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The Geo-politics of Mimicry. An interview to Pankaj Mishra by Wolfgang Palaver

La geopolítica de la imitación. Pankaj Mishra
entrevistado por Wolfgang Palaver

The rise of global terrorism or nationalist populism in our world of today are worrying developments in our world of today and raise questions about how to live together in a global world or how identity and universalism should be related to each other. Pankaj Mishra's book *Age of Anger* offers important insights into the deeper roots of the current crisis. He partly engages with René Girard's mimetic theory to explain why envy and resentment increasingly are causing anger all over the world. Also, a new take on religious traditions is emphasized in his call for a new enlightenment.

KEY WORDS: Mimicry, Geo-politics, colonialism, nationalism, religious thinking.

El auge del terrorismo global o del populismo nacionalista en el mundo actual son acontecimientos preocupantes en el mundo de hoy y plantean preguntas sobre cómo convivir en un mundo global o cómo deben relacionarse la identidad y el universalismo. El libro de Pankaj Mishra «*Age of Anger*» (La era de la ira) ofrece importantes reflexiones sobre las raíces más profundas de la crisis actual. En parte, se basa en la teoría mimética de René Girard para explicar por qué la envidia y el resentimiento causan cada vez más ira en todo el mundo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Imitación, Geopolítica, colonialismo, nacionalismo, pensamiento religioso.

Wolfgang Palaver: We are very glad that you accepted in short time the invitation to come to Madrid and discuss with us your book^[1] but also your interest in Girard and our own reflections on violence and religion.



Pankaj Mishra lives between India and England. He studied Commerce and graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce from the Allahabad University in India and then completed a Master in English Literature at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

He wrote already quite some books —one of them is the book we discuss today— *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*, but also *An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World*, and he is also very well-known globally because he frequently contributes to the *New York Review of Books* and the *New York Times*. In the German-speaking world you currently cannot buy a newspaper without a review of his book or an interview with him, or an essay by him. The same is true in other languages.

I came across Pankaj Mishra's work not because of Girard, but quite early on when I was reading Kipling's novel *Kim* with a new introduction by Pankaj Mishra. Afterwards I frequently read his articles in the *New York Review of Books*. And suddenly he was also addressing René Girard and mimetic theory. Most of the criticism against Girard is not worth to reflect on but Pankaj Mishra's critique in 2005 was not superficial, emphasized Girard's strength and uttered objections that we should take seriously.

In 2005 Benedict XVI became Pope and the American journal *New Perspectives Quarterly* published an interview with René Girard that had the title «Ratzinger is Right»^[2]. In this interview Girard sided, of course, with Ratzinger because of his clear stance against relativism, and also claimed that we have to understand the superiority of Christianity. In the same issue of *New Perspectives Quarterly* Pankaj Mishra was also interviewed and he had a chance to read the interview with Girard. He expressed his admiration of Girard's insight into the nonviolent message of the gospel which he recognized as a significant source of inspiration for Mahatma Gandhi's political and spiritual vision and then he criticized Girard's emphasis on the superiority of Christianity. Mishra wrote. «I wonder if it is not more relevant to try to find traditions —in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam— which chime with the truth of the Gospels»^[3]. Mishra prefers such an approach to the claim of a superiority of Christianity. When I read that I immediately thought that we must take this critic seriously.

Now, 12 years later in November there will be a book coming out, *Mimetic Theory and World Religions*^[4] and in the introduction, we refer to your criticism. It took us 12 years to respond to your objection. So, my first question today is, how did you come across the work of René Girard? What was the first occasion to read him? And how did your interest in mimetic theory develop to play such an important role in your recent book *Age of Anger*?

Pankaj Mishra: I am very pleased to be here because Girard has actually played a big role in the framing of this book but also generally in thinking through a variety of issues over the last decade and a half.



