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*Critical Issues and Creative Possibilities for Mimetic Theory
Mimesis, Creativity and Reconciliation 1*

*Reconciliation without Scapegoats: Conceptual and Practical Challenges
Mimesis, Creativity and Reconciliation 2*

Chapter:
The Good, the True, and the Beautiful and Rene Girard's Mimetic Theory

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Abstract

In this essay we show how mimetic theory helps to explain the emergence of higher and more complex levels of consciousness in a number of aspects of human development. Each level of consciousness is associated with a meme. Classical notions of Goodness, Truth and Beauty are associated with different quadrants in Wilber's integral framework that suggest heuristically that we take into account both individual and collective aspects of human experience and that we attend to both the interior (reflective) and exterior (empirical) aspects of human discovery. Mimesis can be explored as a phenomenon in each of the resulting quadrants: individual-interior, individual-exterior, collective-interior, and collective-exterior.

Introduction

We are grateful to be able to contribute a chapter that both honors and extends Rene Girard's development of mimetic theory. We come to this discussion, not as Girardian scholars, but as conflict specialists, developmental psychologists, and integral theorists with a deep and abiding appreciation for Girard and his work. As faculty members in a developmentally informed graduate program at Antioch University we use and teach his theory. We have researched and written (McGuigan & Popp, 2011) about how students in our program practice mimicking the language and behavior they *perceive* to be that of higher stages of consciousness, convincing themselves that they are inhabiting a higher stage of consciousness, when, in fact, they have merely “borrowed” the language of it.¹ This suggests that it is much easier to mimic another’s behavior than it is to mimic their consciousness.

Spirituality and reconciliation, as we see it, have everything to do with consciousness. They are often intangible, highly subjective, and deeply entwined with context. In this chapter we attend to the ground upon which we actually construct the meaning of violence, spirituality, and reconciliation—the ground of consciousness itself. Many of us struggle with how to bring our spirituality to bear in our attempts to intervene in violence and create meaningful processes of reconciliation. Our goal in this chapter is to dig deep into the evolving nature of consciousness to understand the complex dynamics that give rise to the meaning of violence, spirituality, and reconciliation for those who are caught in mimetic structures of violence, and for those of us who feel compelled to intervene with what we hope will be mimetic structures of reconciliation and blessing.

¹ Having taught and used the SOI for nearly 30 years combined, we have become adept at recognizing the use of borrowed language

We want to share with the readers how Wilber's (cite) integral theory completely changes key elements of Girard's (cite) mimetic theory. While we appreciate Girard's theological linkages to the development of the scapegoat mechanism and its historical role in ending violence, our task at hand is perhaps a little more pedestrian—that of introducing an evolutionary perspective of human nature and consciousness and discussing its implications for Girard's triadic structure of Subject, Model and Object, applied to both violence and reconciliation.

We begin our chapter with an overview of a world steeped in violence, then introduce mimetic theory, highlight the importance of ongoing theory development, introduce Wilber's (2006) Integral Theory and conclude with a discussion of the implications of the convergence of mimetic theory with integral theory. We focus on two themes; **1)** that an evolutionary perspective of social and human development radicalizes mimetic theory and challenges Girard's recent dark musings (Haven, 2009) on humanity's future and **2)** that the complexity of a discursive community/group communication impacts their slide toward violence...or peace and reconciliation.

We look forward to our discussion with you.

If you look at the front page of any major newspaper on any given day, you see a sobering commentary on a world in conflict, on the intensity and complexity of humans at war with each other: the war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan, the genocide in Darfur, the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, civil war in Libya, a transformation in Egypt, and bus and subway bombs in Madrid and London. If we then make our way to the local section of these same newspapers, we find smaller scale, but no less intense, conflicts of every kind: gang wars and homicides, hostile political battles, domestic violence, bitter custody battles, child abuse, hate crimes, racism, sexism, age discrimination, and on and on. The polarization between “us”

and “them” shows up on so many levels and in so many situations that the idea of one human race begins to sound like a track meet with annihilation at the finish line.

A sense of profound unreasonableness seems to dictate the way these kinds of conflicts are waged. People cannot fathom the violence that has killed so many civilians, the way in which human cruise missiles hunt down anybody they can find in the roadways, bazaars, and restaurants of many countries. All over the world, in our small towns and across countries, brutal violence seems to defy reason. Entire groups of people are slaughtered because they belong to the wrong tribe. It would seem that there are no innocents anymore; everyone, at some point, becomes a target for somebody else. It is not hard to see Girard’s pessimism and the very real escalation of violence across our planet.

Mimetic Theory

Rene Girard’s (1977) development, over forty years ago, of mimetic theory and the scapegoating process provided a creative explanatory framework within which we could make sense of violence. Girard (2000) saw the roots of violence growing from our desire for the desire of the other in the escalation of rivalry and competition over coveted “objects,” whether ideas, land, power, possessions, other persons, or consciousness. The explaining power of the idea carries over into the ways that we discover who we are. As the phenomenon of imitating both the behaviors and the perceived interiority of others (Girard, in Redekop, 2002), mimesis is one of the processes through which the transmission of all that we know about our culture happens—the language, the values, the patterns of acceptable behaviour—all of this comes through our imitation of our parents, members of our community, our peers, leaders, and the media

(Redekop, 2002, p. 65). As Redekop says “we do not arrive at our desires spontaneously, but we form desires by imitating the desires of others” (p. 62). Redekop goes on to describe it this way:

At the core of Girard’s work is *mimesis*, a Greek word from which are derived “imitation” and “mime.” ... We not only imitate the behavior of others, but we have a deep impulse to copy the interiority of others. Our desires are internal, and these desires are subject to imitation. And what do we desire more than anything? It is the satisfiers to our identity needs, *those things which we believe we must have to be whole*. (Redekop, 2002, p. 62) (emphasis added)

And how do we know what we must have to be whole? By watching what our parents, teachers, friends, colleagues, and leaders strive for. Television has also become a powerful Model for “suggesting” what we need for wholeness.

Deploying a particularistic interpretation of history and selected novels for analysis, Girard collected evidence for construction of his theory (Townesley, 2003, p6). His notion of a triangular relationship of *subject, model, and object* illuminates our understanding of violence, how it spreads and the powerful role that the ritualistic murder of the scapegoat may have in ending this violence. Beginning in the 1950s mimetic theory became a linchpin in understanding human behaviour, destiny, and the cause of violence and conflict.

Gerard wasn't trapped by the silos of contemporary knowledge development, he drew upon such knowledge domains as sociology, psychology, anthropology and determinism to create his powerful theory (1965,1979,1987) . While we do agree with Townesley's (2003) assessment that Girard's synthesis was not grounded in a larger framework which would allow for a richer understanding of the nature of being human, we acknowledge that Girard's research largely took place in an academic era that did not value cross-disciplinary, let alone inter-disciplinary, or as we discuss here, trans-disciplinary, theory generation. As we investigate Girard's (cite) theory of violence and its subsequent ending through ritual sacrifice, we find that

it does utilize inter-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary knowledge frameworks that would both support and challenge his theory. At the same time, we believe that we need an even more complex understanding of mimetic theory, one that more closely maps the violence in a world that is mind bogglingly complex and, at times, appears to be operating in some kind of impossible, meaningless, violent chaos.

