

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

Origins of Sacred Violence 2008 Session 3: Scapegoating

INTRODUCTION: Session 3, the topic is scapegoating. Our speaker from the Trinity Wall Street Conference is Susannah Heschel, who holds the Eli Black Chair on Jewish Studies at Dartmouth and is the author of *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, which won a National Jewish Book Award. Our live responder will be Dr. Sandor Goodhart, Department of English, Purdue University.

SUZANNE ROSS: We are going to begin our third and final session with Sandy Goodhart leading us in a response to Susannah Heschel, and our framework for this session is scapegoating. So I'm going to - - we'll follow the same format, ask Sandy to introduce Susannah Heschel and her talk, and then we'll watch the video, and then Sandy will make a presentation. We'll take a little break, and then have our Q&A.

SANDOR GOODHART: Sounds good.

SUZANNE ROSS: Okay.

SANDOR GOODHART: Thanks, Suzanne Ross, and my extreme gratitude to Suzanne Ross and Keith Ross for inviting me here and convening such a wonderful and enriching conference. I can't begin to tell you how many possibilities have been opened for me by these conversations we've been having and the promise of new friendships and the promise of repair, of de cure de land, of the repair of the world.

Well, Susannah Heschel is an extraordinary figure because - - primarily because of her father, Joshua Heschel. This is the daughter and who - - the rather rebellious daughter, I should tell you, when she was younger, of Joshua Heschel. And while her father was himself a kind of scapegoat, excluded figure from the Jewish Theological Center, even though he was trying to style himself, in part, as a reader of the prophets and a reader of, in particular, the prophetic



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tradition as defined by Martin Buber, and for that, he was kind of excised from the faculty - - not fully, was not really excommunicated; he taught there. But, you know, people would say, “Oh, well, it’s Heschel.” He was kind of isolated there.

And then Susannah comes along and she publishes a big book, which I remember in my early days in college in the ‘60s, those - - towards Jewish feminism. In those days, you just didn’t talk about feminism within the context of someone who comes out of the rabbinic orthodox tradition. And yet, there she is with this book and was brilliant, and she summoned some of the most powerful thinkers together.

She has, of course, made her career quite distinguishably since then. She has published a major book on Abraham Geiger. And Geiger was one of these figures in the 19th century who was responding to - - it’s a funny question today, just an odd question, and the question is what was the faith of Jesus? You know, we go with faith - - Christianity - - what was the faith of Jesus, you know? And Geiger proposed the strange idea that it was Judaism. They might want to consider Judaism as an option to understand. And so she presented his work, and that was extremely important. So that’s the kind of work, because she opens us to new ways of thinking about things.

Now, when I read through - - first I read an article by her, and there was an interview with her in Trinity News, and then I saw the video. I think what’s interesting to me is how she talks about social violence. She gives much less play to Rene Girard’s thought than we’ve already seen from James Carroll, and that’s interesting. I’m even wondering if, in fact, she got it from Carroll. She said that he’s an old friend - -

FEMALE SPEAKER: Right.



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SANDOR GOODHART: - - and so he said, “You’ve got to read Rene Girard’s book.” So she reads him. And she puts - - what she does is pose it more in the form of a question, really, than any kind of thesis. But I have some remarks that I want to offer you about that. So what I’m going to do now is turn to the video, but I want to ask you to do something. I always find that when I present videos in classes, it’s often helpful if you look for something, if you have something you wonder. Look for - - and then we’ll talk about it - - the first thing, I ask you, a definition of violence. She’ll talk about violence a lot. Look for and see if you can figure out her definition of violence or a definition of violence. So with that [indiscernible – overlapping speakers] - -

FEMALE SPEAKER: Great.

[Video plays]

SUSANNAH HESCHEL: ...That’s our purpose. And so we come back to violence. How do we understand the relationship between religion and violence? Are acts of violence committed in the name of religion then caused by the religion? Or is religion used and abused to justify the violence that stems from other motivations?

We worry about biblical texts because religious people take language seriously. Words are the tool of God’s creation and communication with us. We worry about how violence is discursively constructed as a result of the conceptual expansion that the notion of violence has undergone in contemporary theory. What do we do about linguistic violence or about visual violence? There are some people who argue that watching violent films actually provide an outlet that prevents violent acts. There are writers, such as Elfriede Jelinek, who won the Nobel Prize a few years ago, who mobilizes a language of violence against violence. It’s complicated.



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Do biblical passages such as Judges 19 or Genesis 34 or the book of Revelation inspire violence, or do they distract us from turning the violent impulse into action? We've had arguments like this in the past. So, for example, is animal sacrifice the scapegoat, a mimetic outlet and a substitute, as Rene Girard argues, for the shared hatred and violence that marks the human species? Do we form community by jointly sacrificing the scapegoat? Is violence a means to create community, or is violence the inevitable outcome of social pressures? Think about gang rape. Think about the ein [ph] gatz [ph] buchen [ph]. Are we, as individuals, innately violent as the Nazi Konrad Lorenz gleefully argued, so that the SS is not the elite simply of the Third Reich, but of all humanity?

Concluding that the Bible is a force of evil in our world is a kind of scriptural determinism that fails to explain, for example, why the vast majority of readers of the Bible do not become violent. Some theorists argue that violence does not originate in religion; it's prior. It arises in internal, intrapsychic dilemmas, paranoia, resentment, shame, a sense of impurity, a desire for the eschaton, perhaps stimulated by societal pressures, economic discrimination, political marginalization, and simply uses religion as an excuse to enact rage in the name of God rather than in the name of the proletariat.

If, as Freud claimed, there is a restitutive character to paranoia, violence is experienced by paranoid people, Charles Strozier writes, as healing and redemptive. Yet our explanations of violence are not created ex nihilo. How do we think about violence? How do we tell the story of violence?

Our explanations are themselves artifacts of our culture, so the British psychoanalyst, Peter Fonagy, who has treated convicted criminals, tells us that his patients feel alive at the moment of murder. It is an act that restores their inner sense of equilibrium and allows them to



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turn away, through the murder, from the humiliations, miseries they have experienced emotionally. And that happens because they transfer their hated self to the victim and then murder that hated self. What Fonagy calls their “inner gestalt,” what I might call their soul, is then experienced as peaceful and tranquil because it is now silenced quiet, the inner violence of the soul transferred to the flesh of the victim.

And yet, it seems to me, that Fonagy’s narrative in some sense is also Christological. Sins are transferred to the body. There is an atoning death, and reconciliation is achieved. Has he understood the nature of violence, or has he translated it into the language of Christian theology? We could ask. Can a soul be transferred to the flesh of another?

Perhaps then, there are not only scriptural issues to consider but theological ones as well. It is common these days, and I hear it all the time, to blame chauvinists, monotheism, Holy Land - - that’s what they’re referring to - - apocalypticism, and a host of other religious categories for violence. I also wonder if there might be additional ideational considerations.

Judaism is a religion in which God is hidden, visually unknown, whose name cannot even be pronounced. God is veiled, seeing but not seen. The incarnation of God in Christ, by contrast, makes God not only visible but knowable in the most concrete and intimate fashion possible, in the human body. The body is the most attached to the soul, it seems to me, when it screams in pain. So violence is thus a means to destroy the body and, in the process, unveil and ultimately destroy the soul.

What’s the link to theology? Revelation is to reveal, to unveil - - a term we don’t use in Judaism. Instead, we speak of Torah from heaven as refracted, mirrored, but not seen directly. My father writes, “In the light of faith, we do not seek to unveil or to explain, but to perceive and to absorb the rarities of mystery. What is most dear and real is neither known nor knowable.”



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Now, I have to make a confession. My own inclination as a Jew is a bit defensive. When I have these kinds of discussions, I want to defend the Old Testament and say, “No, the text in Joshua and Judges have not and do not make me a violent person and shouldn’t be held responsible. I want to protect my Bible.” And yet I have to remind myself, I’m the one, among others, who has also argued that the anti-Jewish texts of John 8, Matthew 23, the passion narratives, the sermons of John Chrysostom, among so many others, bear responsibility for Christian persecution of Jews. Am I not caught in a contradiction in trying to rescue the Old Testament and indict the New Testament?

It’s good for me to have interfaith discussion. Perhaps I have to conclude that textual causation is too simplistic, vague, and somehow superficial as an understanding of the human mind, emotions, faith, and religious tradition. Religious traditions are far more complex than such arguments recognize. No text is pure, as we know. Each is read through the grammatical lens of a faith tradition.

Eric Sanger writes about the psalms of vengeance as expressing our anger at injustice, our desire to see our enemies punished, our longing for justice and redemption. But the overriding understanding of vengeance in Judaism is that vengeance belongs to God, not to us, and our conviction that God will redeem our world with justice.

But there’s more to this. Texts of scripture are not simply words, they are gifts from heaven. “Remove the Torah from heaven and all you have is a sky,” my father wrote. “Remove heaven from Torah and all you have is another book.” And so we ask, are we experiencing Torah or are we reading a book?

If heaven remains, we read the Bible not for our insights into God, but for God’s insights into us. How do we look from God’s point of view? Do we seek to justify faith in God when



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one brother kills another? Or do we try to understand how God can keep faith in us after all the horrors we human beings have committed? How can we begin to understand God's faithfulness in light of the horrors we commit?

How does God look at us? There is a rather obscure Hasidic text from the Optorav [ph], a Hasidic rabbi from Ukraine from the early 19th century, in which he says, you know, we describe God in human terms. We speak of the arm of God, the finger of God, anthropomorphisms, we know that. But then he asks how does God understand us? How could we as human beings be imaged in divine terms? It's an extraordinary thought. It's hard to imagine. But you think what would be the reverse of anthropomorphism?

I want to turn to the question of fundamentalism and then some specific Jewish traditions. It seems to me we're a little overexcited these days to speak about fundamentalism. We talk about it as a kind of generic, intense religiosity that is irrational, passionate, fanatical, sexist, dangerous, threatening. It's a phenomenon sui generis divorced in our discussions very often from the particularity of each religious community and tradition. A kind of generic religion fundamentalism - - generic religion carried to an extreme, and extremism is somehow revelatory of what religion ultimately is all about. Look at the fundamentalists; then you know.

