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DOI: 10.35765/pk.2026.5201.25

## The Reception of René Girard's Thought in Central and Eastern Europe

### ABSTRACT

Ten years ago, René Girard, the French-American anthropologist and literary scholar, passed away. This anniversary provides an opportunity to revisit his ideas, particularly the mimetic theory he developed, and to acknowledge its ongoing influence in contemporary academic circles. This article focuses on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), examining the impact of Girard's ideas in this region. Poland stands out among them, which lends support to the idea that Catholicism may positively influence the willingness to engage with mimetic theory. The reception of Girard's ideas is examined through books and scholarly articles, as well as through direct communication with academics who were invited to complete a questionnaire. The survey included questions about the application of mimetic theory in academic research, scholars' and students' reactions to Girard's ideas, and publications inspired by his work. It also asked about Girard's personal impact on the respondent's lives. Responses from over 60 scholars proved particularly insightful. The research indicates that René Girard's ideas are well known and actively employed as a methodological framework by scholars in CEE countries. However, regular gatherings dedicated to this field remain scarce. The annual symposia organised by the Colloquium on Violence and Religion are not sufficient, as few scholars from the region participate and even fewer are members of the organisation.

**KEYWORDS:** Central and Eastern Europe, René Girard, mimetic theory, reception

### STRESZCZENIE

Recepcja myśli René Girarda w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej

Przed 10 laty zmarł René Girard, francusko-amerykański antropolog i literaturoznawca. Stanowi to sposobność nie tylko do przypomnienia jego myśli, szczególnie zaś wypracowanej przez niego teorii mimetycznej, lecz także do wskazania na jej oddziaływanie na współczesne środowiska akademickie. Kwestii tej

poświęcony został niniejszy artykuł w odniesieniu do państw, które tworzą region określany mianem Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej (EŚW). Wśród nich wyróżnia się Polska. Potwierdza to przekonanie, że katolicyzm pozytywnie wpływa na gotowość do korzystania z teorii mimetycznej. Prezentując recepcję myśli Girarda, wykorzystano opracowania książkowe oraz artykuły naukowe. Nawiązano także bezpośredni kontakt z uczonymi, którzy zostali poproszeni o wypełnienie kwestionariusza. Zawarto w nim pytania, które odnosiły się do takich kwestii, jak wykorzystanie teorii mimetycznej w badaniach naukowych, reakcja naukowców i studentów na myśl Girarda, publikacje, w których wykorzystano jego idee. Zadano także pytanie dotyczące wpływu Girarda na życie osobiste. Przydatne okazały się odpowiedzi uzyskane od ponad 60 uczonych. Przeprowadzone badania doprowadziły do przekonania, że myśl René Girarda jest znana oraz wykorzystywana jako metoda przez uczonych w państwach należących do EŚW. Brakuje jednak regularnych spotkań w ramach konferencji naukowych. Coroczne sympozja organizowane przez Kolokwium nt. Przemocy i Religii (Colloquium on Violence and Religion) nie wystarczają, gdyż z jednej strony niewielu uczonych z państw EŚW brało w nich udział, z drugiej jeszcze mniej jest członkiem tej organizacji.

**SŁOWA KLUCZE:** Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia, René Girard, teoria mimetyczna, recepcja

## Introduction

4 November 2025 marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the French-American anthropologist and literary scholar René Girard. This anniversary offered an opportunity to reflect on the influence of his mimetic theory on the intellectual world, including in Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). This article addresses this issue. First, it identifies the countries that constitute the CEE region, and then it examines how Girard's ideas have been received and applied there. As Polish scholars predominate, the discussion of the reception of Girard's ideas is divided into two parts: the first focuses on Poland, and the second focuses to researchers from other CEE countries. Finally, the article recounts the experiences of scholars who engage with mimetic theory in their academic work and personal lives. The research was conducted in the first quarter of 2025.

In studying the reception of Girard's ideas in CEE, I drew on data from the catalogues of the national libraries of individual countries. The catalogues of the Polish and Russian national libraries, which are based on the same computer platform, deserve particular praise, as they offer, among other features, the ability to search for publications using keywords. I contacted more than 100 scholars electronically, inviting them to respond to questions concerning,

among other issues, the use of mimetic theory in scientific research, scholars' and students' reactions to Girard's thought, and publications engaging with his ideas. I found the responses from over 60 scholars to be useful for this study. By citing their names, I wish to express my gratitude and hope that this will foster further collaboration.