I came to him really through his literary criticism in the first instance and then discovered that he had this other side which he had developed in the 1970s and 80s, almost a kind of systematic theory. I began to see its relevance to the things I was very interested in at that time, specifically the evolution of post-colonial societies in the last hundred years starting with anti-colonial movements, then their development into post-colonial states. And I began to see the enormous relevance of mimetic theory to what I think is the central historical development of the 20th century: decolonization and the formation of nation-states in Asia and Africa. So that was one instance where I could see there was a lot to be gained from applying this theory.

Returning to your question about Gandhi, I feel that someone like Gandhi was acutely aware of the sacrificial mechanism. For one reason, this figure of the victim and the prestige of the victim that he built up was his big weapon against the power of British imperialism. The victim acquires a kind of moral prestige by not retaliating, by not responding and to emphasis that the victim is innocent is really in many ways at the core of Gandhi's thought. He derives a lot of this—I do not know to what extent he was conscious of it; he has written about it obviously—from the Gospels. It is impossible to conceive of Gandhi, to conceive of Gandhian thought without the role played in it by his readings in Christianity. And many of them were eccentric readings. He was a self-taught man like many of us who come to Christianity through all kinds of different ways; through Tolstoy—there is a sort of anarchist Christianity which is very intriguing for Gandhi—but nevertheless he draws from it these particular lessons which he then applies to his political method which turns out to be an extremely effective, a very original way of being a political activist combining it with a spiritual program. Obviously, Gandhi was not an intellectual in the way we think of intellectuals today, but he had an instinctive understanding of a religious tradition. And at the same time, there is a very interesting correspondence between him and Christian missionaries about conversions in India. He is very much against conversions because he thought that people ought to be faithful to their particular cultural religious traditions that they are born into and that whatever they gain from it, if they are truly spiritual and truly religious, will not distract them, will not attract them from the pursuit of truth. So, he refused to say, for instance, that Hinduism is superior, or, for that matter, any religion is superior to others. He was very much interested in sort of looking at different religious traditions and combining the best from all of them, so very much in a way an inventor of traditions, too. Even within Hinduism he was looking at particular traditions and rejecting the others. I think it is interesting how he responds to the role of war and violence in Hinduism, how he seeks to diffuse that particular element.

But anyway, to come back to Girard and to my recent book, I had only thought of him in connection with the project of anti-colonial nationalism as a kind of mimicry. Mimicry is a very important theme in much post-colonial thought. The most important book I think about Indian nationalism for instance is called in subtitle *A Derivative Discourse*^[5]. This notion that you have to imitate in very close detail the oppressor, the entity, the nation-states that has invaded and occupied your lands, that has managed to accumulate a kind of power, unprecedented kind of power through technological means, through global capitalism and that you have to enter, you have to embrace the same rules, the same methodologies in order to survive with dignity. In this sort of dog-eat-dog jungle of international relations that is a very powerful theme which also clarifies many of the dilemmas of post-colonial nationalism. When that anti-colonial element diminishes how does that anti-colonial nationalism define itself? And we are seeing



the problems today where internal enemies are being sought so the scapegoat mechanisms is kicking in all kinds of unpredictable and chaotic ways. But thinking about this book made me expand my frameworks a bit and made me think of a larger history, a history of the modern world no less, starting with the late 18th century—but more importantly the early 19th century—as a process of mimicry sometimes very self-conscious. Starting with Napoleon and his conquest of various European countries and the feelings he evokes in the people he has conquered of envy of *ressentiment*, and the ways in which those feelings become politically important, which is true as much of Napoleon in Egypt as Napoleon in Germany. And when I started to think in those ways a whole landscape opened up where I could connect not just post-colonial Asia and Africa, but also much of the experience of modern Europe in the 19th century and I could see Girard's insights being verified across this much broader sort of history.

WP: Let us just follow up a little bit on Gandhi first. You said that Gandhi's reading of the gospel influenced him to come to a new understanding of Hinduism. I very often say to my students when they make a too simple juxtaposition of jihadists on the one hand and the nonviolence of Jesus on the other, that if you go back 70, 80 years and if you would have talked about a non-violent Jesus many Christian Catholics would not have understood what you were talking about. So my impression is that the work of Gandhi also influenced the Catholic Church dramatically to come to this understanding that we teach today when we talk about the importance of Jesus's nonviolence.

