

APRIL 11-12, 2008

Interfaith Conference on Religion and Violence

The Origins of Sacred Violence



Sponsored by

The Raven Foundation
with
Trinity Wall Street

Is religion to blame for global violence?

*Does belief in God eventually lead to the easy justification of violence
in God's name?*

Where does the idea that God sanctions violence come from?

At *The Origins of Sacred Violence*, The Raven Foundation will present an exploration of the provocative ideas of René Girard on the function of sacred violence in human communities. Learn what Judaism, Christianity, and Islam teach about God, violence, and the path to peace.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2008

SESSION 1 - 7:00PM TO 9:30PM

Sacred Violence

James Carroll & Andrew McKenna

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2008

SESSION 2 - 9:30AM TO 11:30AM

Desire

Tariq Ramadan
& Esmail Koushanpour

SESSION 3 - 1:00PM TO 3:00PM

Scapegoating

Susannah Heschel & Sandor Goodhart

REGISTRATION

ALL 3 SESSIONS WITH
ADVANCE REGISTRATION - \$25

SATURDAY LUNCH - \$5

EACH SESSION - \$10 WALK-IN

LOCATION

THE RAVEN FOUNDATION
2624 PATRIOT BLVD
GLENVIEW, IL 60026

Video Conference

Via video from the Trinity Wall Street Conference held on January 21, 2008, we'll hear from:

James Carroll, best-selling author of *Constantine's Sword*, former Catholic priest and lifelong activist for peace

Tariq Ramadan, Senior Research Fellow at St. Anthony's College, Oxford and author of *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad*

Susannah Heschel, holds the Eli Black Chair on Jewish Studies, Dartmouth and author of *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, which won a National Jewish Book award

Guest Scholars

Responding in person to the video and to your questions will be:

Dr. Andrew McKenna, Professor of French Language and Literature, Loyola University and Editor-in-Chief of *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis and Culture*, 1996-2006

Dr. Esmail Koushanpour, Emeritus Professor, Northwestern University Medical School and Executive Director of the Islamic Cultural Center, Northbrook, IL

Dr. Sandor Goodhart, Department of English, Purdue University and past president of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion

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MAURA JUNIUS: Welcome to an interfaith conference on Religion & Violence sponsored by The Raven Foundation with Trinity Wall Street Church. This topic is “The Origins of Sacred Violence.” The date is April 11th and 12th in the year 2008. It’s being held in Glenview, Illinois at the headquarters of The Raven Foundation. Our live speakers will be Andrew McKenna, professor of French language and literature at Loyola University and editor-in-chief for *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* from 1996 to 2006; Dr. Esmail Koushanpour, emeritus professor, Northwestern University Medical School and executive director of the Islamic Cultural Center in Northbrook, Illinois; and Dr. Sandor Goodhart, Department of English, Purdue University, and past president of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion.

Friday, April 11th, our first session is “Sacred Violence.” We’ll hear James Carroll, best-selling author of *Constantine’s Sword*, former Catholic priest and lifelong activist for peace speaking via video from the Trinity Wall Street conference held on January 21, 2008; and our live response will be from Dr. Andrew McKenna of Loyola University, Chicago.

SUZANNE ROSS: So though we have actually two representatives on our panel from each of the Abrahamic religions, in person and via the video conference from Trinity, and many of us in the room identify with one of these religions, I think it’s important to remember that those of us here do not exhaust the diversity of interpretations and practice that exist within these traditions, and that while we’re sharing questions and comments, it’s good to remember that we’re all speaking, each of us, for ourselves from within one spot within the complex of Judaism, Christianities, and Islam that exist today and often defy generalizations, though that’s not going to stop us from trying to make some. But, you know, generalizations have to be made, and I hope that you all think of them as serving as introductions to go deeper into the tradition



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that you're not familiar with or even into your own tradition. So let this just be a beginning for us.

So as Maura said, The Raven Foundation is committed to education about conflict and the use of violence to resolve conflict. Because we believe that from education will come insight, from insight to conversion, away from violence and towards peace. So we at The Raven Foundation are guided in these efforts by the work of Stanford professor and cultural critic, Rene Girard.

Girard has accumulated many honors and distinctions during his long career, but the most recent and perhaps his most notable is his induction into the French Academy in March 2005. Now the Academy is a very prestigious organization in France and well known in Europe and also in the United States, and it consists of 40 members known as immortals- - a title that's very French, I think. Distinguished members of the Academy have been Victor Hugo, Louis Pasteur, Voltaire, Descartes, Moliere, Jules Vern, and Emil Zola, just to name a few.

Now Rene Girard deserves a place among these great speakers and innovators because his mimetic theory offers to the social scientists what physics has found all too elusive- - a grand unified theory. Mimetic theory unites the small scale phenomenon of human desire, rivalry, love, and resentment with the large scale dynamics of politics, war, religion, and the origins of human culture itself. When applied to the origins of sacred violence, which is what we're going to do together this weekend, Girard's theory allows us to acknowledge the differences in our religious traditions while guiding us past them to the origins of religion itself.

So this is going to be a very different kind of interfaith dialog. We're going to begin our conversation on common ground. Because from Girard's perspective, to ask about the origins of sacred violence, the ancient and human practice of wielding violence in God's name, is to ask an anthropological question. That is, it is less a question about the nature of God, which is the



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problem of theology, than it is a question about the nature of human beings. A simple observation serves as proof. It is human beings who are the actors in religious violence. Human beings wound and kill other human beings. They act alone or in small groups or in vast armies, but it is always humans who are the actors in the drama of sacred violence. This fact alone begins to build a new interpretive lens to apply to the violence in the sacred texts and histories of all three religious traditions represented here. And perhaps the divine violence we read there is evidence of humanity's refusal to accept responsibility for our violence and our determination to blame God for it instead.

So we begin our interfaith conversation with an exploration of our shared humanity and the problem of human violence that prompted the myriad and creative solutions the three religions have developed over centuries of study and practice. For before we were religious people, even before there was religion, there were human beings struggling to live in communities of peace with their kinsmen and with those who were strangers to them. Indeed, the biblical stories of warring brothers- - Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers- - warn us that living without violence is no easy task, even when we share bonds of kinship. For Girard, religion is the result of humanity's creative solutions to the problem of violence and the search for communities of peace.

So each of our three sessions are devoted to understanding what each of the Abrahamic religions has to say about why human beings engage in violence and how to go about justifying it. Tonight, with the help of Dr. McKenna, we will tackle head-on the problem of violence justified in God's name. Tomorrow morning, we will address the most basic of all human attributes, desire. And in our afternoon session, we will explore scapegoating, a practice that transcends cultural and religious boundaries. In light of the anthropological questions, we will share with one another the strategies for peace found in our traditions' texts and prophetic



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revelations. In the process, we will be engaging the most important question that religious people must answer for themselves and for their critics: Are the Abrahamic religions the source of global violence today, or do they hold the hope of a cure?

This question was put to the panelists at Trinity Institute's 38th Annual Conference held in January of this year in New York City. Trinity Institute is an outreach program of Trinity Wall Street, an Episcopal congregation. And this year's program was entitled "Religion and Violence: Untangling the Roots of Conflict." The institute encourages organizations like ours across the country to be regional partners, using the videotapes of the January event to host their own conferences. Two speakers from the conference this year referred to Rene Girard in their talks. And that, along with a conference focused on the roots or origin of conflict, prompted us to present this program to you tonight. So the Trinity speakers we are going to hear from are James Carroll, Susan Heschel, and Tariq Ramadan. And each of them will be introduced by our panelists as they comment on their presentations.

But now I would like to introduce our panelists to you. On my far right is Dr. Andrew McKenna, who is our primary respondent for tonight. He is professor of French language and literature at Loyola University in Chicago. He's a founding member of COV&R, which is the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, the academic association devoted to the study of Rene Girard's mimetic theory, and he is a friend, student, and colleague of Rene Girard's. And he is past editor-in-chief of the COV&R journal, *Contagion*. Most importantly to us, Dr. McKenna is on The Raven Foundation board, and we are forever indebted to him for his expertise, enthusiasm, wisdom, and wit, which will be on evidence tonight for you, I'm sure. So thank you, Andrew, for being here, and we look forward to your presentation.

And next to Andrew is Dr. Sandor Goodhart. He is professor of English and Jewish Studies at Purdue University. He is the former director of the Jewish Studies program and the



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current director of the Classical Studies program at Purdue. As is Andrew, he is a founding member of COV&R and a longtime friend and colleague of Rene Girard. Dr. Goodhart is past president of COV&R and is a generous mentor to newcomers to Girard's theory. His encouragement and support of our work here makes him a dear friend of the foundation. Thank you, Sandy, for being with us.

And to my right, Dr. Esmail Koushanpour is emeritus professor at Northwestern University Medical School, and he's spent a career in medicine teaching, doing research, and authoring textbooks. After serving 36 years on the faculty at Northwestern, Dr. Koushanpour became involved in interfaith dialog, sharing his experience and knowledge of Islam with Christian and Jewish conversation partners. Dr. Koushanpour was born in Tehran, Iran. He traveled to England as a young man to attend Oxford University, and then went on to the United States to study at Columbia and the University of Michigan. Since retiring from Northwestern, Dr. Koushanpour has been very active in interfaith work, and you can read about the number of events he has participated in in your packet. I just will mention two: He attended the first World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace held in Brussels in 2005, and was appointed by the governor of Illinois to the Illinois New Americans Immigrant Policy Council in 2006. Thank you, Esmail, for being with us.

So, format for the session is very simple. Each of the presenters is going to be responsible for introducing the Trinity speaker for their session. And then we will hear a 15-minute clip for the Trinity talks. They went on for over an hour, and we don't need to hear the whole thing, so we picked what we thought was the heart of their talk for you. And then, to use tonight for an example, Andrew will give us about a 30-minute response to James Carroll's presentation. We'll have a little break, and then Sandy and Esmail will begin the second half of the session with some questions for Andrew, and then we all get to join in with our questions.



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So, I think I'm done, and I would like to turn it over to Andrew.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Thank you, Suzanne. James Carroll, whose presentation at Trinity Wall Street we'll be seeing a bit of, is a novelist, the author of 10 books, most famously, and it's the reason you're going to hear from him and take an interest in him is for this winner of the National Book Award of this past year, called *Constantine's Sword*. The subtitle is *The Church and the Jews*, and it is a history of anti-Judaism as it's located in Christian scriptures, and as it moves through the Lachrymose tradition, the Middle Ages, and becomes antisemitism. And it's also the history of all the institutional failures in Christianity, particularly in the Catholic Church.

James Carroll is born and raised Chicago Catholic, Back of the Yards, and a former priest; he was a Paulist priest for years. And it is also a personal journey of his experience of growing up in this country within certain myths and delusions and mendacities about race and difference and culture, and his experience of working them through personally, as well as working them through historically and, eventually, and through research and erudition and everything else like this. It's quite a wonderful book. It deservedly has won that prize. And he is talking now at Trinity Wall Street, not about this particular strain of human violence but the larger question of religion and war. And I think, that said, let's see what he has to tell us, and then I will make some remarks about that.

