The Crowd is Untruth: a Comparison of Kierkegaard and Girard

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The purpose of this essay is to provide an introductory comparison of the writings of Søren Kierkegaard and René Girard. To my knowledge, a substantial secondary article or book has not been written on this subject.[1] Girard's writings themselves contain only a handful of references to Kierkegaard.[2] This deficiency is unfortunate, since, as I hope to show in the following pages, these two authors do share common insights into the psychology of violence.

Girard's writings usually take the form of a scientific analysis of historical data. He is attempting to frame a theory of culture which takes into account all of the data which he has encountered. It would seem that Kierkegaard's mode of thought is very different, since he is primarily concerned with the meaning of personal existence before God. But Kierkegaard was in his own way and in his own time a kind of social scientist. He engaged in an extended "anthropological contemplation" (1967-1978, v. 1: #37), in which he attempted to map out the territory of the human spirit. Girard's thought, for its part, occasionally steps outside of the methodological atheism of the scientific guild to speak in theological terms. Thus in both realms, the scientific and the theological, there is the possibility of fruitful dialogue between these two authors.

I am assuming that the members of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion are more familiar with the writings of Girard than with the writings of Kierkegaard. My procedure will therefore involve listing certain key concepts in Girard's thought, such as mimetic desire, envy, the social crisis, etc., followed by a search for parallel ideas in Kierkegaard. If Girard were claiming complete originality for his interpretation of culture, my findings would show that he was in many respects foreshadowed by Kierkegaard. But, of course, he is not claiming this. He claims only to be restating and organizing insights which have already been achieved by great novelists and the Bible. I would argue that Kierkegaard is rightly seen as one of the great "novelists" who sees human culture clearly and penetratingly. It is not a coincidence that Kierkegaard's thought, like Girard's, is rooted in an interpretation of the Bible.

After this initial survey of similarities between Kierkegaard and Girard, I will outline a few possible differences between their approaches. This will lead to comments on the way in which Kierkegaard's thought can be used as a basis for understanding the motives which underlie political violence. I will propose that Kierkegaard's thought can be coordinated with Girard's in such a way that the thought of each author is strengthened by the contribution of the other.

Mimetic Desire Mimetic desire is the main starting point for Girard's theory of personality and culture. Human beings have a basic feeling of existential lack which leads them to

look to a model who seems to possess a greater fullness of being. The desires of the model are imitated in the hope of acquiring a similar fullness of being. In Girard's words:

When modern theorists envisage man as a being who knows what he wants, or who at least possesses an "unconscious" that knows for him, they may simply have failed to perceive the domain in which human uncertainty is most extreme. Once his basic needs are satisfied (indeed, sometimes even before), man is subject to intense desires, though he may not know precisely for what. The reason is that he desires being, something he himself lacks and which some other person seems to possess. The subject thus looks to that other person to inform him of what he should desire in order to acquire that being. If the model, who is apparently already endowed with superior being, desires some object, that object must surely be capable of conferring an even greater plenitude of being. (1977, 145-46)

Is mimetic desire a phenomenon which is noticed by Kierkegaard?

Kierkegaard's book Christian Discourses, which receives very little scholarly attention, contains a psychological analysis which clearly anticipates Girard's theory of mimetic desire. In the discourse on "The Worry of Lowliness,"[3] for example, Kierkegaard describes three modes of being, which are represented by the bird, the heathen, and the Christian. The bird, along with the lily, represents for Kierkegaard the realm of nature. Kierkegaard's description of the behavior of the "heathen" is almost identical to Girard's psychology. Consider the following quotation:

For it seems indeed as if, in order to be himself, a man must first be expertly informed about what the others are, and thereby learn to know what he himself is--in order then to be that. However, if he walks into the snare of this optical illusion, he never reaches the point of being himself. (1971, 42)

Here Kierkegaard is debunking, like Girard, the idea that the desires of the "modern" person are spontaneous and unmediated by society. "Being," in the sense of a centered and coherent self-consciousness, is precisely what the individual lacks; therefore he looks around at the others so that he may pattern himself after them. Kierkegaard and Girard are both describing the double bind in which the individual places himself as he seeks to become himself by copying others. The next passage expands on this theme by opening up the theological dimension of human existence:

For from "the others," naturally, one properly only learns to know what the others are--it is in this way the world would beguile a man from being himself. "The others," in turn do not know at all what they themselves are, but only what the others are. There is only One who knows what He Himself is, that is God; and He knows also what every man in himself is, for it is precisely by being before God that every man is. The man who is not before God is not himself, for this a man can be only by being before Him who is in and for Himself. If one is oneself by being in Him who is in and for Himself, one can be in others or before others, but one cannot by being merely before others be oneself. (1971, 43)

This quotation highlights the emptiness and vanity of the "world." When human beings are looking to each other as models of being, the pathway of life is a treadmill or squirrel cage rather than an actual road. The thread is being pulled through the fabric without having been tied at the end. The only context in which human life gains coherence, stability, and purpose is found in the transcendent relationship between the individual and God the Creator. This theme is very clear in Kierkegaard, and I would suggest that it is implicit throughout Girard's writings, whenever it is not explicitly stated.

If we turn to Kierkegaard's psychological masterpiece, The Sickness Unto Death, we find the same anthropological insights. The person described as the "heathen" in Christian Discourses is now the despairing individual:

He [the person in despair] now acquires a little understanding of life, he learns to copy others,[4] how they manage their lives--and he now proceeds to live the same way. In Christendom he is also a Christian, goes to church every Sunday, listens to and understands the pastor, indeed they have a mutual understanding; he dies, the pastor ushers him into eternity for ten rix-dollars--but a self he was not, and a self he did not become. (1983, 52)

In a passage such as this, Kierkegaard twists the knife which he is plunging into nominal Christianity. He is arguing that the so-called Christians of Christendom are actually living in the way of the "heathen," which is the way of empty mimetic selfhood. Implicit here is the idea that the biblical texts have a great potential for transforming human thought and life; but this potential has been vitiated during the history of Christianity, as the biblical message has been watered down and made to conform to the pre-existing mimetic psychology of the "world." Kierkegaard's critique of Christendom is developed most decisively in his late works, The Sickness Unto Death, Practice in Christianity, For Self-Examination, Judge for Yourself!, and in the essays published in English as Kierkegaard's Attack Upon Christendom. When these works are placed next to Girard's comments on the "sacrificial" nature of nominal Christianity, it is apparent that the two authors are aiming at the same target.[5]

Envy The word envy points to a certain intensifying and souring of mimetic desire. Kierkegaard was keenly interested in this phenomenon, as we can see in an extended passage in Two Ages, 81-84:[6]

Ultimately the tension of reflection establishes itself as a principle, and just as enthusiasm is the unifying principle in a passionate age, so envy becomes the negatively unifying principle in a passionless and very reflective age.... The individual must first of all break out of the prison in which his own reflection holds him, and if he succeeds, he still does not stand in the open but in the vast penitentiary built by the reflection of his associates, and to this he is again related through the reflection-relation in himself, and this can be broken only by religious inwardness, however much he sees through the falseness of the relation. (1978, 81)

This work is a review of a novel entitled Two Ages by Thomasine Gyllembourg, which was published in 1845. It is interesting to note the similarity between Kierkegaard's comments here and Girard's review of 19th century novels in Deceit, Desire, and the Novel. Kierkegaard uses the metaphor of a penitentiary to analyze modern Western culture. When envy, which Girard calls internal mediation, is the basic principle of a social system, human life becomes a prison from which escape is very difficult. In his work, Girard speaks of "ontological" or "metaphysical" sickness, which suggests that modern culture is like a vast insane asylum which has been created by the minds of the inmates. Both authors are painting a picture of modern society as a hall of mirrors in which the self is lost, as it continually seeks to see itself in the other. As long as the individual strives to find himself in the nexus of reflections, he does not come to himself. In the asylum, men are either "gods" or "demons" in the eyes of each other. Religious inwardness, the life of faith, is the pathway which leads out of the trap, as it shows the individual the falseness of the culture in which he is enmeshed and opens up his existence to genuine transcendence. A "vertical" relationship with God is necessary in order for the person to gain authentic selfhood; this makes possible a different kind of social order, one which is based on truth rather than falsehood.

