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From Soul Murder to Spiritual Re-education. Wounded desire transformed through the Sword of Christ in the thought of Girard and Basset

Del asesinato del alma a la re-educación espiritual.
El deseo herido transformado a través de la espada de Cristo en el pensamiento de Girard y Basset

In 2001, the late Henri Tincq from *Le monde* received the John Templeton award for European Religion Writer. In his winning portfolio, Tincq not only took up a balanced portrait of the Swiss theologian Lytta Basset, whom he qualified as one of the 'spiritual masters of Europe', but he also presented an in-depth interview with René Girard in the aftermath of 9/11. It seems no coincidence that two of these contending articles were dedicated to authors who have complementary analyses of violence and the problem of evil in our societies. Hardly a year later, Basset publishes *Sainte Colère* (2002), a remarkable psycho-spiritual book on Holy Anger, in which she engages more deeply with the work of Girard than she has done before. Both authors focus on the victim, but they have another perspective on victimary rivalry. The key to understand this difference lies in a different treatment of anger and the sword of Christ. Mimetic anger is blind and contagious and makes differences disappear, whilst holy anger differentiates and opens the victim up to the other because it enables one to get in touch with the painful zones in itself. Mimetic anger imprisons oneself into a false difference to violate or even eliminate the other; holy anger disowns me from a fixated victimary position because it lets me truthfully face the other as he or she is. Speaking out my complaint and my negative feelings to a benevolent other can stop me from acting out. Holy anger disentangles the deadlock between killing or being killed. It opens a third path, the one of revolt and resistance. Finally, it hopes for blessing and is the precondition for compassion and forgiveness. One of the major critiques on Girard is that he never succeeds in giving a substantive content to the concept of good mimesis. His analysis stays on the level of a certain cognitive conversion or the change of the model to overcome the impact of mimetic violence. Basset however, gives some positive examples in the psycho-spiritual realm of what Jesus really means by doing non-violence. Holy Anger is one of them. It is true that, as of her doctoral dissertation on guilt and forgiveness, *Le Pardon originel* (1994), Basset has already critically and implicitly been dealing with a very basic version of mimetic theory (under the name of 'reproduction of evil'). In what follows, we will go through three different stages in the oeuvre of Basset to shed light on the incorporation, enhancement and critique of mimetic theory that she performs.

KEY WORDS: psychoanalysis, therapy, education, forgiveness, Lytta Basset.

En 2001, el difunto Henri Tincq, de *Le monde*, recibió el premio John Templeton al Escritor Europeo de Religión. En su carpeta ganadora, Tincq no sólo realizó un equilibrado retrato de la teóloga suiza Lytta Basset, a la que calificó como una de las «maestras espirituales de Europa», sino que también presentó una entrevista en profundidad con René Girard tras el 11-S. No parece casualidad que dos de estos artículos polémicos estuvieran dedicados a autores con análisis complementarios sobre la violencia y el problema del mal en nuestras sociedades. Apenas un año después, Basset publica *Sainte Colère* (2002), un notable libro psicoespiritual sobre la Santa Ira, en el que se compromete más profundamente que antes con la obra de Girard.

Ambos autores se centran en la víctima, pero tienen otra perspectiva de la rivalidad victimaria. La clave para entender esta diferencia reside en un tratamiento distinto de la ira y de la espada de Cristo. La ira mimética es ciega y contagiosa y hace desaparecer las diferencias, mientras que la ira santa diferencia y abre a la víctima al otro porque permite entrar en contacto con las zonas dolorosas en sí mismas. La ira mimética se aprisiona en una falsa diferencia para violentar o incluso eliminar al otro; la ira santa me despoja de una posición victimista fijada porque me permite enfrentarme de verdad al otro tal y como es. Expresar mi queja y mis sentimientos negativos a un otro benévolo puede impedirme actuar. La ira santa desenreda el callejón sin salida entre matar o ser matado. Abre una tercera vía, la de la revuelta y la resistencia. Por último, espera la bendición y es la condición previa para la compasión y el perdón. Una de las principales críticas a Girard es que nunca consigue dar un contenido sustantivo al concepto de buena mimesis. Su análisis se queda en el nivel de una cierta conversión cognitiva o del cambio de modelo para superar el impacto de la violencia mimética. Basset, sin embargo, da algunos ejemplos positivos en el ámbito psicoespiritual de lo que Jesús quiere decir realmente con hacer no violencia. La ira santa es uno de ellos. Es cierto que, a partir de su tesis doctoral sobre la culpa y el perdón, *Le Pardon originel* (1994), Basset ya abordó de forma crítica e implícita una versión muy básica de la teoría mimética (bajo el nombre de «reproducción del mal»). A continuación, recorreremos tres etapas diferentes de la obra de Basset para arrojar luz sobre la incorporación, la mejora y la crítica de la teoría mimética que realiza.

PALABRAS CLAVE: psicoanálisis, terapia, educación, perdón, Lytta Basset.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2001, the late Henri Tincq from *Le monde* received the John Templeton award for European Religion Writer.^[1] In his winning portfolio, Tincq not only took up a balanced portrait of the Swiss theologian Lytta Basset, whom he qualified as one of the 'spiritual masters of Europe', but he also presented an in-depth interview with René Girard in the aftermath of 9/11. It seems no coincidence that two of these contending articles were dedicated to authors who have complementary analyses of violence and the problem of evil in our societies.^[2] Hardly a year later, Basset publishes *Sainte Colère* (2002), a remarkable psycho-spiritual book on Holy Anger, in which she engages more deeply with the work of Girard than she has done before.^[3] Both authors focus on the victim, but they have another perspective on victimary rivalry. The key to understand this difference lies in a different treatment of anger and the sword of Christ. Mimetic anger is blind and contagious and makes differences disappear, whilst holy anger differentiates and opens the victim up to the other because it enables one to get in touch with the painful zones in itself. Mimetic anger imprisons oneself into a false difference to violate or even eliminate the other; holy anger disowns me from a fixated victimary position because it lets me truthfully face the other as he or she is. Speaking out my complaint and my negative feelings to a benevolent other can stop me from acting out. Holy anger disentangles the deadlock between killing or being killed. It opens a third path, the one of revolt and resistance.