SUZANNE ROSS: Okay.

[Video Begins]

JAMES CARROLL: Jerusalem. [indiscernible] of Jerusalem that might move twenty-first century conflict toward resolution. Jerusalem, a golden city because of the yellow-white color of Jerusalem's stone. It seems, so literally, "Jerusalem the golden with milk and honey blessed," goes a twelfth century hymn. Its story tracks the history of religion- - the very history



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of religion. Moving from God the unknown, to God the great enemy, to God the intimate friend. Once, God was openly understood to be violent, but beginning in Jerusalem, that faith was left behind. God is no longer violent. Even doctrines of hell fire now are widely discredited.

But humans are more violent than ever. The hope for peace lies in the human imitation of that divine progress, the nonviolent God. Can the theologies of the religions be reformed in such a way as to match that image? Can our religion break its ancient and still vital tie as a source of and even justification for war and violence? It is a question that comes now like a hot wind blowing back at us from the end of the world.

So, your mind's eye: There is a truck-sized rock on a hilltop in the oldest part of Jerusalem. It has been revered as a holy place of one kind or another since the middle Bronze Age. The rock is regarded as the site of the place of sacrifice to which Abraham brought Isaac. King David ordered a temple built here in the tenth century before the Common Era. The temple, so the Talmud says, is the center of Jerusalem, and the Great Hall is the center of the temple, and the Ark is in the center of the Great Hall. And beginning with that stone, the world was put on its foundation. The rock and that stone are one, the foundation of the world.

And should that spot not be in dispute? When Jesus is remembered in the gospels as attacking or cleansing the temple, the basis of Christian-Jewish conflict is set. Across time, some Christians claimed, erroneously, that the temple rock was the site of Golgotha. And that same rock is regarded by Muslims as the place from which Mohammed, accompanied by the Archangel Gabriel, ascended to heaven. And that is why since the seventh century of the Common Era, the Dome of the Rock has stood there, a magnificent Muslim holy place. It, together with the adjacent Al-Aqsa Mosque, as you know very well, is the second most sacred shrine in Islam after Mecca. From this heart of conflict between Jews and Arabs comes a pulse



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that is a drumbeat now of twenty-first century violence- - and you know that very well too- - making this place the most heavily guarded sacred place in the world.

The interplay of religion and violence is considered by some to be a mark only of primitive culture, centered in anachronistic institutions like the temple, which came into being as institutions where bloody sacrifice was enacted. Rituals varied, but across civilizations and eras, humane responses to conditions beyond their control led humans to construct holy places in which offerings were made to gods. Religion began as a way of making sense of the problem of death with gods or God understood as its solution. The ritual enactment of death, of actual death, with a living thing purged of its life became a normal mode of appeal and of contemplation. Indeed the word temple is embedded in contemplation. It derives from the Latin tempus, a boundary, as in a division in time. And, of course, the ultimate boundary is between life and death, which becomes, in religious terms, the boundary between the pure and the impure, a distinction rooted in primitive responses to corpses.

Violence is redemptive when the purification boundary is protected. Purity, in every tradition, is a precondition of sacrifice, even as with sacrifice the boundary into death is crossed. In some cultures, the living thing thus killed was offered to the deity as food, an implicit reckoning with the human need to live and eat by killing. The consuming fire is an emblem of holiness, but so can be the far more ordinary consumption of eating. Today, of course, even scholars are squeamish about the subject of such bloody sacrifice, attuned as contemporary people are to animal abuse, the degradation of nature, anguish about violence generally.

But life itself is violent. There's the starting point. And across the food chain, nutrition assumes the devouring of living things by other living things. A population that brings its meat home from sterile supermarkets wrapped in cellophane is in denial about an essential note of the human condition. Primitive religion had the virtue of being direct in its sacrificial practice. So



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across cultures, special buildings were constructed. Boundaries, or tempori, were set in which to perform the sacraments of sacrifice. And remnants of such structures mark landscapes to this day from Athens to Egypt to Mexico to Japan- - temples.

But what entered human consciousness in the mists of time into cross cultures remain- - it remains. This conference, with each participant honoring the paradigmatic temple of Jerusalem, both in its historical and symbolic manifestations, from Biblical times to the twenty-first century, has aimed to reckon with the inextricable link between the impulses to worship and to kill.

But is the link inextricable? When the jihadist cries, “God is great,” before detonating his explosive vest; when the Crusades are invoked to justify assault from the west into the house of Islam; when Jewish terrorists conceive a plot to blow up the Al-Aqsa Mosque to hasten the arrival of the messiah; when Christian and Muslim Palestinians contend with Israeli Jews over the sovereignty of Old Jerusalem; when holy places lead to holy war, as in the Al-Aqsa Intifada and early twenty-first century Palestinian uprising that led to more than 5,000 deaths; and when is what is only apparently unconnected, the United States military shows signs of embracing Christian supremacism- - through all of this, secular critics can indulge a satisfying sense of superiority over believers, including over liberal believers whose very devotedness can seem to promote, purposefully or not, primal notions of sanctified violence.

In the United States, as we saw in the film “Constantine’s Sword” last night, war justifying religious references came into the explicit rhetoric of the Bush Administration for a time. The War on Terror defined as a conflict between good and evil, for example; God asserted to be not neutral. But as Bush policies, including his Middle East military adventures have been discredited, war-justifying appeals to the rhetoric of faith has gone out of fashion. That does not mean that a subliminal link between religion and violence no longer exists.



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For Christians, Jews, and Muslims- - and for the civilizations they produced- - the temple and its altar, narratives of religious sacrifice, remain structures of consciousness. And not only religious consciousness. When it comes to violence, the secular actually is not all that secular. In archaic religion, violence and the sacred were explicitly joined. That fact is significant because archaic religion itself is the source of culture, including secular culture, which is why violence acknowledged to be irrational yet perceived as virtuous remains a mark of the human condition.

That is not to say- - this is not to say that all violence is tied to Jerusalem somehow, or its equivalent in other cultures; the relationship, say, of Kyoto to kamikaze bomber pilots. And religious justifications for violence can screen crudely political interests. So we're not just talking religion here. Sectarian violence, for example, can be motivated less by the pursuit of redemption than by the pursuit of power as a kind of secular redemption. The sources of violence, that is- - and we've heard this again and again- - are complex. But religion is deeply implicated, and that is what gathers us.

Here is how one argument to that effect is taken to run. The boundary between animals and humans is drawn by what the anthropologist Rene Girard calls the victimary process, the deliberate selection of an innocent outsider to undergo elimination for the sake of the community. The scapegoat mechanism, in Girard's phrase, by which generalized antipathy toward a chosen victim is acted out, serves to quench another insatiable animal appetite for violence. This form of violence, that is, amounts to a control on violence.

Now Rene Girard is a point of contention in our culture. Susannah Heschel referred to him yesterday. My purpose is not to engage the contention. I just want to lift up what Girard puts before us the question of sacrifice as a basic religious idea, but also- - and here is my interest- - as a basic political idea. My concern is not with the soul of the murderer which



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becomes peaceful through murder, as Susannah put it yesterday, but with the soul of the community as affected by sanctioned violence. Thus, redemption is the social calm that follows on the elimination of violent urges when they are appeased through ritualized killing. When sacred realms of purity and chosenness are thus established, a social need is met.

Sacrificial violence, whether directed at an Aztec virgin, the goat of Leviticus, or Jesus, serves the cause of peace. This process becomes religious when the social need is attributed to the deity to whom the victim is offered. Purity and chosenness are established through appeasement. If we sacrifice one, perhaps the killer god will spare many. In this desperate hope begins the temple.

[End of Video]

[indiscernible background conversation]

ANDREW MCKENNA: Showbiz is not my life. Okay. All right. I am going to do basically two things; try to clarify James Carroll's evocation of the theory of violence- - of mimetic violence, as we find in Girard. It's a theory of the origin of the human, of the origin of culture, and of the origin of religion at the same time. It's a theory that tries to hypothesize. We don't have any fossil data for this. But it's a theory that tries to explain the emergence of the human, and the emergence- - which is to say the emergence of culture- - and the emergence of religion at the same time.

All the anthropologists agree that religion goes back to the foundation of culture. That at the beginning of culture, that's a common place we have religion. But why do we have it? What James Carroll has then alluded to is something that I'm going to try draw pictures. I'm going to use some slides or some images, because among other things, the images- - if my explanation isn't very good, the images are very simple and hopefully they'll stay with you. You can carry them around in your memory. And so they're just- - most of them are my doodlings. Some of



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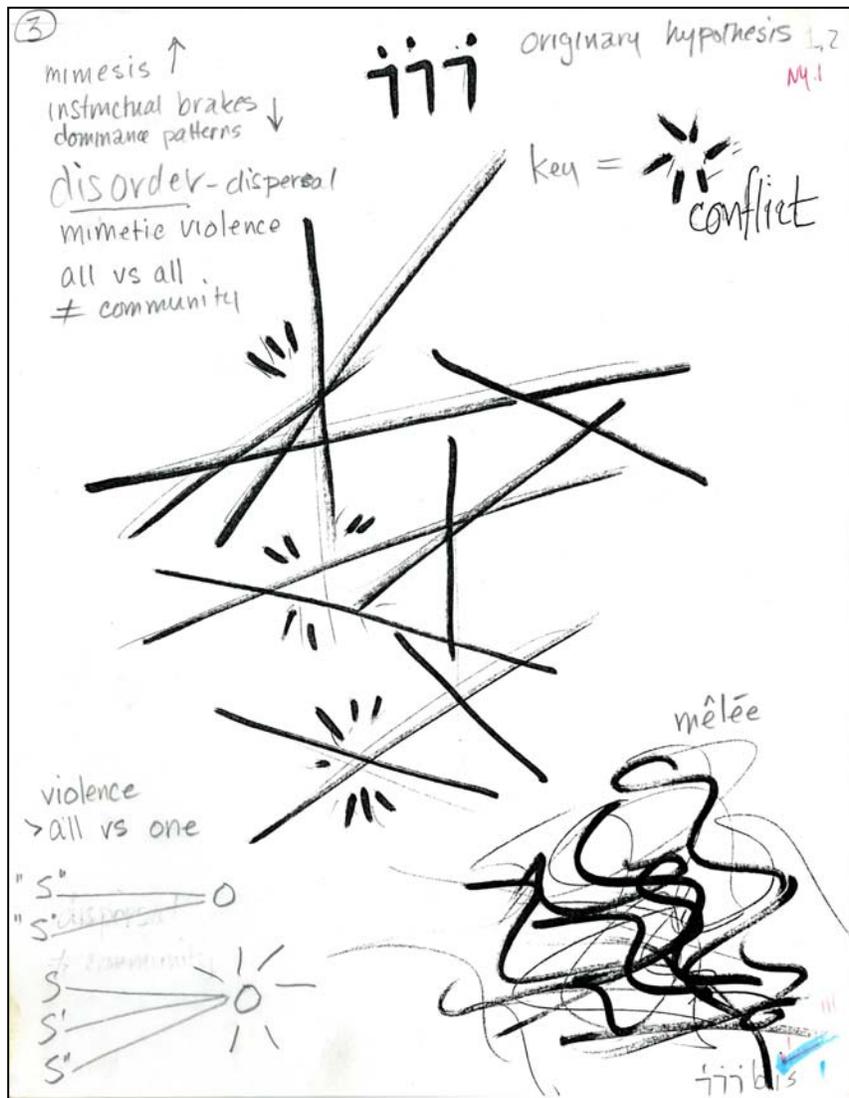
them come from more professional and adept doodlers than I am. But I'll use some images to get that idea across.