I want to continue a little bit on Gandhi. I do not think it is in the book, but you also wrote a very important essay after the *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attacks in the English newspaper *The Guardian*^[6]. You said that «we need a new enlightenment», and in a recent lecture in Austria you continued this claim quoting Gandhi that «those who think religion has nothing to do with politics understand neither religion nor politics»^[7]. Could you please explain your call for a new enlightenment because I think for many Western liberal people this is probably difficult to swallow. Many Western European people have finished in some way with religion, and now you come and say that we must focus on religion again.

PM: That is a very important question. I mean, in many ways what we have seen today around the world is a cry of anguish. You can interpret it in any number of ways, but what we are looking at is a large protest against a world in which the pursuit of individual self-interest has created societies with obscene extreme inequalities, where all kinds of ethical codes have been flouted with ample rational justifications. These particular cults of economic growth of GDP that we have invested in which are a kind of or have been substitute religions, particularly in the last three decades or so, where economists, technocrats, experts devised schemes of universal fulfillment, universal progress and people around the world following those schemes. Now, someone like Gandhi, who senses very clearly that this is the world in many ways that we are beginning to live in (this is a man who experiences globalization in his first phase in the late 19th century) he sees it, he witnesses, he is in South Africa, he is in England, he is in India, he has a unique vantage point on these massive socio-economic changes that are beginning through all of Europe. Also, we are beginning to experience that kind of change in Asia through imperialism and he sees that politics has become increasingly detached from all kinds of ethical concerns; that this is about the pursuit of commodities, about resources, about territories, about national self-interest, individual self-interest, or organized selfishness as Rabindranath Tagore, another Indian who should be spoken of in connection with Gandhi, said.



And his entire program, his political program, is to recombine politics with a religious project, with the spiritual project. Very broadly speaking, an ethical project. So when he says that those who talk about religion or those who say that religion has got nothing to do with politics, know neither politics nor religion, he is basically saying that politics, when it is disconnected from ethical codes that have actually governed human conduct for centuries, then we are going to look at monstrous wars, we are going to look at incredible conflicts what Girard calls an «escalation to the extremes». We need very much to incorporate the ideas, the values, the ideals that have been central to human life for a very long time; that it is only in the modern era that we have abandoned them and even see virtue in abandoning them, even see progress in universal secularization, in a large scale rejection of transcendental authority, in fantasies of creating the kingdom of God on earth through science, reason, and commerce. I think Gandhi is probably the harshest, the most eloquent critic—in that period at least—of this tendency in the modern world, and a very prescient one too.

WP: But if someone today in the modern world claims that there has to be again a connection between religion and politics some people would be alerted because there is already the danger of fundamentalism on the table. So, in your essay in the *Guardian* you also make the claim that «we have to retrieve the Enlightenment as much as religion from its fundamentalists». So, you claim fundamentalism is a problem and there is religious fundamentalism but there is also an enlightened fundamentalism, right?

PM: Absolutely. I mean, I think we are looking at both. We have been looking at both. I have argued many times that religious fundamentalism is a symptom of the decline of religion. I think this should be understood very precisely. It should not be taken as an aggravation of traditional religion. It is in fact a sign that traditional religion is in rapid decline. Not surprisingly we are seeing some oxymoronic developments today of Islamic fundamentalism, Hindu fundamentalism, Buddhist fundamentalism. So, Buddhist have turned to ethnic cleansing or to militant nationalism. That is always invariably a sign that Buddhism is in decline or that Hinduism is in decline and that the hold of all their ideas of transcendence have more or less vanished. And people who are left desolate by this disappearance of all that made life meaningful for their parents, for their grandparents, are desperately trying to recreate some source of authority in their lives. And therefore, the kind of fanaticism they bring to this endeavor that they can only really define themselves by violence, through persecution of some minority or other. This phenomenon that we 'are seeing of Shia/Sunni for instance; this is very much an attempt to create an existential identity for yourself through persecution, through violence. And this is how we should understand fundamentalism rather than connect it to something what someone said in the 13th or 14th centuries. I have been arguing over and over that our discussion of Islamic fundamentalism is intellectually puerile; I could use harsher words, but it really is not only politically counterproductive, which we have seen over the last decade and a half, but intellectually catastrophic. It simply does not understand the traditions, simply do not exist in some unmediated form that you can simply connect yourself to; that you can simply connect yourself to some theology or scripture from the 15th century or from the 8th century that religion is a dynamic force; is constantly shifting, changing, interacting with wider realms of politics; especially in the modern world religions are constantly being secularized and what we are really looking at is a symptom of universal secularization when we talk about fundamentalism. And likewise, with the more secular forms of fundamentalism, the more blatant forms of fundamentalism that we have seen since the late