We take his synthesis another step forward through introducing Wilber's (1996, 2006) Integral Theory to Girards' (1977, 1987) mimetic theory. *Integral Theory* is a shift up to greater complexity of explanatory power, moving from an *inter-disciplinary* to a *trans-disciplinary, meta-theoretical* approach. This powerful synthesis coordinates, locates and deploys the different knowledge domains of (to mention a few) psychology, anthropology, determinism, sociology¹ in an evolutionary model of mimesis. The outcome is a revitalized mimetic theory that stands as a challenge to Girard's dark musings that man is creating

"...more and more violence in the world that is practically without God, if you look at the way nations behave with each other and the way people behave with each other... History you might say, is a test for mankind. But we know very well that mankind this failing that test. In some ways, the Gospels and Scriptures are predicting that failure since it ends with the eschatological themes which are literally the end of the world." (in Haven, 2009 p 6)

While it is easy to see where Girard is coming from, we don't agree with his assessment that the power of ending violence through ritualistic sacrifice is diminishing and the intervals of peace are growing shorter (Girard, 1987; Bailie, 1995 in Townsley, 2003). When we take an evolutionary perspective on both Girard's theory and human nature, we can see that his views are held within a larger, dynamic context of many possibilities, including greater capacities for creativity and reconciliation--giving us more hope for our collective future.

Two Philosophers

Although they have moved about in very different creative worlds, Girard and Wilber are both deeply spiritual, one a Christian and the other a Buddhist. They both have a lifetime of work within which each has laboured to build a scaffold that takes us closer to the Divine. In Wilber's case, this has been critiqued by McIntosh (2008) as a liability, a distraction from noticing the meta-*theoretical* implications of Integral Theory (and these are big implications). Gerard's theory has been found wanting for some because it is not a theology of creation (Adams, 2006). Both men have been described by their colleagues as living legends and great philosophers. And while it would be easy to be distracted in this rich landscape of ideas, our primary focus is to investigate the impact of the convergence of and conversation between these two mighty rivers of thought on how we understand violence and reconciliation. Thus, we begin the next section with a discussion of why theory matters in the first place, and then move to a high level introduction to Integral Theory.

Integralism as a Form of Meta-Theorizing

You might think that introducing an integral approach to understanding mimesis is needlessly complicated, however, as Stein (2010) points out, the ideas we discuss help to create a new vision of reality, which helps us make sense of the overload of information and competing opinions with which we are bombarded daily. This discussion "... is attracting a surprising number of people to integral theory and its application (in Esbjorn-Hargens, 2009, p. 8)."

Theories matter to all of us and they often need to be updated as new knowledge is developed.

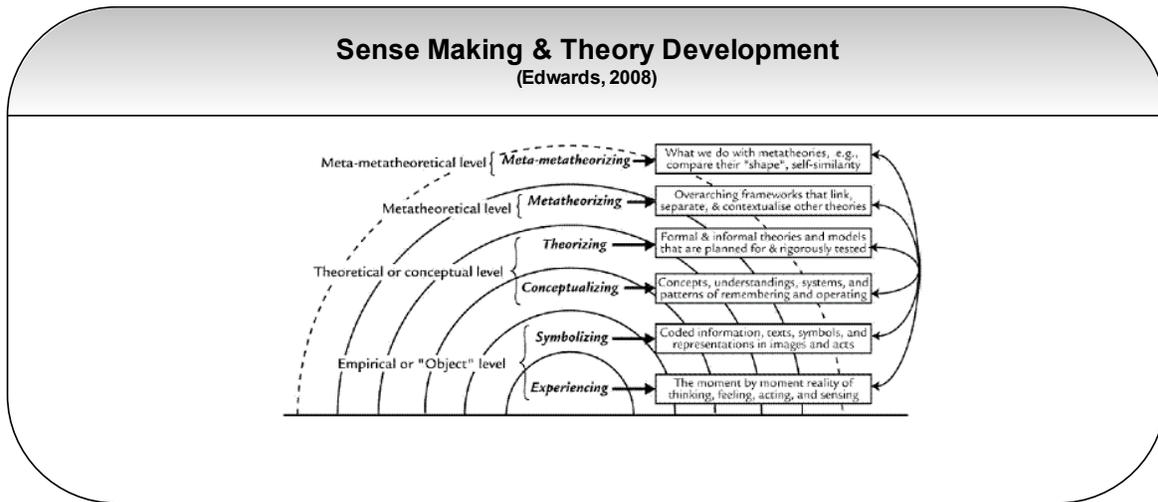
Theories are expendable, Girard says. They should be criticized. When people tell me my work is too systematic, I say, I make it as systematic as possible for you to be able to prove it wrong. (in Haven, 2009 p 6)

While we appreciate and agree with the spirit of his intention, our work here is not to prove Girard is right or wrong. Our intention is to thicken mimetic theory, to infuse it with a new vitality and resonance. The world, as we all know, seems to become more complex and volatile every day. If we are to keep pace with it and our understanding of violence, we must have equally complex ways to understand both. This is where the importance of theories comes in. It is our theories about human behavior and violence that guide and shape how we create governments, create and enact laws, how we structure our communities and schools, how we interact with the natural world—and crucial to our discussion here—how we understand what violence is, how it spreads and how to contain and prevent it. A *metatheory* is a big-picture approach to analyzing the meta-processes that guide us in making sense of our daily experiences. Theories and metatheories are “intimately part of social reality and as causally efficacious as any material object” (Edwards, 2008 p63).

Any changes that we make to these material, physical, and biological realities feed back into our ideas, attitudes, values, beliefs, and assumptions about what we want from life, how we should work, ... [how we should interact], what sort of world we should inhabit, [and how we should deal with conflict]. There is a cycle of mutual co-creation here between theory and practice, between the idea and the action. So, it cannot be said that (meta) theories are simply interpretive of what is real, for they have a powerful hand in shaping reality as well as being shaped by that reality. (p 63)

Again, our point here is that theories matter, not just as abstract ideas to apply here and there, but as the shapers of our experience. They powerfully influence all of the elements our daily life. An integral approach to mimetic theory has the potential to influence a new way to study violence and to navigate pathways to peace (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Sense Making & Theory



A *metatheory* is a big picture approach that Edwards (2008) regards as “part of the core human activity” of making sense of the world and that, he notes, when done in a rigorous way, is a “fundamental part of the scientific tradition of...creating knowledge...Ordinary everyday activities such as planning, designing, facilitating, coordinating, and strategizing are essentially metatheoretical activities...” (Edwards, 2008 p10). because they help to organize and align our thinking, feeling, and acting. These meta-processes are what guide us in making sense of and directing our daily experiences, as well as our understanding of and engagement with conflict.

Whenever we begin to formalize any method of inquiry, into violence or any other phenomenon, our investigation runs the risk of becoming imbalanced if or when *any* particular perspective or practice becomes dominant and/or politically entrenched, and we ignore or minimize the contributions of other perspectives. “It becomes an unseen lens which both frees us to create what we know and constrains us from exploring what we don’t know.” (Edwards, 2008, p 11). Tim Black (2008) notes that “the zeitgeist of many North American universities includes a debate regarding the scientific merit of qualitative versus quantitative methods in research” (p 1),

when each perspective in the debate promotes their allegiance to monological methodologies. Along the same lines, *multidisciplinary* approaches to research are often confused with *interdisciplinary approaches*—the former providing a simple juxtaposition of disciplines, creating an additive, rather than an integrative, understanding.

Unique to our approach is a *trans-disciplinary* framework (integral theory) that we bring to our analysis and understanding of mimetic theory. This trans-disciplinary metaperspective *integrates* multiple theoretical perspectives and research methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, into one coherent story. This story acknowledges and honors the distinct contributions of each discipline within the field and locates each in relation to the others (Black, 2008). This allows for a new, integrated, and deeper level of discourse and applied knowledge development to emerge around mimetic theory (Klein, 2009).