Our discourse of fundamentalism strikes me as retaining a persistent explanatory paradigm from the past, when the study of religion, we're beginning to recognize now, was intimately linked to European colonialism conquest. So in the 19th century - - Theda Chisler [ph] has written about this in a book - - European scholars of religion traveled to Africa as part of the colonialist adventure, and there, they identified what they called savagery. What did they mean? An absence of religion. Without religion, there could be no morality, no social institution such as marriage, no legal order. And people would be lazy, irrational, incapable of



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copied with modernity. The primitive was defined, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl argued, the primitive is characterized by an absence of rational thought.

Now, it seems to me that today, we have replaced savagery with fundamentalism, particularly the Muslim variety, to produce a narrative that's very similar, similar pathology. Too many books have been written all over the world describing Islam's alleged inability to cope with modernity. What does that mean? To integrate itself with the white, European-American, Protestant-dominated society in all of its glory. We haven't changed so much. Don't you think it's very similar, savagery in the 19th century, fundamentalism in this century? Really striking.

Fundamentalism is said to be the cause of violence, so it's characterized by intolerance, we're told, absence of reason, uncontrolled passion, rejection of secularism. And what does this do? This creates fundamentalism's twin religious opposite of rationality, tolerance, liberalism, and psychological health. Such constructs allow us to imagine that we are the morally superior beings, taking religion in smaller doses, for the sophisticated, liberal theology, one that is rational and controls our passions, allowing us to build societies that are ethical, legal systems in which justice is blind, social structures without racial or gender bias, and so forth.

The myth of liberal religion is one of the most self-righteous, self-serving fantasies we have concocted. And after all, who enables the fundamentalists, so-called, to come to power, and what is it about liberal religion that fails to draw the enthusiasm and passion that people bring to these so-called fundamentalist communities?

At least since the days of the great scholar of early Christianity, Walter Bauer, we have had to concede that theologians receive the heretical opponents that they deserve. [Audience laughter]



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But I have to say, it's not a very happy commentary for our contemporary situation. Nowadays, we don't have the calm skeptic or rationalist or materialist like Lucretius [ph] or David Hume. But instead, what do we have? The fulminations of Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and Sam Harris, who would tap all religions without distinctions. Should we learn something from their example about how we, too, may be failing to make distinctions, condemning too quickly, and substituting polemic for prophetic dissent?

While we tend to speak of similarities and family resemblances of fundamentalists through different religions, we have to focus on the resemblances between fundamentalists and liberals within a religion, and the production of fundamentalism as the *via negativa* of liberalism.

[End video]

SANDOR GOODHART: I'll give you a little chart here so you can kind of follow [indiscernible – overlapping indiscernible comment from audience].

So you've seen - - we've done the excerpt, and now - - so my first question to you is, what is violence? What is violence for her? Any ideas? Anyone? She never - -

FEMALE SPEAKER: Says.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - talks about what it is.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah.

SANDOR GOODHART: She just assumes it's kind of an essence. Is that true?

FEMALE SPEAKER: No.

SANDOR GOODHART: That violence is an essence we can all identify? I mean, if I go like this [small knock], is that violent? If I go like this [louder knock], is that violent? If I go like [still louder knock], is that violent? At what point does it become violent? Where is violence?



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FEMALE SPEAKER: It's in the eye of the beholder?

SANDOR GOODHART: The beholder, okay. There's a brilliant book by someone you may know, Andrew McKenna. [Audience laughter] It's called *Difference and Violence*, and he seems to me have to cornered the field - - cornered market on the second brilliant insight that a Girardian has to make, after one understands that the - - Rene's insight that the sacred and violence are one and the same. The sacred is violence that we've effectively kept outside the community, and that violence is the sacred that has entered the community from outside and is running amok. And what Andrew makes clear in his book - - and I really recommend it to all of you - - is that violence is not distinguishable from difference itself. It is simply difference run amok. That violence is simply the name for what happens when difference is no longer efficacious, when it's no longer working, when it's the good gone wrong. And difference, by the same token, is simply violence working well. There is no difference between difference and violence. Violence is difference, and difference is violence. And this is the complementary insight to Rene's founding insight, which is - - Rene Girard's founding insight - - which is that the sacred and violence are one and the same. You know, all cultures, Rene's starts with the famous anthropologist's book, *The Sacred and the Profane*, whose name escapes me now.

MALE SPEAKER: Eliade.

SANDOR GOODHART: Eliade. Eliade - - Mircea Eliade, whose own history turns out to be somewhat spotty - - it used to be violence - - but he writes this book *The Sacred and the Profane*, and he says all cultures have the sacred and profane. Rene comes along and says, well, what is the sacred? The sacred is violence that we've kept under control outside, and violence that which has escaped from the sacred and has entered the city. But where - - you know, so we



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have violence in the city; how do we understand it vis-à-vis our everyday life? Well, it's simply difference. It's simply difference. It's simply difference. And that's the extraordinary insight.

And it seems to me that James Carroll was kind of there. She doesn't know quite what to do with this insight yet. She's thinking - - I want to bring this now to scapegoating. She's thinking of scapegoating as projection rather than a social explosion. What Freud and lots of other object psychologists and others as well called projection - - Von Franz, for example, has made a whole career on the notion of projection.

I want to turn now to give you just a sense of what Girard is doing and how the notion of scapegoating plugs in and how violence plugs into Girard's schema. And then afterwards when this is done, just a little bit, then we'll come - - I'm going to focus on the notion of substitution, and then I'm going to give you an example of substitution in Genesis. The other - - the other - - now we can go back to the previous screen.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah.

SANDOR GOODHART: The other point that I want to make about Susannah Heschel is that in mentioning scapegoating, she is not making the distinction between the modern world and the archaic world. And she's linking in the same breath the archaic way in which one can identify a Saunders [ph] within and out and through their exclusion reestablish peace the way we've been talking about it. She does line that with the ein gatz buchen, the Nazi situation which is clearly in the context of Jewishness and Christianity. And one has to make, it seems to me, in Girardian thinking a fundamental distinction between the world that is benefitting from the revealed religions - - and here I include not just Judaism and Christianity and Islam, but also Hinduism and Buddhism. These are the five revealed religions, which seem to me are all critiques, discourses about sacrifice. I know Rene has recently talked about how endlessly



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Hinduism talks about sacrifice, how it's at the very heart of the Bhagavad Gita - - [indiscernible] very well, but the texts are about nothing but sacrifice. He says it even better than any of our own texts. So that - - I'll come back to the distinction between the archaic world and the modern world.

But let's take a little tour through Rene's work. When I do this at COV&R, I always call it the - - you know, the three ideas of Rene. You know, one is considered great if one has one idea. Rene has three ideas. The three ideas, in sum, are imitative desire, sacrificial substitution, and the scriptural dismantling of the sacrificial system so that we have to pose the problem of sacrifice.

Rene began his career as an historian and quickly found that he had things to say about literature that no one had said before, primarily that we take our desires not from inside or from outside but from other individuals. We borrow our desires - - that all desires are borrowed and our behavior is among many behaviors. So he's defining the very passage, to be a subject - - what we call in philosophy as subjectivity - - as an imitative or meta-phenomenon, from the word nemesis. And what he argues is that our great novels, Cervantes and Flaubert and Dostoevsky and Proust and who did I leave out? - -

FEMALE SPEAKER: Stendhal.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - and Stendhal are all about mimetic desire, right? And that when they're - - he has this great chapter at the end, which actually Jim Williams has made clear it came - - at a certain crisis moment in his own life that he wrote this chapter on a - - when a train from Baltimore - - between Baltimore and Philadelphia, when he was teaching, he had this - - he was thinking about deathbed situations, and he said that on deathbed conversions are all similar. All, in these books, are about mimetic desire. And so he erased the concluding chapter



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of *Imitative Desire* - - the book that became in French, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, which was translated in a somewhat odd way as *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* - - it's not literal. It should be *Romantic Lie and Novelistic Truth*, but it's translated differently. Anyway, what he argues in that book is that all these great novelists discover this imitative nature of desire.

All right. We're skipping at a breakneck pace here, and we have other contexts. We could spend a whole several weeks on this.

He then asks the question, well, okay, if this is true and, you know, if I desire one and if the other person is desiring through me and we extol mediation and it leads us inevitably to rivalry. In the modern world, it has to led to rivalry because I - - you know, my father says to me, "Do what I do. Desire what I desire." So as a good, dutiful son, I see that he desires my mother, his wife, and I desire what he desires and I do what he says, and then he charges me with an Oedipus complex. He says, you know, "I'm going to take this boy to a psychiatrist." You know, "This kid is actually obeying me. I can't deal with that," you know. Because then it becomes - - because it's a potential for rivalry, you see? So all mimetic desire leads inevitably to rivalry, and Girard says, well, he asks, how did we fall into this? That's the big question which provides a transition to the second big idea for Girard.

The second big idea is that all culture - - and this, I think, is really what I would call his primary anthropological thesis. All culture in the world, bar none, is organized around sacrificial exclusion. All culture in the world, bar none, is organized around sacrificial exclusion and the mechanism of the scapegoat. And what that means for Rene Girard is that all cultures, whether they explicitly do it or not - - and *Violence and The Sacred* is simply a book that goes through this culture and this culture and this culture and this culture, saying well, it doesn't look like it's



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working here, but see how it is. And it doesn't look like it's working here, but see how it is. And so forth and so on. All cultures are organized around the sacrifice, the exclusion of an arbitrarily chosen victim.