18th century which really in a way are trying to create substitute religions by upholding such goals as progress, science, commerce, «universal trade is going to bring us peace». These are the investments that are made in the late 18th century very consciously, that this is the clue to being a cosmopolitan citizen. And in many ways what we are looking at today is the endgame of that project: a long-drawn-out endgame, a project in which the individual, his desires were exalted above all, where humanism of a certain kind was privileged over all other ways of being in the larger world. And the fantasy of individual reason, of the individual self to begin with as a coherent entity, all these things that were first formulated, theorized and then institutionalized throughout the 19th century in our politics, that are in our economy, what we are seeing today in this global landscape of rage, of disaffection, is really in a kind of worldwide challenge to these ideas. And that is why I argued that we need a new Enlightenment. We need to emerge from this immaturity that these fantasies of individual reason and faith and science and faith and commerce have had plunged us into.

WP: The probably two most influential books after the end of the Cold War were Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilization*. *The Age of Anger* responds to both of these books. I think you start in some way in *The Age of Anger* with a challenge of the worldview that is comprised by Fukuyama's *The End of History* by showing that the anthropological view of how human beings are is false in this version of *homo economicus* and overlooks passions, anger, resentment that we have to understand better in order to understand our world. Is that correct?

PM: It is important to understand both *The End of History* or *The Clash of Civilization* that both come from writers very close to the American establishments (in one case actually an employee of the State Department-Fukuyama). Huntington is a classic kind of adviser to power, an intellectual scholar. So, whatever they write cannot be detached from foreign policy, military imperatives of the United States. That in itself deeply compromises whatever they have to say about the state of the world. In many cases *The End of History* was a kind of Hegelian fantasy that the state of equilibrium that the United States had arrived at in the post-war period, with a heavily commercialized economy and expanding economy, with people apparently content with material pursuits of all kinds and of course living in a kind of material planet plenitude (technology, creating new objects for consumption all the time), that this state, this peculiarly American state can be generalized around the world and since it is so attractive to Americans it will also be attractive to other people who will aspire for it. This is partly right, but many things were completely either obscured or ignored in this whole fantasy. Many people are not in a position to aspire for those things temperamentally, historically; their countries, their societies have not been privileged in the same way the United States was to aspire for those things. So that aspiration, that pursuit, that struggle might end in frustration which might turn politically toxic as we are seeing today. This is one thing.

The other thing is that many people have other ideals, other values and not all of them can be theorized, can be seen or can be made to conform to this anthropological image of first theorized in the late 19th century by slave owners in America and some upstart networked intellectuals in late 18th century in France and in England. Why should we assume that people around the world at different stages in their historical development, with different cultures, different traditions would want to be like the man Adam Smith thinks everyone should be? Why did we entertain this fantasy? But nevertheless, here we are: much politics, much economy,



much work that is carried on by international organizations, United Nations, the governments assume that this is the case. Well, it turns out that is not the case. Now, when we move away from this «end of history» narrative the response to that is «oh no, history is not ending, we are entering a clash of civilizations». That is another sort of sleight of hands, where you posit these large civilizations which are internally very different, you posit a kind of clash and beneath all that is a kind of racial anxiety—which is very clear in Huntington's last book—that we, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants are being thronged by these darker skinned immigrants which, of course, now it is being bluntly stated by all kinds of white nationalists in the United States. But, again, I think these books are important as symptoms of particular anxieties, of particular fantasies entertained by powerful people, and of course they circulate, they acquire a kind of international reputation because of the cultural political power of the United States, and the networks of publicity advertising that go into making them important books. But intellectually, they are really operating at the level of fantasy.