Integral Theory

Integral Theory originated from Wilber's (2006) cross-cultural comparison of most of the known forms of human inquiry. That process led to his comprehensive "map" of human experience, referred to as the All Quadrant, All Level (AQAL) model, shorthand for the multiple aspects of reality that are recognized in the integral approach. (see figure 2). Wilber defined the term "integral" to mean inclusive, balanced, or comprehensive, and his AQAL model is just that, a model, or map, whereby we can more clearly appreciate the complexity and interconnectedness of every aspect of our experience in general, and of mimesis in particular.

Wilber's (2003) definition of *integral* illustrates the model's comprehensive grasp:

Integral: the means to integrate, to bring together, to join, to link, to embrace. Not in the sense of uniformity, and not in the sense of ironing out all of the wonderful differences, colors, zigs and zags of rainbow-hued humanity, but in the sense of unity-in-diversity, shared commonalities along with all the wonderful differences. And not just in humanity, but in the Kosmos at large: finding a more comprehensive view—A Theory of

Everything—that makes legitimate room for art, morals, science and religion, and doesn't merely attempt to reduce them all to one's favorite slice of the cosmic pie. (p.2)

In talking more specifically about consciousness, Combs (2009) relates this type of mapping to Isaac Newton's discovery of the spectrum of light. In a room sealed off from all light except for a single shaft of sunlight,

Newton passed the shaft of light through a glass prism from which it emerged as a complete spectrum of colors. These could be projected onto a white screen for ease of viewing. Placing an opaque lattice such as a comb across the emerging stream of colored light broke it into smaller beams which, if the size of the lattice was properly adjusted, could be recognized as discrete colors such as red, orange, yellow, green, and blue.

Now, it turns out that when conscious experience is passed through the appropriate prism, it too can be seen in multiple colors or, speaking literally, in multiple *perspectives*. This is the prism of reflective awareness by which we each can examine the facets of our own experience. (p. 13)

Consciousness, or experience, is a process, a moment-to-moment awareness of *being*. It is multi-dimensional, and is comprised of the most basic elements of our sense of *being* and *presence*. It is the experience of being alive and having a personal history and a future; the experience of an intersection between our private, subjective experience and the external, objective world; and the binding together through memory of moment-to-moment awareness (Wade, 1996). All of this made coherent through the processes of our meaning-making (Kegan, 1982; McGuigan & Popp, 2007).

Using the AQAL map, we can *artificially* separate our experience (or consciousness) of mimesis into four facets or dimensions: singular and plural, internal and external, as shown in figure 2. *None of these dimensions exists without the others*, but when we conceptually separate them, we see more clearly the dynamic interplay among them.

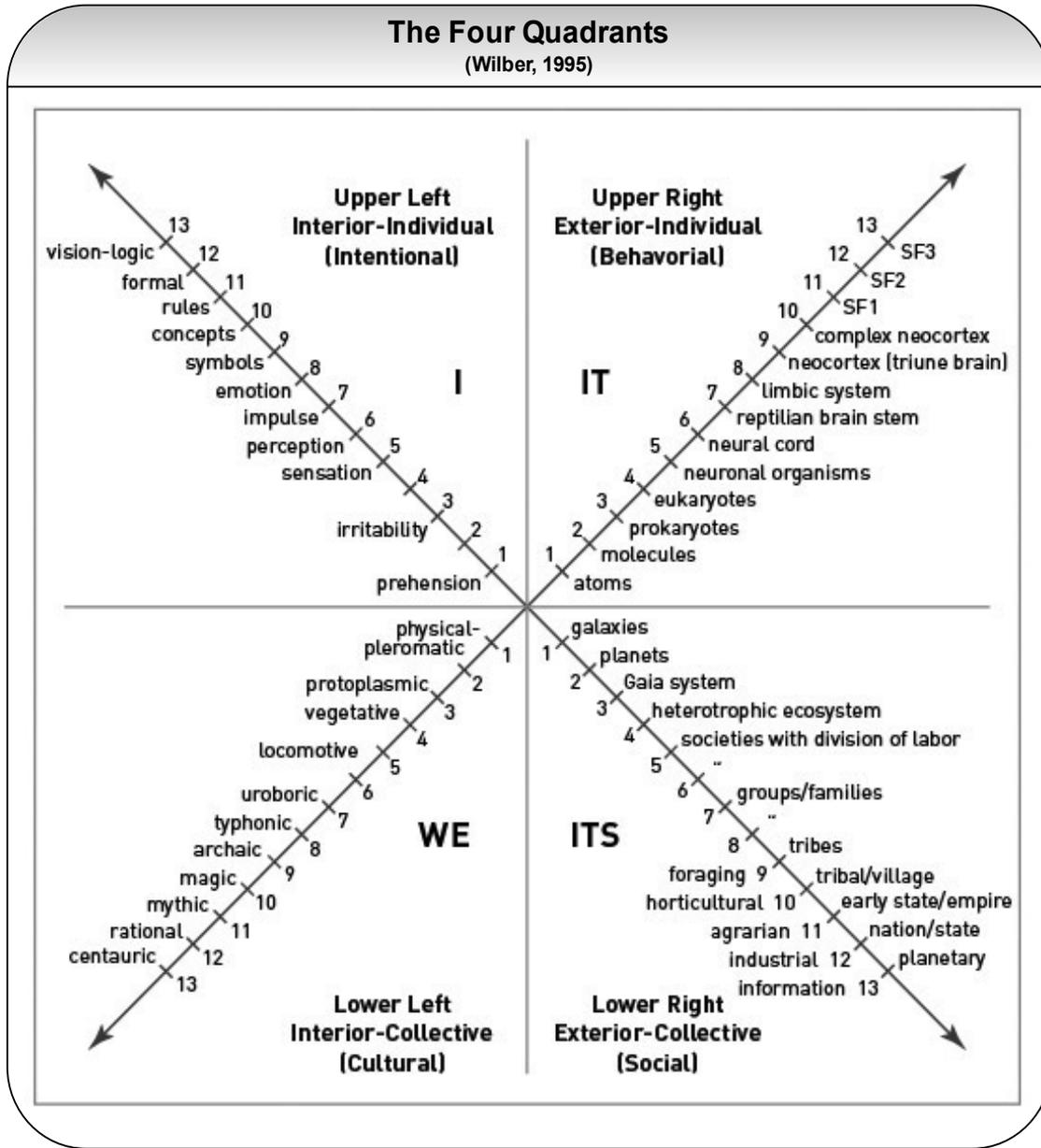
The two right-hand quadrants shown in figure 2 represent those aspects of mimesis that relate to the *exterior, observable, objective* processes, and are studied quantitatively. The two left-hand quadrants represent the *interior, subjective, qualitative* dimensions of mimesis, those

features that can be understood only through introspection. From the Integral perspective, every *experience of mimetic desire*, has both exterior surfaces that can be directly observed and interior depths that must be grasped introspectively (Wilber, 1995, 1996).

The AQAL model functions as a content-free integrating map that organizes and describes the refractions of the evolution of mimesis in both theory and process. The Integral approach is distinguished from other approaches in that Integralism does not focus exclusively on any one perspective or theoretical domain. Thus, our approach addresses Townsley's (2003) concerns, and overcomes the limited inter-disciplinary approach deployed by Girard in his initial formulation of mimetic theory by locating it within a larger trans-disciplinary and evolutionary context.

Any individual perspective generates important, but partial and incomplete, analyses because it attends to only a fraction of our experience. The integration of the important contributions of each knowledge domain provides a new framework through which we can examine the tacit assumptions, theories, and hypotheses that guide our understanding of the mimetic process of both violence and reconciliation.

Figure 2 - The Four Quadrants



The Five Elements of AQAL

Any experience or event can be refracted into the four quadrants, and even further into the following five elements, only two of which - *quadrants* and *stages*, are we are able to discuss here because of space limitations:²

² See Wilber (2006), and McGuigan & Popp (in press), for a detailed discussion of all 5 elements.