So, for example, in the story, "Dry September" by William Faulkner, some people are standing around on a hot day in the summer and there's a - - someone has found a white woman who has been raped, and they're trying to wonder who could have done it. And, you know, you've got the sense just from the information you're getting that any one of them could have done it. But there's one person who's not there, the older black man in their community. And so it's, "Well, maybe he chose not to come today because he knew this would be our discussion." And. "I've always noticed him looking oddly at me," and "We're going to have to deal with this. I think we should go up there and really teach him a lesson. I think we should string him" - - at the end of the story, they go out and they lynch him. They kill him, and we don't know whether he's done it or not. It's absolutely [indiscernible - overlapping cough]. Simply the fact that he's not there provides the galvanizing moment, the paroxysmal moment at which all the energy of the community against each other can focus on, as Andrew showed us in this chart, on this one gesture which does the miraculous thing, which is it brings peace.

So the first distinction is peace now, violence just a moment ago. That's the origin of all cultural order in the exclusion - - in the communities that precede our own. This is Girard's thesis. And it seems to me that, you know, when I met Girard in 1969, he was saying, you know, let the anthropologists show me that it works in some other way, and none of them came forward to do that. I mean, the reigning moment at that point was structuralism. And so you had Claude Levi-Strauss coming along and saying, well, it's all about differences. We can't really be bothered by origins of things. We have to - - you know, where we are, we already have language



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and we'll die out, and language will go on beyond us. And we can only think within - - you know, and Rene said we have to ask about the real function of language and violence and difference in culture at the human level. And so he was the only one proposing this. And, of course, the anthropologists wouldn't engage in it and basically regarded him with a smile. Which is kind of funny to me now that both he and Levi-Strauss meet each other where? In a French academy, where they both sit there, Levi-Strauss apparently almost completely blind, but meeting on a kind of weekly basis whenever Rene's in France and he's at the academy.

So then he has this idea that all culture is organized in this way, and how do we get to this point? Well, we get to this point through difference. Difference is - - what is difference? Difference is simply boundary creations, simply separation. What we mean by difference is simply separation. The word difference comes from *differre*, which means in Latin to carry away from the sacrificial altar. So the word difference means *differre* from *ferre*, which means to carry it or to, you know, portability - - port away, to carry away. And so it's keeping things separate.

And normally, you know, I'm Oedipus and you're Tiresias, and everything is just hunky dory and, you know, we're doing fine. But then, you know, I ask you to tell me why - - you know, what you know, and you say I shouldn't have come. And I'm saying, well, you're telling me that - - you're resisting me. I'll bet you're resisting me because you really did it. And said, well, you're saying that because you really did it and you don't know it. And, you know, a moment later they're at each others' throats. So what begins as difference ends as violence.

Violence is simply difference asserted in the extreme, in a context in which it's no longer efficacious. It's hard to get that idea, that violence is simply difference asserted in the extreme in



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a context in which it no longer works. It's what I like to call "the good gone wrong." It just seems to violate categorization. "The gone wrong." I don't talk about "the gone wrong."

FEMALE SPEAKER: Mm-hmm.

SANDOR GOODHART: Okay. So that's where we have this scapegoating. The "gone wrong" continues and it accelerates, and so we approach this war of all against all, as Andrew pointed out, this [indiscernible] war against all. All of a sudden, the slightest difference - - absence, hairstyle, hair length, skin color, hue - - you know, the most arbitrary differences under other circumstances come to be absolute differences. He's taller than we are; he must be from elsewhere. Let's get him! And the crowd takes over, and this mob - - what we call mob violence takes possession.

So we no longer are in possession of things, we are possessed by. We move from possessing to being possessed by. And, in fact, being possessed by we regard in a whole different category than possessing. Possessing is capitalism and is the economy in which we normally function. Possession, being possessed by, demonic possession, is a different world, yet they're really in the same world within this model.

So we get carried away, and we get into mob violence, and then once we create this scapegoating, we no longer know where we are the following morning, and we begin piecing it together. So we're going to now reproduce every year at this time a little bit of the crisis to re-inaugurate, to kind of prime the pumps, for a redo up to a certain point. You know, because before we just lost all control, so we can't really lose all control, but we can kind of encourage - - we can do - - the victim this year, he had some family, he had some livestock. So next year, we can't sacrifice the victim but we'll sacrifice his livestock. Or we'll cultivate some cakes that remind us, because he used to make cakes like that, and we'll eat those cakes. You know what I



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mean? So there's ways in which we continue to commemorate the moment of violence, and that moment of violence has now become sacred, because it becomes sequestered outside, and that sacred enables us to go on.

Okay. What happens when, for whatever reason, contact of various communities organized sacrificially begin to relate to each other, and mutually antagonistic systems find that they're forced to live together. In some sense, Girard says that's - - the modern world is a consequence of all of these cultures that have sacrificial systems that are each involved in their own way - - very, very different - - being forced to live together.

And so the question of the anti-sacrificial suddenly comes up. Can we live without sacrifice? And for Girard, that question begins within the tradition that we know, those of us who are Jewish or Christian or Islamic, begins within Judaism, and then turns to Christianity. And for Girard, he - - that completes the process. You know, I've endlessly argued that the process is already fully articulated in Judaism, but for Girard, he was raised in a Christian context and for him, it's completed in Christianity. And I would venture to guess - - I don't want to anticipate what this note's going to say, but I would venture to guess it's already fully there only in Islam, and maybe that's how our game can go on, if, in fact, it's only reached in Islam, but it's the same game. We're all playing the same game, he's saying. Because Judaism had already said the primitives came close to it, but we really get it, and the Christians said well, Jews didn't really quite get it, but we get it. And maybe the Islamic people would say, well, Christians didn't, Jews didn't quite it. They got close, but we got it. So he's saying we're all in the same endeavor, trying to find a way to live without sacrifice. This is how Rene would understand what we're about.



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Okay. So that's - - now we can move to the next screen. So what is the function? How does this work? The scapegoat, therefore, is a substitute. At the heart of the scapegoating system is the logic of substitution. The war of all against all suddenly converts into the war of all against one, since in a context of universal enemy twins, any one enemy twin is identical to every enemy twin. So every enemy twin that each dreams of sacrificing can be absolutely identical, for all intents and purposes, with anyone. Since I hate everybody equally and anyone and everyone, we could all gather together around this one. There's no difference there. And each killing the same one gets rid of the problem. So miraculously, the problem ends at that point through the logic of substitution.

Now, it's interesting to me that the passion is about substitution, but it's a substitution, Rene says, to end all substitutions, the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. So what we have to think about is the possibility that Judaism and that Christianity and that perhaps Islam are founded on the substitution to end all substitutions. You know, Girard would see it in the passion. I, as an individual who was born into a Jewish context, would see it in the notion of responsibility. And to talk about the context of Islam for where substitution is, I mean, it would be interesting for me to know, to try to understand where substitution is in the Islamic tradition.

And I want to try to give you an example of this because I don't want to go on too long, I can get into so many things that have come up, but I want to move on now to Genesis 22 to try to show you how this text is a text about substitution in the Jewish context. And maybe we can turn now to - - I want to move this - - is it okay if I move, or am I moving out of camera if I do - - okay.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Oh, you - -



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SANDOR GOODHART: All right. So this is from the JPS, Jewish Publication Society, Tanakh. Tanakh is just the anagram for Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim, the three bodies of writing that make up the Hebrew Bible.

“It came to pass after these things” - - after what things? Whatever they are, “after these things, that God did prove,” - - [indiscernible: Hebrew word] - - this is a test. God did show as a test Abraham. “And said unto him, Abraham: and he said, [indiscernible: Hebrew word], here I am.” “And he said [indiscernible: reading Hebrew], take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest,” - - this is Isaac - - “and [indiscernible: Hebrew], get thee into the land of Moriah; and [indiscernible: Hebrew] offer him up there for an offering up.” The words in Hebrew are, the noun and the verb are the same, and it’s interesting; the word is “alah”. Alah, it means to offer up, to offer up. Alah means to offer up.

“[indiscernible: Hebrew] Offer him up as an offering. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him.” In a Hebrew Midrashic tradition, one of them is a schnell [ph]. So maybe that’s - - you see we’re going to have some discussion about that, I’m hoping. “And he cleaved the wood for the burnt - - and Isaac his son, and cleaved the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide here with the donkey; and I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship” - - which lad? I mean, I think at this point again we’d have some discussions to have about this quote. But “I and the lad will go yonder.” How old is Isaac, by the way, in Hebrew tradition? Do you know? How old is Isaac? He’s 37 years old.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Oh, my God!



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SANDOR GOODHART: He's 37 years old. Now how did we arrive at that? Well, his mother dies right after this, and she dies, Torah tells us, at the age of 127. How old is she when he's born?

FEMALE SPEAKER: I don't know.

SANDOR GOODHART: Do the math. Isaac is 37 years old, still being led by his dad, called a lad. Do you see anything wrong with that? [Audience laughter] Is there a problem for a 37-year-old man in this day and age, of this moment, to be led as a lad? You see the nature of the difficulty, of why the rabbis - - numbers are always Midrash again in rabbinic thinking. This is what I call number Midrash. Thirty-seven means that this is too old to be led this way. There's something wrong about this text. Okay.

“On the third day...Abraham said...abide here.” Okay. “Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac, his son.” Did we forget that this is his son? Why does it say, “Isaac, his son”? Okay. “And he took in his hand the fire and the knife, and they both of them went together. And Isaac said” - - now why did he have this little exchange? He could just go right to the mountain. We have this little exchange. “Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said, father” - - well, again, an odd thing. When he spoke, he just could have jumped to, “Here I” - - you know, “behold the fire.” But it says he spoke and he said, “Father, my father: and he said,” - - and Abraham answered him as he answers God, “Here I am,” as Abraham answers God, “Here I am,” characteristically.

You know, when Ha-Adam was approached by God and God said, “Where are you?” He said - - Ha-Adam said, “The woman did it.” [Audience laughter] So he blames somebody; he scapegoats here, right? And when Noah - - does anyone know what Noah says when God says, “I'm going to flood the earth and I want you to build this ark and so forth.” What did Noah say?



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FEMALE SPEAKER: Huh?

