

Nevertheless, on the whole, Wood's translation reads clearly, and fluidly, and in this sense stands as a unique contribution to the resurgence of scholarly activity revolving around Hegel's encyclopaedic system.

Granting that one might want a condensed presentation of the central philosophical motifs running through Hegel's notoriously difficult, though rewarding, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, one would do very well to start here instead. Similarly, Wood's fresh translation and useful contextualizing commentary will appeal to those seeking to revisit these specific sections of the final system in order to arrive at a more sophisticated understanding of Hegel's mature thought.

WES FURLOTTE *University of Ottawa*

The One by Whom Scandal Comes (OWSC)

RENÉ GIRARD, Trans., M.B. DEBEVOISE

East Lansing, MI. Michigan State University Press. 2014. 151 pp. \$19.95.

When These Things Begin: Conversations with Michel Treguer (WTTB)

RENÉ GIRARD, Trans., TREVOR CRIBBEN MERRILL

East Lansing, MI. Michigan State University Press. 2014. 152 pp. \$19.95.

The Head Beneath the Altar: Hindu Mythology and the Critique of Sacrifice (HBA)

BRIAN COLLINS

East Lansing, MI. Michigan State University Press. 2014. 320 pp. \$24.95.

doi:10.1017/S0012217315000724

... In *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*—the “somewhat incriminating title” of which, René Girard reassures us, does not refer “to the author of the present work” (OWSC, ix)—Girard's interviewer, Maria Stella Barberi, remarks: “At a conference recently, someone asked in a rather exasperated tone of voice, ‘How can one still speak of René Girard after Auschwitz?’” (OWSC, 78). This sardonic remark imperfectly conceals the more serious question *behind* the question: what is the *real* connection between Girard's scapegoat theory and the Nazi Holocaust or Jewish Shoah?

Girard's scapegoat theory—which attributes sacrificial violence to the subconscious repetition of the collective murder of a primordial (human) scapegoat victim—is frequently taken as an explanation of the Holocaust or Shoah (‘Auschwitz’)—that is, of the systematic extermination of some six to 10 million Gypsies, Jews, Slavs, Social Democrats, and other undesirables, in the World War II Nazi concentration camps—as if the Holocaust or Shoah were simply a colossal scapegoating episode. And Girard was a French college student in German-occupied Paris in the mid-1940s, when the Vichy regime passed anti-Semitic laws and began shipping French Jews off to the Nazi death camps.

But Girard's answer to this exasperating question appears somewhat more disturbing. “Let me point out,” Girard quips, “that there is a chronological problem here. How could

one have spoken of René Girard *before* Auschwitz?" To which Barberi replies: "Right—how old would you have been?" (OWSC, 79). The scathing answer to this question (Girard was born in 1923) might be: *old enough to know what was happening when French Jews began to disappear from the streets of the Vichy regime....* But Girard does not speak directly about French complicity in the Nazi horror. And considering the scandals that have erupted around the question of complicity in the Holocaust, in the cases of Paul DeMan and Martin Heidegger (referred to by Barberi and Girard: OWSC, 107), it would set the present reviewer's mind at ease if Girard would provide a more pertinent answer to this troubling question.

But what, exactly, *is* Girard's scapegoat theory? Is it specifically a critical analysis of the contagious 'sacred violence' that grips endangered communities during 'the sacrificial crisis,' when a whole society, caught up in the escalating violence of mimetic rivalry, turns against a stigmatized minority or an ostracized individual, and achieves a brief catharsis by discharging its 'sacred violence' upon its scapegoat victim(s)? Or is it, more generally, a theory of *sacrifice itself*, which attempts to explain the bewildering diversity of sacrificial rituals by recourse to this 'scapegoat mechanism'? Girard would probably argue for the latter thesis, since he invites comparison between his scapegoat theory and the previous theories of sacrifice by Sigmund Freud, Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Sylvain Lévi.