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Finally, it hopes for blessing and is the precondition for compassion and forgiveness. One of the major critiques on Girard is that he never succeeds in giving a substantive content to the concept of good mimesis. His analysis stays on the level of a certain cognitive conversion or the change of the model to overcome the impact of mimetic violence. Basset however, gives some positive examples in the psycho-spiritual realm of what Jesus really means by doing non-violence. Holy Anger is one of them. It is true that, as of her doctoral dissertation on guilt and forgiveness, *Le Pardon originel* (1994), Basset has already critically and implicitly been dealing with a very basic version of mimetic theory (under the name of 'reproduction of evil').^[4] In what follows, we will go through three different stages in the oeuvre of Basset to shed light on the incorporation, enhancement and critique of mimetic theory that she performs.

Firstly, we will show how Basset reverses the classical moral focus on evildoing (*le mal commis*) to the priority of the suffering Self (*le mal subi*). This will lead to a series of questions about the nature of desire. Is it not wounded desire that enrages us and fuels bad mimesis? Doesn't the mimetic subject always already have a history? A history that needs to be unfolded. In this unveiling of the wound, Basset discovers with Alice Miller a psychological version or an intra-subjective repetition of the scapegoat mechanism. It is as if the traumatized, split subject scapegoats the most important part of itself to immunize itself against the pain that it has suffered: it buries this suffering Self under a narcissistic protective bubble which it uses as an armature against the Other. It is this freezing of the wound that blinds us for our own responsibility and fuels and sharpens the mimetic polarities around us. In her analysis, Basset delves deeper into the psychological realm to uncover the roots of mimetic violence, which is only one possible outcome of mimesis itself. Secondly, Basset's treatment of Holy anger shows how it is even possible to undo mimetic polarities once the sacrificial protection has broken. This allows us to consider the non-violent violence of the good anew. Girard's one-sided focus on the apocalyptic sword of Christ doesn't bring to light its positive identity-building potential. The cognitive conversion which Girard defends, seems to have a much more complex counterpart in the psycho-spiritual realm. Thirdly, it is with the benevolent help of a lucid witness—the third—that the I will be able to profit from good mimesis. This leads to a positive life-enhancing anthropology that seeks to highlight the potential of benevolent examples and to a renewed emphasis on the ethical struggle against violence from the perspective of spirituality.

2. PART 1. WOUNDED DESIRE AND SOUL MURDER

As a pupil of the influential French protestant philosopher Paul Ricoeur, Basset tries to evacuate the problem of evil out of the narrow constraints of the moral realm to give space to human suffering and complaint. In doing so, she opens the possibility to reconnect with the wounds of the evil that we have undergone, before even considering the moral problem: underneath the problem of guilt lies the problem of human pain.

In his book *Evil*, Ricoeur claims that ever since Augustine, the question of the origin of evil—'where does evil come from?' (*unde malum?*)—has in the West immediately been interpreted in terms of sin and punishment—'where does the evil that we do come from?' (*unde malum faciamus?*).^[5] We suffer since we have sinned. Because of our natural tendency to assign blame to deflect pain—who has done it?—there is a special anthropological connection





between guilt and punishment. We always already have the compulsion to feel guilty (or to accuse the other) instead of feeling the unbearable pain of the wound. This way to get grip on evil seems to be a protection mechanism to remain in control and to silence the hurting of unjust and unexplainable suffering.^[6]

For girardians, the link of this line of reasoning with the scapegoat mechanism never seems far away. However, Basset changes the priority of the questions. In focusing too much on the moral problem, the human substrate in which sin occurs, remains untouched. She points to the urgency of treating the wounds we have suffered, before speaking of sin and moral responsibility. In the lineage of the very informative French title of James Alison's book on original sin —*Le péché originel à la lumière de la Résurrection*— the question of sin only makes sense *a posteriori*, after being given the good news.^[7] It amounts to the same reason why Basset uses the provocative title *Original Forgiveness* for her doctoral dissertation.

The first explicit encounter with Girard lies in Basset's treatment of the book of Job. The mimetic polarity between blaming the other and self-accusation is the way in which Job struggles with a double scapegoat mechanism. In *le Pardon Originel* Basset only hints three times to Girard in her analysis of the suffering of Job. However, she sees in Job more than the victim of his people, because the whole book of Job is about the excess of evil and the counter-violence of Job himself. There is more to evil than moral sin and human wickedness. There are painful things in life that can't be blamed to others. She considers that Girard himself points to the excess of evil when he says that it is the religious solution that contains and keeps in check the underlying chaos in the world.^[8] Without victimization, we can't deal very well with our powerlessness in the light of excessive evil. Thus, in Job, there is a kind of intra-subjective version of scapegoating because he alternately blames the other *and himself*. Only when he gets at the bottom of his anger, he becomes able to let go of the blame game and to face the Other as he is (without mimetic projections and dissociations). It is clear that next to the very few references to Girard, Basset is already constantly talking about mimetic processes from the beginning without naming them as such. That is because of the integration of some basic lines of the thought of Alice Miller. Her theory of the reproduction of evil has some very interesting similarities with mimetic violence and scapegoating.

3. ALICE MILLER AND THE REPRODUCTION OF EVIL

Basset opens the fundamental first part of her doctoral dissertation with a quote of Alice Miller: «Every persecutor has been a victim» This sounds very familiar to a line Girard utters in *Battling to the End*: «The aggressor has always already been attacked».^[9] The nuance is of importance. Girard criticizes the usurpation of the victimary position, because it seems that this insight is nowadays being abused to persecute the other. It almost sounds like an excuse to perpetrate evil. As such, the scapegoat mechanism is brought back in through the backdoor. Let us hear the extensive quotation:

This also contains a major discovery in anthropology: aggression does not exist (...) [A]mong humans, the fact that no one ever feels they are the aggressor is because everything is always already reciprocal. The slightest

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little difference, in one direction or another, can trigger the escalation to extremes. The aggressor has always already been attacked.^[10]

However, not every victim becomes a persecutor. For Miller, the difference lies within the availability of a lucid witness who can attune to the victim and can listen empathetically to the traumatic experience. Those who do not find someone who can hear and help bear the pain of the suffered evil, will become deaf for the pain of others as well. Especially when something has been considered as 'normal' or as a 'just' pedagogical measure, the victim not only needs to transform something bad into something good, but consequently has to suppress and dissociate his negative feelings. This kind of perversion makes victims unable to attend to the real pain of others. And even worse, the suppressed hatred becomes latent and accumulates within so that it unconsciously can be acted out. Eventually one can become a perpetrator oneself by reproducing the suffered evil. The mimetic nature of the reproduction of evil becomes very clear in the following words of Miller:

My very point is to refrain from moralizing and only show cause and effect; namely, that those children who are beaten will in turn give beatings, those who are intimidated will be intimidating, those who are humiliated will impose humiliation, and those whose souls are murdered will murder.^[11]

This leads us to believe that the mimetic subject is not only susceptible to the present but is also deeply informed by a singular traumatic history that needs to be unfolded. The subject is as much influenced by its family history as it is the contemporary of every mimetic model at hand in the present. Isn't it true that underneath the blind reproduction of evil lies a part of the self that is murdered by the others? And if there is a history of violence, wouldn't it be necessary to enhance our analytical equipment with a developmental perspective, as Martha Reineke also claims in her groundbreaking magnum opus *Intimate Domain*?^[12] To change ourselves, to convert us from our blind ways of acting out the violence that has been done to us, we need to look at the wounds that lie underneath our defensive armatures. It is essential to investigate our traumatized and dissociated parts not to fall into scapegoating ourselves. It is no use to blame humankind for sin, without taking into account the wounds beneath it. This implies that we urgently need to look at childhood trauma.

4. SOUL MURDER AND OBJECTIFYING VIOLENCE

In *For your own Good*, Alice Miller lays bare the basic principles of poisonous pedagogy (*Schwarze Pädagogik*) that lie at the root of most child-rearing methods until very recently. She starts her exposition with a careful examination of the pedagogical handbooks of Dr. Schreber. His controversial method seems extreme now, but it was fashionable in 19th century Prussia and led to all kinds of mental health problems. His children eventually became mentally ill and his paranoid son was a famous patient of Sigmund Freud. The pedagogue prescribed that, already from in the cradle, children must be manipulated to free them from the seeds of evil. The malevolent will of the child must be broken at all costs, so that the stubborn ego of the child cedes





into obedience for the master. Once this emotional blindness is installed, one can do whatever one wants with the child without ever being questioned about parental cruelty. Morton Schatzmann wrote a book about the mental troubles of Schreber's son with the revealing title: *Soul Murder. Persecution in the Family*.^[13] According to Miller, this child-rearing methods are based on the need to stifle certain parts of one's own self and amounts to murder of the child's soul. One tries to stamp out in children what one fears in oneself, namely, the seeds of evil.

The concept of soul murder reminds us also of Rebecca Adams' view on violence: «The essence of the scapegoating process is that someone or something is turned into an *object*».^[14] We could add with Alice Miller: «an object to fulfill our own emotional needs». It means that the sense of selfhood and the relative autonomous agency of the subject is attacked on such a profound level that the subject is made unable to access its own full potential. It is seen as an object without vivid inner core and its subjectivity has been silenced and colonized by someone else. This leads to an intra-subjective definition of the scapegoat mechanism as the result of primordial violence that has been reproduced from generation to generation. Miller defines it by tracking two processes at once: dissociation and projection. The primordial violence leads to dissociation or the splitting of the subject, which is the very definition of trauma. The scapegoated child needs to expulse some parts of the self in order to stay alive, because it is emotionally and physically dependent on the abuser. Once it has grown up, this rejected fragments of the self are still ignored and can now be projected unto another that becomes a new scapegoat. Alice Miller explains this double process as follows:

The pedagogical conviction that one must bring a child into line from the outset has its origin in the need to split off the disquieting parts of the inner self and project them onto an available object. The child's great plasticity, flexibility, defenselessness and availability make it the ideal object for this projection. The enemy within can at last be hunted down on the outside.^[15]

For Miller, what we call education is essentially based on this scapegoat mechanism. It's because of the void in ourselves that primordial violence leaves us with, that we need to colonize others and fill it with their being. She continues: «Characteristic of these kind of persecution is the presence of a strong narcissistic element. *A part of the self is being attacked and persecuted here*, not a real and dangerous enemy, as for example, in situations when one's life is threatened».^[16] The murdered subject is in fusion with the other without knowing who he or she really is. And it's the intra-subjective exclusion of the wounded I that leads to the consequent discrimination of the other. In her article *Loving Mimesis*, Rebecca Adams talks about a split inauthentic subjectivity 'colonized' by the subjectivity of the mediator. According to her, «violence is somehow bound up with the nature of the object, or the nature of turning things into objects».^[17] Objectifying or colonization of the subjectivity of the Other is thus the primordial violence that turns mimesis into bad mimetic violence.

5. MIMESIS OF VIOLENCE AND THE LACK OF AN AUTONOMOUS SELF

The French emeritus Literary professor and childhood specialist Olivier Maurel, a reader of both Girard and Miller, criticizes Girard in *Essais sur le mimétisme* (2002) for not being able to

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account for pedagogical violence. He sees the links between both of the afore-mentioned authors, but raises the question of autonomy to counter the weight of violent mimesis. He maintains that it is precisely the lack of autonomy that feeds into mimetic rivalry. That's why a child is more susceptible to mimetic behavior in both the good and the bad sense. But this means also that mimetic violence holds no power over the child that has been loved and respected in its own subjectivity.^[18] This child has been desired for itself and not as an object. There was no primordial objectifying violence, so as an adult he will not have to deal with its own soul murder. The child that has been treated with benevolence gains a capital of self-confidence for life, so that there will be no need to appropriate and assimilate the being of others to compensate for the narcissistic wound that leaves behind an insatiable inner void.

The authenticity of an autonomous subjectivity sounds somehow circumspect in girardian ears, because it may be unmasked as a mimetic illusion or a false difference. But in the interview book *When these things begin*, Girard himself makes an interesting claim about the possibility of autonomy. It's a very informative quote, because the English translation omits an adverb that's essential. First, I will quote in English, afterwards I repeat the omitted part in French.

