франка
вул. Університетська, 1, 79000, м. Львів, Україна
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6044-6412

Ця стаття досліджує теоретичну еволюцію від концепції сакрального Рене Жирара до тези про рідкісність (scarcity, la rareté) Поля Дюмушеля як механізмів регулювання насильства у суспільстві. Через критичний порівняльний аналіз ми відстежуємо, як Дюмушель розширює та трансформує міметичну теорію Жирара, пояснюючи особливості сучасної ринкової економіки. Якщо Жирар визначає механізм цапа-відбувайла як основу архаїчного суспільного порядку, то Дюмушель переосмислює рідкісність благ як «сучасне сакральне», що працює через системну байдужість, а не ритуалізоване жертвоприношення. Ми стверджуємо, що цей теоретичний прогрес відкриває перспективи для розуміння сучасних форм насильства, водночас ставлячи під сумнів критику ринкових економік Дюмушеля як переважно насильницьких інституцій. Наш аналіз доводить, що міметична теорія пропонує цінну парадигму для осмислення економічної конкуренції та управління насильством у сучасних суспільствах. Досліджуючи, як *méconnaissance* (неусвідомлення) функціонує сучасних контекстах, наша праця долучається до дискусій про моральні засади ринкових систем і та вивчає феномен дії механізмів жертвопринесення у, здавалося б, секулярних суспільствах. Також ми досліджуємо найсвіжіший (2024) розвиток теорії звинувачення Дюмушеля, як продовження його праць про системну байдужість, демонструючи, як сучасне насильство функціонує через складні механізми визнання, що одночасно визнають людяність жертв, але заперечують їхню моральну рівність. Концептуальна еволюція яку ми прослідковуємо, розкриває парадоксальну напругу в постхристиянських суспільствах, де дієвість традиційного механізму цапа-відбувайла частково підірвана, але ймовірно продовжує діяти через більш розмиті, бюрократизовані форми. Наш методологічний підхід простежує генеалогію від ранньої літературної критики Жирара, через його антропологічні праці та до послідовного застосування Дюмушелем цих теорій до економіки та сучасного політичного насильства. Хронологічно аналізуючи ключові тексти: «Обман, бажання і роман» та «Насильство і сакральне» Жирара та «Амбівалентність рідкісності» Дюмушеля, ми виокремлюємо вирішальні теоретичні зрушення та трансформації, розкриваючи не лише те, як Дюмушель розширює концепції Жирара, а й де він суттєво від них відходить.

Ключові слова: міметична теорія, Рене Жирар, Поль Дюмушель, механізм цапа-відбувайла, насильство, сучасність, сакральне, капіталізм, міметичне бажання, християнське одкровення, геноцид, філософська антропологія, суспільні інституції, культура, людське існування.