The Social Crisis Girard maintains that a society which is organized around the principle of mimetic desire is inherently unstable. It can degenerate into a war of all against all, as imitation of the desires of others leads to rivalry with them. The breakdown of society can produce a mass contagion which is most accurately described in terms of demonic possession. Here again, Kierkegaard's thought is cognizant of the same phenomenon. He not only spoke of the demonic as a category of individual psychology, but also as a sociological category. Indeed, this distinction between individual and society is broken down by Kierkegaard just as it is by Girard. The term which Girard coins to indicate the social construction of the mimetic self is "interdividual psychology." This term suggests a lack of coherent, discrete individuality in those persons who are suffering from the ontological sickness of mimetic desire. When an entire society is made up of such persons, there is a lack of genuine human subjectivity. As Oughourlian puts it, "the only subject is the mimetic structure" (Things Hidden, 199). In this light, consider this entry from the Journals which expresses Kierkegaard's understanding of an acute social crisis:

In contrast to what was said about possession in the Middle Ages and times like that, that there were individuals who sold themselves to the devil, I have an urge to write a book:

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and show how people en masse abandon themselves to it, how it is now carried on en masse. This is why people run together in flocks--so that natural and animal rage will grip a person, so that he feels stimulated, inflamed, and ausser sich. The scenes on Bloksberg are utterly pedantic compared to this demonic lust, a lust to lose oneself in order to evaporate in a potentiation, so that a person is outside of himself, does not really know what he is doing or what he is saying or who it is or what it is speaking through him, while the blood rushes faster, the eyes glitter and stare fixedly, the passions boil, lusts seethe. (1967-1978, v. 4: 4178)

This passage is reminiscent of Girard's comments on the The Bacchae in Violence and the Sacred. Girard's analysis of the play leads him to the conclusion that Dionysus is "the god of decisive mob action" (1977, 134). The subject of the play is the outbreak of violence which threatens the existence of the community. This threat is avoided through sacrifice. In Girard's words: "The metamorphosis from peaceable citizens into raging beasts is too terrifying and too transitory for the community to accept it as issuing from within itself. As soon as calm has been miraculously restored, the past tumult will be looked upon as a supreme example of divine intervention" (1977, 134).

The Scapegoat In Girard's sociology, the crisis of societal disintegration is resolved through the identification and killing of a chosen victim, a scapegoat. The killing of the scapegoat provides a means for the formation of a new social unanimity and cohesion, as acquisitive mimesis is transformed into conflictual mimesis, which is resolved by the destruction of someone arbitrarily designated as the cause of the conflict.

Kierkegaard had a unique perspective on the phenomenon of scapegoating as a result of what has become known as The Corsair Affair. The Corsair was a satirical paper which began to ridicule Kierkegaard after he complained about being the only intellectual in Copenhagen who had not been attacked in its pages. He could not stand the guilt by association. After the verbal insults and visual caricatures began to be published, Kierkegaard literally became a laughing-stock within Danish society. His beloved walks around the streets of the city became a continual gauntlet of derision. Mothers began to tell their children: "Don't be a Søren!" Kierkegaard's tendency to associate himself with Christ was exacerbated by this experience, as he came to see himself as being surrounded by vulgar mockery, just as Christ was when he was beaten by the soldiers.

He saw himself as undergoing a repetition in his own life of the social expulsion which Christ experienced.

It was his experience of heterogeneity which enabled Kierkegaard to reflect deeply on the meaning of the crucifixion of Christ, an important theme in his later authorship. Works of Love, for example, contains a vivid description of the mockery of Christ, as it would have appeared from Christ's perspective:

I wonder if the wild, nocturnal howl of beasts of prey is ever so dreadful as the inhumanity of the raging mob. I wonder if one beast of prey in the pack can incite another to a frenzy greater than is natural for the individual beast in the same way as one man among the unrepentant crowd can incite another to a more than animal bloodthirstiness and frenzy. I wonder if even the most bloodthirsty beast's spiteful or flashing glance has this same fire of evil which is kindled in the individual's eye when, incited and inciting, he rages in the frenzied mob! (1962b, 166)[7]

The phrase, "incited and inciting," is a direct parallel with Girard's observations concerning the process of mutual "interdividual" reinforcement which constitutes the system of mimetic desire. In this system, persons may alternate from moment to moment between active and passive roles in the production of mass contagion.