Scholars were asked to identify authors who had written about Girard, particularly those from their countries. Publications in English were considered less relevant for assessing the reception of Girard's thought in CEE because, while they allow their authors to enter international academic circles, they often refrain from presenting local (non-English-language) scholarship on Girard. This practice borders on intellectual dishonesty, as it can create an impression on the international stage that the author is a pioneering researcher of Girard's thought in their home country.

### Central and Eastern Europe

The CEE region comprises 20 countries, including Kosovo, which is not recognised by all states. The term helps maintain political distance from related concepts such as "Eastern Europe" and "Central Europe." The former is associated with Pan-Slavic (Russian/Orthodox) domination, while the latter (as *Mittel-europa*) is associated with Pan-German (German/Protestant) hegemony (Hal-ecki, 1994; Szűcs, 1995; Kłoczowski, 2003).

The CEE countries can be grouped by reference to contemporary and historical state or organisational entities: 1. the Visegrad Group countries (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary); 2. the Baltic states that separated from the USSR and were historically associated with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia); 3. the post-Soviet states historically associated with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Belarus, Ukraine); 4. the states that emerged from Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia); 5. the Balkan state that separated from the USSR (Moldova); 6. the remaining Balkan states (Albania, Bulgaria, Romania) (Winnicki, 2017).

It is worth paying attention to Russia, which continues to influence the inhabitants of countries once connected to it, especially in the linguistic sphere and through the Russian diaspora. Nine of Girard's works have been published in Russian (since 2000): *Violence*; *The Scapegoat*; *Critique*; *Resurrection*; *I See*; *Things Hidden*; *Deceit*; *Battling*; and *A Theater*.<sup>1</sup> A translation of his biography by American scholar Cynthia L. Haven (Haven [Хэвен],

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1 In this article, we cite the titles of English translations of Girard's books, and in their absence, the titles of the original editions. The works are cited according to the chronology of their

2021) and a study by Stanisław Budzik are also available (Budzik [Будзик], 2017). A comparable dynamic of cross-border cultural and linguistic exchange can be observed in the Balkan region, particularly in the case of Serbo-Croatian, the linguistic basis of Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin (Bobkowski, 1997).

Since familiarity with Girard's thought appears to be influenced by religious identification (primarily Catholicism) (Mäkelä, 2018), a brief overview of the contemporary demography of the CEE countries is provided below, including the size of Catholic populations. Poland is the most populous country in the region, with 38 million inhabitants, 93.5% of whom are Catholic. The population and number of Catholics (in millions and percentages) in the other countries are as follows: Czech Republic (10.9; 10.5); Slovakia (5.4; 60); Hungary (9.6; 29.2); Lithuania (2.9; 74.2); Latvia (1.8; 17); Estonia (1.4; 0.5); Belarus (9.2; 7.1); Ukraine (33.4; 8.8 Greek Catholics; 0.9 Roman Catholics); Slovenia (2.1; 69.5); Croatia (3.9; 83). Bosnia and Herzegovina (3.4; 15.2); Serbia (6.6; 3.9); Kosovo (1.6; 1.8); Montenegro (0.6; 3.2); North Macedonia (1.8; 0.4); Moldova (2.4; 0.6); Albania (2.4; 8.4); Bulgaria (6.4; 0.6); Romania (19; 4.4). The following countries lack scholars specialising in Girard's thought: Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Kosovo, and Montenegro. This supports the thesis that Catholicism may influence interest in mimetic theory, although Slovakia demonstrates that it cannot be considered as a binding criterion.