But after reading Girard's *Sacrifice* (2011), and Brian Collins' *The Head Beneath the Altar* (2014), both of which apply the Girardian theory to Brahminic Vedic sacrifice, it becomes clear that the attempt to make the Girardian scapegoat theory 'fit' the enormous diversity of sacrificial practices results in a straining after analogies (for Collins, virtually *everybody* in the *Mahabharata* is a scapegoat figure!) and a conflation of different mythological personages (for Girard, both *Prajapati* and *Purusa* are simply aspects of a single scapegoat victim!) that does justice neither to the Girardian theory nor to the indigenous sacrificial culture. And this disconnect between Girardian theory and its applications suggests that no single theory can satisfactorily comprehend the diversity of sacrificial rituals within a single explanatory framework.

It could then be argued that Girard's 'scapegoat mechanism' is really a peculiarly degraded version of sacrificial ritualism which emerged in Western European cultures after the desecralization of Christian political theology, which is starkly evident in the catastrophic world-historical events of the past two centuries: the French Revolutionary Terror, the Stalinist Great Terror, the Nazi Holocaust, and so on. But the danger of making Girard's scapegoat theory into a general theory of sacrifice is not only that sacrificial scapegoating becomes a metaphysical, eternal, and therefore inescapable feature of the collective experience of the human species, but also that it risks projecting this (per)version of sacrifice upon non-Western culture(s), in which sacrificial ritualism serves a host of functions, including sublimating the killing of animals for food, managing the guilt and anxiety arising from the killing of human beings, carrying out the 'purging' or 'healing' of psychosomatic diseases, and effecting the reintegration of stigmatized individuals into the sacrificial community.

Further, Girard's argument—that only in Western culture, in the Christian Gospels, has sacrificial ritualism been exposed for what it is: the collective murder of an innocent scapegoat victim by a crowd or mob in the grips of a sacrificial crisis—also betrays a Eurocentric bias, which relegates the sacrificial rituals of non-Western cultures to subconscious mythological repetitions of the scapegoat mechanism. But in *The Head Beneath the Altar*, Brian Collins shows that the Girardian critique of sacrificial scapegoating

was foreshadowed in Brahminic Vedic (Hindu) culture, in the *Sunashopa* stories of the *Rig Veda*, a thousand years before Jesus Christ (HBA, 126-132); that Christ's debunking of scapegoat sacrifice could be set against the *anti*-sacrifice of Karna in the *Mahabharata* (HBA, 161-174, esp. 169); and that the Girardian critique of sacrificial violence has already been incorporated into three schools of Hindu thought—the *Vaisnavite*, the *Saivite*, and an 'existential' school (HBA, 237-241)—all of which call into question Girard's claim for the Christian revelation as the exclusive debunking of the scapegoat mechanism.

Girard's reading of the Christian Gospels is also highly selective, since it emphasizes precisely those episodes (especially the Barabbas episode, *Matthew 27:20-23*) which expose the crucifixion as a scapegoat sacrifice, and de-emphasizes those (e.g., 'The Last Supper,' *Matthew 26:26-28*) which depict the Crucifixion as the supreme self-sacrifice, through which Jesus Christ gives his flesh and blood for suffering humankind. Girard has previously argued that to accept this sacrificial reading is to disguise the scapegoat mechanism behind a primitive mythology of sacrificial violence, like that of the Dionysian cult of Euripides' *Bacchae*, and to conflate Jesus Christ with the sacred kings and dying gods of Frazer's *Golden Bough*.¹ But what Girard can't accept about this sacrificial reading is that Christ's Passion is not simply the abrogation, but also the fulfillment (Greek: πληρωμα, from πληροσα, "to fulfil"; cf. *Matthew 5:17*) of sacrificial ritualism; and that it is only through the shockingly physical reenactment of Christ's suffering and death, in the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist, that the communicant actually imitates Christ's self-sacrifice, and thus partakes in the sacrificial community of "the Body of Christ" (cf. *1 Corinthians 10:16-17*).