WP: I think one can read your book as a justification of a left-wing critique of neoliberal globalism. We discussed it in a small circle and so let me therefore express a concern. You very much draw on Tocqueville and the phenomenon that equality is spreading but the hopes that equality raises are not fulfilled. So, one could probably read your book as saying it is a problem of distribution, if we distribute globally the goods on the world so that everyone has his or her share everything would be solved. We, Girardians, and Girard in his very first book also refers to Tocqueville and recognize that the more there is equality the more there will be mimetic fights. And even in another book Tocqueville recognized interestingly that the French Revolution did not start when there was a very strong depravation, but it started when there was equality already growing. Would you think it is justified when I would say your book is still a little bit too much going with left-wing allusion there is an easy way out or did I read your book not carefully enough?

PM: I'm glad you asked me that because it is an important point. I feel that a lot of left-wing critiques of new liberalism do not really transcend a certain banal economism. They remain stuck at the level of redistribution which is really restating the problem it does not actually solve this problem of mimetic violence, of mimetic rivalry.

Equality is a highly problematic idea. Obviously, its roots are in Christianity, but it is very clear that equality in the eyes of God, the pursuit of equality through some other means, through material prosperity, which has been the case in the last three decades, is going to unleash all kinds of mimetic rivalries—which is what we have also seen—and conflicts, and of course, exponential rise in feelings of envy, resentment and all of these emotions. We need to really think about equality differently. We need to look at pre-modern social formations that, without ever compromising on some basic ideas—the dignity of the human person—which are all there and are enshrined in practically every religion^[8]. This notion that we have to address equality through heavier taxation, through better redistribution, really does not go to the core of the problem, which is that our modern societies are premised on values that were always held in great suspicion by the religions and philosophies of the past (competition, vanity, mimesis). And that, as long as those things are tried or are even given a great value and credited with moral value, then the problem will continue to reproduce itself. We saw that also in social societies or communist societies and what happened there where equality was imposed. It is important to critique new liberalism not only for entrenching, for producing outcomes that are manifestly



unequal, first promoting equality, promoting a pursuit of universal prosperity but then rigging the game in the way that there is extreme inequality. We have to definitely engage in that critique. But one has to go deeper and critique new liberalism from an ethical perspective and to say that the values it cherishes, above all of competition, really undercuts the basis of human societies, the social bonds, solidarities, networks that have been essential to human societies for centuries and centuries.

WP: Many of us are really concerned, or the whole world is concerned because of jihadist terrorist attacks. So some scholars, also some among us, now go into archives and they come up with a hadith looking for explanations. You write in your book that thinking that some obscure hadith or some verse in the Quran explains jihadism does not understand the problem at all and you draw on emulation between the West and the jihadists. I think it would be very important that you explore that a little bit.