## Poland

Poland stands out as a country marked by an above-average interest in Girard's work. In 1974, extracts from *Deceit, Desire and the Novel...* were published there (Girard, 1974). In total, eight of Girard's books have appeared in Polish, along with one in fragmentary form: *Things Hidden* (fragments); *The Scapagoat*; *Job*; *Violence*; *A Theater*; *Deceit*; *I See*; *Evolution*; and *Battling*. The first major study of Girard's thought was published in 1997 (Budzik, 1997). Since then, a further 14 books have appeared that present his ideas and apply them as a scholarly method (Zalewski, 2005; Bolewski, 2007; Zalewski 2012; Kaznowski, 2014; Romejko, 2015; Zalewski, 2015; Korusiewicz, 2015; Michoń, 2016; Zalewski, 2017; Nieć, 2019; Strączek, 2019; Gielarowski, 2021; Korusiewicz, 2021; Maciejewski, 2025). Earlier publications were fragmentary in nature and tended to reflect a rather negative view of Girard (Romejko, 2015). The ethnologist and archaeologist Jarosław Kolczyński comments on this issue as follows: "It is worth pointing out that Girard's works are talked about more than they

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publication in each country. For a list of the originals and their English translations, see Romejko, 2015, pp. 24–25.

are written about in our ethnological community...” (Polish: *Warto zaznaczyć, że o pracach Girarda w naszym środowisku etnologicznym raczej mówi się, niż pisze...* [Kolczyński, 1995, p. 65]).

Seven issues of scholarly journals and collective works have been devoted wholly or partly to Girard's thought. These included articles by Polish and international authors; in the latter case, the contributions were most often translations of texts previously published (*Forum Philosophicum*, 2018, no. 2; *Forum Philosophicum*, 2019, no. 1; Mizińska & Kociuba, 2003; *Studia Gdańskie*, 2013, vol. 32; *Rocznik Antropologii Historii*, 2013, no. 2; *Czterdzieści i Cztery*. 44, 2013, no. 6; *Czterdzieści i Cztery*. 44, 2020, no. 11). Excluding the 15 books mentioned above, Girard is referenced in over 220 scholarly publications (books, articles, and reviews). He has also been discussed at academic conferences, although such events have not been very frequent. Noteworthy is the three-hour philosophical debate organised by the Institute of Philosophy at the Ignatianum University in Cracow on 13 January 2022 (*Apokaliptyka*, 2022). It is instructive to compare the Wikipedia articles on Girard in the languages of CEE countries. The Polish version is several times longer than those available in Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, and Ukrainian.

The research conducted by the author of this article supports the claim that scholars in Poland who engage with the work of René Girard represent the following disciplines (in order of prevalence): theology, anthropology, cultural studies, literary studies, philosophy, political science, ethnology, religious studies, and pedagogy. Below is an alphabetical list of scholars working on Girard's thought and their respective fields. Their publications are included in the bibliography available on the author's website.<sup>2</sup>

Leszek Augustyn analyses philosophical issues, including those found in the works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky. He has written two articles drawing on Girard's ideas. Agnieszka Bielak explores anthropological and literary issues, including the relationship between literature and religion. Jacek Bolewski (1946–2012) specialised in cultural anthropology and published one book and four articles. Jarosław Borowski specialises in literary studies. Stanisław Budzik first encountered Girard's ideas while studying theology in Innsbruck between 1982 and 1988 under the supervision of Raymund Schwager (1935–2004). His research on Catholic soteriology resulted in the aforementioned book and two articles. He ceased his scholarly activity after being elected Auxiliary Bishop of Tarnów in 2004 and has served as Archbishop of Lublin since 2011. Agnieszka Burakowska studies soteriology and sacramentology, and collaborates with Wiel Eggen, a Dutch expert in Girard's thought. Lucyna Chmielewska examines the relationship between religion and culture, focusing on the role of

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2 See [www.romejko.edu.pl](http://www.romejko.edu.pl), Selected publications (Wybrane publikacje) tab, file Bibliography of works on René Girard published in Central and Eastern European countries.

religion in establishing and maintaining social order by counteracting rivalry based on mimesis. Ewa Domańska's research interests include anthropological history. She collaborated with Girard during research stays in the United States and also visited him at home (Haven, 2018).