I am not saying that there's no autonomous self. I'm saying that the possibilities of the autonomous self are always hindered by mimetic desire and by a false individualism whose appetite for differences tends to have a leveling effect.^[19]

In the French edition, he says that these possibilities are *almost* always («presque toujours») hindered by mimetic desire. Maurel fills in the blanks and proposes that educational violence can account for this 'almost always'! When one doesn't find the proper recognition for one's own subjectivity, the victim will seek it throughout her lifetime by appropriating the being of others. This is how the positivity of mimesis as such quickly turns into bad mimesis, according to Maurel. In a couple of very detailed books about the different and often subtle ways of ordinary physical maltreatment in child-rearing, he has brought together massive evidence of pedagogical violence that feeds into bad mimesis. One of the appalling figures he offers is that almost eighty percent of the world population has been raised with ordinary pedagogical violence such as spanking and the pedagogical rap. Since the immense majority of children have been submitted to physical violence, which has blocked them to feel recognized as persons in their own right, it may be very instrumental in the genesis and transmission of mimetic violence.^[20] When one uses violence to promote certain learning and behavior, one only teaches how to be violent. The learned content will be lost. Soul murder inhibits the formation of a relative and stable autonomy and installs a wounded desire instead. In the words of Basset:

The tragedy is that in many cases, not to say the majority, our desire has been stolen from us since childhood. What we have been forced to undergo has more or less crushed within us the desire to be ourselves. (...) The more the child's desire has been destroyed, the more imitation comes into play, as a last resort: unable to appropriate his own desire, he tries either to appropriate others and the fruits of their desires, or to fit the desires of others, which one comes to confuse with his own desire.^[21]



The question remains then how one can still resist to mimetic violence. How can one access the true self once it has been murdered prematurely.

6. PART 2. THE SWORD OF CHRIST UNDERCUTS VICTIMARY RIVALRY

In *Holy Anger* Basset fully engages with mimetic theory and gives much more attention to the counter-violence of the suffering person. It is this awareness that finally draws us out from a comfortable victim position and unlocks the mimetic deadlock in which we were imprisoned before. This book marks a new stage in the work of Basset, because it accentuates counter-violence, resistance, immunity, and so forth and so on. She treats a special kind of anger, which leads to a healthy differentiation because it helps to reclaim one's own desire, *without eliminating the Other*. The ultimate question to be asked from Girard, is the following for Basset:

If human desire is nothing but pure imitation, how is it possible for us to renounce violence without having a scapegoat to blame? On whom should we lean if we are not to give in to mimetic rivalry? On what part of ourselves should we rely in order to refuse being dragged into violence, if what we wholly are is mimetic desire for what others have and are?^[22]

The fascinating claim that Basset makes, is that *Holy Anger* liberates this authentic part of the self. This is because it is a structuring part of the mourning process, in which the expelled suffering Self can be brought back into the land of the living. However, this is an extremely painful process.

7. HOLY ANGER AND THE WAR OF CHRIST

It is through Biblical readings of the stories of Caïn and Abel, Jacob and Esau and the book of Job, that Basset traces the contours of Holy Anger. First, let us sum up what it is certainly not. It is not the anger of God, nor is it the appropriation by human beings of the anger of God. It's essential to see instead that holy anger disentangles fusional mimetic relationships, because one gets finally in touch with one's own counter-violence. It is unlike revolutionary anger not after claiming victim status, nor is it for the use of lesser violence to achieve a greater good. Holy anger paradoxically leads to the giving up of one's victim status, because when one exhausts its own anger, when one really gets at the bottom of it, one realizes one's own mimetic involvement in violence. The victim gets in touch with its counter-violence and thus with its desire to agency and subjectivity. As such, the victim can be empowered and start to cease identifying with the victim position!^[23] It's also important to see that holy anger does not lead to the breaking off of relationships, but that it leads to the repositioning of them. Holy anger is thus by definition the opposite of mimetic anger. In the words of Basset:

Holy anger [is not] fed by the illusion of putting an end to violence by means of greater violence. (...) it does not take itself for anything that it is not, it avoids the 'hunt for the hunters of the scapegoat,' as René Girard says; it has given up the monopoly of victimization. In fact, the heat of anger prevents us

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from seeing that others are victims too, that there is a persecutor in us that does not acknowledge itself, and that the more innocent we believe ourselves to be, the more we are indifferent to victims other than ourselves. Our anger becomes sanctified when it lets go of its illusions; from then on, it reveals to us that there are more and more victims, not because this is a new reality, but because our anger had made us short-sighted. We come back to occupy the field of the relationship alongside many others, because we do not want to keep burning up alone in the fortress of the judge who is unaware of his own violence.^[24]

To unravel the specific holy character of anger, we will need to read a very specific and shockingly violent word of Christ that plays a major part in both the pessimistic vision of Girard and the optimistic counter-story of Basset.

Don't think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. One's enemies will be those of his own household (Matthew 10:34-36).

According to the theologian Raymund Schwager, these verses are not to be interpreted as if the conflict is the end of Jesus' message.^[25] In *Brauchen wir ein Sündenbock*, Schwager denounces the underlying war that is already beneath the seemingly normal and peaceful intimate relationships. It is the truth of Christ's message that leads to the dissolution of this mythical account of the sacred family, which finally results in open conflict.^[26] It is also this glacial peace of honeypot love—which is nothing else than a subterranean cold war between frenemies—that Basset aims at. The myth of the good peace keeps the scapegoating mechanism of soul murder hidden for the naked eye. Until it is revealed by Christ. The girardian argument goes that in a society without the sacrificial protection differences tend to disappear. Therefore, Christianity has brought war and not peace. However, the kind of holy anger to which Basset refers, is exactly the opposite. It brings a peace that is not threatened by the dissolution of the sacrificial system, because it is not based on it. The scapegoat mechanism is, as we have seen, an immune system, both on the social and psychological level. The sword of Christ undercuts only the social immune system according to the apocalyptic reading of Girard. But in Basset, the sword also disables the internal splitting process that undergirds the exclusion of the suffering Self. War is thus not the endgame itself but a means toward more fruitful interpersonal relations. It is the internal scapegoating process that keeps us entrapped in mimetic violence on the interpersonal level after the sacrificial system on the societal level has failed already. That's why the sword in Basset's version cuts much deeper than the one of Girard. Let's take a closer look at the two different interpretations of this seemingly violent word of Christ.

