

**The origins of culture.
How to reconsider established social order and historical approaches in the
study of management in the light of René Girard works?**

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ABSTRACT

*“René Girard’s work suggests the projects
of those nineteenth-century intellectual
giants – Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud –
who still cast such long shadows today.”*
Comparative Literature

This article aims at proposing to critics an alternative theoretical perspective, inspired by René Girard’s thought, that could help stimulating the debate on established social order and historical perspective well as initiating new research agendas regarding relatively underestimated themes (such as violence, desire, sacred, sacrifice or gift).

Beyond his works, Girard is important because he is a contemporary with, and his ideas form a counterpoint to, those of Barthes, Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida, who have had a major impact on social theory and organization. Now, building on the heritage of Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Levi Strauss, Lacan, Sartre, and so on, a new generation of social scientists emerge that renew the question of social order and

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severely criticize the liberal model. Deeply rooted in what is called “French Theory”, they benefit from a long tradition of critical research that allows them to strongly establish the dominancy of the social and anthropological nature of human society over its economic organization. In other word, the economic world could be ruled by social instinct and objectives rather than governed by the profit imperative. By the way, Girard questioned the human science assumption of the autonomy of the self’s will through his *mimetic theory*. This theoretical framework postulates that the individual’s desire is driven by a reference to a competing model and doesn’t exist otherwise. Such a perspective leads to reconsider the status of *violence*: it becomes the way to create social order and needs to be regulated through rites and institutions. It is important as one of Girard’s recent clarifications that mimetic desire is good in itself; it is the basis of love even though it often – and inevitably in terms of the history of humanity – takes destructive forms. There, we propose a general discussion on how Girard’s ideas might contribute to theories of social organization in management studies, especially in a dynamic and historical approach.

Thus, everything – assumptions and commons ideas, roles or structures – which enables human beings to exist together without being overcome by chaos, violence, random murder. According to the mimetic scapegoat theory, culture is founded by scapegoating and maintained by a system of differences which is rooted in a nonconscious, concealed scapegoat mechanism. Difference, in a girardian acceptation, refers to the basic distinction arising from victimage and the beginning of culture. The originary distinction is the one between “here” or “us” by contrast to “it” or “that”, the victim. In fact, mimetic desire could be an alternative theoretical frame to explain origins of culture and to question future of civilization.

We propose, in a first step, to present the theoretical frameworks and main researches conducted by Girard. A second step will pertain to some possible translations into historical approaches in the study of management and some examples of research in progress using this background.

References (for Girard)

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