SANDOR GOODHART: Nothing. Cosby made this great career on this, you understand, by saying, you know, “What’s a cubit?” [Audience laughter] “You want me to do what?” The fact is that Noah walks with God but doesn’t say anything. Right? Noah is characterized in the Torah as the best in his generation. It doesn’t mean he’s the best. [Audience laughter] He would be just the best in his generation.

Abraham is the first who says, “Here I am.” God says, “Where are you?” And Isaac says, “Abraham.” Abraham says, “Here I am.” So Buber says we’ve made some progress from scapegoating, to doing God’s work without responding, to saying, “I am answerable. You got me. I’m answerable. Do what you need to do with me. I’m showing up.” Right?

“Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood” - - where’s the beef? [Audience laughter] As they used to say in the Wendy’s commercial, where’s the beef?

FEMALE SPEAKER: The lamb.

SANDOR GOODHART: Now, look at the answer that Abraham gives. He said, “God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” Mind you, there’s no comma in Hebrew, so some rabbis have said “God will provide a lamb for the burnt offering, namely, my son.” Or that it’s readable in there, if we subtract the comma, because, in fact, in Hebrew there is no comma, or “God will see to it that what is need he will provide me.” This comes from the word “video” [ph], “provideo” [ph]. The sons sees, here’s this; here’s this; this is not there. The son sees presences and absences. The father sees to a depth. It’s enriched seeing. To be a father is to not only see, but to see to a death. It’s what it means to be a father.



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So the son says, “I have cancer,” you know, the father knows he has cancer, and he says, “Am I going to die?” And it’s kind of that kind of question. And what does the father say? He says, “God will do what God needs to do.”

In saying, “God will provide,” Abraham provides. Did you get that? Saying, “God will provide,” Abraham provides at this moment. How do we know that? Because we have this line, that Abraham - - “So they went off both of them together,” and that line echoes the line by which they got there. It says, “They went off both of them together,” in the sixth, or again the sixth, and they went off both - - in Hebrew, it’s identical. Little bookends - - what we call Jewish bookends in the text, when identical words are used and it’s a setting off of the passage so that you can read it with some more care. Okay.

“They came to the place that God had told them of, and Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order, and bound” - - this is called the *acheda*, the binding. He bound Isaac; he doesn’t sacrifice him. It’s not the sacrifice of Isaac, it’s the *acheda*, which the word means binding. “...bound Isaac his son, laid him on the altar upon the wood, and Abraham stretched forth his hand” - - I mean, look at the detail. Not just he slayed or tried, but he stretched forth his hand, so you actually see it. Bound the son - - you can actually picture the scene - - stretched forth “and then took the knife to *slehut* , to slay his son.” Now notice the word slay there, *slehut*. And the Angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven, this time two times, “Abraham, Abraham.” Why two times? Maybe one was to get his attention. You know, it would be a bad moment for him not to hear. So he says it twice so he can get it, “Abraham, Abraham.” And he said, as he characteristically says to God, “Here I am.” And he said, “Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do anything unto him, for at the present moment, I already know you are God fearing, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from me.”



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Now, we've been told - - Abraham has been told earlier in Torah that he's going to get the covenant. Where's the covenant in that transmission? It's just the angel speaking to Abraham. Where's the covenant? Does he get the covenant for bringing him up to sacrifice him? It's not there. I propose that he does not get the covenant for bringing him up to sacrifice him. That Abraham, in bringing his son up to sacrifice him, is wrong. That the angel is saying, "Don't touch him! Don't do anything! I already know you're God fearing." How did he know he was God fearing? Because just a chapter or so before, he circumcised Ishmael and himself. He already knows he's God fearing. He didn't need to do this. So we're going to have to talk about this, the oddness of the fact that there's no covenantal reference there. So how do we get the covenant out of this text where it's not there in the angelic transmission?

And Abraham - - all right - - so God fearing. Seeing that - - [indiscernible]. "And Abraham lifted" - - now here's the key moment, line 13. "Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked" - - was he not looking? Were his eyes down [indiscernible - overlapping laugh]. It says, "lifted up his eyes," when the Torah says, "lifted up his eyes," where, why? And not only lifted up his eyes, but he also - - Torah makes us sure we know that he looked, "and behold" - - henay - - "behold behind him, a ram caught in the thicket by his horns..." Now does God command Abraham to do anything to that ram? No. Yet, what does he do? "Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son." Substitution, uncommanded by God. It is not commanded by God.

Now, the rabbinic tradition at this moment has a very interesting response. Rashi, our foremost interpreter in the Middle Ages, says you notice the word slay in line 10, took the knife to slay? Well, God never said slay. He said, "Bring him up as an offering up." So Rashi finds a way linguistically, semantically of saying, what? Abraham is wrong. Insofar as he's ready to



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sacrifice his son, he's wrong. He's right only when he does not follow commandments. This is getting odder and odder, right? And when he follows a substitution logic in place of the son, "And Abraham took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And called the name of the place Adonai-Jireh" - - "Adonai," being Lord and "jireh," will see - - Lord will see. And then, "...as it is said today, in the mount where the Lord is seen." Which is interesting because this is will - - Adonai-Jireh means "will see" and "where the Lord is seen." So we have active, future active, and passive.

But why doesn't he call the name of the place Moriah? You know, when Jakob - - when Jacob meets Esav, he names the place Pineal [ph], because that's where they met at Pineal. Pineal means "face of God, as I met him, as I saw it in the face of God." But in fact, Abraham calls the name of the place Adonai-Jireh. Why does he call it Adonai-Jireh? Because on the way to - - just go back just to the previous screen for a second here - - on the way to Moriah, they had this little conversation when Abraham said to Isaac, "God will provide himself," Adonai-Jirehlo [ph]. The naming of the place refers to the moment that Abraham said to Isaac, "God will provide." It does not name the moment of the sacrifice. What I would suggest to you is that what the text is about is substitution - - literally, substitution of the human conversation between father and son for the moment of sacrificial behavior.

Now how could - - I'm going to jump ahead. How could this make sense to us? I was at the university and, again, in the '60s, and we heard I think it was Helen - - Bette Davis or some actress like that who came, and she was in her 80s at that point. And she said, "You know, I spent the first 40 years of my life learning how to act, and I spent the second 40 years of my life learning how not to act."



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What if we read this text not literally - - even though it's given to us in as literal a manner as possible - - but prophetically? Not literally or metaphorically but prophetically?

Prophetically would say, as an if/then structure, or I'll give you another definition of the prophetic. Prophetic reading is the recognition of the dramas in which human beings are engaged - - long definition - - recognition of the dramas in which human beings are engaged, the naming in advance of the end of those dramas in order that we can choose to go there or not. I'll say it again. The prophetic is the recognition of the dramas in which human beings are engaged, the naming in advance of the end of those dramas in order that we can choose to go there or not. In other words, the prophetic is not fortune telling. The prophetic is an if/then structure. If you do these things, that will follow. Okay.

So this text may be about reading commandment prophetically. If I - - does God not know that Abraham knows commandment? God knows everything, right, so he knows that Abraham knows what to do. If Abraham continues only by doing commandment, sooner or later he'll end up as Jim Jones. Sooner or later, he will kill his son. And we all - - what he has to learn is when commanded, even by God, not to do it. He has to learn to read commandments in some instances as in quotation marks. "Take your son, your only son and whom you love, and sacrifice him." When do we read the quotation marks and when do we not read the quotation marks? That's what Torah is about. The movement from Abraham to Moses is about learning how to read. Learning how to read prophetically.

All right. So we come back to Rene Girard. So the Jewish tradition teaches us a reading about substitution, and then I would suggest to you that the passion, in Rene's own understanding, is a prophetic account. Jesus shows us where our violence is going. It recognizes the dramas in which human beings are engaged and that's where we're going so that we can give



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up those dramas if we want to. So I would say Rene's a prophetic reader. And that way of reading distinguishes that kind of substitution from the primitive logic of substitution. And I think I want to stop with that, and then turn the floor over to Suzanne. I'm sorry.

SUZANNE ROSS: It's okay. That's great. So let's - - let's take our break.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

SUZANNE ROSS: I think that's a good idea. To formulate your questions, we'll take a 10-minute break, and then we'll come back and let our panelists again start the Q&A for us, and then we'll open it up. Thank you, Sandy.

[After Break]

SUZANNE ROSS: So Andrew.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Okay. Two quick comments and then a question, a real question. I can't underline - - emphasize enough the power of Sandy's definition of prophecy. We think of prophecy as fortune telling, you know, magical mystery stuff. The prophet - - you know, God tells so-and-so what's going to happen, he tells us - - because God knows everything that will happen. No. I mean, I want it repeated that prophecy is naming in advance of an ending, given certain circumstances. It's a recapitulation of our dramas. You know, if you keep in this direction, if/then, etc.

It's like a structural analysis, you know, if/then. And that should open up our imagination to the prophet's power to explain all the world to us. You know, I do recall that - - you know, in the Jewish tradition, this idea that, you know, we know that God is [indiscernible], but what are we? The constant insistence that we have to reverse the telescope, if you will, and that our business is not to explain the prophets. Our business is to understand how do they explain us, and how the prophets, how Isaiah, Jeremiah are describing their own world. And



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Sandy gives us a definition of prophecy that makes a very, let's say, contemporary and relevant and powerful reading of scripture. And I daresay that also goes for the access to correct that Esmail gives us as well.

My second comment is just on reading Susannah Herschel's remarks that - - she does a wonderful job of posing questions, and I wrote down the questions. I'm going to have to think hard to get some answers. But I'm grateful to that way of - - that style of discourse of posing questions, one of which - - she goes through, she never gives a definition of violence, and is it this or is that, or at one point, is it intrapsychic. Now, that's the great danger. That is to say within the head. Violence is en masse. And one of the key senses of Girard's thinking - - Sandy says Girard has three ideas. I think he has one idea. [Audience laughter] One idea is mimesis. And there's good mimesis, which is specific, and there's bad mimesis, which is violence. But that in any case, violence is not in us. It's a relationship. It's a relationship and we have to deal with it relationally, relationally, relationally. And that's something that is brought home to me by all these failed efforts to find, you know, is it here? Is it in our genes? A lot of scientists are going to be - - it's very precious. Say, find the DNA, find the violence gene. That's a myth. That means you can locate it and maybe extricate it, you know. Well, it's not in the Middle East. It's not in the Koran after all, you know. It's in your DNA and we'll futz with that, you know. There's good and bad science.