Because of his insistence, which is demonstrable- - we know this; we can read it in the press that he's talking about archaic religion. And the conflicts that we have to deal with today in the world as we read across in the headlines, have the same dynamics, the same structures as the origin of the religions.

Religion did not- - in this statement- - it wasn't a problem of death that religion emerged to solve. It's the problem of violence. And if we could have our first image, David, maybe I can try to make that clear. In the meantime, I'm going to scroll through some images on this theory of origins, which is a theory of culture and of religious origins at the same time. And then at the end, I'll make a few remarks that go in the direction that James Carroll's book sends us. At the very end of his book, he tries- - he makes a plea for reform of religious institutions. The title of his talk is "Reforming Theology in the Way of Jesus." So we'll look at some images of mayhem, chaos, disorder, and disagreement, and then we're going to read some nice things that we have from a perfectly nonreligious thinker who is most- - who has spent most of her career working and teaching here in Chicago.



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Anyway, this is my drawing, and it's transparent. It is - - you have two schema, but they're identical. This is just the second image of the first. It's disorder. There's no structure. There's no order. Nothing can come out of that. The difference between us and animals - - we know of; we do ethology studies and we study animal behavior - - is that animals have violence which, at a certain point, is arrested. It's arrested by instinctual grace.

That's why animals produce things that we call, for instance, a pecking order or a dominant status. Animals don't typically kill one another within their own species. I love to quote Samuel Johnson on this topic, where he says one mama vulture says to baby vulture, who wants to know what humans are. She says, "Oh, that's simple. Humans are the only people who don't eat what they kill. So they're very friendly to vultures."

And this is extraordinary about humans. We kill. Animals kill to eat. We don't eat what we kill. We don't have instinctual grace on our violence. Animals - - mimesis is something that runs all through the animal kingdom, right down to the spermatozoa and everything else like



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that; behavior that replicates another form of behavior. And in the higher animals, in simians, in apes - - we call them apes and simians because they ape one other another. We ape their behavior, they ape ours. Those etymologies are actually born of an intuition that those are our closest ancestors. And where they're most closest - - close to use as a species is essentially in the area of violence.

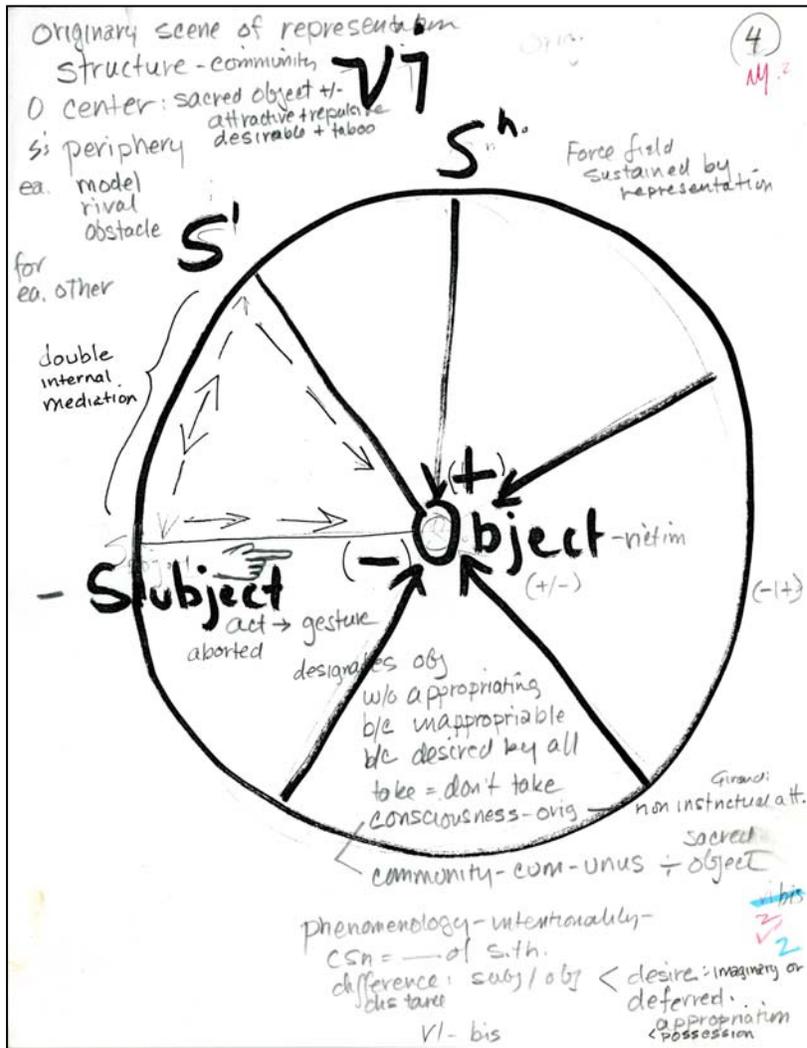
They're discovering now that they're - - you will find - - for instance, you don't find murder among tigers and lions and bears. They don't murder one another. They murder their threat. They murder their threat. Well, typically, in the study of animal behavior, one animal against another animal establishes dominant status - - the alpha male - - and his access - - primary access to food and to mates is not contested. Among apes there is murder. And, of course, among humans, well, that's our human specialty. We don't have brakes on our mimetic behavior, so that when push comes to shove and blow comes to blow, there's nothing to stop it.

Where does that violence originate? This is the violence - - chaotic images. Conflict is the key, you know, at all these flash points, of the fact that violence is everywhere, and you have a species that may be coming together, and the fighting breaks out, and everybody is fighting against everyone else for possession of particular objects, if you will. And there's nothing to stop it, and the community will, you know, to a certain degree come together, and then it will dissolve and come together, and dissolve. As long as you have this kind of violence, which, famously, Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* called "the violence of all against all," you don't have a pattern, you don't have a structure, you cannot have a society. By the way, this is an image of interspecific human violence prior to culture. But it's also an image of what's going on today in history, we know. We see societies where people are at one another's throats in groups of individuals, and we talk about failed states and things like that. And so the archaic, the primitive issue that our ancestors had with violence, we still have.



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It's a question of eventually, the violence that's going all over the place will streamline. It'll streamline because of a certain process of elimination, of a certain process of elimination. And when the violence of all versus all- - which isn't written there strangely, but it doesn't



matter; you can take my word for it- - streamlines to the violence of all versus one. This subject, subject, subject, subject, subject, subject primes and double primes, subject 1 through n , etc., etc. If the violence can streamline- - go to the next image, please- - you get a structure. And it's a circle. And by the way, if you think about a circle with its periphery and its center, you can take that image almost

anywhere, in any- - this is a kind of circle. I am now at the center of it. I'm going to share this centrality with Esmail and with Sandy, and then we're going to spread it all around, and the mike will pass around. But this circle is a good [indiscernible]. It's a holding line, whatever you're talking about, any social organization at any level, the family circle, the community circle, or other.



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This is the theory that you see when the violence has streamlined and all the violence has converged mimetically on one single target, one single victim, this can happen. This will happen eventually with precisely that particular target or victim's inability to fight back successfully. And so what you have is all- - the violence of all now is the violence of all against one. And you can multiple those numbers of the subject in that circle. The circle is only formed with the death of the victim. With the death of the victim, the violence ends only to an extent that the violence has streamlined all together in one direction. It's going to deliberate choice at any time. It's a structural dynamic, that sooner or later the violence will streamline and polarize, and if as of when it concentrates on a single victim, it will end with the destruction of that victim. And then you have what James Carroll is talking about, paraphrasing Girard, a calm because the violence is ended. It's expended. It's not a moral decision. They're not- - it's not exhausted. It's just what it is that everybody was trying to kill at the same time, unanimously, the job is done. And you have a calm and you have an experience of peace. You have what Girard calls a moment of non-instinctual attention. Not attention to a prey, disease or to a rival to destroy or to fight off, but simply attention to an object. And this object therefore is seen, in its death, it's perceived as the source of the calm, but it's also imagined, therefore, as the cause of the violence. That is to say, the victim is killed because- - and this is the way we imagine all kinds of scapegoated things. That if we get the culprit, you know, that's responsible for this, get rid of this, get this guy, then our problems will be over. Get Oedipus, get, you know, whomever. Again, the Jews. Or if you're a Jew, you might want to go after some Muslims, blacks. We know that scapegoating is something that we don't approve of, but it has taken a very long time for us to get there. So then we quote scripture against antisemitism. But that's a recent, post World War phenomenon. And we spoke scripture against any kind of racism or anti-ethnic or anti-religious sentiment. That has been a long, slow, and very tragic process. And James Carroll walks us



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through it in his magnificent book, and I'm going to talk a little bit about what he says at the very end.

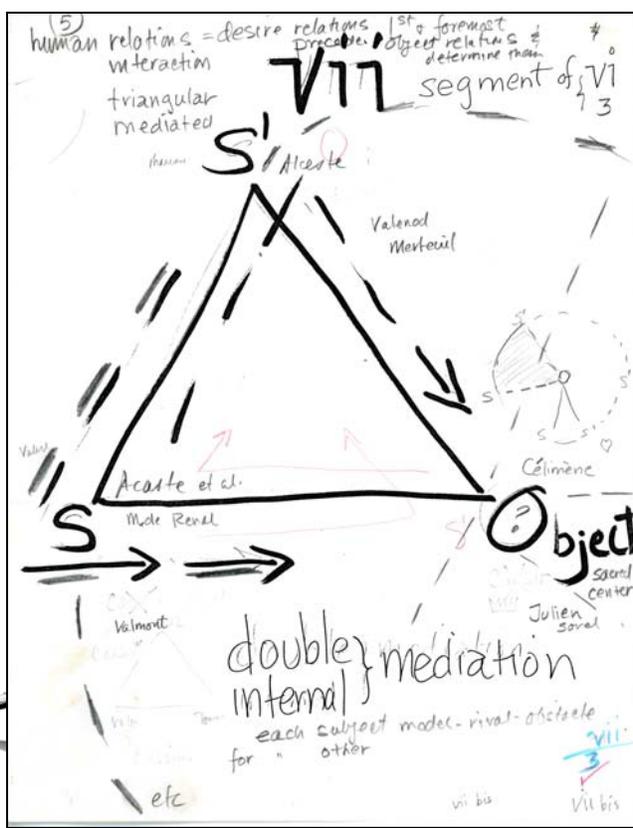
So here for what it's worth. You have this circle and the center is sacred. You can't go there. You can't touch it. And by the way, what does that mean when someone tries to appropriate that centers- - the center? The others are going to pile in, and they're going to meet immediately again. So you better keep that center clean and pure. That has everything to do with the idea of sacrificial and ritual purity.