8. THE SINGLE-EDGED SWORD OF CHRIST IN GIRARD

Let us focus first on the version of Girard. He reflects on this word on very different occasions. Ever since the question about the violence of Christ has been raised in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, this theme gets more and more attention until it gets its final



apocalyptic tone in *Battling to the End*.^[27] In a passage that Basset often refers to from the *One by whom Scandal comes*, it is said that «the sudden intrusion of the truth destroyed a social harmony that depended on the lie of unanimous violence».^[28] One already can see that the consequences of this lost harmony will be terrible for our interpersonal relationships. In *I see Satan fall like lightning* Girard expands his reflection on Mt 10, 34-36: «The loss of sacrificial protection transforms the most intimate relationships into their exact opposites so that they become relationships of doubles, of enemy twins. This text enables us to identify the true origin of modern 'psychology».^[29] But this modern psychology Girard speaks about, is still subjected to the intra-subjective scapegoating process in which the desire of the murdered soul has been sacrificed for that of another. In other words, the sword of Christ leads indeed to apocalyptic violence, but only as long as this internal psychological mechanism stays intact. For Basset, however, this violent word of Christ is not so much about the dissolution of differences, but about healthy separation. It cuts deeper and as such, it leads finally to the disentanglement of modern or mimetic psychology.

9. THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF CHRIST IN BASSET

In *Aimer sans dévorer*^[30], but also already in the small booklet *La fermeture à l'amour*^[31], Basset denounces forcefully the violence of ideological love. Here, she implicitly answers to Miller's critique of the fourth commandment that tells us to 'honor your father and your mother'. According to Miller, this commandment serves as a mythical lie to hide the truth about educational violence. Basset however, explains the Hebrew verb «kavad» as «giving the proper weight» to the *real* parental figures. It's no canonization and no ideological legitimation of honeypot love in which the child needs to bear everything that has been done to him for the sake of maintaining the good peace. Thus, the commandment doesn't necessarily support the mythical account of the sacred family.

But the Christian commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, isn't the legitimation of honeypot love either. It has its origin in Leviticus 19, 17-18: «You shall not hate any of your kindred in your heart. *Reprove your neighbor openly* so that you do not incur sin because of that person. Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your own people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD».^[32] This part of reproofing openly, blocks the possibility of inverted anger or resentment. This is very liberating, according to Basset, because it means that people don't have to mutilate themselves to love one another, because the designation of evil by its proper name (*nommer le mal*) is an important part of this love. The internal scapegoat mechanism can eventually be lifted, by speaking out to the other. Honeypot love is a kind of idolatry, but you shall not love the other more (or less) than yourself. «The sword cuts into the core of relationships just as it does into the deepest being of the person who, having received it from Christ, has chosen to use it».^[33] But the use of the sword would not differ from mimetic anger if it would be handled by ourselves and for the sake of ourselves. This is not what Christ offers, according to Basset. The sword is a gift that Christ wields in me! «It is never a question of breaking off relationships; the sword works to render them fruitful»^[34].

Girard doesn't account for the double-edged sword of Christ. For him, the loss of the religious solution —the scapegoat mechanism— leads people into the chaos of complete

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undifferentiation, in which everyone looks like the other. Basset however, asserts the exact opposite. In *Aimer sans dévorer*, she refers to the same teaching to enable the process of differentiation. For Christ, it is not only about the unveiling of the false peace that rests on scapegoating, but also about getting access to the true self. That's the meaning of the adverb 'holy' in the interpretation of Basset:

Let us recall that, in the Bible, «holy» means set apart, separated to be made powerful by God. Thus anger is holy when it separates me from the painful chaos that swallows me up, and that separates me from those hostile humans, incompetent and indifferent, to whom I was clinging desperately. That anger is also holy that separates me from stereotypical images of myself as «victim», «guilty», «perfect», «cursed», «nice», etc. Holy also is that anger that separates me from those death-dealing representations of God with which I long nourished my faith and which I at last give myself the right to reject. And that anger is eminently holy that turns against God and implicates him.^[35] (our italics)

The sword not only cuts me loose out of the totality of society, but it cuts out and awakens the traumatized parts within myself. War was not only going on in the world but also in ourselves. Before people victimize others, they always already victimized parts of themselves. War is nothing else than the compulsive repetition of scapegoating in ourselves and the projection of it on others. The hurt part of the self that was demonized and victimized through poisonous pedagogy, has been expelled and buried by the self itself! My allergy against the other is due to the interior division that blocks authentic love. Thus, it is of the highest importance to reunite the Self with its exiled parts. That is the true work of differentiation! Basset reads the words of Jesus about Him bringing the sword as something beneficial and as supportive through times of disequilibrium. She also considers the violence of the sword: it evokes the process of separation that cuts deep in the flesh and is extremely hurtful. Girard contests rightfully the false sort of peace —which Levinas calls the «peace of empires and graveyards»^[36]— that is united against the scapegoat. But to break open this kind of peace, we also need to lift the ban on rightful anger. One does not separate from the others without being born to oneself at the same time. This birth pain is due to the process of the sword, but it is eventually very fruitful. Getting access to one's true self loosens the tight grips of mimetic violence. The ambivalent spell of honeypot love can finally be broken. Basset accounts for the authenticity of what has happened:

By what means can I see that the sword has truly passed? I no longer let myself be carried along by vehement self-justification or by violent accusations: no one will catch me in them again.^[37]

In other words, I don't let myself be trapped in mimetic rivalry again. The special war Jesus proclaims, is a necessary trajectory to reach inner unity and to restore our relation with the Other. Holy Anger installs a good and proper distance between I and the Other.^[38] When someone finally accepts my anger, and listens empathetically to my traumatic experience, he



or she shows the desire to awaken my subjectivity instead of acquiring me as an object. This is what Basset means with the positive possibilities of mimesis: the other desiring and loving me as a subjectivity (and vice versa).

10. PART 3. SPIRITUAL RE-EDUCATION AS A REHABILITATION OF THE HUMAN BEING

In *Oser la bienveillance* (2014), Basset takes up themes from her other major books to criticize Girard. She detects once again the blind spot in mimetic theory: childhood trauma and educational violence. But now she offers a solution to the pessimistic view on human nature.

She proposes the remedy of a spiritual re-education to counter the toxic heritage of the malevolent view on human nature that stifles parts of the Self through soul murder. Spiritual re-education goes further than the psychological level, because it keeps the relationships alive instead of putting an end to them. It also breaks open stereotypical images of the self and the monopoly of the victim position. She goes thus one step further than Alice Miller.