Note that in a passage such as this, Kierkegaard is giving his attention to the dynamics of crowd behavior as they are revealed in the Gospels. This is a different mode of reading than that which is found in typical biblical scholarship. Kierkegaard is demonstrating that the Gospels have a fundamental anthropological interest and knowledge. It is this knowledge which Girard is seeking to exposit in his writings. Together they are forging vital links between theology and social science. These links are vital because they concern the very possibility of knowledge itself. An understanding of the basic motives which impel human behavior is made possible by the revelation of the scapegoat.

The Cross as Revelation Girard speaks of the Gospels as texts which reveal the scapegoat mechanism, because they are written from the point of view of the victim, not of the persecuting crowd. This process of revelation is echoed and amplified in Kierkegaard's writings, which stress as strongly as possible that truth does not lie on the side of the crowd, but of the individual. (It is a misconception that when Kierkegaard spoke of "the single individual," he was thinking of the so-called "individual" of the modern West. He was thinking of Christ.) Indeed, Kierkegaard wrote an essay on the theme "The Crowd is Untruth" (1962a, 109-120). This phrase could serve as the perfect epigraph for Girard's thought as a whole. In this essay we find passages such as this:

The crowd is untruth. Therefore was Christ crucified, because he, even though he addressed himself to all, would not have to do with the crowd, because he would not in any way let a crowd help him, because he in this respect absolutely pushed away, would not found a party, or allow balloting, but would be what he was, the truth, which relates itself to the single individual. And therefore everyone who in truth will serve the truth, is eo ipso in some way or other a martyr. (1962a, 114 [my trans.])

Girard maintains in his works that the most common Christian understanding of the Cross, as a vicarious atonement, is an example of the reversion of Christianity to sacrificial thinking. Such a reversion is a falling away from the revelatory insights of the New Testament. Girard is attempting to show that violence has a human origin alone. Violence is not directed or demanded by God. Concerning the Cross, he says that: "Neither the Son nor the Father should be questioned about the cause of this event, but all mankind, and mankind alone" (1987, 213). Kierkegaard anticipated Girard at this point as well, as we see in the following passage:

Rarely does one make a real attempt to understand how it was that Christ (whose life in one sense could not possibly have collided with anyone since it had no earthly aims) ended his life by being crucified. Perhaps one fears getting to know anything of the implicit proof of the existence of evil in the world. So one pretends as if Christ himself and God's providence ordained it this way.... The fact that Christ was willing to sacrifice his life does not at all signify that he sought death or forced the Jews to kill him. Christ's willingness to offer his life simply means a conception of the world as being so evil that the Holy One unconditionally had to die--unless he wanted to become a sinner or a mediocrity in order to become a success in the world. (1967-1978, v. 1: #305 [emphasis added])

The Key Differences Between Kierkegaard and Girard This very brief overview of Kierkegaard's thought suggests that Kierkegaard can be legitimately described as a 19th century thinker who reveals the workings of mimetic desire. While further research and articulation is warranted on this agenda, we need to turn our attention now to the differences between the two authors.