- 1) *quadrants*: the four dimensions-perspectives of experience: individual, culture, behavior, and systems domains (see figure 2):
- 2) *stages or levels* of psychological development, i.e., pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional (see figure 2);
- 3) *lines* of psychological development, i.e., cognitive, emotional, moral, and kinesthetic;
- 4) *states* of consciousness, i.e., waking, dreaming, deep sleep, altered, meditative; and
- 5) *types* of personality, i.e., masculine and feminine or the Myers-Briggs types.

We focus on the first two of these elements as they are the most relevant to the particular content area of our discussion. In helping to understand the AQAL model Swartz (2010) notes:

AQAL diagrams are, for Bernard Lonergan, *heuristic images* (Lonergan, 1992). Such images or diagrams are not in and of themselves conceptual, but provide a foothold from which we enter into a cognitive process of understanding that can flash forth as insight. AQAL, as figure, is the point of departure and ongoing spur for insightful cognitive reflection and comprehension. How we frame an AQAL diagram, whether we do so consciously or not, orients our cognitive engagement. (p. 229)

Element 1: The Four Quadrants (see Figure 2)

In the refraction of mimesis we see that it manifests equally in all aspects of all the quadrants: the inner and outer individual experience; the inner and outer mediators of mimesis; the inner and outer cultural expressions which perhaps lead to violence. The more we can understand each perspective of this experience and the mutual influences among them, the better we can understand the escalation of violence perpetuated through mimesis. Likewise the better we can see more alternatives in how to respond to, intervene, and create processes of

reconciliation. Through an Integral approach we can organize our attention to these four distinct dimensions of every Subject's individual and collective experience.

The idea that looking at the world through multiple perspectives in order to understand its complexity is not new. Plato, St. Bonaventure, Baldwin, Kant, and Habermas, among others, all had a version of what Wilber (1995) calls “the Big Three:” Tracking Plato, those three aspects of experience we call the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.

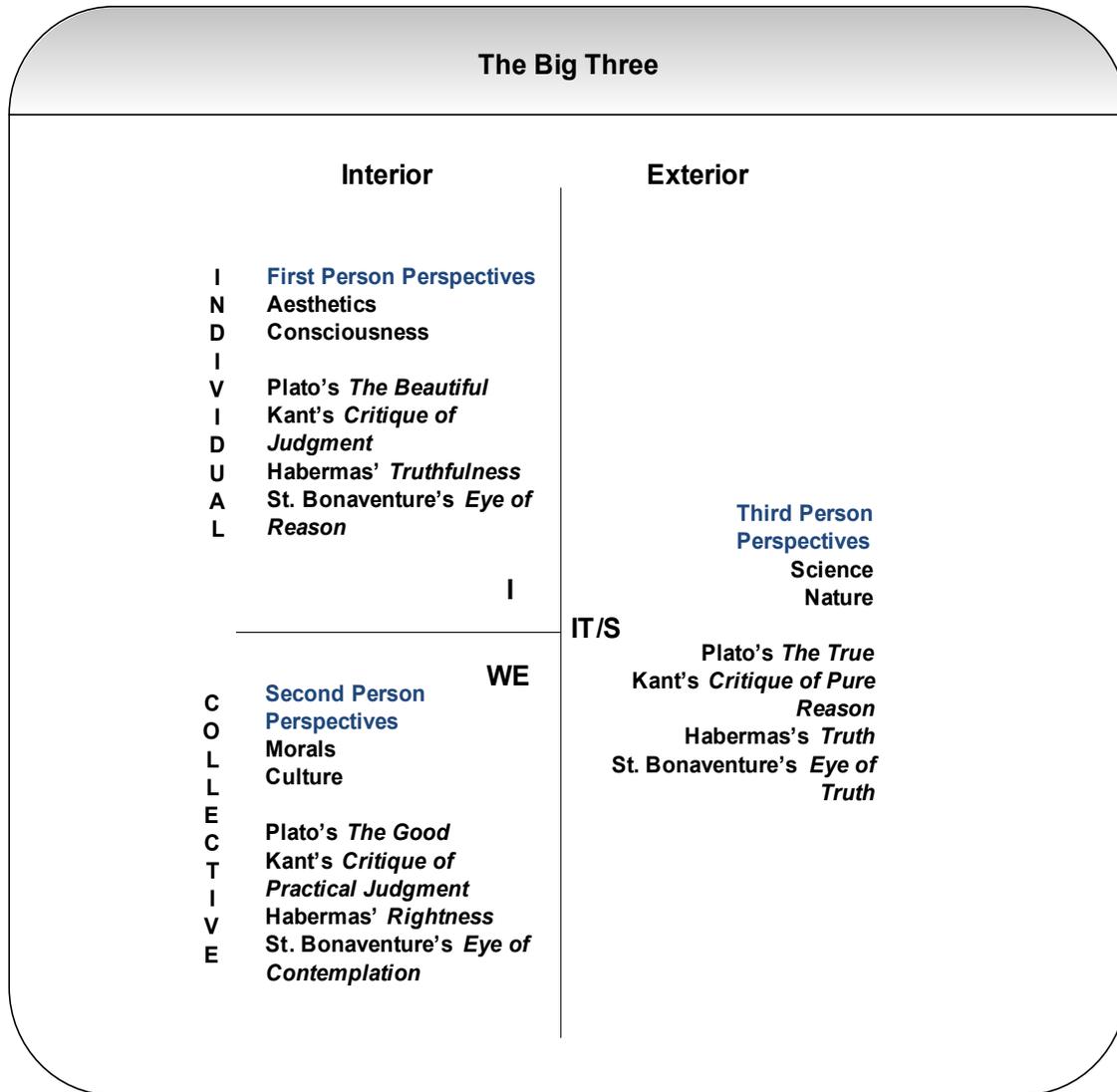
The Big Three: The Good, the True, and the Beautiful

Wilber's (1995) vision of the Big Three equates individual subjective consciousness (“I”) with the *Beautiful* (the aesthetic); the physical body and brain (“it”) with the *True, singular*; nature, social systems, and the environment (“its”) with the *True, plural*; and cultural contexts and worldviews (“us” or “we”) with the *Good* (the moral). He then relates these to the four quadrants of human experience: the interior and exterior realms of the individual and of the collective (see figure 3).

In the 16th century, the balance among the Big Three shifted in favour of one—the *eye of flesh*, as St. Bonaventure called it, or empirical science. The birth of scientism began with Galileo and Kepler, and culminated in the work of Newton.

Within mere decades of Kant, the eye of flesh, blinded by Newton's light, thought that it, and it alone, was worthy of knowledge . . . It did not just speak for the eye of flesh, but for the eye of mind and for the eye of contemplation as well . . . The scientists tried to force empirical science, with its eye of flesh, to work for all three eyes. (Wilber, 1995, p. 20)

Figure 3 - The Big Three.



This gave rise to the predominance of a single-quadrant (the right hand side of the Integral model) analysis to examine all human interaction and experience. According to this perspective, and at that particular point in history, the only aspects of experience worthy of study are the observable choreographies of actions and events. It is in this quadrant that we find the research and writing of Ardrey (1967), Lorenz (1971), Darwin (1911), and Skinner (1953) with their emphasis on aggression, physiological evolution, and behavioral conditioning, from which Girard drew for aspects of his development of mimetic theory.