Andrzej Gielarowski explores cultural crisis and its potential consequences. Małgorzata Gruchola examines social interactions that emerged during the recent pandemic from the perspective of the scapegoat mechanism. Rigels Halili, an Albanian who has lived in Poland for many years, conducts anthropological and literary research. Andrzej Hejmej specialises in comparative literature. Dominika Jakubiak is interested in the Holocaust studies. Iwona Janicka, who has lived in the Czech Republic since 2024, analyses gender issues. Until 2016, Piotr Jarosz maintained an online bibliography of Polish publications on Girard. He has also drawn on Girard's ideas to evaluate the impact of remote work during the pandemic. Wojciech Kaftański studies the moral psychology of Søren Kierkegaard. Marcin Kaznowski researches the theology of original sin. Teresa Klimowicz wrote her doctoral thesis on exclusion, examining consumer behaviour from a mimetic perspective. Maciej Kociuba analyses the issue of violence from a philosophical viewpoint.

Like Domańska and Niewiadomski, Maria Korusiewicz had the opportunity to meet Girard in person while conducting research in the USA. She examines the category of tragedy from anthropological and theological perspectives. Andrzej P. Kowalski addresses the phenomenon of sacrifice and explores the origins of culture. Krzysztof Kozłowski wrote a review of Girard's book *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare*, in which he criticises mimetic theory for its reductionism. Katarzyna Krempleska examines the phenomenon of war from an anthropological perspective. Michał Łuczewski references Girard when discussing political issues, particularly those related to national identity. In one of his studies, he presented a manifesto in which he hailed Girard as a Father of the Church ("Respondeo dicendum. I proclaim Girard a Father of the Church"; Polish: *Respondeo dicendum. Ogłaszam Girarda ojcem Kościoła*) (Łuczewski, 2013, p. 17). Jan Maciejewski also explores national questions, presenting a philosophy of Polish history. Meanwhile, Łukasz P. Michoń highlights the political mechanisms that establish power structures in Poland. Mateusz Nieć uses Girard's ideas to uncover the origins of political phenomena, including analyses of political myths.

Józef Niewiadomski has lived in Innsbruck since 1972. In addition to his academic activity in Austria, he publishes articles on Girard in Poland, participates in discussions about him, and writes book and doctoral reviews (Romejko, 2005; em. Univ.-Prof., 2025). It was thanks to Schwager, who supervised his doctoral dissertation in 1981, that he met Girard in person in Paris in January 1983. As a professor, he has supervised over 80 master's and doctoral students, many of whom have studied Girard's thought, especially its theological

reception (Aktivitäten, 2025). Piotr Nowak applies Girardian ideas to recent Jewish history. Aneta Ostaszewska analyses violence against women in academic circles. Piotr Pasterczyk explores the origins of religion and culture, as well as the ideas of Sigmund Freud. Grzegorz Pełczyński presents Girard as an important apologist for Christianity and interpreter of the Bible. Ireneusz Piekarski specialises in literary studies. Jarosław Rokicki examines the social perception of the 2010 Smolensk plane crash, which claimed the lives of leading Polish state officials. Grażyna Romańczuk-Woronecka addresses the concept of the scapegoat within poststructuralist theory. Adam Romejko wrote his doctoral dissertation on mimetic theory under Niewiadomski's supervision in Innsbruck. He employs this theory in his apologetic work – primarily in sermons – as well as in political science, including the phenomenon of migration. He is the author of two books (including one in German), 19 articles, and eight reviews of works by and about Girard. Dariusz Rozmus explores the concept of the scapegoat in a biblical context. Małgorzata Sławek-Czochra interprets social reactions during the pandemic through the lens of the scapegoat mechanism.

Drawing on Girard's thought, Bogumił Strączek explores cultural issues and socio-political phenomena. For example, he addresses the recent pandemic, the Sino-American rivalry, and the war in Ukraine. He is the author of one book and seven scholarly articles. As editor-in-chief of the journal *Forum Philosophicum*, he has devoted two issues to Girard. Similarly, Tomasz Szturo examines the phenomenon of plague – both historical and recent – as well as religious exaltation from a literary perspective. Łukasz Tischner uses the concepts of triangular desire and the scapegoat to analyse works of Polish literature, including those of Witold Gombrowicz. Piotr Ufnal employs workshops for journalism students to explore imitation and the violence associated with it. Katarzyna Wielechowska analyses dramatic works, focusing on plot structures, character relationships, and ongoing socio-cultural processes. Cezary Zalewski introduces the works of Polish literary authors and philosophers. He is the author of four books drawing on mimetic theory and has also translated Girard's final book, *Battling to the End*, into Polish (Girard, 2018). Marek Zambrzycki addresses hostility toward other national groups as a factor stimulating the formation of national identity. Rafał Zawisza studies the origins of Christianity and the violence manifested in political and social life.