The tools that psychology and psychoanalysis give us today make us believe that we have «found our being (psyche)». If we stop there, it is not the symbolic sword of the Bible that has passed but, too often, the sword of war that destroys relationships for good. Yes, I have become me, without fusion or confusion, but the Other no longer exists; there is no bond at all. Christ indicates that there is another way to mourn for what we were and for the type of relationships we had: not to take this mourning as an end in itself, not to handle the sword oneself simply to let the sword pass, not to 'cut the cord' for the sake of cutting the cord, but to mourn our old being because of someone («for my sake», says Jesus).^[39]

11. FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA TO SPIRITUAL RE-EDUCATION

To heal and recover from psychological wounds, Basset opens a trajectory that goes further than the psychological perspective. She starts speaking about 'spiritual re-education' to hint to another road in which the relationship doesn't need to end after being violently wounded by the other. As such, after the reversal from morality to suffering in the beginning of her oeuvre, she is now finally able to take up the question of the ethical anew. I will very briefly point to four instances in *Aimer sans dévorer* (roughly translated as *Loving with devouring*) to reconstruct a possible pathway to heal the wounds of poisonous pedagogy.^[40]

Primo. When our trust in the others is severely damaged, we need to reconnect with our inner child and our capacity to trust and believe in other human beings. As we have seen, we only need one concrete lucid witness to begin with. This other can become a compassionate advocate of our suffering and wounded parts, so that we can get access to our authentic being. Re-education consists in internalizing being a good mother to ourselves, in the likeness of the lucid witness, thus integrating the suffering I and being unified again. It is about finding out

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about a sacred space within myself in which the other as Other takes up my defense. When I can look through the eyes of this benevolent other to myself, it helps me to let go of the negative and malevolent view on others and myself.

Secundo. But it is impossible to break out of the negativity without revisiting our feelings of anger and hatred. The accumulated and repressed hatred deep within ourselves needs to be dealt with and this becomes possible in the relationship with a benevolent witness who desires us to be a 'whole', unified person. If the welcoming other who becomes a vis à vis stays alive when confronted with my negative feelings, the walls I have built around me will gradually come down. The world doesn't end when I express my feelings to the benevolent non-mimetic other. As Alice Miller says, expressing feelings doesn't kill, but repressing them does. This is the fundamental experience of Job. He expresses his anger to God and by doing that he discovers real alterity.^[41] God does not retaliate and accepts his emotional distress. At the end of the book He says that Job has spoken truthfully. Thus it makes us capable of breaking out of the victim position.

Tertio. This process will be eminently spiritual, because it will open us for the Real. We will not obey anymore the mimetic laws of binary exclusions. The spiritual looks beyond the split categories of 'monsters' and 'victims.' Beneath a given situation, it always looks out for more in the Other than what we can see at any time. Re-education means that we always allow ourselves or even desire to be resituated in our relationships through the renewing 'breath' of God. Humility is necessary to let go of our projections and suppositions. We learn to speak up when needed in order not to accumulate hate against others again. We dare to express our needs and expectations and let them be brought back to realistic degrees in confrontation with the other. Thus we can accept that the imaginary or magical other doesn't exist. As such, we become faithful to the others and to ourselves as we really are. There is no need to demonize anymore.

Quattro. The disenchantment of our emotional ties has colored our vision on the world and has often installed a very pessimistic view on our relational possibilities. But it's enough that we have one real friend —or one lucid witness— to reenchant our inner world with love again. It is this mimetic power of benevolence in the world of human relationships that Basset tries to uncover beneath the massive flood of pessimism that reigns the world. We are always already blessed by the original benevolence of the Other which opens us to responsibility. As Todorov truly says in *Life in Common*: «The recognition of our existence, which is the preliminary condition for all existence, is the soul's oxygen».^[42]

12. A SPIRITUAL TAKE ON THE MORAL PROBLEM OF NARCISSISM

The process of spiritual re-education doesn't end with the rediscovery of benevolent others and ditto relationships. It also helps in dealing with new forms of violence and division. In 2019 Basset makes a last explicit reference to Girard in *Faire face à la perversion*, a groundbreaking book that tackles the question of narcissistic perversion in a very original way.^[43] It can also be read as an implicit answer to the long-standing problem in mimetic theory of what *imitatio Christi* really means in our everyday world. Basset lays bare ten spiritual strategies from the Gospel to confront our adversaries. She not only denounces the wide-spread tendencies of narcissistic perversion that are present in our society but also is aware of the one-sided moralistic perspective on it.^[44] She doesn't feel at ease with the prevalent binary and mimetic





exclusion of perceived narcissistic adversaries because the tendency to narcissism is always already part of ourselves. She takes the definition of narcissistic perversion from the French pioneer Paul Racamier: «a certain way of protecting oneself against internal conflicts by asserting oneself at the expense of others».^[45] We can recognize the intra-subjective scapegoat mechanism that Alice Miller already talked about. Racamier claims that there are two kinds of immunizing strategies behind the narcissistic perversion: conflictual immunization and objectal immunization.^[46] In other words: the narcissist defends himself against internal pain and the (mimetic) attraction of the other. As we have seen, mimetic desire is in essence wounded desire. For the narcissistic immunization strategy to work the other has to pay with his being. A being that is seen as a terrifying threat to the narcissistic self that is insecure but always in denial. This is the very core of violence itself: the other is objectified and stripped of its subjectivity to feed the narcissistic self. Narcissistic perversion is recognized by following dysfunctional maneuvers: lying, hypocrisy, manipulation, complotting, intimidation, undifferentiation, inversion of culpability or gaslighting, humiliation, expropriation. The narcissist operates in the dark to attack the other laterally—as an object—and not up front, and covers its maneuvers up with lies. Thus it becomes necessary to *face* the other spiritually to denounce the perversion. That what is hidden, eventually has to come to light.