As long as the center holds- - paraphrasing Yeats- - you'll have calm. People believe in the same thing and they will find victims, substitutional victims, for that original divine sacrificial victim. Ritual sacrifice comes out of a reenactment of the event that gave birth to culture in the first place, culture which is born in a moment of calm where desire for an object is defeated. It is defeated. It is deferred. Because everyone desires the object so nobody dare touch it. Now I'm leading a little bit into a theory of the origins of language and I won't go far with it, but there are further, more detailed, coherent steps to this theory. That if everyone is in a circle and if they're all after the same object, then anybody who actually goes for it is really in

for a lot of pain. So the grasping the object, the act of doing that, becomes a gesture.

Instead of- - they do this, it just becomes this, and you have a theory of the origin of language.

Now that's part of the anthropology. I'm not going to do all of that but, if you go to the next image, we're going to look at a



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segment. Here's the circle, okay? And I've just taken a segment out of the circle in order to focus on subject and subject prime in this mimetic relationship. We don't- - there's nothing mysterious about this idea of mimesis. We, as humans, don't know what to desire. We have needs, just as animals do. We need food, we need shelter, and we need to reproduce ourselves, reproduce our species. But animals don't have desires. They don't have language. We do. We have language and we have desire, and it's all borne of this same phenomenon of the scapegoat mechanism, if you will.

You have an object of desire. Here, I sort of named some characters. You can't read them so it doesn't matter. I've named a number of characters in literature who more or less exemplify this relationship. The- - you know, subjects- - subject one, subject prime, you could have a number of subjects, all desiring the object. Why? Because each one in the circle also desires the object. The problem in the modern world is that the center, and to quote Yeats, this time- - the center lacks that centrality, that untouchable character that says that's a place that we need to keep pure. And so the rivalry for appropriating the object in the center or occupying the center is very intense. And again, I'm only reminding you of what James Carroll just said about the Dome of the Rock and the stone and the foundation of the stone, and the absolutely terrifying fact that the three great Abrahamic religions are in hot and violent contest for it.

So this more represents human relations which are desired relationships. The thing is that we want to take that- - you know, our relationship is to objects. No, our relationship to objects is a desired relationship in the sense that we only desire objects that others point out to us. We couldn't- - if you just think of it a little bit, we couldn't know what to desire on our own. We need parents, we need peers, we need elders, we need schools, we need advertisers, we need a whole culture. It takes more- - much, much, much, much more than a village. In any case, what you have here is each one is a model, if you will, for the other one. He's a role model, if you



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will, but he's also therefore an obstacle, since his possession of that object, it will be an obstacle to the others. Each one is a model for the others, so if this one models the desire for that object, this one copies that desire. And by copying that desire, he's intensifying the original subject's desire for it. So you can understand how desire, when it converges on the same object, leads to conflict. And we like to think that- - and it's true; as humans, if we think the same thing- - two and two is four- - we agree. But if we desire the same thing, we're in trouble. And Lord knows the world is in trouble today. That phrase that James Carroll used. He says that- - he is talking about, and I quote, "A hot wind blowing back to us from the end of the world." You know, it's really a hot, prophetic phrase. It's a very good paraphrase or title for the Book of Apocalypse or the Book of Revelation. "A hot wind blowing back to us from the end of the world." Because I don't want to sound too catastrophic, but we are there. We know now because we have the means of violence to destroy the entire planet, every living thing in it. And we have that knowledge and we have that power, and we really do. But we don't have the power to control. That is to say, we can't keep it out of the hands of the people whom we can't trust. And so we have to make sure we keep it, which just makes it very attractive to people who are trying to take it. And we're in that state, and that is in the headlines- - this is not- - you know, I'm not a theologian; I'm a literary critic. It's my literary sources, Shakespeare and others, who teach me these things.

One example: Here's your object of desire. This is the object in a circle of people surrounding the circle. In Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, who occupies the center? Julius Caesar himself. He's the strongman of Italy. He's defeated Pompeii. And the crowd now goes for Julius Caesar. And Cassius whets Brutus against Caesar, and you have a circle of conspiracy. Conspirators are around Caesar out of fear, on the part of Brutus that he will become king, on the fear of the others perhaps because they envy his centrality. Cassius's famous thing, "It's not in



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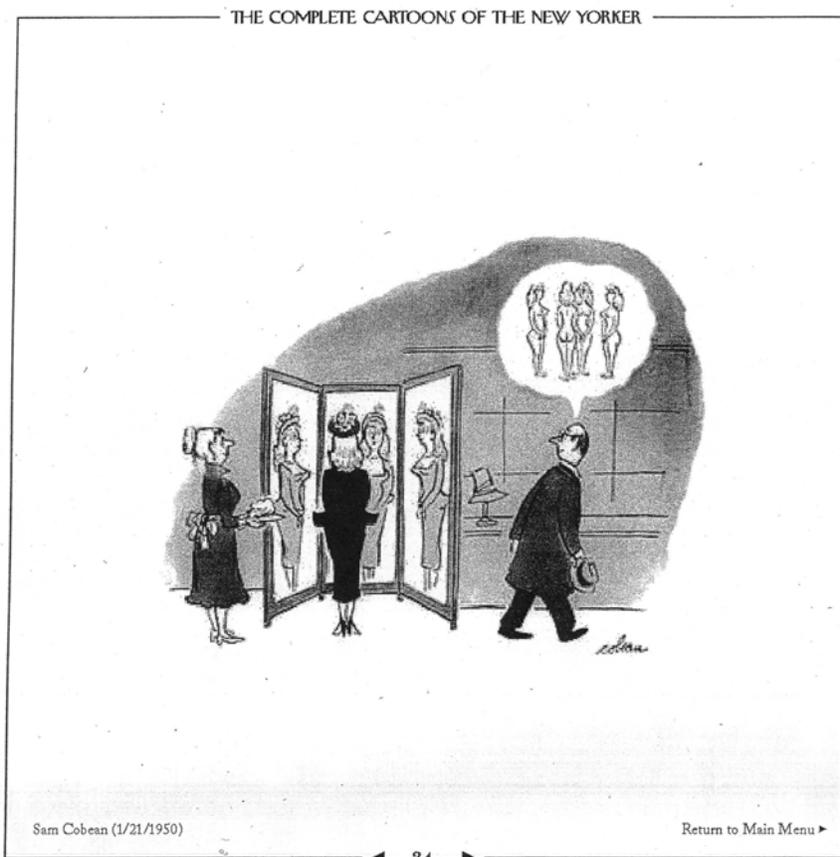
ourselves, but in” - - “It’s not in our stars but in ourselves that we are lonely.” That is to say, “Who does he think he is? I saw him almost drown. I’ve seen him have epileptic fits. No great thing. Why do they treat him so well, treat him like a God?” And I’m paraphrasing a speech that lots of us know. So they decide to kill Caesar. And they need Brutus because he’s doing it to save the republic. And he thinks that we have to nip this in the bud, you see? He didn’t say, “I have nothing against Caesar personally.” He loves Caesar. And, I mean, he doesn’t kill the spirit of Caesar. You know, we would do that, but no, he must bleed for it. We have to kill the man. And he has this soliloquy where he says that it’s like a serpent growing out of the egg. You have to kill the serpent before it grows up to be a poisonous animal.

What does he do? He says- - and he says it to himself and he says it to his co-conspirators, “We need a preemptive strike.” This is Shakespeare talking. Shakespeare sees that- - and of course, after the deed is done, Mark Antony comes out with this magnificent soliloquy about the dogs of war, “Let fly- - cry havoc, and let fly the dogs of war.” Brutus thinks you can use violence, that if you’re very careful. “Let us be sacrificers and not butchers,” he says to his co-conspirators, and he thinks he can use violence like a tool, you know, like pen or a pencil or a knife or a pointer. And what happens? The violence gets out of control, because Mark Antony turns the crowd against him, and the violence which was meant to be used as an instrument gets out of control, and men are used up in it, and you have civil war. We see that again and again in history, and we see it today without editorializing. The idea that you can use violence as a surgical strike, “take him out,” etc., history has proven that idea wrong. Violence rose with man’s increasing effort- - gets more out of control with our increasing effort to control it. All right. Next image, please.



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And we move to one- - ah, okay. This is as clear as we possibly could have. Next are



images from *The New Yorker* magazine and other cartoonists. They draw much better. And they tell our story. They tell our story and they tell it very simply. If you want to know what it is we try to understand by mimetic desire, or mediated desire, or metaphysical desire. Those sound like terribly academic and philosophical

terms. Well, here's an image and it's perfectly clear that there's no caption, you don't need it.

This is an image of object desire, real desire: a man walking and imagining a woman without clothes on. Which means that the man is desiring that woman, but it is her flesh. I mean, that's- - I'm not going to get into what she's wearing and why. We don't need these details. But this is an image of a man, lubricious or not, perhaps the latter. But in any case, a man's erotic desire for a woman, and it's object desire. His desire is attracted to the object, the woman as a sexual being, the woman's naked body. Clear enough, object desire, immediate desire. Next, please.



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Here's where we are all are. This is Saul Steinberg. This is 1962. One of Carroll's ideas is that we know. We know now we can destroy the world. We know what our means are, and we don't know how to control them. The Book of Revelation is not any more some fantastical



science fiction piece of work. It's headline history. This is Saul Steinberg of a man sitting in a chair thinking of a woman. He's not thinking of her body as an object. He's thinking of her thinking of him. This is mediated desire.

This is mimetic desire, because what could this man want? He doesn't want her body. He wants her to- - by the way, this is not a guy thing. I teach plays in which this is a woman and this is a man. The woman wants the man to be thinking of her. It's structural. It's mediated. It's mimetic. He wants her to be thinking of him, which means- - and here I didn't- - you can imagine, if we went that back, but I won't bother- - imagine little circles. She- - what he wants is to be the center of her attention, okay? What it means in the terms of the circle of desire, you have he, she, and they're both- - and he wants to be the center of her attention.