PM: That is a very important thing in the book, and it is not just about terrorism, it is not just about the mimetic tendencies within international terrorism but it is also about nationalism. I argued that Zionism, political Islam, Hindu nationalism they all emerge out of a process of mimesis. It is fascinating that Hindu nationalism for instance reproduces, takes all the stereotypes about Hindus: that they are weak, cowardly, effeminate ... it embraces them and even when it is denouncing Islam, even when it is the sounds denouncing Muslims, it envies Islam for its apparent strength, for its apparent unity, and wants to imitate those aspects. So, I do not think we will understand much of modern ideologies if we do not understand how Zionism emerges out of anti-Semitism, how Hindu nationalism emerges out of colonial stereotypes about Hindus. Likewise, with many ideologies of extremism, of violence, of anarchist violence they have always derived their identity from what they are opposed to. And without that the whole project will collapse. I showed that in the various remarks. To take only one instance, Osama ben Laden as an example. He is very consciously talking about mimesis: «you do this, we do this; you do this, we are going to do that». It is very apparent, «you dress our people in orange jumpsuits and send them to Guantanamo, we are going to dress them up in orange and behead them in public» (this is not ben Laden, but this is other people). So, this is really a case of escalation to the extremes, of mimesis gone mad or gone pathological on a global scale and, again, this is where we should really locate the sources of much violence today. We are trying to understand it through some theology or scripture and, just intellectually, it is just really deadening. It is a total impasse that we find ourselves in when we try to do that. We cannot understand any of these phenomena. I mean, can one find sanction for violence in any Buddhist scripture? Maybe somewhere in some Tibetan tradition there is some sanction, but does that explain why the Thai monks are engaged in ethnic cleansing?^[9]. This is a fool's game, so I think we really should pay more attention to the Girardian concept of mimesis.

WP: One sentence in your book comes very close to Girard's apocalyptic vision. You write: «the two ways in which humankind can self-destruct, civil war on a global scale or destruction of the natural environment are rapidly converging». This sentence is summarizing the introduction of Girard's book on Clausewitz. Some of the reviews that reacted already to your book said that Pankaj Mishra shows us the mess we are in. He shows us the Voltairean neoliberalism, and he shows us the Rousseauian nationalism and resentment and so what now? Many refer to the interesting sentence that concludes your book. In the conclusion of your book, you write that «we need some truly transformative thinking». Some of the reviewers ask



themselves what that means. If one reads your book more carefully you have very important little hints to important religious traditions. Of course, I myself as a Catholic theologian was very happy when you write in a book that the most convincing and influential public intellectual today, Pope Francis, is not an agent of reason and progress. You see a hopeful sign in Pope Francis and especially in his encyclical *Laudato si'*, you refer to Gandhi, you refer to Simone Weil, you refer to Eric Voegelin and you quote from Eric Voegelin the «new absoluteness of evil, [...] is not introduced into the situation by the revolutionary; it is the reflex of the actual despiritualization of the society from which the revolutionary emerges». You see the spiritual vacuum, the spiritual nihilism of our world which creates these strange reactions and so therefore, you would side a little bit with Voegelin so that we need some new reflection on the religious traditions. Could you tell us what probably the follow-up volume will be when you will tell us what «truly transformative thinking» means?

PM: It is difficult to explain that because I have grown up and spent most of my life in India and most of my adult life in a village where I am surrounded by religious people. My parents, who do not live in the village, are extremely religious people. Religious in the old sense, for whom the idea of transcendence is still alive; for whom the idea of divine presence is palpable. This is not religion approach through intellectual means or through study or scholarship, this is the faith practiced every day. For me this is not design called for new thinking, but it does has alerted me, living surrounded by these people, to another relationship with the world. A non-instrumental one with other human beings and when I step out of that world, I am in a world that has been remade by our emphasis on science, on a particular kind of instrumental rationality and when I am saying we need a transformational thinking I think we need to rediscover some of these old ways of being in the wider world. Because otherwise I think we are looking at extensive devastation, which has already happened. The number of species that have gone, extinct, just in the last few decades, the kind of damage that has been inflicted on the natural environment and the kind of violence that has been committed in the last 200 years or so. If we are going to escape this particular trap, then we really do have to return to the wisdom we are safe in many of our religious traditions and philosophies. There have been hundreds of reviews of this book and not one of them pointed to this element that you just pointed out, pointed to the influence of Girard or to the particular religious traditions that I am alluding to because intellectual life is almost entirely secularized. To speak of religion, to speak of spirituality there is to provoke embarrassment amongst large numbers of very sophisticated people. And that means that the whole discourse has been delegitimated, that people who are paid to think about the world, about how we go forward, have discarded a whole way of understanding our place in history, our place in the wide world. We are looking at a huge intellectual deficit, apart from everything else, which, I feel as a writer that I should help overcome. Bringing these figures into play, bringing these religious traditions, writing a book on the Buddha, writing about Gandhi, writing about Girard, indirectly is my way of saying that these traditions are relevant, these traditions are even more relevant today because of the old Enlightenment.