According to Basset the root of this malevolence lies in envy or the need to compare. She comments on the famous parable of the workers of the vineyard (Matthew 20, 1-16). At three different hours of the day a landowner hires workers and promises them to pay a fair wage. He promises all workers the same wage. But at the end of the day, the workers of the first hour expect they would be paid more. But they aren't. So they start to complain because they are comparing themselves with the workers of the last hour. Then, the landowner gives this intriguing answer: «Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?».^[47] Basset comments on the Greek word *ponèros* that is translated in English as 'envious':

In Hebrew 'the evil eye' is envy. But there is a suffering beneath it: 'evil' is this infamous word ponèros that means at the same time 'suffering' and 'wrongdoing'. We feel treated unjustly... uniquely because of comparison.^[48]

The 'evil eye' that Jesus speaks about is an eye that is blinded by hurt but that also turns bad everything it sees. It's the mimetic eye that lies at the root of wrongdoing and narcissistic action. It's not only something that we can see at work in others, but it is a spiritual exercise to recognize this in ourselves. Because of the pain our own wounds can unconsciously ferment into this envious malevolence against the others. Our envy is always fed by inequality or feelings of unjust treatments.^[49]

13. FROM SPIRITUAL RE-EDUCATION TO A MORAL DECISION

According to Basset, it is ultimately an important part of the process of spiritual re-education to take a fundamental spiritual decision about giving in or not to our own narcissistic strategies. That helps to delineate ourselves from the others and to find the right distance.^[50] Basset

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complements moral responsibility through spiritual resources. This decision helps to be aware of mimetic desire and its infernal logic we are caught up in:

When this happens again, we can begin to listen to our body, to this divine ego that is hiding in the silence of our inner womb: it is only our 'suffering —wrongdoing eye' that is envious, not our whole being —thus we only see things like this, but our vision could quite be deformed.^[51]

In *Faire face à la perversion* Basset adds two new stages of spiritual re-education: facing perversion (in ourselves and in others) amounts to vigilance (a kind of spiritual immunity against chaos and division) and a radical choice for the truth. In the end, giving in to untruthfulness or hypocrisy, even as small as it can be in the beginning, always leads to appropriation of the other and expropriation of the self.

First, Basset makes a plea for the fundamental decision to commit fully to the truth. Being truthful to oneself and to the other is a radical choice that is necessary because otherwise we are introducing a split or division in ourselves. It is the spiritual option to choose for authenticity against all kinds of self-dividing strategies. Jesus talks a lot of this spiritual vigilance as a way to access the Kingdom of God. Basset speaks about a symbolic gatekeeper that keeps you sound and safe: you only let in what doesn't lead to internal division or robs you from your subjectivity or your being. As Jesus says: «Truly, truly, I tell you, I am the door for the sheep. All who came before Me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't listen to them. I am the door for the sheep. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved and go in and out and find pasture» (John 10, 8-10).

Secondly, to face evil and destructiveness you can lean on the divine inner core that connects the self to God: that part of ourselves that is indestructible because God commits himself to the vulnerable human person. In the intimacy of our soul, in our inner womb, God defends our interiority. Basset refers to the words of the prophet Hosea: «For I am God and not man, the Holy one in your midst, and I will not come in wrath» (Hosea 11,9). As Basset affirms in *Holy Anger* and *Aimer sans dévorer*, this intimate connection of the I with God is the royal road to differentiation without violence. It is the divine gatekeeper that defends our interiority, a sacred space within that is inviolable, but that also *leaves room for the others*. In narcissism there is the logic of one: it is either I or the other. The narcissistic I can only have value when the other has none. But the Kingdom of God is a place in ourselves where God defends our otherness against violation and manipulation of our being. It's not a defensive immunization against others but a spiritual immunity so that I and the Other(s) can co-exist.

One of the final important chapters in *Faire face à la perversion* about systemic perversion concludes with a quote from Girard.^[52] Jesus teaches us to make use of our spiritual resources to combat perversion. Vigilance can help us to become an upstander over and against violence. But being truthful to the divine part in ourselves can also lead us towards becoming a scapegoat. Jesus has shown the road to resist violence. He is not a scapegoat that is an unknowingly toy of the powers of evil. He freely accepts this position to undo violence. Following Christ, we can take up this combat because we have the spiritual freedom to reposition ourselves to the system of perversion by relating ourselves otherwise. Facing the other as *other* instead of subjugating or being subjugated opens a new world. This makes our spiritual capacities to



deal with perversion believable and gives content to Girard's view on the imitation of Christ. Spiritual re-education is all about transcending the victim position because we can learn to become a forgiving and compassionate victim ourselves. When one commits oneself to the long road of differentiation by the living and holy God, perhaps one becomes eventually able to love one's enemy vigilantly, without confusion and without breaking off relationships.

14. REFERENCES

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15. NOTAS

- [1] See Agence de Presse Internationale Catholique, *Genève: le prix John Templeton décerné à Henri Tincq du 'Monde'* (03.09.2002); <https://www.cath.ch/news/geneve-le-prix-john-templeton-decerne-a-henri-tincq-du-monde> (Access: 20.06.2023): «The three articles presented by Tincq to participate in

the Templeton Prize included an analysis of the current situation of the dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics, written before the Pope's visit to Greece and the Ukraine; an interview with the philosopher and anthropologist René Girard after 11 September; and a portrait of the Swiss theologian, Lytta Basset».

- [2] H. Tincq. *Lytta Basset, compagne des affligés*, in *Le Monde*, July 31, 2001; R. GIRARD, *Ce qui se joue aujourd'hui est une rivalité mimétique à l'échelle planétaire*. Propos recueillis par H. TINCQ, in *Le Monde*, November 6, 2001.
- [3] Hitherto, this is the only book from Basset that has been translated into English: L. Basset, *Holy Anger. Jacob, Job, Jesus*, London, Continuum; Ottawa, Novalis, 2007.
- [4] L. Basset, *Le Pardon originel, De l'abîme du mal au pouvoir de pardonner*, Paris, Labor et Fides, 1995.
- [5] We refer to the French edition: P. Ricœur, *Le mal. Un défi à la philosophie et à la théologie*, Genève, Labor et Fides, 2004, p. 34-35.
- [6] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- [7] J. Alison, *Le péché originel à la lumière de la Résurrection*, Paris, Cerf, 2009.
- [8] L. Basset, *Le Pardon originel*, p. 142.
- [9] R. Girard. *Battling to the End. Conversations with B. Chantre*. Michigan, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2010, p. 18.
- [10] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- [11] A. Miller. *For your own Good. Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*. New York, NY: Farrar-Strauss-Giroux, 1982.
- [12] M. Reineke. *Intimate Domain. Desire, Trauma and Mimetic Theory*. Michigan, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2014.
- [13] M. Schatzmann. *Soul Murder. Persecution in the Family*. London: Random House, 1973.
- [14] R. Adams. *Loving mimesis*. En W. Swartley, *Violence Renounced. René Girard, Biblical Studies and Peacemaking*. Telford: PA, Pandora Press, 2000, 277-308, 295.
- [15] A. Miller. *C'est pour ton bien*. Paris: Aubier, 1980, p. 112. Translation from A. Miller: *For your own Good. Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*, e-book, New York, NY, Farrar-Strauss-Giroux, 1982. Italics added.
- [16] *Ibid.*, p. 111. Our italics.
- [17] R. Adams, p. 293.
- [18] O. Maurel. *Essais sur le mimétisme*, p. 204: «Autrement dit, pour Alice Miller, le mimétisme de la violence n'a pas de prises sur l'enfant aimé et respecté dans son individualité et sur l'adulte qu'il devient».
- [19] R. Girard. *When These Things Begin. Conversation with Michel Treguer*. East Leansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2014, p. 12. Italics added. Compare to the French edition: R. Girard, *Quand ces choses commenceront*, Paris, Arléa, p. 30-31: «Je ne dis pas qu'il y a pas de moi autonome. Je dis que les possibilités de moi autonome, d'une certaine manière, sont presque toujours recouvertes par le désir mimétique et par un faux individualisme dont l'appétit de différence a au contraire des effets niveleurs» (italics added as well).
- [20] O. Maurel, o.c., p 207: «[L]'immense majorité des enfants a été soumise à des traitements qui leur ont interdit de se sentir reconnus en tant que personnes».
- [21] L. Basset. *Holy Anger*, p. 187.
- [22] *Ibid.*, p. 187-188.
- [23] L. Basset. *Holy Anger*, p. 228: «At the moment when we get in touch with our counter-violence, we are no longer victims. (...) We remain victims, and therefore potentially counter-violent, as long as we fill