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If we move to the next image, we can see it more clearly. This is from our beloved Matt

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Groening, who is the creator, of course, of The Simpsons, the favorite TV program, and the Archbishop of Canterbury,

by the way. And here I've done some diagrams, but you probably don't need them. I don't know if that's perfectly legible so I'll read it. He -

and he, by the way, he and he, he and she, she and she - it doesn't matter, you see, this is structural. And what desire

does when it heats up to rivalry, it dissolves differences. And Matt



Groening understands this perfectly well. “Hold me, kiss me, touch me, grab me, hug me, screws me, caress me, screws me. Fine, be that way.”

MALE SPEAKER: What was that last one? I didn't -

ANDREW MCKENNA: “Fine, be that way.”

MALE SPEAKER: Okay.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Each makes a demand on the other's affection. Each wants to be the object of the other's affection. Each is a model for the other, which is, by the way,



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Groening is very careful not to make any sexual or character logical distinctions between them because they're both asking for the same thing from each other. Each is a model for the other's desire, and they're repeating that desire. And they are each- - so, for instance, in technical talking, you'd say, well, here's the model and, you know, here's the subject. But what does he do? He imitates the model, and so the model imitates his imitating. And it goes around in that kind of spiral. The whole pathology of desire is right there, because they both want the same thing. He's not- - we say people are violent because they have their differences. We don't agree; we have our differences. It's not true. If we really have our differences, we're just fine with one another. It's when we want the same thing. When we want something both and we imitate each other's desire, we will not agree. We will disagree. "Okay, be that way."

Each wants to be the center and the sole source of the other's attention, affection, etc., and it leads to a falling out, a conflict. Again, what I love about this thing is, again, it's not guy, not girl, she-she, it-it, whatever. You know, I didn't think about the household pet to get into this act, so we can probably love household pets. As you see, they're each a part of our affection and they don't- - [indiscernible; laughter]. And I [indiscernible], in fact [ph], you know. Okay, let's move to the next slide or to the last slide, which is simply taking with the last phrase. I mean, "Okay, be that way. "



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Here we are 20 years later, 10 years later, five minutes later, who cares. This is the cover of *The New Yorker*, and it is a structural analysis of violence. It is a structural analysis of



violence in absolutely every way. It's all about structure. It's all about symmetry. You know, chair, couch, her, him, dress, necktie, black, white, frame, windows, all about rectangles, all in symmetry. This symmetry is violent. The symmetry is violent, and they're arguing about this same thing. I mean, it's a black square and a white square, but the white square is only a function of the black square. She says black because he says white

and vice-versa. Each is a prisoner of the other's desire. Each is a prisoner of the other's position rather than having, owning, occupying any position of his or her own. And this is where we are today. This is Sunni and Shiite. This Shiite and Shiite. This is U.S. and Iraq. This is all over the place.

And, of course, these images are very telling, and they make us think, and that's very good. The whole question is, well, how do you get out of this? Well, yeah, it helps.



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Shakespeare helps. But we're not going to get the world reading Shakespeare and listening to our reading to it, much as Sandy, you know, here has done a very bold and powerful effort in that direction.

So the question- - and this is the question that James Carroll ends his talk with, really- - how to get out of this. Because the subtitle of his book, again, is *Reforming Theology as a Way to Peace*. And he makes an allusion, he makes a connection between Abraham Lincoln as a martyr of assassination, and he connected it in ways I can't go into with Martin Luther King, with Martin Luther King also a martyr and an object of assassination. The thing about Martin Luther King is something we know too. Is that he never had this idea of redemption through violence. He never had the idea that violence is redemptive. You don't have to be a believer, or you just have to be a reporter to remember what he said when he spoke at the Lincoln Memorial. He said, "I believe suffering is redemptive." And not that violence is redemptive.

We, as a country, are constantly being called upon to believe that violence is redemptive. Which is to say there's a good violence, you know, that will get us out of the trouble or get rid of the bad guys. And I'll quote Suzanne's book that says, quite simply, "There's no such thing as good violence or bad violence. There's only violence. Violence is what it is. It's not good or bad. And to religionize it, instrumentalize it is delusional." And now we know not only delusional, it's extremely dangerous.

At the end of James Carroll's book, he quotes a passage, or he makes some paraphrases from Hannah Arendt's book called *The Human Condition*. Now, she is a secular Jew, but she has actually taught here at the University of Chicago, then she sort of set up shop in New York. And how do we get out of this? That is to say, how do we get self-understanding and a self-critical attitude that can keep us out of this kind of bind? Hannah Arendt is talking about the gospel, namely, that the gospel is not supposed to forgive because God forgives and we must do



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“likewise.” “But if ye from your hearts forgive, God will do likewise.” So God will imitate us. Look at that. And this is Arendt. This is not like a theologian. She’s just reading the text, telling it like it is. The reason for the insistence on the duty to forgive is clearly, “that they know not what they do.” We get into these rambles, we’re not planning to kill anybody. But things heat up and we take sides and we get allies and, sooner or later, push comes to shove, and we see it happening all over the world. This is both true on the micro family level, as well as the macro international level.

“They know not what they do,” which is a quote that we know well. And it does not apply to the extremity of crime and willed evil. But then it would not have been necessary to teach, “If he doth trespass against thee seven times in a day and seven times in a day turn again to thee and saying, ‘I repent,’ thou shalt forgive him seven times.”

Crime and willed evil are rare. These people are not bad, but they are capable of doing great harm. Even rarer has to be good deeds. Because we’re basically these too, but we get into terrible- - you know, why do good people do bad things? According to Jesus, they will be taken care of by God in the last judgment, the last time, the apocalyptic time, and we’re there, whether we like it or not. I brought a copy of Rene Girard’s last book. It’s called *Achever Clausewitz*. Clausewitz is the author of the great treatise on war. And he shows how Clausewitz gets you von Moltke, who gets you Wilhelm the First, who gets you Hitler, etc., etc. It’s not pretty. The last judgment, it’s not characterized by forgiveness but by just retribution. The- - okay. Last sentence. But trespassing is an everyday occurrence, which is in the very nature of action’s constant establishment of new relationships within a web of relationships and it needs forgiving, dismissing, in order to make it possible for life to go on by constantly releasing men from what they have done unknowingly.” We don’t deliberately decide to trespass, but we do all the time. And, “Only through the constant mutual release from what they can do, men remain free agents.”



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In later books, this rides like a motif in all of her writings, including the last posthumous writings that have been lately published by Schocken. It's an original act, because it's not something you do in response to somebody else's anger or hostility or suspicion or resentment. There's something original and creative about forgiveness that you can't say about any other kind of forward aggressive action which is always a reaction to someone else's harm. And so there is a way out of this. Reforming theology is a way to peace. It is also a rational decision. This is Hannah Arendt talking, a rational political philosopher from New York. It's an reforming theology is an anthropology of mimetic relationships. There are opportunities to get out of it, and we don't have to be believers to know what we know. What we do know is that we are at the end of something really, really- - and my last word is- - really terrifying. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

SUZANNE: Thank you Andrew. That was a long journey, from the beginning of time right up to the present. So we will take a ten minute break, so check your watch, synchronize your watches. We'll be back at 25 minutes before the hour. So use the restrooms, grab a cup of coffee, and write down your questions, think what you want to ask.

[Break]

SUZANNE ROSS: ...through sacrificial mechanisms, scapegoating mechanism, and so forth. So Andrew covered both those strands for us quite beautifully, and I think I'm going to ask Esmail to begin with any thoughts he has on either James Carroll or Andrew and to be offered the first question as well.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: I have to actually correction to make about what James Carroll is saying.

MALE SPEAKER: Mm-hmm.



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ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: It is important, because from my experience, Islam is very unknown in this country, even though we have been here since Columbus. In fact, there were people who knew how to operate a compass. A Muslim actually developed the compass in order to find direction for prayer, so they were on that boat, and we've been here all that time. And the mosque that I represent in Northbrook was founded by Bosnians. I'm not Bosnian, but they did found it, and they came here in 1906. So they've been here over 100 years. Despite that, people don't really know much about Islam or Muslim, but there's a lot of the stereotyped comment about Islam. Now I don't think James Carroll meant to be stereotyping Islam, but let me correct something he said.

First of all, he said Al-Aqsa Mosque is the second holiest mosque in Islam. That's not true. It's the third holiest mosque. That should be corrected. Because the first holiest mosque is Mecca, toward which we pray. Second is the Mosque of Prophet in Medina, and the third is Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The other comment I'd like to make- - this is very important. It touches the sacrifice that Abraham made, prophet Abraham made. I'm not going to argue over whether that was the first, his older son Ishmael or the second son Isaac. In either case, he was being tested of his devotion, whether or not he really believed in God. I don't think that act was meant to be a violent act. So I don't think it's fair to call it a violent act in religion. That was not really a violent act. It was not intended to be a violent act, and we cannot really say God at that time was a violent God, as he is saying. Because if he were a violent God, he would have let Abraham sacrifice his son, either one. It doesn't matter which one. I don't think that's the important issue. The important issue is that he actually was tested, and it was a test of his devotion to God. And, of course, an animal was given to him to take care of the sacrifice.



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Now Muslims to this day do sacrifice when they go to Hajj. They sacrifice an animal, and the purpose of that, to distribute the food to the needy. In Chicago, when the month of Ramadan comes, or actually after the month of Ramadan, when the pilgrimage to Hajj is made, we offer food. And for the last three years, Muslims have given 50,000 pounds of very high quality meat to the pantry. So even though we have killed animals, as he was saying. So I don't think that's a sign. It's for reenacting what Abraham would have done by using an animal and distributing the food.

So my question really was, not necessarily to Dr. Andrew, who did a great job, by the way. I enjoyed it very much as a new person here who is learning about mimetic theory, which is rather very interesting. I've become an already convert, and I have many examples already found for myself. And these two gentlemen that are experts, so I have been rubbing elbows with both of them. They did a very good job. But I really have a question with the analysis of James Carroll. I think he pushes the idea of killing too much. I know that it is not the religion that is responsible for killing. I think it that the human beings or that each man. Even Girard said that. It's a human question, not necessarily a God question, so that was my comment.

SUZANNE ROSS: Yeah. Andrew, would you comment on how James Carroll does push the violent nature of human beings.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Well, yeah. My guess is that, I mean, he's a latecomer to this. See, he wrote this wonderful book, and he had wonderful things, again, regarding Hannah Arendt. Now I am beginning research on Arendt and Girard because the overlap is extraordinary. But he doesn't do justice to the mimetic theory of violence, which is why it's going to pose just the kind of question you asked.

You know, he says, you know, life is violent. Well, the whole point is that the great religions tell us that it doesn't have to be. The religions- - and the only two I know, and the one



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I'm born and raised in, if you will, is Christianity. But I was raised in a generation of Christian Catholics where it was okay, you know, to read the Bible. You know, I was a latecomer, too. And you try to find more about it. And I also come from New York, you know, and to quote the famous Jesse Jackson, "In New York, everybody's Jewish." [Audience laughter]

And my point is, quite simply, that within our tradition, it has taken a long time for us to understand that God doesn't want this violence, and he has no part in it, and the violence comes from us. And that reaches all the way back- - and Sandy can tell you this story a lot better than I can- - all the way back into the heart of Hebrew Bible. This is not something that the Christians come along and discover, and we have to get rid of this idea that the violence out of the Old Testament is a beneficent, pacific one. That's nonsense. That is a manmade Judaic stereotype.