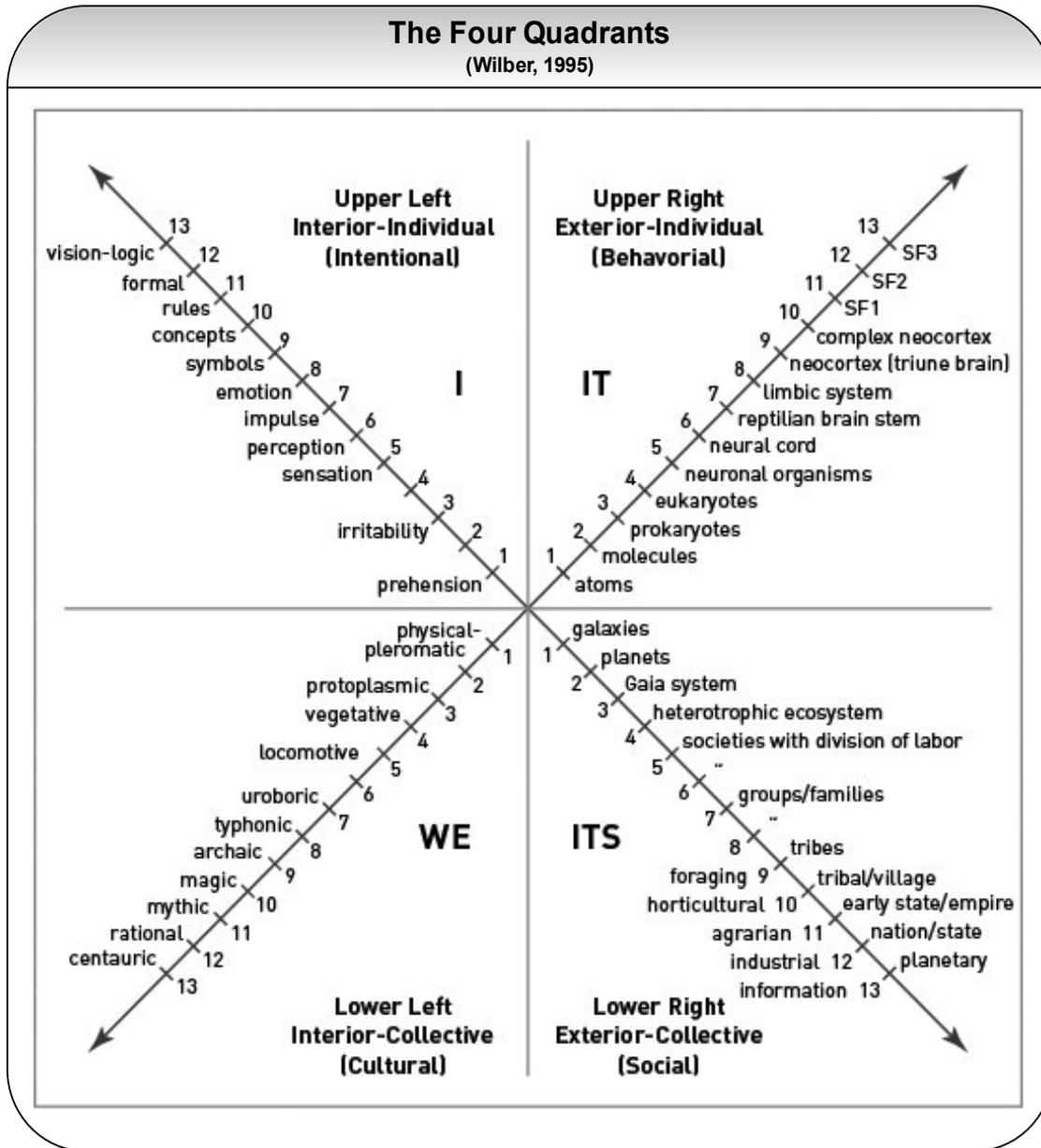
Postmodernism came along and reintroduced the subjective aspects of knowledge development and attempted to balance the playing field by declaring *all* points of view equally valid, thereby restoring aesthetics and spirituality as equal players. But a different kind of imbalance was created by postmodernism's refusal to acknowledge *any* hierarchy of values. The position "all things are equal" disregards many fundamental aspects of meaning. A level playing field suggests that every person's experience, concerns, values, and behaviors are of equal importance and should receive equal consideration. While we do value everyone's concerns, when examined more carefully, we see that all claims do not carry equal weight, and that context plays a defining role in how we assign and assess value.

Integral Theory restores the *power of balance* (Torbert, 2003) –the dynamic balance of the whole. The dynamic balance does *not* see all things as equal. However, by refracting the single stream of conscious experience into the four quadrants, allowing each its own truth and expression, the power of balance reveals the complexity of meaning and the *contextual* influences on *how we define* and understand mimesis—whether loving or violent. We can *see* the historical and cultural contexts within which Girard's theory of mimesis arose, and the social systems that supported it, we can also see what he left out, and that he has perhaps projected his own sophisticated and complex meaning-making backwards through history to the triadic structure of earlier and less complex cultures. The more we can see, the more choices we have. That is the power of balance.

Applied to mimetic theory, the four quadrants are not simply four different kinds of mimetic phenomenon, but refer to *four different dimensions of, and perspectives on, mimesis*.

The whole point of a quadratic approach is to illustrate the ways in which *all four dimensions* of any experience (figure 3) *arise simultaneously*: they tetra-enact³ and tetra-evolve (Wilber, 2006).

Figure 4 - The Developmental Dimensions of the Four Quadrants



Seeing this, it becomes clear how important each one is in contributing to and shaping all the others. The important distinction between perspectives on and dimensions of experience

³ tetra-enact means to act simultaneously as a group of four discrete aspects

refers to the directionality of our gaze. Dimensions of experience describe the individual's experience from his or her own frame of reference. Perspectives on experience are the theoretical and empirical lenses through which we look to understand the particular aspects of each quadrant. As shown in figure 4, each of the four quadrants represent distinct sets of perspectives on the individuals' experience, their mimetic desire and their behaviours.

The right-hand of mimesis – external observable dimensions.

The right- hand dimension of the Integral model attends to the external, observable behaviors and systems of the individual and the group—the observable ways that individuals (UR) interact with each other, the language they use and their tone of voice, body language, their observable mimicry of the Other. The lower right (LR) quadrant attends most importantly to crowd or group behavior, and to the systems within which individuals become a crowd: the structure of their government; the laws of their society; their traditional social and family structures, the roles designated for men, women, and children in the social order. We get essential, observable information about the ways in which mimetic desire, violence, and scapegoating, as well as creativity and reconciliation, play out in groups of people.

At the same time, we need the interpretive, qualitative understanding indicated in the left-hand quadrants to make sense of the levels of *meaning* that find expression in the concrete behavioral manifestations of mimesis. These left hand dimensions help us understand the intensity of mimetic desire and rivalry—*how and why people care so much* about obtaining the Object, and *why* they fight so vehemently over it.

The interior dimensions of experience: Upper left and lower left quadrants.

The left-hand quadrants attend to the qualitative, invisible aspects of every experience, and are concerned with *interpretation*—the meaning-making process itself, and how cultural contexts shape the possibilities for the construction of meaning. The meaning-making process reflects the evolution of consciousness, as individuals make increasingly complex sense of an increasingly complex world. It is this process of making increasingly complex meaning that transforms the Girardian notion of mimesis from a static, “flatland”ⁱⁱ theory of escalating violence to a fluid and evolutionary process of individual and social identity construction through mutually creative and constructive intersubjective connections.