It might then be asked: can the Nazi Holocaust or Jewish Shoah still be 'thought' in sacrificial terms, without disguising the scapegoat mechanism behind a mythological façade and blaming the victims for the crimes committed against them? In OWSC, Girard refers the reader to "my last book [in which] I spoke of anti-Semitism and Nazism in the chapter on Nietzsche" (79). And in *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, Girard argues that Nazism, after Nietzsche, is an attempt to desecrate the Christian anti-sacrificial system and to restore primitive human sacrifice.² But in *When These Things Begin*, Girard also refers to German National Socialism, along with Stalinist Communism, as an attempt "to deliberately go back to scapegoating" (WTTB, 5), to employ 'sacred violence' "to close the ranks at the expense of scapegoats" (WTTB, 6), and to forge a barbaric community based upon the persecution of its scapegoat victims.

¹ See René Girard, Jean-Michael Oughourlian, and Guy Lefort, "The Sacrificial Reading and Historical Christianity," in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, 224-262. But, in OWSC, Girard revises his position, under the influence of Raymund Schwager's *Must There Be Scapegoats?*, to grudgingly accept the Christian doctrine of sacrifice. See OWSC, 33-34.

² In *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 174-175, Girard accepts Friedrich Nietzsche's thesis that "Christianity wants it established that no-one should be sacrificed" (cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, #246, 142), but argues that Nazism, after Nietzsche, attempts to eliminate the Christian solicitude for victims.

Certainly the Nazi Holocaust was, in part, motivated, by the Nietzschean desecration of all 'higher (Christian) values,' and by the reduction of Christian sacrifice to its most perverted, debased versions, in what Giorgio Agamben, in *Remnants of Auschwitz*, describes as the completely *un-sacrificial* death. But Jewish theologians have compared the Shoah to the Abrahamic sacrifice of Isaac (the *Akeda*; *Genesis 22:1-18*) as the supreme test of faith which was required before the Jewish tribes could return to the Promised Land. But this sacrificial interpretation is obviously highly problematic, and it would be interesting to know how Girard might respond to the challenges raised to his theory by Jewish theologies of the Holocaust or Shoah.

References

- Agamben, Giorgio, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen
 1999 *Remnants of Auschwitz*. Stanford CA. Stanford University Press.
- Girard, René, translated by Matthew Pattillo and David Dawson
 2011 *Sacrifice*. East Lansing MI. Michigan State University Press.
- Girard, René, translated by James G. Williams
 2001 *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books.
- Girard, René, with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort, translated by Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer
 1987 *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*. Stanford CA. Stanford University Press.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, translated by Walter Kaufmann
 1967 *The Will to Power*. New York. Vintage Books.

ERIC D. MEYER *Independent Scholar*

Laruelle: Against the Digital

ALEXANDER R. GALLOWAY

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014; 304 pp.; \$27.50 (paperback)

doi:10.1017/S0012217315000761

In Herman Melville's short story, *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* (1853) Bartleby's obstinate response to every request made of him is that 'I prefer not to.' Bartleby withholds participation in his environment and gradually recedes from society altogether thus fostering a curious indeterminacy in his outright refusal to do anything at all. Yet Bartleby emerges as an unlikely figure of resistance. Is Bartleby's withdrawal, revolutionary and an effective act of protest? Or is his solipsistic and ultimately infuriating behaviour a symptom of the overall social and political malaise of neoliberal society.

Alexander Galloway invokes Bartleby's abstention from society in the second chapter of *Laruelle: Against the Digital* likening his withdrawal to the Occupy movement's demand of having no demands. Slavoj Žižek and Antonio Negri (among many others) have also connected Bartleby's attitude of passive resistance to the Occupy movement. In *Laruelle: Against the Digital*, a critical analysis of self-styled, so-called non-philosopher, François Laruelle, Galloway also connects the Occupy movement with Bartleby. Bartleby