And now my question, which is probably one that you are familiar with, but I'm reminded of it when I see you, once again, going over Genesis 22, which is most often spoken of by or at least read about by the non-scholars of scripture like myself, as the shift in Israel [ph] - - which, by the way, Israel doesn't exist yet. We're talking about the andromeda stage. But as the shift in Judaism, if you will, in a very sort of vague way of Judaic religion, from human to



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animal sacrifice. You see, so if you think about God - - God did not want human victims, and then he blows the whistle on that, and he accepts an animal as the victim. Now, it's important - - James Carroll, when they said on Rene Girard's made the point, if you're going to have a sacrificial victim, you're better off with an animal who represents a human than the human, you know. And we know about how - - well, you've got to get the right human, too. If he has too many relatives in the clan, that's a bad choice because they want to seek vengeance, and so you have orphans, you have widows, you have foreigners, outsiders, prisoners of war, things like that. That's my question. How do you - - how close or far from you are that idea that this is the story of the shift, the transfer from human sacrifice to animal substitution?

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah, and I don't have any problem with that. I think it is true, but I think, you know, as in the case of René's comments on Oedipus, it's not textually specific enough. So I'm trying to give it some body within the text and trying to show precisely at what moment in the text it's happening, trying to do a close reading of the text to show how the moment of substitution occurs not where we would expect it to occur, which is in a human sacrifice, but at a moment when he does not do commandment against everything we will later understand as to the commandment would have thought, and he learns to do the "instead of." So the key is not the - - it's not in any way incompatible with the historical, but it focuses in on the substitutive, and the substitutive as a replacement for the former substitutive. So the moment that the logic of substitution becomes explicit, it's the beginning of the anti-sacrificial.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Right.

SANDOR GOODHART: It's not complete yet. It sacrifices the animal. It's the beginning of animal sacrifice but it's the surfacing of the logic for the first time.



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ANDREW MCKENNA: All right. I don't need any more, but I'm beginning to understand better the richness of that reading. Because it's not about substitution, per se, it's about the logic.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yes, it's about the logic, exactly.

ANDREW MCKENNA: I do recall in that translation - - is that the Matthew Fox?

SANDOR GOODHART: No, that's not. I couldn't - - Matthew Fox is not on line, if you buy his book or [indiscernible] got to get it, but this is the standard 1917, the older Jewish text.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Because it reads quite clearly it doesn't say "instead of." It says, "in the stead of," which is the original formulation. When we say "instead" it's like we short-circuit it in some - - what we have short-circuited is the logic of substitution.

SANDOR GOODHART: That's interesting. That's great. That's exactly right.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Now I understand very much better the relationship of your reading to let's say - - you see, because the traditional readings are not wrong. It's still true that Christ died for our sins, as the Christians say, but not in[indiscernible].

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah, right.

ANDREW MCKENNA: It's still true that God created the world, but not in the Six-Day War.

SANDOR GOODHART: Thank you.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you. Esmail? Comments, questions?

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Well, I think the narrative in Islam is quite different from what we have seen. It's not the same as the narrative in either the Christian or Hebrew Bible.

MALE SPEAKER: Yeah.



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ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: And, for instance - - two comments. One, the prophet, his prophecy was - - whenever things were revealed to him, it was revealed to him in the presence of other people as a circumstance. Something was happening and then a revelation would come. Just to give you an example. And he was kind of seen by [indiscernible]. And he was not - - it wasn't anything - - I mean, he was not a literate man. He just - - an angel came and sometime - - he could see an angel; nobody else could see. And sometime he would appear in front of people but no one would recognize him, and he would tell them that person in that white outfit was Angel Gabriel.

And the example I was going to give, that he and his companions were going through a town. They arrived there at that night, and his wife, Aisha said, "We have to stop here." And the prophet said, "Why?" And she said, "I lost a necklace that my mother gave to me when we got married." And of course he saw that it was part of the plan of the day, so the prophet said fine. And the people kind of unloaded their - - whatever they had in either their horse or their camel. They realized that there is no water in the area, and they came to the prophet and they said, "There is no water. We cannot perform ablution and wudu." And at that time, there was a commotion going out there. And the father of Aisha was Abu Bakr and started chastising the others, saying, "Why are you making us to stop here when there's no water?" In the midst of that, then they realized that the prophet is receiving a - - he shows a certain sign that he was receiving a revelation, and the revelation came how to perform dry ablution with the sand, which is called tayammum. It's a very famous - - famous first, and they performed that. And then the next morning when they were ready to go, when the camel got up, the necklace was underneath the camel.

MALE SPEAKER: Oh.



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ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: This is the - - this is the way - -

FEMALE SPEAKER: [indiscernible]

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: This is by which it took place. Now in relation to the sacrifice, obviously there was an animal. And I think people very well have said it was the ram, but never for sacrifice after the fact. But - - and he, of course, would soon believe that it was Ishmael, the older son. And the story that is related in the Koran is that Abraham had a dream. In the dream, he was told that you are going to be sacrificing your son. And he approached Ishmael, and said - - he is referring that - - my first name is ESMAIL, but the spelling is Persian. It's not Arabic and it's not Turkish. And Arabic is spelled with "i" I-S-M-A-I-L, and some people spell it I-S-M-A-E-L. So I kind of - - and my spelling was not done by me. It was done by somebody in the passport office who was from the French - - he had a French education, so I'm not guilty of that. I'm just happy to be.

And so he told Ishmael that God has - - I had a dream that I have to sacrifice you, and they went out and says - - Ishmael says, "Whatever God wants, I will do," and he submitted to God. And so that was the [indiscernible].

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah. And that gets echoed - - I'm sorry, did - - that gets echoed in "they walked off with their hands together."

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes, and went to the site.

SANDOR GOODHART: And went to the site.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: And then when he was about to do that - -

SANDOR GOODHART: The rabbi's understanding that it's complete submission.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Absolutely.

SANDOR GOODHART: Complete submission.



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ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: No question. In fact, he put his head down - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: - - as a way to express - - prostrate.

SANDOR GOODHART: Right. Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: And he had the knife in his hand and he was about to do that, and here comes a - -

SANDOR GOODHART: In fact, it's such complete submission - - we were having the conversation at lunch - - that it creates tremendous problems for Isaac afterwards. He's still submitting to his father's knife, even when he's married and he has two kids.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: And he can't get his head off the sacrificial altar, in some way, and it becomes a problem for him later on. But you're right. The positive side of it is that it's complete submission as a result of this moment.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Exactly. Exactly. And for us - - and when I discuss this with my Jewish colleague - - and we talk about this sometimes casually, sometimes more seriously - - my comment has been that really I'm not so much concerned about if it is a history, this part. Because depending on what - - who we want to rely on, if we say we rely on the Koranic writing, this is [indiscernible] - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: - - fine; the other one in the past. So we kind of stop arguing at this point, but aside from that, for me it doesn't really make any difference which one. It was Abraham's son.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.



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ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: But the name issue is that - - what was the reason for doing that? It was a sign of submission of the father to do something that he talked about that he really believed.

SANDOR GOODHART: And it's in some sense it's because of this admission of the father to the son, to the voice of the son - -

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - that he names the place Adonai-Jireh - -

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - in the text. In other words, he doesn't name the place, you know, Hamoreah [ph]. He could have named it Hamoreah. He does not.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: No.

SANDOR GOODHART: He names is Adonai-Jireh.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: "Lord will see."

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: "The Lord will see."

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: This was a big act.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: I mean, just think of it, I mean, if you can. It's happening right there, and you're watching it.

SANDOR GOODHART: You're watching it, yeah.



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ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: It wasn't the easiest thing in the world to take his son in there - - his son to the place to, you know, if you want to put it in kind of a modern word, slaughtering.

SANDOR GOODHART: That's right.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: I mean, it is not - - I mean, for me, when I was a kid, they used to cut the throat of a sheep at the time of a - - after the Harash [ph], and as commemorating going to Harash, and we would take a piece of meat to eat it and show it's good - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: - - and then the rest would be sent to the poor. And my father would stand there, and he'd say to me, "Come, watch." And he would say, "It was Ishmael, the son of Abraham, that was supposed to be sacrificed." And I did not like to watch that animal being - - you know, somebody else - - my father was not - - he had somebody who was doing the - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah. Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: It's not an easy sight to see this. Imagine you're watching somebody doing that to his own son, and that's - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: - - what the drama behind it is the most important one.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: It's a sign of submission. I am going to submit to you because that's what - - I want to prove to you that I believe. That's not the easy thing to say, regardless what son it was.



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SANDOR GOODHART: And it's that belief and it's that submission that's rewarded, it seems to me, in the text.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes, exactly. And the Muslim when they prostrate, there is a meaning about this actual prayer that I did not even know about until recently. You know, we all probably think that I know a lot of things I don't, really. I learn everything as I go along. When you - - part of the prayer that we do is stand up, and then we bow, and then we prostrate. And then we do it two - - twice in the morning, and then four times at noon, four times in the afternoon, three times at sunset, and four times at - - this motion. What does it really mean? We say a lot of stuff, but what is it - - what are we really trying to say?

Well, when you're standing up, you're standing before God and you're - - as part of your submission, you're asking him permission, thanking for allowing to stand before him to perform - - to prove that you are submitting to him.

SANDOR GOODHART: Mm-hmm.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Then you bow. As you bow, all the humanity is bowing with you. All the animals are bowing with you. You're not alone, even if you're doing it at home. And then you prostrate. The first prostration is that you are saying that, "I was from the dust." Then you get up. This is a resurrection, standing up. You are from the dust, you got up, and now you - - with the second unit we do that, you're going down and bowing and then prostrating. That is a sign of submission to him as though you are going to be going back to the grave, and as of that submission. And then the second standing will be the resurrection in the day of judgment, and in the process, you are asking for forgiveness because you are basically enacting that. So this is a - - not many people who are doing this prayer - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah



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ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: - - saying this [indiscernible] are aware of what they are doing. They do that as a kind of routine because they've been learning to do that, and they do it.