### Other countries of Central and Eastern Europe

The first study of Girard's work in Czech was published in 1968 (*Deceit*). Two further books followed (*The Scapegoat; Evolution*), along with Michael Kirwan's 2004 study, *Discovering Girard* (Kirwan 2008). The most important populariser of Girard's thought in the Czech Republic – and, through his lectures, also

in Slovakia – is Petr František Burda. He has published eight books on Girard, including one as editor, as well as 12 articles. Burda employs mimetic theory to explore various cultural phenomena, particularly those related to imitation, desire, and conflict. His study of violence in culture, published in both Czech and English, deserves special mention (Burda, 2014). The English version is available in many libraries in CEE countries. Other Czech scholars interested in Girard include Marián Kišš and Ivo Budil. The former wrote a doctoral thesis in which he compared Girard with Gabriel Tarde and Émile Durkheim, while the latter is an anthropologist, university lecturer, writer, and political activist known for his conservative views (Kišš, 2017; Budil, 2010).

In 2011, the only Slovak translation of a book by Girard (*Evolution*) was published. Although the country is influenced by Catholicism, it is notable for the lack of scholars working on Girard. One article makes only a passing reference to his thought, citing the philosopher Apollonius of Tyana (Bednářová, 2023).

Three of Girard's books (*I See; Things Hidden; The Scapegoat*) were published in Hungarian relatively late (2013–2014). Roland Tamás, in addition to promoting mimetic theory, introduces Hungarian readers to the thought of Niewiadomski, under whose supervision he wrote his doctoral dissertation in Innsbruck (Niewiadomski, 2007). Péter Tóth-Lipták points to the usefulness of mimetic theory for studying a range of issues, particularly those related to religion and the functioning of the scapegoat mechanism in social life. Andreas Wilmes by contrast, publishes exclusively in English by choice.

András Szalai, a Baptist theologian and moderator of the apologetics website (<https://apologia.hu/>), criticises mimetic theory for lacking scientific precision and for being inconsistent with biblical message. At the same time, he reproaches Schwager for introducing Girard to the theological fraternity. This criticism is despite Szalai's apparent unfamiliarity with Schwager's major works – in his study (Szalai, 2016), he cites only a translation of a single article (Schwager, 1988). He also expresses concern about Hungarian scholars' use of mimetic theory, including the Lutheran pastor Sándor Cserháti. The latter, by contrast, praises Girard's thought as a valuable tool for understanding religion and human culture more broadly, and he himself employs it in theology, particularly in soteriology.

In Lithuania, mimetic theory is used only by Arvydas Grišinas, who applies it to questions related to national and ethnic identification in CEE countries. In Ukraine, Girard's thought is likewise not very widespread, as evidenced by the small numbers of studies devoted to it. Among the scholars who engage with it are Bohdan Shumylovych, Serhiy Savchenko, Yekaterina Prokofieva, Alexander Filonenko, and Oksana Pushonkova. Shumylovych employs mimetic theory – primarily the concept of the scapegoat – in his courses on culture and aesthetics. Savchenko and Prokofieva employ it to explain the mechanisms underlying conflicts in both small and large societies. Filonenko draws on

it in his interpretation of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, while Pushonkova addresses the issue of sacrifice from an anthropological perspective.

Two of Girard's works were published in Slovenian: *I See* (2006) and *The Scapegoat* (2011). Among Slovenian scholars, Robert Petkovšek is particularly noteworthy as the author of 17 studies in which he examines violence from anthropological and theological perspectives. Petkovšek's students include Mirjana Borenovič, a researcher of myths and rituals. Jernej Pisk builds on Petkovšek's work and applies Girard's thought to the phenomenon of sport.