The first difference concerns the Kierkegaardian concept of the spheres of existence. Kierkegaard, through his pseudonyms, paints a picture of three primary spheres of existence, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. Since Kierkegaard is most commonly construed as an individualistic thinker, these spheres are usually considered as describing different ways in which an individual thinks and acts. I propose, however, that it is also legitimate to interpret these spheres in social terms. In other words, there is a certain sub-group within the culture of the modern West which lives "aesthetically;" there is another sub-group which lives "ethically;" and there is another sub-group which lives "religiously." I suggest, for instance, that Naziism is an example of an "aesthetic" culture which became demonic. Stalinism is an example of an "ethical" ideology which became demonic.[8] I refer to the theory of the spheres at this point because I do not find a parallel theory in Girard's writings. He tends to make only a binary distinction between the way of mimetic desire and the way of the kingdom, which seems to parallel Kierkegaard's description of the aesthetic and religious spheres. I would suggest, however, that Girard's thought can be further nuanced by separating out the aesthetic and ethical spheres as two different types of mimetic culture. Kierkegaard's The Concept of Anxiety is helpful here in the distinction it draws between angst before the good (e.g. Naziism) and angst before the evil (e.g. Stalinism) (1980, 113-24). Girard's thought paints a picture of one social group forming around the lynching of a victim. But what if an "aesthetic" lynch mob enters into a war with an "ethical" lynch mob? They are not exact doubles of each other. Kierkegaard's concept of the spheres of existence sensitizes us to differences between the mobs which ought not to be elided.

The second main point of difference between Kierkegaard and Girard concerns the starting point for their interpretation of human psychology. Girard starts on the horizontal plane with a secular account of the origin of religion among primitive people. This is similar to Hume's attempt, in The Natural History of Religion, to provide a naturalistic, non-rational account of the origin of religion. We could paraphrase Hume as saying: "This is a plausible account of how religion first arose, even if there were no God." Girard is engaged in a similar project, in that he is providing a naturalistic explanation of the genesis of religion and culture. It is only after Girard has developed his theory of interdividual psychology and the scapegoat mechanism that he arrives at the doorstep of theology and points his reader to the way of the kingdom and the life of faith. In this movement from below to above we can see an apologetic framework which is in my opinion very powerful.

It needs to be seen, however, that Kierkegaard's thought is different in that it is theological from the ground up. It is not an example of apologetics but of confessional theology. In The Concept of Anxiety and The Sickness Unto Death, his two main psychological works, he understands human beings as creatures of God who unavoidably

exist in relation to their Creator. The question is, what is the nature of this relationship? Are human beings going to live in faith and openness toward God, or are they going to turn away from God into despair? This basic decision, if we can call it that, defines the most central core of a human being. It is in the wake of this decision that the individual enters into social relationships. Whereas Girard's thought finds theology at its conclusion rather than at the outset, Kierkegaard understands the crowd to be an assemblage of individuals who are hiding from God and attempting to evade the difficult process of spiritual growth. The crowd is untruth because it is made up of persons who are falsifying what it means to be a creature of God.

I am not at this point putting forward a critique of Girard's thought, I am merely pointing out an important difference between his writings and Kierkegaard's. Girard writes within the genre of sociological theory. In the modern university, this genre does not allow theological postulates. Therefore, in order to gain any hearing at all, an author must start with non-theological premises. This places a certain stricture upon Girard which Kierkegaard did not have to worry about. For the open-minded among the social scientists, Girard's work can serve as a gateway for the introduction of Kierkegaardian insights into social scientific thinking, which will always remain woefully incomplete as long as it functions without reference to religious transcendence.

Kierkegaard's Reflections on Violence We turn now to a consideration of the way in which Kierkegaard's thought can help us to understand the basic motives which lead human beings toward violence. His thoughts on this subject are not exactly the same as Girard's, but the two visions can be coordinated.

Girard begins with the idea that human beings experience a basic feeling of existential lack. It is this experience which is the engine driving mimetic desire and its resulting mechanisms. But why do human beings have this feeling of lack?

I propose that there is a key in Kierkegaard's idea of continuing creation, as found in The Concept of Anxiety. This is suggested by Kierkegaard's decision to begin the book with a consideration of the creation story in Genesis. The crucial difference between human beings and the lower animals is that we have the ability to be conscious of the ongoing process of creation which is occurring within our souls. This ability produces anxiety, which makes sin possible; yet anxiety is also a sign of our relationship to our Creator and thus points toward the possibility of redemption and growth into maturity.[9]

What makes us anxious is the event of creation, as it is experienced by us. Kierkegaard is leading us to think of creation as an ongoing event in the present, rather than simply as a completed event in the past. In this light, the basic motivations which drive human behavior are understood as arising out of the relationship between the individual and God the Creator.