SANDOR GOODHART: Right. Right.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: But the idea of doing that is much more - - much more rewarding, and I find a few times I was doing that trying to feel what is going on. I really couldn't sustain that.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah. Yeah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: The - - your emotion gets - - starts playing with you. You suddenly realize you're not really in the room that you are. There's something else going on here.

SANDOR GOODHART: You know, and I think that - -

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: And this is true for everybody else that - - for anything. When you're doing that, if you're serious enough, you get the connection, you know, and you suddenly say, "What happened to me? What did I do that was doing that?"

SANDOR GOODHART: I think one of the ways that Judaism takes into account the difficulty - - just the jihad, the struggle - -

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - that one has with this is in the story it tells about Sarah.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: Because you remember that Sarah is in the background. And Judith Plaskow has this wonderful collection called *Standing Again at Sinai*, in which she tells these feminists in Midrashim. And I love these stories because she says, for example, in one story Sarah knows that her husband is sacrifice-happy. This guy will sacrifice anything, you



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know. [Audience laughter] He wants more sacrifice, you know. [Indiscernible - multiple overlapping speakers/laughter] sacrificial trigger. And so she dogs him. She follows him through the woods behind him, you know, from a distance. And then she hides in the thicket, you know, with the ram. [Audience laughter] And at the moment that God - - the angel of God rebukes him, she thrusts the ram out and Abraham sacrifices it instead of the son, and she saves the day. [Audience laughter] I love that story because in some way, it's saying that it's because of her - -

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Sure.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - that the story gets saved.

SUZANNE ROSS: Behind every great man there's a great woman.

[Audience laughter]

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: We didn't say anything about the feeling of the mother in this case.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah. And that's the other sacrifice.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: It was really an [indiscernible – overlapping speakers]

SANDOR GOODHART: She'd never see her son again. God never - - two things happen. God never talks to Abraham again - - never in the entire Torah. This is the last time. God says, you know, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love..." and that's the last direct response - - communication from God. You have the angels talking to him. Then Sarah never sees her son again because she dies in the next chapter. Abraham goes off to some other town. Rabbis say have they got divorced? You know, why doesn't he go back to - -

SUZANNE ROSS: Yeah. She's mad.



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SANDOR GOODHART: [indiscernible – overlapping speakers] business arrangements, and she's there, and she dies at the age of 127, you know.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Mm-hmm.

SANDOR GOODHART: And then Ishmael and Isaac come together at the mother's funeral.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: And she says - - the rabbis say she dies of grief. She dies of grief because she knows what has gone on there, and she knows her husband, she knows what's likely to happen, and she - - they said at the moment of - - that he's at Moriah, she dies at that moment when he raises his hand to slaughter the son. So yeah, it's very much part of the Midrashic way of thinking about things, which I'm so glad that you're bringing in.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: It's easy to - - we don't pay attention to that. We just read the story like, you know, it just [indiscernible], but there is a lot going on here and we don't appreciate it.

SANDOR GOODHART: That's right.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: And you're watching television now and you see some people's trial of being killed in a battle, and you can see just how they react. It doesn't matter how many years. This is not the easiest thing, for a mother would raise and the father - - I mean, this is a real drama.

SANDOR GOODHART: It's a real drama.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: A real drama.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah. As I say, it becomes afterwards when the inheritance of this is the first dysfunctional family in the Bible because of - -



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FEMALE SPEAKER: Because of Isaac.

SANDOR GOODHART: -- Isaac and -- for me, it capped off when his -- when Abraham arranges for the servant to go to the foreign land and then find a wife, Rebekah, for Isaac. Why doesn't Isaac go? I mean, Jacob goes and finds his own, but Isaac can't go and find his own. Anyway, so there's some, you know, maybe some funny business we don't know between the two of them. [Audience laughter] Anyway, he comes back and she sees her future husband. She sees her husband, and he looks up, and what does Torah say? He sees camels.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah. He sees the camels.

SANDOR GOODHART: Camels. And at that moment -- and he sees camels and he takes her to his mother's tent -- Torah says the tent of his deceased mother. Now is that the first thing that you want to do when you meet your future husband, go to the tent of his dead mother? You know, this is a strange family --

FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah.

SANDOR GOODHART: -- and things don't get better from -- they get only worse from that point. [Audience laughter]

SUZANNE ROSS: They do. Let's open it up to the participants for questions. If you can, please come to the mike to ask your question.

FEMALE SPEAKER 2: Oh, my goodness.

SUZANNE ROSS: Don.

DON: I just wanted to thank you guys again for sharing with us this weekend. It's been really enjoyable. And one of the comments that Sandy made was very interesting to me about -- well, talking about what violence is. So I guess my question is still what is violence. I'm going



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to say a couple things about why I'm confused, I guess, and then maybe you guys can help enlighten us.

So you said that violence is indistinguishable from difference, and also that violence is difference gone wrong. And yet like Rene Girard talks about culture as difference, like culture is the shared understanding of our differences. And so in that sense, the difference is what prevents the violence. I know that you're a police officer and I'm not. We're different, so there's different things we're allowed to do. So the difference kind of defines acceptable social behavior versus unacceptable. So when the difference goes wrong, is it - - like what - - it's becoming saneness, I guess, but it's that - - I guess I don't understand exactly what - - sure.

SANDOR GOODHART: Let me give you an example, another example. I've always said this to my students in the classroom. If I'm standing in the classroom or I'm standing here, if I suddenly run at you, Don, with my fist - -

DON: Mm-hmm.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - in this context, that would count as violence. I think everybody would kind of agree that it counts as violence. However perverse an example, it's violence. Then what if Keith says, "Hey, how about if we have a football game afterwards. And we'll have these two teams, and Don will be on one side, Sandy will be on the other." And it's my turn to run towards you and your turn to run towards me, and my hand strikes you with the same or greater force, it's not violence in that context, right? Exactly the same behavior, so it's the context different. And you could say that violence is the inability to switch from one context to another. It's one way to talk about it. I'm not saying that there's not things that are so conceptually difficult for us to grasp that we want to think of them as essentialistic ideas. But it seems to me that there's a lot more room for understanding what counts as violence or



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transgression as a form of context shifting than simply anything inherent to a gesture in and of itself.

DON: The difference in the context would be that in the football game, I'm a willing participant.

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

DON: But then again, certainly there are - - so would violence then be kind of going outside of what's acceptable given the context?

SANDOR GOODHART: Violence would be going outside - - changing context, if you like, in a non-agreed upon way. But the behavior - - all I'm saying is that the behavior is identical.

DON: Right.

SANDOR GOODHART: Like the fist striking the chest with the same force is identical in both instances, yet in one it counts as violence and the other it does not - - in addition to whatever else is also going on at that moment. So violence is simply a scapegoat category. It's a category by which we blame something as having not been appropriate. I mean, the appropriate but not appropriate is a way of blaming what's not fitting into what we're finding acceptable for this moment. So it's a way of - - in our vocabulary, violence is a way of segmenting off certain kinds of behaviors and saying these differences will count as violence and those differences will not.

SUZANNE ROSS: But - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Differences that the following day [ph] will count entirely differently [ph], or in other cultures would count entirely differently.



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SUZANNE ROSS: But there is an absolute category of violence where - - I'll ask it as a question.

SANDOR GOODHART: All right.

SUZANNE ROSS: Is killing someone - -

SANDOR GOODHART: All right.

SUZANNE ROSS: Is there a context in which killing - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Let me up the ante just a little.

SUZANNE ROSS: Okay.

SANDOR GOODHART: Not quite that much, but I think I can - - let me up the ante.

Let me take a little survey in this room. If I tell you that a man - - if any of you know this story, then don't respond, but if you don't know the story - - if I tell you that a man walks into a room in which a woman is bound on the table, she's pregnant, and that man takes a knife and stabs her in the stomach, would you consider that violence?

SUZANNE ROSS: Yeah.

SANDOR GOODHART: How many would consider that violence?

FEMALE SPEAKER: Initial response would be - -

[indiscernible – multiple overlapping speakers].

SANDOR GOODHART: - - certain that he's a doctor and it's a scalpel and he's performing a Cesarean and saving her life.

FEMALE SPEAKER: But we wouldn't use that language. You wouldn't say a man walks into a room and stabs her. You wouldn't say she's bound and - -

[indiscernible – multiple overlapping speakers].



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SANDOR GOODHART: I was sitting in a restaurant the other day and they said, “Can I have a piece of cow.” Someone said to the waitress, “Can I have a piece of cow.” So it is a question of how it’s structured. But what I’m saying is it’s the same behavior. The behavior is not different. It’s simply how we packaged that behavior that’s changed.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Or the intent.

SANDOR GOODHART: Sorry?

FEMALE SPEAKER: Or the intent.

SANDOR GOODHART: Or the intent, or our inability to stop - - I mean, you know, what - - we had this long discussion when I was younger, but when Foucault’s book on *Madness* was first translated into English and said what is madness? He just said it’s the inability to stop. Madness is just that it can’t stop. I’ll give you an example of that. John told the joke on Tuesday and Ethel laughed at it, and was still laughing the following Sunday when they came to take her away. [Audience laughter] Right? So what has gone on here? He says - - I mean, it’s the inability to stop and the fact that it violates propriety, that it violates - - that it’s considered to be a transgression.

ANDREW MCKENNA: That’s a good joke. [Audience laughter] I’m [indiscernible] laughing! [Audience laughter]

SANDOR GOODHART: So I’m a relativist here. I’m not saying that there’s - - you know, every - - all violence. I’m saying that the categories are much more flexible.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Mm-hmm.

SANDOR GOODHART: And that what René is offering us is simply an understanding of categorization rather than of things.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Mm-hmm.