The two left-hand quadrants represent qualitative theories which focus on the data uncovered through introspection and the apprehension of “Thou/we,” as described in phenomenology and introspection theory, hermeneutics, and collaborative inquiry. The *upper-left quadrant* represents the phenomenological perspectives that guide our investigation of the direct first-person accounts of their experience. This perspective illuminates the immediate, lived experience of mimesis, and the degree to which the Subject is aware of his mimetic desire. Structuralism or structural theories are also located in this quadrant; we draw on the work of Piaget (1932), Kegan (1982, 1994), and others who employ this perspective, to explore the deep-rooted patterns of consciousness that underlie the process and phenomenon of mimesis. We will focus specifically on these theoretical developments later on in the analysis and implications section.

The *lower-left quadrant* is the intersubjective space uniting two or more people who exchange information about their interior perspectives⁴ in order to more adequately understand one another's inner experience (Wilber, 2003). The works of Heidegger (1968) and Gadamer (1976) offer significant contributions to understanding this field of inquiry. As developed by Heidegger, phenomenology is a science of interpretation, and illuminates the intersubjective experience of mimetic desire located in the *inside* of collective interiors.

Element 2: Levels and Stages of Development.

The Integral approach relies on another vital component to help us understand mimetic theory and phenomenon: Within each quadrant there are levels of development that correlate with the levels of development in all other quadrants (see Figure 4). This means the same evolutionary patterns and capacities exist in each aspect of each quadrant.

Levels of development are important because they describe and allow us to recognize the different degrees of complexity of the aspects associated with each quadrant and to see how development in one quadrant relates to development in another. Levels of development also describe the qualitatively different ways that mimetic desire is experienced, understood, and acted upon. The next section will discuss this in further detail.

A big assumption in the literature is that mimesis shows up pretty much the same way in everyone's experience—we call this a flatland (Abbot, 1963) approach to mimesis, formulated from a static view of history that has essentialized man as rivalrous and conflictual (Girard, ?). This is a flawed conclusion when we place disproportionate value upon the research of determinists in the upper right quadrant, or fail to update a theory as new knowledge becomes available. However, when we bring an Integral perspective to it, it allows us to bring to bear

⁴ Language is not the only form of information exchange; it is used here for illustrative purposes

other theories that influence our understanding of mimesis, and other possibilities for its meaning and expression. For example, bringing Kegan's (1980, 1982, 1994) constructive-developmental theory (located in the upper left quadrant) of self and other to the understanding of desiring what the other has, we begin to see a deeper complexity in the experience and meaning of mimesis. Within the developmental process, as well, each subsequent stage of development incorporates and transforms the previous one. The process of transformation and inclusion arises from interaction between the individual and his or her environment.

Thus development in one quadrant correlates to development in each of the other quadrants. If we look at the levels of development in the upper left we can see that the development of perception correlates with the development of the neural cord as illustrated in the upper right quadrant. In each of the quadrants there is a developmental journey that can be represented in many different ways. What is this developmental journey and why does it matter? The next section answers these questions.

Analysis & Implications

An evolutionary perspective fundamentally changes how we interpret Girard's triadic structure of Subject, Model, and Object. It takes his flatland (Abbot, 1963) theory of the human being and opens it up – pries apart the layers that have been collapsed on each other, and reveals a radical, dynamic, multi-dimensional truth: that the complexity of a person's (or group's) consciousness is a critical and fundamental variable within the triad of mimetic desire and violence, and is equally critical in the possibility and process of reconciliation.

An evolutionary perspective of social and human development radicalizes mimetic theory and challenges Girard's recent dark musings on humanity's future

Desire is like driving a car, my foot on the gas pedal is the impulse to satisfy it. In the vehicle imagined by Girard, there is no brake: mimetic rivalry has no other option but acceleration, escalation, and the inevitable crash. But if we play it back in slow motion, we can see many opportunities within the process to make different choices. An evolutionary perspective shows us that as the complexity of my consciousness grows, so does my *awareness* of those opportunities for different choices and my capacities to make them. The more complex my consciousness, the more aware I am of the potential for the car to speed out of control and thus what I need to do to control it. Most importantly, *it allows me to more effectively regulate my impulses*. A more complex relationship to myself and to my desire gives me the power of self-regulation, the power and capacity to notice, manage, and regulate my desire; to manage and control my impulses; to prioritize my goals and desires, and to act on them accordingly: to step on the brake. To drive (and control) the car rather than being driven *by* it.

To be the one doing the driving of, rather than being driven by, my desire, requires a *perspective on* my desire so that I am not subject to it. Being subject to my desire means being driven and controlled by it, with no brake and no perspective. A complex consciousness has within it a powerful regulatory feedback mechanism that not only allows me to control my desire, impulses, and behavior, but *requires* that I do so. As one of our students wrote, “I have never tended toward being vengeful, but thinking about vengeance as providing a reciprocal violence feedback loop really takes the joy out of it.” Her perspective allows her to see not only her potential desire to be vengeful, but the multiple dimensions and consequences of vengeance

as well, which gives her the pause to make a different choice. This larger perspective also sees the Other in a more complex way as well.

This is why an understanding of the evolution of human consciousness is so absolutely necessary to understanding mimesis and the structure of mimetic violence: because with a more complex consciousness, it is *possible* to stop mimetic desire in its tracks, before it becomes rivalry or violence. It gives us the reflective, regulatory capacity to pause, to consider, to choose, before acting. A more complex consciousness is an essential variable in being able to slow it down and stop it. A more complex consciousness gives us a bigger, more complex perspective on the social system as a whole, seeing myself, my desire, the other, the other's desire in a vast interconnected web of relationships and consequences. I can see more.

As we remind you, the reader, of the two themes of our chapter, we will continue on with an in-depth discussion of what exactly this evolutionary journey is, what it means to have a more complex consciousness, and why this is one of the most important perspectives to have in our world today. Our two themes for this chapter: **1)** that an evolutionary perspective of social and human development radicalizes mimetic theory and challenges Girard's recent dark musings on humanity's future and **2)** that the complexity of a discursive group and their slide toward violence or peace is relative to the complexity of consciousness of the individual or group.

An Integral perspective lays out the map to guide us through this evolutionary journey, explicitly valuing all aspects of all four quadrants, privileging none over any other. However, our contribution here is only a chapter and not the whole book, so we limit our discussion to the left hand quadrants, to those aspects that comprise the internal experience and perspective of the individual (UL), and the aspects that attend to intersubjectivity and shared meaning within a group (LL).

As the aspects of the four quadrants tetra-enact, they both shape and are shaped by each other in a continual process of increasingly complex interactions. The phenomenon and process of mimesis is no different.

This is a pivotal point in our discussion. This section lays out for the reader the evolutionary process by which and through which the increasing capacities of our meaning-making offer the possibility of recognizing the mimetic dance as part of the rhythm of our evolutionary heartbeat; that with increasing awareness and perspective, not only does the mimetic dance transform us, but as we evolve, we transform the dance. Reconciliation is all about transforming the dance.

Constructive-developmental theory, a theory of the evolution of self and other is, by far the most comprehensive and sharply focused lens through which we can begin to see a deeper complexity in the experience and meaning of mimesis. And it stands in stark contrast to the flatland approach which assumes the transmission of all that we know is static, fixed, and identical for all.

An evolutionary perspective shows us that the Subject and the Model each have their own consciousness—sometimes similar and sometimes very different—and depending on how they match up or not, the transmission and replication of desire and rivalry can be profound or not at all. It illuminates the significant and dynamic patterns around the ways mimetic desire plays out—*or not*—and how they are driven by the complexity of the Subject's consciousness in interaction with the Model's consciousness. Our understanding of the human being shifts from a perspective of seeing a static entity to seeing a human *being in process*, to seeing the essential nature of a person as a dynamic, complex, adaptive system (Midgely, xxx), always in motion,

always in interaction with the social environment—another dynamic, complex system that is always also adapting to us.