Girard leaves us asking why people have a feeling of existential lack. Kierkegaard gives one possible answer to this question. We have a feeling of lack because we are unfinished beings. We are immature. We have not yet attained the goal (telo") of our existence as creatures of God.[10] If we had attained the goal of our existence, then our desires would be consonant with God's desires. But since we are not completed beings, our desires are untethered. We are blown here and there by the winds of the culture into which we are born. We are lost in the "inconstancy" of the world.

Using The Concept of Anxiety as a starting point, a Kierkegaardian understanding of violence can be developed along the following lines. 1) Human beings are not "finished" creatures. The process of creation is ongoing within our souls. This process of creation opens up the potential for anxiety. We are anxious about the possibilities inherent within our developing beings. 2) The starting point of sin is the human attempt to evade the

possibility of divinely directed spiritual growth. Kierkegaard speaks of this as "self-protection."[11] 3) In rejecting the ongoing process of creation, human beings are rejecting the work of God.[12] 4) The basic root of violence is the turn of the human soul away from God in an attempt to control the process of creation and lessen the pain of anxiety.[13] Violence is a means of fortifying a particular immature formation of the ego against the possibility of the ego's "death" and "rebirth" in a more mature formation. The immature ego finds support by belonging to a social group which consists of others who are immature in a similar way. The individual thus hides in the "crowd" which is "untruth."[14] The individuals who make up the crowd require scapegoats which they can denounce and attack in their ongoing efforts in self-protection. 5) The drama of human rejection of the possibility of spiritual growth is revealed most clearly in the crucifixion of Christ, as Kierkegaard suggests in this passage:

How Did It Happen That Christ Was Put to Death?

I can answer this in such a way that with the same answer I show what Christianity is. What is "spirit"? (And Christ is indeed spirit, his religion is of the spirit.) Spirit is: to live as if dead (to die to the world). So far removed is this mode of existence from the natural man that it is quite literally worse for him than simply dying. The natural man can tolerate it for an hour when it is introduced very guardedly at the distance of the imagination--yes, then it even pleases him. But if it is moved any closer to him, so close that it is presented in dead earnestness as a demand upon him, then the self-preservation instinct of the natural life is aroused to such an extent that it becomes a regular fury, as happens through drinking, or as they say, a furor uterinus. In this state of derangement he demands the death of the man of spirit or rushes upon him to slay him. (1967-1978, v. 4: 4360)

Conclusion To sum up, the key point at which Kierkegaard's thought advances Girard's is to be found in his description of the relationship between the individual and God the Creator, when the individual is attempting to avoid the process of spiritual growth. This is the central theme of The Concept of Anxiety, Purity of Heart, the essay on "The Crowd is Untruth," The Sickness Unto Death, and Practice in Christianity.[15] In these works, Kierkegaard lays the foundation for an understanding of the psychology of violence that is subtle and theologically profound. The key point at which Girard's thought improves upon Kierkegaard's is found in Girard's theoretical refinement of the understanding of the crowd. The idea that "the crowd is untruth" was an insight that Kierkegaard pointed to at various times in his authorship. But in Girard, this idea is developed into a comprehensive social theory which is articulated in conversation with current philosophical anthropology, taking into consideration a broad swath of social scientific data from the ancient Aztecs up to the present day. When Girard's thought is coordinated with Kierkegaard's, the result is a very strong testimony to the power of the Christian intellectual tradition as a resource for understanding the psychology of violence.[16]

NOTES

1. Eugene Webb's Philosophers of Consciousness and The Self Between contain discussions of Kierkegaard and Girard, but they are basically parallel sections which do not include a focused comparison of the two authors. David McCracken's The Scandal of the Gospels makes reference to Girard and contains a chapter on Kierkegaard, but it also lacks an extended comparison.

2. See Deceit, Desire, and the Novel, 58; The Scapegoat, 173; To Double Business Bound, 26-27; and p. xi of the Foreword to Robert Hamerton-Kelly, The Gospel and the Sacred: "Mimetic theory is too realistic and commonsensical to be confused with one more nihilistic stepchild of German idealism. And yet, unlike the positivistic social

sciences, it is not blind to paradox; it can articulate the intricacies of human relations just as effectively as a Kierkegaard or a Dostoievsky."