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SANDOR GOODHART: That there's a process of sequestering and of exclusionary actions. And what we - - and in the name of the bad and the non-good and the mimesis that is not acceptable, we'll call that violence. But it's not in form or behavior or structure anything different from yesterday or today or in other circumstances we would call the acceptable and different, you know. We expect the violent to be a different kind of behavior, you know, and it's not. It's just a different kind of behavior in the wrong context. It's hard to get this because we're [indiscernible – overlapping speakers/laughter].

MALE SPEAKER: We'll think about that for a while.

SUZANNE ROSS: Andrew, do you want to say anything about that?

ANDREW MCKENNA: Well, just for a little bit. But the football analogy is very interesting because, at first, football is a sacrificial simulation.

SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah.

ANDREW MCKENNA: I mean, we have the data on that. It comes from the South OF America. And then you know, it's not an accident we still insist that it be a pigskin. You know, rayon, latex won't do. Because in the South American - - and, you know, this literature is obviously onto something. They're fighting over the ball, which is a simulation of war within the community and also between communities. And by that right, that still goes on in Europe, and by the way, sometimes it can even get violent. That hasn't changed, and we see archaic behavior in the stadiums of Liverpool.

But basically, I want to sort of - - I mean, we can talk about difference and violence, difference and violence, etc. I want to validate here your basic sense here that violence destroys context. Even with Tiresias, there's a context in Thebes. And there is the political and there is a prophetic, and everybody agrees that the prophetic is the holy and the sacred is above the



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political, and Oedipus had better listen. And he wants to hear. And as Sandor just reminded us, Tiresias doesn't come across. And what happens - - so he gets angry, and they both get angry, and then they're on the same plane. And then you see the difference, which is hierarchical, hieratical, it's vertical - - between the prophetic and the religious and the home and the sacred. And the human and the political gets flattened out, and each are charging the other with being the source of the city's pollution. And in that sense, violence is destruction of difference. Violence erodes, it erases differences. And I think that's the question you're raising, and that's the way I read violence. It destroys difference.

SANDOR GOODHART: But it hides the circumstance in which difference is destroyed, rather than being a thing - -

ANDREW MCKENNA: No, it's all circumstantial. It's all relational. Yeah - - no, because that's why I don't want to quibble with you on that. There's a different way to use the word difference here, but it's all getting back to Susannah Heschel's idea that, you know, of any intrapsychic. No, violence is simply, obviously, never simple. It's all these relations all the way down.

SUZANNE ROSS-: And yeah.

MALE SPEAKER: It trickles.

SANDOR GOODHART: Trickles all the way down. Sure. And Don has just a followup?

DON: Yeah, just a quick followup comment, because that makes some sense to me. And although since Rene Girard helped me understand that autonomy is in that, I have a little harder time thinking about myself as like an independent individual. But you mentioned natural law earlier or the idea that we are each kind of, you know, endowed by our creator with a life that is



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ours, and I'm a self-owner. And that is the - - I think I can think of myself - - my mom is her person; I'm my person. So when that violence is the erasure of that difference is when I assert my will over her body. So when I no longer acknowledge that she is different from me - - I'm about to say autonomous, but she's not with our desires, whatever. But she has - - her body has its own rights. So that's what I - - like the difference between the context of the football example versus here is what I sense you're allowed to do to me. I think that's the key - - could that be the key difference? I call it self-ownership.

SANDOR GOODHART: See, I mean, there's another thinker that I always like to bring into the discussion of Girard, which is - - his name is Emmanuel Levinas. Because he says that all of subjectivity we customarily think of as autonomy and independence, but, in fact, it's what he calls a heteronomy. He says it's - - we come not from the auto but from the hetero. Hetero means different, or the other, in particular, the other. And so he says I am the others. I'd like to think of myself of being the self-same. I'd like to think of myself of being self-named, autonomous, self-named. But, in fact, I discover myself every time I try to name myself, that I'm always doing either what my mother has already done, or I'm doing it in the context of exactly what she's done. Even when I rebel against her, I discover that she rebelled against her parents in exactly the same way, and I couldn't be more like her than I am in my moments of greatest difference.

SUZANNE ROSS: It's a trap.

SANDOR GOODHART: So it's tricky, and, I mean, if Levinas is right, that we're really heteronomous that like to think of ourselves to create this myth, which we call the myth of the ego - - see, the ego may be the myth that I am autonomous. The ego may simply be a myth that I am autonomous.



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DON: That makes sense.

SANDOR GOODHART: And that denies the reality of my heteronomous relationality to other individuals. You know, how differently do we think about things if we think I am the others, you know, that I'm hardwired that way. This is not something I choose or that I give of my independence to choose to be generous to the other. I can only be - - I mean, literally, I come from the other, right? I am the others, in Levinas again, the notion of responsibility comes from motherly, from maternity. Maternity would be the original of my answerability for the other, because I am the others. I come from the others. So it is the original maternity that hardwires me as responsible. It hardwires me as responsible.

SUZANNE ROSS: Mm-hmm. Yes, Janet. Please come to - -

JANET: Yeah. I have a few comments that all relate to this, and I'm afraid I'll be inarticulate. But just in response to what you just said, I wanted to say, well, isn't it both and? Because we are, you know, each other, but we also do have our differences, and wouldn't it be boring if we didn't? I mean, we are partly autonomous in the sense of, you know, different. So when you all were talking about it, how you keep looking for differences and you can't find any, it made me think about, you know, we've been talking about violence and difference run amok, but how difference run well leads to creativity. And we have touched on that, but there's a couple of studies, actually. There's a study that came out, I'm not sure if it's in *Nature*, a couple years ago, maybe, in - - from Northwestern, in which they looked - - actually, they have data on Broadway composers and musicals. And they found the artists who had - - I'm going to get this wrong, but the idea is there - - the artists who had been mostly successful, probably in numbers of successful musicals; I mean, they analyzed this data mathematically, were the ones who had collaborated with the most different people. So the pairs that continued to always collaborate



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together were not as productive as the pairs that went and, you know, produced with others. And, you know, you can think about that in terms of evolution and mating and so forth as well. And I also heard a psychologist - - the famous Dan Stern, psychoanalyst - - speak once about how a child growing up in an environment where there's a diversity of role models, people who have different kinds of defensive adaptation mechanisms, psychologically, then has more to choose from in terms of what kinds of defensive adaptations they will be able to have. And so difference that involves cooperation and sharing versus competition. And I was just thinking when you were talking about Tiresias and Oedipus, you know, what if Tiresias in *Oedipus* had said, "Well gosh, you know, there's clearly something on here. You know, you think this; I think this. Let's talk about this. Let's figure this out." And maybe they would have come up with some more creative solution, so.

SANDOR GOODHART: You know, since I've written a book on Sondheim - -

[Audience laughter]

JANET: Oh.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - this interests me a great deal. And Sondheim had a very, very turbulent relationship to his mother and defined himself as radically different from his mother. In fact, I couldn't believe how, in another time and day and age, what would have counted as dirty linen, he wrote publicly in the New York Times in Capitano's telling of the story. Then later, you know, Secrest published it as part of the biography of Sondheim, that at one moment, she was in the hospital and she said to him, "I never wanted to have you."

FEMALE SPEAKER: [Gasps] Oh!



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SANDOR GOODHART: “I never wanted to have you.” And he just wrote back, he said - - he said, you know, I can understand saying, you know, “It was hard to have you,” and you know, “It was time.” But, “I never wanted to have you”?

FEMALE SPEAKER: Oh, boy.

SANDOR GOODHART: So he said, “As fast as I could get pen across paper, I wrote, ‘I understand.’” He never spoke to her again.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Oh.

SANDOR GOODHART: He never attended her funeral. And, in fact, the person he had worked with - - a guy who used to work with him from John Ogaman [ph], his longtime buddy, producer. He produced all kinds of things. Recently did *Bounce* came back to Sondheim again with the producers - - Hal - - anyway they worked together. They were buddies. And he - - you know, he was also part of this - - Hal Prince, Hal Prince.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Oh, Hal Prince, sure.

SANDOR GOODHART: And he and Sondheim used to hang out in these coffee houses and then just plot how they were going to take over Broadway, to really just take it by storm, and they did. I mean, they worked together on the *Follies* and then *Company* and *Pacific Overtures* [ph] and really broke only with *Sunday in the Park with George* and then he began work - - but he was the guy who was absolutely independent and never was able to give that up. And it did produce certain creativity and yet it would suggest that there’s something there. So in the piece *Passion*, which is where I got into the discussion and read a long piece on *Passion*, and I called it the mother’s part. He seems to write a character who gives up a perfectly good relationship for a depressed, horrible relationship. And it’s almost as if he’s telling his own story and reconciling himself with the mother by telling the story. It seems to me like - - you know, he didn’t die, but



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it's a deathbed conversion kind of story. And I actually sent it to him, and his response to me was, "I'm going to send this to my psychiatrist and see what [indiscernible – overlapping laughter] - -

SUZANNE ROSS: Yes.

JANET: Well, one of the key points - -

SUZANNE ROSS: Janet - -

JANET: I'm sorry. Just to comment on the passion, which I did see when it was here on Navy Pier, the reason that the relationship with the - - the adulterous relationship with the better woman - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Right.

JANET: - - although she was an adulteress - -

SANDOR GOODHART: Clara - - Clara.

JANET: - - Clara.

SANDOR GOODHART: Clara and Fosca.

JANET: But she was still an adulteress - - but that lovely relationship. She - -

SANDOR GOODHART: The light. The light, yes.

JANET: What?

SANDOR GOODHART: The light. Fosca, and it's Clara at the light and [indiscernible – overlapping speakers].

JANET: Right, it is Fosca - - exactly. She would not leave her husband because of her child, so she would not betray her child, which, you know, his mother didn't do.

SANDOR GOODHART: Right. That's right.

JANET: So I didn't know anything about this, but you see that.