the space of the Other that is between others and ourselves with falsely reassuring signs: 'Beware of the monster!' It is by choosing to remain always in contact with Him whose non-violent omnipotence tries to communicate itself to us that our counter-violence reveals itself to us, dissolving our fear of the 'monstrous' other».

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

[25] Schwager, R. *Avions-nous besoin d'un bouc émissaire. Violence et rédemption dans la Bible*. Paris: Flammarion-ARM, 2011, p. 239: «[O]n n'a pas le droit d'interpréter ces paroles comme si le conflit était le but de son message. Elles ne peuvent signifier que ceci: sa venue crée involontairement et pourtant nécessairement du conflit. La vraie cause de la division ne tient donc pas à lui. Mais sa venue découvre les tensions souterraines déjà présentes et elle provoque par là, effectivement, des inimitiés ouvertes».

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 242: «Il y a bien des familles, dit-on, où (...) on s'entend bien. C'est là que se manifeste, pense-t-on, la nature humaine normale. Comme les textes de Girard, les écrits néotestamentaires ne confirment nullement cette expérience de la vie prétendument normale. Ils montrent, au contraire, de façon éclatante, que partout où des hommes sont confrontés intérieurement au message de l'amour véritable, c'est tout autre chose qu'on voit émerger. Ce qu'on désigne comme de la bonne intelligence s'avère être un fragile armistice, et les divisions qui naissent révèlent que la paix prétendue n'est qu'une paix branlante».

[27] R. Girard. *THSF*, p. 174: «Everything that you say here is bound to provoke in response the famous words that the Gospels have no qualms about putting in Jesus' own mouth: 'I have come not to bring peace but a sword'. People are going to tell you that the Christian scriptures explicitly provide a reason for discord and dissension».

[28] R. Girard. *OSC*, p. 38: «The synoptic Gospels all quote Jesus as saying that he brought war and not peace; John shows that Jesus provoked dissension and conflict wherever he went. The sudden intrusion of the truth destroyed a social harmony that depended on the lie of unanimous violence».

[29] R. Girard. *ISSF*, p. 159: «Jesus makes allusion to this, I think. It is the deprivation of victim mechanisms and its terrible consequences that he talks about when he presents the future of the evangelized world in terms of conflict between persons who are most closely related: Don't think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. One's enemies will be those of his own household (Matthew 10:34-36). In a world deprived of sacrificial safeguards, mimetic rivalries are often physically less violent, but they insinuate themselves into the most intimate relationships. (...) The loss of sacrificial protection transforms the most intimate relationships into their exact opposites so that they become relationships of doubles, of enemy twins. This text enables us to identify the true origin of modern 'psychology'».

[30] L. Basset (2010). *Aimer sans dévorer*. Paris: Albin Michel.

[31] L. Basset (2000). *La fermeture à l'amour. Un défi pratique posé à la théologie*. Labor et Fides.

[32] Lv 19, 17-18. *Translation from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE)*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011.

[33] L. Basset, HA, p. 190.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[36] E. Levinas (1972). *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, The Hague-Boston-London, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979, p. 22.

- [37] L. Basset, *HA*, p. 198.
- [38] *Ibid.*, p. 198: «The distance created by the passage of the sword permits us at last to spot the ambivalence, confusion and destruction that others' behavior keeps alive. But it also sheds light on our behaviors that can be ambivalent, confusion or destructive. It is not a question of knowing if there is more in others than in us, nor of knowing who started it. It is merely a question of seeing our own involvement, so that we can, so to speak, cease fire».
- [39] *Ibid.*, p. 195.
- [40] The four instances of 'spiritual re-education' are to be found. En: L. Basset, *Aimer sans dévorer*, Paris: Albin Michel, 2010, p. 67; 81; 231; 243.
- [41] This is also a fundamental point in Winnicott. See the chapter of C. F. Alford, *Job, Transitional Space and the Ruthless Use of the Object*. En ID., *After the Holocaust. The book of Job, Primo Levi, and the Path to Affliction*, New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 26-57.
- [42] T. Todorov (2001). *Life in Common. An Essay in General Anthropology*. Nebraska, NE: University of Nebraska Press, p. 57.
- [43] L. Basset (2019). *Faire face à la perversion. Des ressource spirituelles inattendues*, Paris: Albin Michel.
- [44] For an interesting overview of the narcissism narrative in present-day society, see K. Dombek, *The Selfishness of Others. An Essay on the Fear of Narcissism*. New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2016.
- [45] P. C. Racamier (1992). *Les perversion narcissiques*. Paris: Payot, p. 21. Own translation.
- [46] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- [47] Matthew 20, 15.
- [48] L. Basset (2019). *Faire face à la perversion. Des ressource spirituelles inattendues*, Paris, Albin Michel, p. 269.
- [49] *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- [50] See also R. Girard (2010). *Battling to the End. Conversations with B. Chantre*. Michigan, MI: Michigan State University Press.
- [51] L. Basset. *Faire face à la perversion*, p. 271. Our translation.