3. Walter Lowrie translates the title as "The Anxiety of Lowliness." This is acceptable, but it is misleading now, given that a reader is likely to assume that the same word is being used here and in Kierkegaard's important book, The Concept of Anxiety. The word used here is not Angest, however, but Bekymring, which means worry, trouble, concern.

4. In the original: "han lærer at efterabe de andre Mennesker." Efterabe means literally to ape after, to mimic.

5. See, for instance, Things Hidden, 235-236: "In effect, this sacrificial concept of divinity must 'die', and with it the whole apparatus of historical Christianity, for the Gospels to be able to rise again in our midst, not looking like a corpse that we have exhumed, but revealed as the newest, finest, liveliest and truest thing that we have ever set eyes upon."

6. See Robert L. Perkins, "Envy as Personal Phenomenon and as Politics," in International Kierkegaard Commentary: Two Ages, 116: "The highest relation between persons is that based upon the God-relation. Those who relate to this concept and to each other through this concept are ideally united.... This is the very heart of Kierkegaard's thought. If the idea is missing, then persons relate to each other simply en masse. The result is violence, anarchy, barbarism, decadence, gossip, rumor, and an apathetic envy that becomes the standard in human relations. Persons have nothing else to look at except each other, and they turn on each other in suspicion and aggression."

7. This is just a portion of a longer section which has astonishing resonances for the reader familiar with Girard. See also a parallel passage in the Journals and Papers, v. 3: 2926.

8. See my essay in Connell and Evans, eds.

9. See Nordentoft, Kierkegaard's Psychology, 75: "This synthesis-structure is a potential, and the possibilities it contains are, in brief, two: completion or despair."

10. The Sickness Unto Death, 33: "Every human being is primitively intended to be a self, destined to become himself." See also Eugene Webb's comments on "existential appetite" on pages 241-242 of The Self Between, which are among the most insightful words which I have read on the dynamic structure of the self.

11. See, for example, The Sickness Unto Death, 109, where he describes despair's attempt to hide from the good; For Self-Examination, 34, where he calls biblical scholarship an attempt to defend the self from God's Word; Judge for Yourself!, 176, where he speaks of his generation's effort to defend itself against Christ; and Kierkegaard's Attack Upon Christendom, 160-161, where he critiques the Christian Church in history for trying to defend itself against the possibility of following Christ as the Pattern.

12. See Gregor Malantschuk, The Controversial Kierkegaard, 13: "Kierkegaard maintains that when a person attempts to root out the thought of God he destroys his own worth as a human being. He declares that 'to murder God is the most horrible form of suicide, entirely to forget God is a man's deepest fall, no beast ever fell so deep as that.' [1971, 70] Presumably one can kill the thought of God--but not God himself. Kierkegaard believes that no human being can escape the relation to the eternal. This will assert itself in a positive or a negative way. Only by a positive relation to the eternal and to God will a person achieve his true destiny."

13. Marjorie Suchocki expresses similar ideas in The Fall to Violence. See pages 86 and 96-97.

14. See Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits, 134: "While the crowd makes a big noise and uproar and triumphs and jubilates; while one individual after the other hurries to the crowd's arena, where it is said to be good to be if one is seeking oblivion and indulgence from the eternal; while the crowd seems to be shouting mockingly at God, 'All right, see if you can get hold of us!' since in a throng it is of course always difficult to see the individual, difficult to see the trees if one is looking at the forest--then the earnestness of eternity calmly waits. And if all the generations that have lived on earth rose up and united into one crowd in order to charge against eternity and to coerce it also with their enormous majority, eternity splits them up as easily as the imperturbability of the cliff that, without moving from the spot, disperses the foaming surf, as easily as a storm wind in its advance scatters the chaff."

15. See Practice in Christianity, 88: "... this deification of the established order is the perpetual revolt, the continual mutiny against God. That is, God wants to be involved ... wants to have a little bit of control of the world's development, or he wants to keep the human race developing. The deification of the established order, however, is the smug invention of the lazy, secular mentality that wants to settle down and fancy that now there is total peace and security, now we have achieved the highest."

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