When we see the fluid nature of consciousness that the Subject and the Model live within and interact from, it fundamentally changes how we interpret the triadic structure between the Subject, the Model, and the Object. For example, when the Subject and Model share the same complexity of consciousness, there is a stronger resonance in their mimetic desire—each person has the same capacity to see or not their own desire and its escalation. When the complexity of the Subject and the Model are mismatched, i.e., one is more complex than the other, the probability of escalation is diminished because there isn't the same degree of resonance and identification with the desire and/or each other. These patterns reveal greater depths of complexity within the phenomenon and allow us to see the possibilities for other loving and conciliatory expressions of mimesis.

Constructive-developmental theory

Drawing upon the upper left quadrant, the interior of the Subject, our particular focus comes from the “whole-person” perspective as conceptualized, defined, and operationalized by Kegan’s approach to constructive-developmental psychology (1980, 1982, 1994). Constructive-developmental theory recognizes the constructed nature of our reality, and recognizes as well that the ways in which we construct that reality *in interaction with* our environment(s) continually evolves and becomes increasingly complex. By whole-person we refer to the essence and meaning-making activity of human *being*, and to the organizing principles that give coherence and “wholeness” to the ways that meaning is constructed. As Kegan says,

Human being is meaning-making. For the human, what evolving amounts to is the evolving of systems of meaning; the business of organisms is to organize, as Perry (1970) says. We organize mostly without realizing we are doing it, and mostly with little

awareness as to the exact shape of our own reality-constituting. Our meanings are not so much something we have, as something we are (Kegan, 1980, p. 374).(*italics in original*)

These systems of meanings can be traced through a regular and predictable continuum of development toward ever-increasing complexity, yet growth along this continuum is neither static nor rigid nor guaranteed. Much depends on the social contexts that support our growth or suppress it. This whole-person framework evolved from the work of Piaget (which he evolved from Baldwin, 1897) and is called Neo-Piagetian theory. Again, Kegan explains:

Indeed, what is “neo” about the constructive-developmental framework is that it moves from Piaget’s study of cognition to include the emotions; from his study of children and adolescents to include adulthood; from the study of stages of development to include the processes that bring the stages into being, defend them, and evolve from them; from Piaget’s descriptive, outside-the-person approach to include study of the *internal experience* of developing, and from a solely individual-focused study of development to include study of the *social context* and role in development. (1980, p. 374) (emphasis added)

A whole-person perspective looks at the dialectical processes of integration between the person and his or her myriad holding environments. So our specific focus goes beyond the actual choreography of mimesis to include the *context* and *meaning* that gives rise to it, and how that meaning both shapes and is shaped by the particular complexity of our consciousness. To what extent are we able to recognize, manage, and transform it?

A whole-person model, very simply, looks at the person through an AQAL lens—as an organized whole—an integrated, evolving organism. One of the overarching characteristics of this model is the evolution and transformation of the ways in which we relate to others and to (parts of) ourselves. We borrow again from Kegan:

Although the most visible feature of the constructive-developmental framework is the idea of the “stage,” the framework is not fundamentally about stages, which, in the end, are only a way of marking developments in a process. And it is this *process* that is fundamental to the framework, the process of the restless, creative *activity* of personality, which is first of all about the making of meaning.

[And] these meaning systems shape our experience, [which] as Aldous Huxley said, is not so much what happens to us as what we *make* of what happens to us. Thus we do not understand another’s experience simply by knowing the events and particulars of the other, but only by knowing how these events and particulars are privately composed. (Kegan, 1980, p. 374.)

This process of meaning-making, as the primary activity of being human, is inextricably connected to, and dialectically constructed through the many social contexts and mimetic desires in the middle of which we literally find and compose *ourselves*.

Kegan has described a developmental continuum along which he has identified six primary “stages” of development, which we refer to as mindsets, with four transitional sub-phases between each mindset. The process of evolution from one mindset to the next is “...not [just] a matter of increasing differentiation alone, but of increasing relationship to the world. These ‘increases’ are qualitative and they involve, first of all, *a better recognition of what is separate from me so that I can be related to it, rather than fused with it.*” (Kegan, 1982, p. 68; emphasis added) We will describe here only the three primary mindsets that are observable in adulthood. We refer the reader to Kegan (1982, 1994), Popp & Portnow (2001) and McGuigan (2006) for more in-depth discussion and review of all the mindsets and the transitions between.

The first mindset that we encounter in adulthood is the *Instrumental mindset*. A person with this mindset has a concrete orientation to the world, toward satisfying her own concrete needs, and an inability to think abstractly. From this mindset, I cannot imagine your interior or emotional self, nor can I look at things from your perspective. I know you have a perspective that

might be different from mine, but I am sensitive only to how you react and behave, and what the concrete impact is on me, i.e., whether I get what I want from you or not. My desire for the Object you possess can only take the form of my imitation of your behavior. I see that you have something I want, so I mimic your behavior so that I can get it, too. I care about your perspective only to the extent that I can predict your actions and how they will impact me. I only care about meeting my concrete needs for acquiring the Object.

The evolution toward the *Affiliative mindset* is marked by the emergence of a new capacity to not only recognize another's perspective, but to actually care about it—to internalize it and identify with it. A person with this mindset is defined by the relational context and orients toward how others view him or her; it is an orientation toward the other's perspective, to feel what the other is feeling, in fact, to feel *the same as* the other person—to *identify* with them, and thus feel responsible for causing the other's feelings. With this mindset, I not only take your perspective, but your perspective *takes me*. To be in a good relationship with one another, mutuality and loyalty are very important, so we must think alike, feel alike, and believe in the same things. We must “stay true to each other.” From this mindset, I not only can imagine your desire for the Object, but I *identify with* your desire, it defines me. I can see my mimetic desire only to the extent that I can see that I want to be just like you, that I want to be loved and validated, and in that there is no choice but to model myself after you. I cannot see the actual nature of my desire and I cannot see any choices of how to respond—I see *from* my desire—it shapes and focuses my vision. My mimetic desire “has me.”

Following the *Affiliative mindset* is the *Self-authoring mindset*. A person with this mindset, as the name implies, is very much her own “author.” She is no longer identified with or by the important others in her life. Rather her concern from this mindset is about her own

integrity and competence in her own eyes, and whether she is living up to her own self-generated values and standards. Where someone with an *Affiliative mindset*, is able to take others' perspectives *one at a time*, and find herself 'taken over by them,' someone with the *Self-authoring* mindset is able to consider many different perspectives *at the same time*, and integrate the parts she finds useful into her own thinking. She uses others' perspectives to inform her own, not replace or take them over. From this mindset, I can see my desire getting stirred up for the Object you desire and possess. I see both of our desire as objects in my mind. I no longer see *through* it, my desire does not "have me," I *have* my desire, I look *at* it, I can have a conversation with myself about it and what it means to me as well as what it might mean to you. I can see the consequences not only for myself but more far reaching in my interactions with you and our entire social network, and I can put my foot on the brake. I can manage and choose my reactions and responses. I am no longer driven by it, and thus I have the capacity to transform it from rivalry to reconciliation

In an optimally supportive and challenging environment, our consciousness continues to grow. We construct increasingly complex understanding of and relationship to desire—and not just our own desire, but of the intricacies and nuances of the mimetic dance itself. We develop the capacity to see how we create and perpetuate the dance even as we are doing it, and in that increased capacity, as we see our own construction of it, we see that we are also constructing our choices for response. Those choices have the potential to then create a different dynamic within the mimetic dance. As I change my steps, your steps must change in response, and then mine change in response to yours. The more I am aware of and in control of my own steps, the more clearly I can see and understand your steps, and thus the more powerfully I can see and shape the

dance we are doing together. I am no longer at the mercy of the dance, my desire, or yours. Our dance becomes about the well-being of each other.