WP: A last question, because maybe that can help us in the challenge we are facing. In all the religious traditions, and we can especially see it inside the Catholic Church, one of the things where we cannot go back is the gender issue. We cannot go back to a patriarchal Christianity or Hinduism or whatever in some way, and you address again and again in your



book male rage. There is a male rage going on globally in all the traditions —Trump probably was also elected because of male rage— Would you recommend we have to go back to a complementary understanding of male and female? You quote Friedrich Ludwig Jahn in Germany «“let men be manly then women will be womanly” (in other words, passive, soothing and domestic)». If you would underwrite that you get probably in trouble with half of the audience here, but on the other hand there is male rage...

PM: Someone like Gandhi recognized that there was a deep crisis of masculinity within the modern world that had caused this exponential rise in violence and that created the cults of people like Napoleon. Mass murderers came to be worshipped because of their apparent power and strength and ability to conquer, to manipulate millions of people. Having recognized that, he emphasized this notion of androgyny. To move away from these hardline distinctions that Jahn is emphasizing between the masculine and the feminine, which really in a way, especially for men, create an intolerable burden of freedom, of individuality. We see this in India today: men are expected to move out of their rural environments to find a place for themselves in the wider world, to become free to take on this responsibility of freedom; and of course, also to tend for their families, for the weaker ones in the families which they have left at home. And this proves to be an impossible burden. And therefore, this male rage which manifests itself in many cases in horrific violence against women (a lot of the violence against women in India we see today is precisely caused by these men who find this challenge of masculinity impossible to meet and therefore unleash their frustration against the physically weaker people around them). So, this particular pathology of modernity, of wanting to achieve power and realizing that a lot of this power is achieved by achieving domination over others, this is something Gandhi identified very clearly, very precisely and overturned the masculine-feminine thing. By not retaliating, by remaining passive, he gave virtue to that particular stance at the same time making it an active principle, making feminism an active principle. So, I think there is a lot to be learned from in these particular. And I completely agree with you that there is no going back, there cannot be any going back to the old patriarchal, feudal systems where women were oppressed, that in the world we live in one has to think again about these gender roles.

1. NOTAS

[1] Mishra, Pankaj (2017). *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*. 1st American edition. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. It has been translated into several languages. In Spanish it was translated in the same year of its original release: Mishra, Pankaj. 2017. *La edad de la ira: una historia del presente*. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg. The conversation took place within the COV&R Annual Meeting held at the UFV in Madrid, on July 11 to 15, 2017.

[2] Girard, René, and Nathan Gardels (2005). «Ratzinger Is Right. Interview with Nathan Gardels». *New Perspectives Quarterly* 22 (3): 43-48.

[3] Mishra, Pankaj (2005). «What Would the Buddha Think?» *New Perspectives Quarterly* 22 (3): 49-53, here 52.

[4] Now already published on the Michigan State University Press series *Studies in Violence, Mimesis and Culture*: Palaver, Wolfgang, and Richard Schenk, eds. 2017. *Mimetic Theory and World Religions*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.



[5] Chatterjee, Partha (1993). *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* London: Zed.

[6] Mishra, Pankaj (2015). «After the Paris Attacks: It's Time for a New Enlightenment». *The Guardian*, enero 20. [Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/jan/20/-sp-after-paris-its-time-for-new-enlightenment>]

[7] Mishra, Panka (2016). «Wir brauchen eine neue Aufklärung». *Der Standard*, 20. August, 2016, Album A1-2.

[8] Buddha himself, when he raises the question of equality, it is something that is to defined through the fact of suffering. All sentient beings suffer and that is really the basis of equality. The awareness that all living beings suffer and therefore one needs to feel free of compassion for them is, in a way, the basis of his critique of the sacrificial systems of his own time.

[9] This is a different tradition of Buddhism.