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SANDOR GOODHART: Yeah. Yeah, so there's a very, very - - yes. I mean, it's an extraordinary moment. In *Passion*, in one moment, this woman who he can't stand, Fosca, who is the cousin of the officer in charge of the barracks where he's forced to stay away from his girlfriend, Clara - - this extramarital affair he's having with Clara; she's married to someone. At one moment, Fosca says, "I want you to write a letter." You know, "Would you take down the letter," and it's just extraordinary because she sings the letter that she would write to her lover, and in a certain way, he falls in love with the language, and then in a couple scenes later, then appropriates the language of the letter to her, breaking it off with Fosca. So it's - - you know, so writing is involved, and it seems to me we're never very far from these kinds of issues.

But is he autonomous or is he heteronomous? It's kind of hard to say when one - - you know, clearly, he sets up his life to be as independent as possible, yet once it finds [indiscernible] to throw out, I get that the relationship with his mother.

SUZANNE ROSS: Right.

JANET: And he sort of gets colonized by this Fosca, so.

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

SUZANNE ROSS: Yes, Evelyn. I will - -

EVELYN: I will come up to - -

SUZANNE ROSS: Oh, really?

EVELYN: - - the thing [ph].

SUZANNE ROSS: Oh, okay.

EVELYN: If you're just slightly able to wait.

SUZANNE ROSS: For you, yes.



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EVELYN: I want to make sure I don't trip over the cord, etc. There are so many strands going on. They're fascinating. And I have heard words like "mother," and also "violence" within the last few minutes, and everybody who knows me knows the kind of thing I'm like. They just say Earth Day is coming. And we have a lot of violence to think about that we are doing in the natural world and our role in that.

And as you speak of the, let us say, five major religions and what comes next, I have great confidence in works of people like Thomas Berry, and you did mention somebody under his breath, Matthew Fox. But there are a number of new-thinking theologians who encompass much more than we have in the past. And there is a kind of branch called creation spirituality, but some people steer away from the word "creation." But there are so many aspects that verge on the secular. And, of course, there's biology and DNA and all of those things. And anybody that doesn't notice me, I would say I sum it all up with my license plate, which I preach with. It is "kin-dom." And you note there is no "g," there is no "king" in "kin-dom." But not just DNA links us. We've been talking about people. But I'm thinking of everything that has life, and if you want to go a bit beyond it, we are dependent on the inorganic world, too. And within the larger sense, this "kin-dom" that we are part of can be a new drive to override our - - not differences, but our disagreements over what is all there. There is so much to talk about and so many people that are involved in this. One aspect is, of course, the Jesus Seminar, when you are looking to find meaning from the old texts and many intellectual, scientific, spiritual, personal aspects. We could keep these discussions going forever.

SUZANNE ROSS: Yeah. Thanks, Ev.

FEMALE SPEAKER 2: Thank you.



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SUZANNE ROSS: Care to comment on any aspect of that? Violence against the created world, or?

SANDOR GOODHART: I just thought of Hamlet again.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah.

SANDOR GOODHART: And that great opening line of Hamlet, which is spoken off to the audience. It says, "A little more than kin, a little less than kind."

FEMALE SPEAKER: Mm-hmm.

SUZANNE ROSS: That's wonderful.

SANDOR GOODHART: I think that we're all kind of talking about this issue.

EVELYN: We could also say, "My name is Ishmael."

[Audience laughter]

ANDREW MCKENNA: Well, it's a very good example because the - - I mean
[indiscernible – overlapping speakers] - -

FEMALE SPEAKER: Sure.

ANDREW: - - you know, we're slaughtering these gorgeous beasts and cutting them up to, you know, for perfumes and the [indiscernible].

FEMALE SPEAKER: Oh, yes.

ANDREW MCKENNA: No, no - - it is. And two other references immediately come to mind, one of which, of course, is Rene Girard's last book, *Achever Clausewitz*, which isn't just about atomic destruction. In a certain point in the discussion, he has a philosophy. He said, listen, you know, we're in this apocalyptic time, and we can either blow ourselves up or we can simply consume our resources, and it's a question of whether we choke ourselves to death on this



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or whether we kill each other, you know, fighting over the last remaining ones, but that the ecology is at stake.

And the other reference that occurs to me in that regard is - - I mean, you can't separate it, you see, the issue of weapons of mass destruction.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Right.

ANDREW: And of consumerism as this unclassified weapon of mass destruction. That's what I mean. And another reference, but because I just finished teaching it is Chekhov - - is of *Uncle Vanya*. Now, I could put it in a Girardian context of all these unhappy people and they're all in these unhappy love triangles. If we look in the 19th century, which is the century of the autonomous individual, and all these people are autonomous and they're all unhappy, and half of them are suicidal. And the suicide, besides being a sacrament in the individualist religion, because it means the act of self-possession and it's done out of self-hatred, because nobody really is alone, we're better off thinking of the self instead of a center, it's a symptom. Let's change Alison's definition, and it's a good one, and it's a translation of Sandy's idea from it's heteronomous. And that the, you know, the ecology and the, you know, the atomic - - the self and the other, we have to make sense out of this, and we can't separate it. So I'm very glad you brought in the trees and all that because we can't separate our need to preserve the planet from our need to save ourselves from our most violent possibilities.

SUZANNE ROSS: Mm-hmm. Indeed. I'm realizing that we're at 3:00, and I'm wondering if maybe I didn't tell you gentlemen I was going to do this, but if you wanted to make a little - - a closing comment or statement about anything that we said here today or make a grand conclusion. As I said when we started, we wouldn't go where conscious of generalization



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is not necessarily working. We're going to make some anyway. So if you would like make some concluding remarks, now would be the moment. Esmail?

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Sure. First, I want to congratulate you and your husband and everybody working in this institute, in this foundation. I already mentioned that I think it should be called Raven Institute. It's a wonderful, wonderful occasion and people that are doing something very great. What you're doing is groundbreaking, and I hope you continue doing this.

SUZANNE ROSS: Thank you.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: I wish you success - - a lot of success because this is needed in this world at this time. I, for myself, was very fortunate to meet two preeminent scholars, and I say that without any reservation. They taught me a lot. I learned a lot from them, and it was a pleasure to know them, and I always said that March 8th, when we met, will live in infamy in my life because I learned so much, and I'm glad to have been here, to have known them. They have really taught me a lot. And as I said, my middle name is "Student." I don't have a middle name, but I'm glad that I have that name, that middle name. And as for Sandy, it's been a pleasure, and we will find some differences down the road. [Audience laughter]

SANDOR GOODHART: Because we haven't found it yet.

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: And as to Andy - - Andrew, I really enjoy your conversation and, yes, it is thought that really done for me about the fantastic job of talking about mimetic [ph] theory that I was starting to understand, and I'm working to get some stuff from you and from Sandy. I look forward to continuing our relationship, because there's a lot to do, and we need to be working on it. Thank you very much.

SANDOR GOODHART: Well, I feel the same way as Esmail. I'm just thankful to Suzanne and to Keith and to their family and to everyone, and Adam and everyone and Dave,



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who have worked so hard to put this all together. And, you know, I'm terrible with names. I'm not going to remember everyone's name, but all of you who are really part of this project, I just encourage you to go on with it. What keeps going back for me is possibility.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Mm-hmm.

SANDOR GOODHART: Is the openness to possibility. And as Esmail says, I have, you know, discovered a new friend - -

ESMAIL KOUSHANPOUR: Likewise.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - in a way that, you know - - I mean, I'm reminded of the story when there was a guru of some kind, Buddhist or I don't know, some kind of a guru. And he was asked by a kind of character like Howard Cosell. You remember Howard Cosell?

[Multiple speakers responding in the affirmative]

He would stick his microphone in and, "Well, how did you reach enlightenment?"

SUZANNE ROSS: Right. Yeah.

SANDOR GOODHART: And on this occasion, the guru said, "Ah, one failure after another." [Audience laughter] And it seems to me, it's great because what I'm learning are the failures of all the myths - -

SUZANNE ROSS: Yes.

SANDOR GOODHART: - - by which I've tried to shield myself from understandings. And I've always felt that with Rene Girard's group and with Andrew, in particular, the discovery that the Christianity light goes off, and now the discovery that Islam is like [indiscernible]. It's just wonderful to me to - - you know, it feels like family, and it feels like we're really rediscovering family, and I reaffirm that sense that it's not about violence; it's about family.

SUZANNE ROSS: Mm-hmm. Thank you. Thank you.



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ANDREW MCKENNA: Well, yes, I want to echo the recognition and especially to the Raven Foundation, to Keith and to Suzanne and to Adam and to Emily, still working at it even though she's not in the room and Maura. So we've been talking a lot about submission and prayer and humiliation, submission, determination, and commitment and how they're paired out. And they're paired up with this third term [indiscernible]. We didn't make the world. We can end it, but we didn't make it. It's not bad to leave it. We'd rather be in it than not. And Sandy was talking a moment about a Sondheim story. It reminded me of a Woody Allen story, but I won't tell that one.

SANDOR GOODHART: Why, please?

SUZANNE ROSS: Please do.

ANDREW MCKENNA: Of all the special gratitude I could make, I'm thinking of a bumper sticker that we see here and there, "You have a friend in Jesus." And I'd like to think that's true. But in any case, thanks to Esmail's participation and to his eloquence, I'm looking for a bumper sticker that will tell me that I have a friend, you know, in the Koran. You know, one of these - - I think that's very true, and I'm not educated in that tradition, and I did not know that, and thanks to the Raven Foundation - - and thank you again and again - - we have the opportunity to know how many friends we really have out there and up there. That's the purpose that is, I think, quite nobly served. I thank you very much.

SUZANNE ROSS: Great. I want to thank you all very much.

[Applause]

FEMALE SPEAKER: And we will send you emails when we get the audio up online for you to listen to and look at, and - - oh, and please, fill out your evaluation forms. We would



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really appreciate that. Those blue sheets in your folders, and turn them in to Maura or Emily - -
so we can make it even better next time.

[Multiple conversations by participants talking among themselves.]