Only one of Girard's books has been published in Croatian (*I See*, 2004). In Croatia, one of the earliest popularisers of Girard's thought was Stanko Lasić (1927–2017), a literary theorist, historian, and anthropologist. He devoted a book to Girard and three other intellectuals – Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Nadeau (Lasić, 2001). Other scholars include sisters Lada Čale Feldman and Morana Čale, as well as Marinko Tomić and Antun Pavešković. The Čale sisters have authored books drawing on mimetic theory, including a joint study on the *doppelgänger* phenomenon (Čale & Čale Feldman, 2008). Marinko Tomić and Antun Pavešković co-authored an article interpreting Albert Camus' first novel, *The Stranger*, from a mimetic perspective. Pavešković has also analysed works by Croatian writers (Tomić & Pavešković, 2023).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Franjo Topić engages with mimetic theory and cites Girard's thought in a book on the relationship between faith and culture (Topić, 2017). He emphasizes that Girard's ideas are useful not only for anthropologists but also for cultural historians and theologians. In the obituary he wrote following Girard's death, he called him the "Prophet from Stanford" (Topić, 2015). Among younger researchers, Mario Bernadić is noteworthy. His doctoral thesis was supervised by Niewiadomski in Innsbruck, and he applies mimetic theory primarily in Christology and eschatology (Bernadić, 2022).

In Serbia, Girard's thought has not generated much interest among scholars, even though three of his books have been published there (*Job; Violence; I See*). Similarly, in North Macedonia, Girard is little known. Only Katica Kulavkova refers to his works (*Deceit; Evolution*) in two publications (Kulavkova, 2018; Kulavkova, 2022).

In Moldova, Victoria Fonari applies Girard's ideas to literary studies, particularly in relation to the works of Dostoevsky (Fonari, 2009; Fonari, 2021). In Albania, as Halili has noted, Girard's ideas are also little known. Only Gelanda Shkurtaj cites them, in an article on customs conducive to conflict resolution (Shkurtaj, 2020).

In Bulgaria, two of Girard's books have been published (*I See; Job*). Apart from a brief two-page text by Alexander Lozev (Лозев, 1994), there are no scholarly studies devoted to him. In Romania, Girard's first publication appeared in 1972 (*Deceit*), followed by seven more books (*Violence; Scapegoat*;

*I See; Things Hidden; Christianity; Job; La voix*). Daniela Sorea, the author of two articles, engages with Girard's thought by discussing Maximus the Confessor and contemporary interpretations of the commandment to love one's neighbour (Sorea, 2010; Sorea, 2015).

### Scholars from Central and Eastern Europe on the reception of René Girard's thought

In preparing this study on the reception of Girard's ideas in CEE, responses to a questionnaire completed by over 60 scholars were used. The information obtained is presented below in a generalised form, alongside quotations from specific individuals.

The first issue concerns the path that led scholars to encounter Girard's ideas. In this respect, no fixed patterns emerge; rather, the process appears largely contingent, often involving the chance selection of a book by an unknown author and an experience perceived as intellectually groundbreaking. In Chmielewska's case, for example, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* was initially chosen simply as a book to read, yet it proved both moving and inspiring. Strączek describes a similar experience with *The Scapegoat*.

Intermediaries play an important role in such encounters with Girard's work. These include academic teachers who encourage students to read Girard's works, as well as authors of secondary studies who cite him and thereby inspire readers to engage with his ideas. Scholars consult Girard's works in their native languages as well as in editions published in English, French, and Russian.

Two approaches predominate: a positive one, coupled with a belief in the intellectual usefulness of mimetic theory; and a critical one, which questions its scientific validity and universal scope, emphasising what is seen as its outdated character. There appears to be no neutral stance. Assessments of mimetic theory are shaped both by scholars' professional orientation: whether they pursue research in an interdisciplinary or narrow manner, and their religious worldview, particularly their position on Christianity, including Catholicism. Wilmes emphasises that scholars often prefer to problematise rather than explain, and Girard compels them to confront violence in a more concrete way.

Mimetic theory is also sometimes treated as taboo. In some circles, referring to Girard is considered inappropriate. As a result, his works may be widely known and discussed, yet rarely written about. Čale Feldman highlights this situation in relation to the interpretations of the sword dance *Moreška* from the Croatian town of Korčula.

Burda emphasises that many scholars are unfamiliar with Girard's work yet feel no qualms about speaking critically about it. In this way, Girard is turned into a scapegoat, uniting academic circles in a shared hostility toward him.