And so partially in response to your remark, I wrote the word stereotype because that's the connection that scapegoating satisfies, you see? Is that we can somehow or other isolate and, in a sense, draw a circle around someone or some group, and then isolate that as the source of our problem. We feel that- - we believe in that. It's not true, but we believe in it because it lets us. And we have a sense of who we are and a sense of belonging, and the need of humans to belong is absolutely overwhelming. It's indispensable, because we don't have instincts that plug us into the sources of our needs. We need- - we require belonging because of all kinds of non-mechanical things that our DNA just isn't supplying to us. So that's- - I mean, I agree with you there. He says life is violent. It isn't, and it doesn't have to be. And I know that from my own religious tradition, and I defer to you in terms of any number of examples or quotations where you can, I'm sure, say the same.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Yeah.

SUZANNE ROSS: Thank you. Sandy.



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SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah. Following up on what Esmail has said, I really appreciated what James Carroll said. I think I agree with Andrew that this is a wonderful book, and I think Andrew's presentation today was really marvelous. I'd never seen Andrew- - I known him for years and years and never seen him do this type of a piece of this work, and it was just great for me. It was marvelous.

I share the notion that James Carroll is a really important thinker, I think, in the Christian world, and that he's doing work which raises the question of the sacrificial. That's number one. Number two, I was very pleased to see that he had what seemed to me favorable remarks to say about Girard, largely because I think Susannah Heschel must have picked it up from him because she has only a sentence. Right. And there's not much there, and she's much more dismissive. So I was very happy that this came out in a positive way.

But like Esmail, I think what they're beginning to get- - there is something very powerful here, but what they're not quite getting yet is what Girard calls the Judeo-Christian revelation, or the revelation in the Hebrew context and then in the Christian context, and, I would add, in the Islamic context, which is the revelation of sacred violence. That is to say, to use the buzzword, deconstruction of sacred violence. In other words, that the scripture is a way not of continuing but of undoing, making us aware of it so that it can't be operative in the same way. And when James Carroll referred to archaic violence, we have to make a very careful distinction between violence that engenders the possibility of the human and violence with which scripture is blamed. I mean, Girard loves to talk about how the last moment of the swan song of the lie about sacred violence is when you blame the scripture itself. The scripture which is the document that tells you about it. So, you know, that's the final sort of.

Anyway, so I've just- - but I do have a question, though, and this is really for Andrew. I was struck, as Andrew was- - and he remarked about it right away- - by this reference to death- -



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to the origin of religion and death. I was wondering what you make of that. Why he would feel-
- I mean, he seems to get it that there's something very powerful about sacrifice, and yet-

ANDREW MCKENNA: Yeah. Well, I think he has not grasped something essential. That sacrifice and religion doesn't come into the world to deal with humans' problems with death. It's humans' problems with violence, where we make death for one another. We're going to die, but the idea is that God has nothing to do with that. We are a biological species, and we're going to die no matter how many people in California try to rearrange their faces. [Laughter] [Indiscernible – laughter], you know, in one way or another. And what's terrifying, of course, is that long before they can get all that Botox up and ready, we might just say to one another on our own atomic weapons. [indiscernible – laughter]. I mean this is where we are, and it's funny and it's terrifying.

But it's not losing- - death is- - that's a metaphysical issue, in a sense. It's not about that. It's the fact that humans cannot- - humans need- - need to control our violence because we don't have it breaks to it- - instinctual breaks that create dominance patterns, pecking orders, etc. And the thing is that that was okay, that each war and each century is more violent, and today's violence is total, you see. The need for control was less great in the 19th century where a few armies could take one another out. And then with atomic weapons, everybody can be taken out at the drop- - you know, at pushing a button. And this violence is always more or less religionized. We all can remember in the Cold War, where it was definitely us, them, God, atheism, etc.

It's always- - mimetic theory is always a critique of religionized violence, sacralizing violence, saying that violence is good to use against evil. You don't find that in the Hebrew tradition. You find it in its naming. It's jumped in and then, as Sandy says, it's deconstructed. That is to say that the number of texts which say, okay, you have been told this, and God says, in



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the Hebrew Bible, I want mercy, not sacrifice. I mean, that's not Jesus talking. Jesus comes along and confirms, and he says so, not a jot a jittle, is lost. In my view, and I think it's true, is a confirmation of Torah. It is not, you know, a replacement, a supersession, a superseding or abnegation or anything like it.

SANDOR GOODHART: It is a very famous rabbinic saying, in the place where we used to sacrifice, we pray and read.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: We pray and read.

ANDREW MCKENNA: And Carroll is very eloquent on the emergence of rabbinic Judaism and the decreasing role of sacrifice within that religious tradition, and the increasing role of reading, praying, and discourse, and learning.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

SUZANNE ROSS: Esmail, would you like to comment on that, about in the Islamic tradition, you know, this idea that the texts are deconstructing the sacred violence?

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes, I agree 100 percent with what you said, Sandy. But, you know, these are my great friends. You know, I agree with you. In fact, this has been going on. One of the- - there are a lot of people who are doing that, and a lot of people are criticizing Muslims for not having done critical analysis of the Holy Koran. But they have been- - they are doing this. Unfortunately, the writing is not available in English. Only recently, there are some books available by Muslim scholars who had lived in this country, over in England, who know how to speak English and are educated who are exactly doing that. And they are trying to change the narrative and describe some of these phenomenon that we are puzzling about. So this is being done, and I agree with you.



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ANDREW MCKENNA: And our inability to read Arabic, that's our fault. I mean, that's our culpability. Which is to say, that God is not in this one. [Audience laughter] But believe me, since the nineteenth century, he was. And we had the Pax, you know, Britannica. Before that there was the Pax Romano. Now we have the Pax Americana, and it's not pretty. And good riddance, on the one hand, and Lord knows, on the other. And I think now we have some questions.

SUZANNE ROSS: Yes. If you have a question, please come across to the mike, or we can bring the mike to you. Evelyn, do you have a question?

EVELYN: Yeah, I do.

SUZANNE ROSS: I think Adrian would have to bring the mike to you.

EVELYN: Oh, I can get to it.

MALE SPEAKER: We can't really move it.

SUZANNE ROSS: No, we can't.

EVELYN: Yeah, I can get to it okay.

SUZANNE ROSS: This is what I'll do, sweetie.

EVELYN: Oh.

SUZANNE ROSS: I'm going to sit next to you.

EVELYN: Oh, like that.

SUZANNE ROSS: You'll just have to- -

EVELYN: All right, now, are you okay?

SUZANNE ROSS: We know each other.

EVELYN: Yes, we do.

SANDOR GOODHART: Or at least you know now.

[Laughter]



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EVELYN: One of the great ideas I got out of *Constantine's Sword* that I've thought about a great deal are two major traditions in Christianity. And one is the violent idea, that God required Jesus to die for our sins. And that is a strand- - do I remember, was it Bernard- - not the dog but the Saint- - who espoused- - who said that kind of thing? And the reverse was held by Abelard, our famous romantic, and that was that, you know, violence is not the answer and there are other ways to explain the story of Jesus as victim rather than as something God ordained. And I think there must be many people who still believe that God required his death, and I think if in any way we can change that idea, it would be a very positive thing.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Well, it's very interesting because there's a lot of press. One of the books that I planned to bring with me, it's almost as thick as this, and it's about atonement theology.

EVELYN: Yes, that's it.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Which is Anselm's idea. That God somehow made a deal with his son. Somebody's got to pay for this. For the honor of God, you're it. I mean, I'm characterizing, because when you examine that idea, atonement theology is good. And the movement in theology is away from that, and good riddance. And there- - the book is edited by Willard Swartley. One of the contributors in it is James Allison, who is a regular- - who is the theological wing of mimetic theory and will be here to make presentations, who is in Chicago on a regular basis. And so you're absolutely right. Anselm versus Abelard and James Carroll takes Abelard's side, and a lot of theologians to this day that atonement theory doesn't wash, doesn't make sense. It makes God into the cruel sort of person that our other understandings of God through scripture make him, incomprehensible and inaccessible.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Can I comment on that?

EVELYN: Certainly.



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ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: I think Muslims do not believe that Jesus was crucified. There is a verse that's in the Holy Koran that says it appeared that someone like him was crucified but that Jesus was taken to heaven. So as Muslims are concerned, there were no redemption sacrifice of Jesus, and he is supposed to come back at a time chosen by God to finish his ministry, because he only had three years to preach. So he is going to come back, and he's a very important figure in Islam, and his mother is a very important figure. We believe in his immaculate conception.

And of all the- - in the entire Holy Koran, there is the name of one woman mentioned, and that's Mary, the mother of Jesus. And there's a chapter. There's a chapter 17 of the Koran- - actually 19 of the Koran talks about Mary only and the life of Jesus and how Mary was- - Mary conceived Jesus. And there's a lot of beautiful verses there. And many of the Christian scholars have actually used that entire chapter when they talk about Mary and Jesus in their book. And one of them is Jaroslav Pelikan, who is a Lutheran, who has written a book called *Mary Through the Centuries*. And he actually takes- - there's a chapter in that book which is copied from the Koran. And he's, in the preface to the book, he said if you want to learn about Mary or Jesus, come to this Koran and learn from them, not from Bible. And in the Koran, it talks about Jesus as the messiah. So there's a lot in there that people do not know, so we don't have that essentially.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you.

SANDOR GOODHART: We've each been talking about traditions that we have a familiarity with, but one of the things that the three of us talked about when we sat in that room was that an interfaith dialogue is a kind of funny word. It's not really dialogue and it's not interfaith. In other words, it's in some sense the same faith and the same family. I mean, if you begin with the notion of dialogue, it sounds to me like divorce litigants, you know, the parties,



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you know. If you begin with that, you're going to end with that. You're never going to overcome that. But it seemed to us better as an idea to try to start with the commonalities. Suzanne invoked that idea of what's common to us, and it seems to me that that's what we're striving for. Not interfaith dialog but something familial. That's why it really makes me feel good to hear Esmail talk about the Islamic tradition this way. Those are things that I don't have as part of my repertoire and of things that I know, and I need to know that. And Andrew and I, we're both in literature, but we've been hearing so much about- - especially about Judaism and Christianity for many years, and again, it's all part of the same project. I just want to emphasize the sameness of- - the good sameness, so to say. This is not the sameness that provokes violence. This is- - there's an idea in Girard that there's a good mimesis. You know, and this would be the good mimesis of discovering the ownership of the familial connection, is maybe how I would put it.