As is hopefully clear from these brief descriptions, mimesis becomes a qualitatively different beast—wild and out of control or deliberately channelled toward mutual well-being—depending on the complexity of meaning through which it is engaged. The more complex the meaning-making system, the more awareness and choice one has in response to their mimetic desire. The degree to which the mimetic dance escalates or not is driven by the particular mix of mindsets. Clearly the most potent escalation happens where there is little capacity for reflection on or self-regulation of either one's desire or one's actions. Our next section explores the developmental implications for communication in the spread of violence.

The complexity of a discursive group and their slide toward violence...or peace.

In this section we discuss the discursive practices of a community as an expression of their average stage of growth, hypothesizing that this is a crucial variable in how violence—or reconciliation—replicates.

In the previous section we focused on Kegan's (1980, 1982, 1994) constructive-developmental theory (located in the upper left hand quadrant) which tracks the evolution of consciousness in individual humans as they interact with and make sense of their various social and cultural holding environments (Fischer, 2006). While the same developmental principles apply we deploy them a little bit differently to help us understand how they inform communication in a discursive community (the lower left quadrant). We now discuss the implications of a developmental, evolutionary approach for understanding the patterns of communication within a group, and the variables that support or impede the spread of violence within it. This is a crucial variable when analyzing a community's response to violent messaging. Let's look at the impact on language and communication: A community's values and social norms are represented and recreated through the discursive practices of that community. To signal membership/participation members are required to interpret the correct signified when they encounter the signifier through a 'sign.'⁵ Only those who have directly experienced the referent can correctly interpret the signified and thereby participate in the community discourse. Correspondingly, those outside the discursive community may misinterpret the sign of the community's dominant mode of discourse. Only those who have reached the required level of linguistic competence can share signifiers and legitimately participate in community discourse.

⁵ Saussure (1959) defines a sign as the combination of a sound - the *signifier* with the *signified*, the mental concept which together point to an object, event, etc, - the *referent*.

Discursive communities, hermeneutic circles, or linguistic groups share a similar sign language within which the members share enough experience with the referents to interpret the correct signified upon encountering the signifier. While many community members may have reached the level of *linguistic* ability to share signifiers (voice sounds, i.e., words) only those members that live within (or have access to) the same *complexity* of mindset or worldspace of the referent can share the signifieds (correct mental image), make the correct interpretations and participate meaningfully in the community's discourse (Leonard, 2009). Wilber (2006) developed the term "*cosmic address*" (p. 266) to more precisely define the complexity of consciousness and perspective of these discursive communities. He states:

All signs exist in a continuum of developmental referents and developmental signifieds. The referent of a sign is not just lying around in "the" world waiting for any and all to simply look at it; the referent exists only in a worldspace that is itself only disclosed in the process of development, and the signified exists only in the interior perception of those who have developed to that worldspace (which structures the background interpretive meaning that allows the signified to emerge). (Wilber, 2000, p. 280)

When thinking about how Girard's triadic structure of *subject-model-object* is infused with desire and potential violence, which often historically ended in ritualistic murder, we must consider how the variable of Wilber's (2006) cosmic address plays out in our analysis of whether or not, and in what ways, the community might escalate to violence or explore more peaceful pathways. Following this path Leonard (2009) notes that:

The Kosmic address alignment among two or more people reveals both the communication possibilities and impossibilities within that specific discursive community. A threshold Kosmic address alignment must exist for meaningful exchange to occur. If a member's Kosmic address prohibits him or her from attaining the requisite referent experience, then the sign language will not be appropriately interpreted and the hermeneutic circle will be compromised. (p. 7)

Let's apply this notion to examine the remarkably peaceful uprising in Egypt.⁶ If a substantial number of group/community members correctly interpret the *signified* (and referent) of democracy and its peaceful pursuit, as exhibited by various models in the crowd, then this triadic structure will likely replicate very quickly because the community has the same alignment of '*cosmic address*' - a key variable in the Girardian triadic structure. Essential to maintaining the momentum of the peaceful uprising and preventing regression to less complex structures of consciousness, which opens the door for considering violence, is the role that the Egyptian military played. The military provided security for the protestors which supported them to maintain their higher structures of complexity—continually communicating a complex sign of peaceful non-violent action which for many had its roots in the work of Gene Sharp (cite). Protected by Egypt's military, peaceful mimetic models deliberately filtered out through the protest groups continually transmitting a sign of democratic non-violent protest that remains today.⁷

Communication, which can take place through a variety of media, is a significant aspect of mimetic theory. Crucial to understanding communication is understanding the implications that a developmental approach provides, something that Maslow (1971) also recognized:

"The meaning of a message clearly depends not alone on its content, but also on the extent to which the personality is able to respond to it. The 'higher' meaning is perceptible only to the 'higher' person. The taller he is, the more he can see" (p. 167).

A mob's rise to the desire for vengeance, for murder and ritualistic scapegoat killing is not immune from these developmental concepts. We believe that groups or communities with more *complex discursive practices*, as we have outlined, are far less prone to follow a straight

⁶ This is a crude hypothesis, without accurate data, but it can serve as a general illustration to highlight how the concept of Wilber's (2006) cosmic address may influence mimetic structures of violence.

⁷ Because of space limitation this discussion is not very nuanced.

trajectory that leads to explicit acts of vengeance and murder. This is because they have the opportunity to create "higher meaning" which allows for more engagement *and* disengagement options for the group or community. Correspondingly, "lower" meaning creation reduces options for action.

We are careful in making such a bold claim because we know that many readers will point to Nazism as a counter-point to our approach. We emphasize that no matter how complex a discursive group or community may be, the possibility always exists of being hi-jacked by malevolent lower level impulses and subsequent regression, for the group or the individual. Volkan (1998, 2006) addresses these issues in his writing about consequences of societal regression.

Wilber's (2006) concept of cosmic address (we don't like the term either!) dramatically informs Girard's work and provides a new lens through which to understand the genesis and spread of violence and the role of the scapegoat in today's chaotic world. Even while looking backwards at history, we have to keep one eye firmly on our present and future, watching for the emergence of novelty—of new creative options for action that previously did not exist. No wonder Girard is feeling a bit gloomy these days about humanity's prospects. If you are only looking backwards "at the lessons of history" it is hard to feel optimistic. But with an eye on the horizon, scanning for new ideas to help us map the contagion of violence, we can create "a higher meaning." That is the source of our renewed hope for a world that can resonate with peace.

Conclusion

Indeed, this academic lemon (Haven 2009) has made some very good lemon-aid. Girard's structural contribution to building a theory of violence and its extinguishment through ritual murder is rich with metaphors of goodness and evil, of reconciliation, redemption and rebirth and is part of many theologians' discursive communities. Through applying Wilber's (2006) integral theory we see the partiality of the theoretical lenses that influenced Girard in his era, and we see the imbalance in his construction of what it means to be human. Drawing upon contemporary theories of adult development (a span of 40 years), we apply new thinking to Girard's triadic structure of Subject, Model, and Object. We build into his structure the complexity of the evolving self and attendant meaning-making that has been absent in his work. We then carry this a step further, extending the developmental notion to the group, introducing Wilber's notion of *cosmic address*, and discussing the communication implications for the spread of violence and/or peace.

Integral theory coordinates and reaffirms the power of balance in updating mimetic theory, once again highlighting it as a powerful mapping of violence and, most importantly, as we face an increasingly complex and dangerous world, of reconciliation and peace.

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ⁱ foot note here to introduce the Good the True and Beautiful – expanded by Wilber to 4 domains),