Referring to scepticism about Girard's ideas, Fonari notes that in her homeland, Moldova, this attitude is a consequence of anti-Western sentiment. The question remains to what extent this stems from historical factors, specifically from Moldova's past membership in the Soviet Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as earlier Turkish influence. Notably, 95.2% of Moldovans are Orthodox Christians, while only 0.6% identify as Catholic. Fonari herself points to nostalgia for the Soviet academic world, in which there is no place for the Western (Catholic) Girard. He is rejected not because of his writings, but because he is perceived as "not one of us." Shumylovych makes a similar observation, highlighting that one criticism of Girard's work is its alleged Eurocentrism. Meanwhile, Zawisza cites the opinion of an Indian professor who could not fathom why mimetic theory was rooted in Christianity.

Scholars emphasise that introducing Girard's ideas to students is a significant challenge. Students' responses depend on their field of study, their worldview, and their emotional attitudes toward Christianity. Although theologians tend to be open to Girard's ideas, tensions persist within the theological community, primarily in the area of soteriology, given that Girard is critical of the concept of Jesus' sacrificial death. Simply referring to Schwager's theological reception of Girard's thought (dramatic theology) is not sufficient, as this is not widely known. Mimetic theory demands erudition from students and thoughtful guidance from teachers, including careful explanations of terminology. For example, in colloquial Polish, the term *sakralny* ("sacred") usually denotes religious or church spaces and carries positive connotations. In Girard's usage, by contrast, the sacred refers to a sacrificial reality marked by violence, which he critiques. When explaining mimetic theory, it is therefore important to avoid unwarranted simplifications, as Savchenko emphasises. At the same time, scholars who have embraced Girard's ideas should guard against a neophyte mentality and not expect his thought to evoke similar enthusiasm in others.

The questionnaire sent to scholars who use Girard's ideas in their academic research included a question about the significance of these ideas in their personal lives. This question was inspired by memoirs written by individuals who had met Girard in person (Goodhart, 2009). Most respondents emphasised the importance of mimetic theory, even when they did not find Girardian religiosity appealing. They highlighted its relevance to interpersonal relationships, such as marriage, where mimetic theory can help guard against the temptation to designate someone as a scapegoat without justification.

Understanding mimetic theory fosters self-reflection on one's own passions, which might otherwise lead to harmful rivalry within families – for example, between siblings – or in professional environments. Girard's ideas encourage a balanced perspective on everyday life, free from extremes such as unwarranted

optimism or pessimism. As an apologetic framework, it can also inspire individuals to defend Christianity, their neighbours, and themselves in a society that readily employs scapegoating mechanisms without admitting to doing so.

Girardian insights also influence consumer behaviour, providing an opportunity for prudent restraint and helping individuals to recognize that things once considered essential may not in fact be necessary for life satisfaction. In this way, Girard's ideas can serve as a safeguard against the dangers of disappointment and boredom.

### Summary

In conclusion, René Girard's ideas can be said to be known and employed by scholars in Central and Eastern European countries, particularly in Poland. Their primary focus has been on the societal impact of the recent pandemic and on the ways individuals and communities interpreted it. Interest in mimetic theory varies among scholars, depending on their professional orientation and personal worldview. One notable shortcoming is the lack of regular academic conferences devoted to promoting research grounded in mimetic theory. Meetings organized by the Colloquium on Violence and Religion are insufficient in this regard, as only a few scholars from CEE countries have participated, and just as few are members of this organisation. This situation may therefore serve as an incentive to develop regional cooperation encompassing CEE countries.

Professor Józef Niewiadomski deserves special recognition as a mentor to successive generations of Girardian scholars and as a link between Western and Eastern researchers working with mimetic theory. The following authors stand out among those who have written on Girard and his method, each with five or more publications: Jacek Bolewski, Agnieszka Burakowska, František Petr Burda, Morana Čale, Lada Čale Feldman, Andrzej Gielarowski, Maria Korusiewicz, Robert Petkovšek, Adam Romejko, Bogumił Strączek, Péter Tóth, Katarzyna Wielechowska, Cezary Zalewski, and Marek Zambrzycki.

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