ANDREW MCKENNA: As opposed to ownership of God.

SANDOR GOODHART: Right.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Which is what it's been about- -

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

ANDREW MCKENNA: - - too. It is already in early Christian anti-Judaism. You know, God is our God. And as Christianity goes, Christianity is Noah's Ark. And that starts a tradition which becomes devastating, and that's still going. Carroll talks about a sibling rivalry again and again between Judaism and Christianity, and it wasn't- - you know, we know who won, but it's not- - it's not anybody that- - it's a disgrace, you know, that it was won that way. As Sandy said in his book, you know, the Jew, in certain circumstances, is the mimesis that we understand. You know, we're rival partners and the winner gets to tell the story.

SUZANNE ROSS: Are there any questions? Would you mind coming to the- -



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MALE SPEAKER: This is a question to Esmail Koushanpour. As I understand- - and I know very little about Islamic history, but from the very little I understand, Islam spread extremely rapidly throughout the Middle East and through North Africa and all over the Mediterranean region. And I suspect it was spread by the Islamic armies moving through that region, because I don't see how it could have expanded that fast. The question is to you how fast did it expand, and please don't soft pedal the method of spreading it by violence, because I know that no one wants to admit that their religion was spread by armies and violence. I want the unvarnished truth.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Well, it's a very good question. Let me just give you a quick answer first, and then I will elaborate on that. The Muslim- - spread of Muslim was not through the armed combat. Most of these countries that were- - it went to, people there were ready to accept Islam. I'll give you an example of my own country, Iran. At the time that Muslims went to Iran, Iran had an empire. And the- - but the people, the historic history of Iran tells us that the people in Iran were fed up with the government they had. It was basically autocratic, authoritarian, and they were deprived of many rights. Whereas the same country in earlier time had enormous rights- - people had enormous rights. And so by contrast, they did not have that. So they were more than happy to accept the Arab armies when they brought in their religion. And people who have studied the usual conquests of the other countries where Islam was spread, the number of people who have died, including the Arabs and others who were participating in the combat, was very small. It was not such a large number.

Now we just came back from visiting Spain for about 12 days. And one of the reasons why I went there, I wanted to find out how Spain for 800 years was getting along under the control of the Muslims, Jews, and Christians. And I had to see the places where there were people getting together. And we had a guided tour, and the tour guides were all Catholics. And



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they knew the history very well. Every single one of them said the same thing, and they were reciting the history of the countries around Spain, that this did not happen.

The other reason that Islam spread was through another group of people, Muslims, who were called Sufis. They were the ones traveling along the Silk Road around the world and the Silk Road went through Iran. There is a city in Iran called Hamadan. That was just south of Tehran. That was a center of - every caravan went through that. So if you look at the people who have written books about Islam and the spread of Islam, and these are all American scholars. One book about the Islamic empire is written by Bloom, they're husband and wife from Boston University. And the *Islam: Empire of Faith* film was put together by PBS not too long ago. All of this describes the fact that the religion is spread not by sword, which is a misunderstanding. This is a misunderstanding that has been perpetuated in the history in order to, I guess, to demonize the Muslim.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Exactly. You know, just, for instance, think of the counter example. Islam could not have spread that fast unless its religion was attractive and compatible. Compatible and, more so, attractive. The argument of *Constantine's Sword* isn't that Constantine went around the Roman Empire, you know, "Join or die." He didn't - it would not have worked. Christianity was more attractive to the Romans in the Roman Empire than their various pagan religions. They're the counter example.

The Mongols. The Mongols conquered everything. They got past Budapest. They just rolled over the Christian and the Islamic armies to the point that at a certain point, the Christians and the Muslims were trying to get together and they couldn't. The Mongols were unstoppable, and they had to go back because Genghis died and they went and had a family, you know, council. The ones who lived in the territories they conquered became Muslims. My point is that the Mongol invasions were unstoppable. They were iconic, and I can give you military details,



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ethnic. They meant nothing, you see. They had no- - they were an animist religion. They adopted to the presiding religion because it was compatible. With living together, it was compatible.

So the myth of conquest by the sword of Islam, that's just what it is. That's the scapegoating. You never had these, "We're the nice guys." Christianity was spared by Sister Mary Alacote. [Laughter]

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: It's exactly- - the Mongol came to Iran. This is good to know. Everything that moved, they killed.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Including cats and dogs and whatever. And they did.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Yeah. Nobody had a Mongolian religion. They could conquer the world, but [indiscernible].

SUZANNE ROSS: Good question. Good point. Jenny.

JENNY: Come over here. This is a question and a comment for any of you. There was a comment made about retributive war. Would that be the same as just war? And could forgiveness be considered retributive justice? Because in a sense, when you forgive, the person forgiven might be sorry that there was ever a problem in the first place.

SUZANNE ROSS: A question about forgiveness and justice.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Well, yeah. Forgiveness is not justice. You owe me. You've hurt me. I want to get even. That's justice. But we have retributive justice for that. Forgiveness doesn't weigh into justice of the thing. To put it in- - forgiveness is something that frees you from the desire for revenge. Which if enacted, it's only way to end the cycle of revenge. And we know what goes on in the world. We have only to read the newspapers to see that it is simply



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only balanced of human extremes and it repeats itself. And now the cycles of repetition are just too lethal, because they have such power and, you know, and such potential power.

Justice and forgiveness are not two things- - I'll paraphrase Dostoyevsky on that score. Dostoyevsky has the idea that justice- - you want justice, go to hell. That's where you'll find it. But we live on earth, you know, and we cannot- - we need justice, and we need, you know, judicial arrangements and institutions. But we couldn't live alone ourselves only with that, you know. Without mercy and forgiveness, we wouldn't survive. We couldn't get along for a very lengthy time.

SANDOR GOODHART: There's a midrash about that.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Well, okay [indiscernible – overlapping laughter].

SANDOR GOODHART: God says to the angels- - I mean, he runs things by the angels. He said, "I'm going to create the world entirely of justice. What do you think?" And the angels said, "It won't work." It won't survive even five minutes pure justice.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Okay. Right.

SANDOR GOODHART: So he says, "Okay. All right, Plan B. I'll create the world entirely of mercy." And they said, "That won't work either, because they won't survive each other for five minutes." So God creates the world of justice and mercy.

MALE SPEAKER: [indiscernible] on that. [Laughter]

SANDOR GOODHART: The question of forgiveness is a tricky one because I'm thinking a lot about what forgiveness is about, and I tend to agree with Andrew that it's a kind of getting yourself out of what Paul calls judgment. There is no- - for example in Judaism, there is no third party forgiveness. If you injure me, I have the capacity to forgive you. But if you injury my parents, only my parents could forgive you. I can feel bad with you, and I can recognize that



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you're suffering and help you through the whole occasion. So it's tricky. I mean, it's not exactly- - it has other parameters other than justice.

ANDREW MCKENNA: But it has institutional rewards. I mean, in recent history, we have the Truth and Justice Commission in South Africa. The alternative would have been a retribution would have had to be racially, you know, devastating and total destruction of the economy, the population, and everything else like that have. You had Desmond Tutu at the right time and the right place who prevented that. And also in Argen- - no, his endorsement in Chile?

FEMALE SPEAKER: Chile.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Chile, yes. And they need one for Rwanda, and they're trying to get it going. And it worked in South Africa. It's delicate. It's dicey. Because people want to get even. But we never get even. That's the point. We can never get even because every time we react violently, our partner in this is obviously going to react with more violence. I mean, if some aggresses me, I'm not going to come out with less aggression. It makes no sense whatsoever. And we're going to come back with more to end the violence, and that's called good violence because it means to put an end to violence. But there's only violence.

SUZANNE ROSS: Right. Yeah, Esmail.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Just a comment about the- -

SUZANNE ROSS: Just a comment, and then Janet.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: - - forgiveness. There is a beautiful verse in the Holy Koran, and I don't want to just supply all those verses, that says if you harm someone, don't come to me for mercy and forgiveness. You have to ask the person that you harmed for forgiveness. If he forgives you, then I will forgive you the fact that you even thought of hurting someone. So the fact that you- - the fact that you think that I'm going to pour coffee over you but you don't do it, that, in itself, is a sin. You should really- - now you have to start asking both



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God and the person that you were going to commit the crime on. And this is very important. People don't understand that. And I want to bring some- - it's a very politically hot issue- - the fact that somebody strapped dynamite around their belt, regardless of what the circumstances are- - desperate, however you want to characterize that- - the mere fact that they do that, even if they don't blow anything, they take it off, that is a sin. As a Muslim, they cannot do that. And the prophet said that- - it has been his saying that if you harm someone, I will not be your advocate in the day of judgment. I will be your adversary. You will not even see, smell the fragrance of paradise. I will be the adversary. I will not allow you to get- - to get any reward. This is Islamic justice. We don't hear about it. But what we hear is all these people who are, for whatever reason- - I'm not here to explore their mental psyche- - that they are doing that, it is actually a great sin. Because they're taking their own lives, number one, which is a sin, committing suicide- - and on top of that, they're taking the lives of a lot of innocent people. And in that we share, both in Talmud and Koran, it says if you kill someone, it is like killing the entire world, and if you save someone, it's like saving the entire world. We cannot do that. And in my judgment and in the judgment of the Islamic scholars, they are not really Muslim, no more than if somebody does- - a Jewish person does it or a Christian does that; they're neither Christian nor Jewish. This is not allowed in any religion. None of the founders of these religions, however- - whoever you want to name, they never prescribed any act of violence. That was not part of their prescription. So I think this is my Islamic tradition, and Jewish tradition, and Christian tradition. It's shared in that there's no question about it.

SANDOR GOODHART: Esmail and I were talking. We were trying to find differences between us. We couldn't. [Laughter] But as he started to speak, I began to think of the text of Sefer Yonah, when we, at the very end of the text, for injuries that you have committed against God, Yom Kippur can provide atonement. For injuries that you've committed against others,



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Yom Kippur cannot provide atonement. Go first and reconcile yourself with your brother. Then come here.

SUZANNE ROSS: Yeah. There's this saying in the gospels when Jesus says before you go to temple, if you have any- - if you have committed any wrong against anyone, go first- -

MALE SPEAKER: Exactly.

SUZANNE ROSS: - - and make it right. Then come to temple.

SANDOR GOODHART: That's right.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Exactly. And Jesus is not saying that as a Christian.

SUZANNE ROSS: Exactly. He's going to temple.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Carroll brings up a very obvious fact that people don't know. And those are things in Christianity, for hundreds and hundreds of years. Jesus is simply digging into his own religious tradition to say, you know, remember, remember.

SUZANNE ROSS: Janet [ph].

MALE SPEAKER: [indiscernible].

JANET: Not at all. The thing that I wanted to say was in response to Andrew's talking about the South African Peace and Justice Commission. And it seems to me that the need for revenge and retaliation is, in many ways, a defense against loss and helplessness. And, you know, if these things have happened in your- - whether it's in a small scale, in a family, someone murder- - you know, a gang member murders somebody, or on a large scale culturally, the loss, instead of being felt, it goes into retaliation and the back and forth, and the back and forth. And you were saying how hard the forgiveness is, and it seems to me that what makes it so hard is our incapacity to bear the pain of the loss of what happened, what will never be able to be undone. And so, you know, the more people can bear that, and it takes community and help and support



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to bear that- - but that's where the issue is. If that can be born, then it makes the rest of it a little more possible.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Yes. I mean, yes. I mean, quite simply. The- - if the loss is lethal, you can't bring someone back to life who has been slain by, let's say, by their political or ideological, you know, adversary. So that experience, you know, has to be gotten through. And what happens often is it's short-circuited by, you know, get even. And we have that dreadful saying, you know, don't get mad, get even. The point that Arendt makes 50 years ago- - it was published in 1958- - is that in these nonlethal situations, to forgive the person who has injured you puts you in a position of originality. And it's a creative act rather than repeating a destructive act in which you were a prisoner of the other's aggression, consistently repeating, you know. So that is your loss. It has to be dealt with. It's not forgetting. Okay, hurry up and forgive. It's not easy, because, you know, there is pain. But these losses are the result of violence, and the answer is not more violence. And if we didn't know that before, in the atomic age, we know. We simply cannot, you know, make more retaliation.

SANDOR GOODHART: And I think there's something really interesting to me, as we're talking about this today, because the technologies by which we've tried to deal with violence have been (a) justice, and (b) mercy or forgiveness. And maybe this is a third technology: Telling what happened.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Yeah. Right.

SANDOR GOODHART: You know? I mean, it seemed to be part of what Freud discovered in psychoanalysis as a way out of neurotic and, if not psychotic, at least neurotic behavior. The potential for it and I'm wondering, as some theorists talk about, the power of truth speaking. And I wonder if we give enough attention to the potentially liberating power of saying the truth, saying what happened, which is kind of- - which is a kind of bearing witness.



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JANET: But the saying what happens has to be also heard. There's the truth saying and there's the truth hearing.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yes. That's right. That's right.

JANET: And that in the truth saying, there's the grieving and the grieving is what heals.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yes. That's right.

ANDREW MCKENNA: It has to be witnessed. It's communal. Because what you're trying to heal, you can't redeem the loss. You're trying to heal the community because the alternative is that it will self destruct. And five cases out of six, that's what people are used to.

SUZANNE ROSS: I'm wondering if - it's kind of along with forgiveness, goes this idea of being in need of forgiveness. And the - I think Andrew was talking about it - this sort of unconscious process of scapegoating where when you commit this act of violence, you feel so justified and so righteous in it that you do not feel you need to be forgiven for anything. And I think part of - for me, it's always been that the ability to extend forgiveness depends upon being aware that you need it yourself.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Yeah.

SUZANNE ROSS: And if you could talk about it in context of that, this scapegoating phenomenon where we just aren't aware.

ANDREW MCKENNA: We know not what we do.

SUZANNE ROSS: Yeah.

ANDREW MCKENNA: If we suffer a loss, we want to get even. We don't see that we're replicating this violent behavior. That is to say, we see ourselves as victims. You know, every persecutor originally sees him or herself as a victim. They're only responding in kind or with an extra measure to an evil, an aggression of violence, the transgression, or trespass against them. And the mimetic theory enables us to see that's the creatures we are. We are mimetic.



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And so we always need forgiveness. I mean, repentance is built deep, deep, deep, deep, deep into the Jewish Bible before it becomes, you know, the theology. But it's not nearly a theology, it's an anthropology. This is mimetic theory. Hannah Arendt comes along and she sees its theoretical power and its healing power in its strictly political sense- - the possibilities of moving on and not being a prisoner to these hostilities.

So the need for repentance is anthropological. It's not moral or religious or theological. It's a fact of the way we are.

FEMALE SPEAKER: I was just- -

SUZANNE ROSS: Can you come to the mike, or shall I come to you?

FEMALE SPEAKER: No, it's okay. My voice will carry.

SUZANNE ROSS: No, not for- - not for our purposes.

FEMALE SPEAKER: The thing which I can remember is the statement, "I can forgive but I will never forget." And to me, that is one of the most reprehensible statements, because if you cannot forget, the affect and the resentment which will occur even though I forgive you, that is a shibboleth.

FEMALE SPEAKER 2: I strongly disagree.

SUZANNE ROSS: Can you speak in the mike?

MALE SPEAKER: Uh-oh.

FEMALE SPEAKER 2: I would strongly disagree. It does depend on the way it's said, and yes, sometimes I think you're right, it is said in that spirit. But I think that it is possible to forgive in the sense of not harbor any more resentment because you've worked through the pain of something, and to not need to retaliate but to- - it's important not to forget because that's how one comes to protect oneself in the future. So if you know that this person in your life, for example, is a dangerous person because they have hurt you, you don't want to forget that



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because you might set yourself up to be hurt again. So you don't forget it, but you do what you need to do and work through whatever, and in that process, you can forgive in the sense of not spending all your time. Forgiveness is more for the forgiver than for the forgiven. And so you stop spending all your time, you know, letting that person rent space in your head, as they say, and that's where forgiveness really is, I think.

SANDOR GOODHART: I completely agree with that, with what you just said. You know, can I forget that someone put my child in the oven? How does one forget that and go on? We have to remember that. We can forgive the consequences of that and begin to move from that place, but if we forget that, that's the assurance that we're going to be very soon back in the same place.

ANDREW MCKENNA: There's a wonderful moment in the documentary by Marcel Ophüls, the son of the great German refugee, filmmaker Maxwell Ophüls. (*The Memory of Justice*) And he's interviewing- - the topic is the Holocaust and then subsequent disasters. For the French, it's the war in Algeria, and, for the Americans, it's Vietnam. This movie was made in the late seventies. And he is interviewing Yehudi Menuhin. Yehudi Menuhin. Yehudi, "I am a Jew." Because Yehudi was in Berlin and played the violin. And, of course, a large segment of the Jewish community said you can't go to Berlin. You can never go to Berlin, etc. And this is a quote he used. He said, "Well," he said, "I'm Jewish. I feel we're all guilty." And he does mean that we're all supposed to go and beat our heads on rocks, but that you don't accomplish anything by saying, well, they're the bad guys; we must be the good guys. That's sacrificial. And Yehudi gets this because he's Jewish, because in his religious culture, you know, there's that need for repentance. How many of the rituals in the liturgical year are beginning with atonement, you know, are about the vulnerability within us. To, you know, evil that we always want to push outside.



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FEMALE SPEAKER: A couple of comments about forgiveness. One is I think that the forgetting that comes with forgiveness is somehow something like what they say about women, is that they forget the pain of childbirth. And they forget the pain of childbirth not because it wasn't physically painful but because life came out of it. And I think when you truly forgive, you do forget in that way. That you- - and I also would say that I think forgiveness is a choice and much more an act of the will than it is a feeling or that it even comes with the resolution of feelings. I think it actually is what allows the resolution of feelings at the deepest level, and that we have kind of psychologized forgiveness in our age.

And then the other dynamic about does God forgive, do we forgive- - and, yes, forgiveness is, in many ways, for the forgiver. But I think that to the extent that there is something kind of significant about the Christ event in history, I think it is that those who followed Christ came to understand their need for repentance because they were forgiven, because they experienced Jesus' presence among them in a forgiving way. And for me, at least, that's essential, that God does forgive me all the time for things that I may or may not ask for forgiveness. And often it's only when I realize that I'm forgiven that I can even articulate what it is that I've done. So, you know, I don't know, chicken and egg sort of thing, but I do think there is something about absolutely the need for repentance and going and asking for forgiveness, but also, I think that forgiveness is, in a sense, the ethic that's embedded in the universe and to participate in that wherever it comes from, and then to realize it in our human relationships.

SUZANNE ROSS: And we have time for you each to make a comment on that.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Well, I would just say yes. See, for Hannah Arendt, forgiveness is not a theological or moral issue. It's a survival tactic. So your statement was, if you mean it metaphorically or not, is talking about the engine of the universe. Now, really, it's



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the only alternative, because violent reprisals are, in our age, no longer- - they won't work. They simply won't work. The tower of destruction is that great.

SANDOR GOODHART: And I also agree with that, in the limited way in which we're talking about it. The Talmud says if we didn't- - if we remembered everything, we couldn't exist after five minutes. We have to forget in order to get through the day. But at the same time, there's a balance between what we forget and what we remember.

SUZANNE ROSS: Right. Right. Right.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: We have a similar thing in Koran in Islam, that it's better to forgive even though you may not forget. It's better to do that. If somebody kills someone in your family, don't go and act- - don't go kill him. I mean, you can kill him- - an eye for an eye- - but it's better not to. And it says forgive. I think this is- - forgiveness is a very important thing. And I think I agree with the fact that it does something for you more than it maybe does for the other forgivee, as you were saying. I like- - I love this fact that we agree on so many things. I have been saying that for the last 15 years when I talk to different venues- - Christian, Jewish venues, and Muslim venues- - that we have so many things in common as we are talking about this. And we should be talking about those, not about the minutiae.

And I was commenting about the fact that we all have- - agree on a lot of things, yet we go a different path. And that, I think is okay. As I was telling the young people as they came to our center that we all go to the mall, but we don't travel the same road. We each take a different road and we get there ultimately. We all go to the mall, but we take from Glenview, from Northbrook, from Wilmette, from Evanston, maybe [indiscernible]. So we all do the same thing. And I think this is so important in this day and age, that I think we should cherish our differences just the way we cherish our hand. Five fingers are not the same. Imagine if they were exactly alike, we couldn't do anything. And this is really a best example of what is given to us to



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suggest that the five fingers are different. Diversity of your life is right in your hand. It's a good lesson.

SANDOR GOODHART: [indiscernible] [Laughter]

SUZANNE ROSS: Yes, and I want to thank our speakers for leading us in a wonderful conversation this evening, and all of you for participating. And just a few announcements. Tomorrow morning at 9:30, we begin again with Dr. Koushanpour leading us in a response to the comments of Tariq Ramadan, who is a very well-known Islamic scholar who spoke via videoconference to the Trinity event because our State Department has pulled his visa. He used to be, I think it was- - around 2003, I think, they denied him his visa, and so he can no longer come into the country. But we are able to see him and have Esmail respond to him on the topic of desire in Islam and in the whole scheme of mimetic theory. And then in the afternoon, we will be looking at scapegoating with Sandy and Susannah Heschel. So even if you didn't sign up for tomorrow, you can come. We'll be ready for you. And on your way out tonight, Maura has a basket for you to put your nametags in, so we'll have them for you. You don't have to worry about keeping track of them. And, really, thank you once again. It was a wonderful evening.

[Applause]

