

## (118) THE MIMETIC MODEL AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Does the mimetic model result in a deterministic anthropology? The latter was said to me. That means that the anthropology which results from the mimetic model, from the work of René Girard, should be worked out, in order to establish if the result is a deterministic anthropology or if that is a misunderstanding...

### 1. Human beings are who they are as a result of mimesis.

Human beings are not born with instincts. They are in no manner instinct driven. If that would be the case in a sense they would be determined. Humans are only "possibility", never "actuality", when they are conceived and when they are born.

This being only "possibility" does not mean that everybody can become everything, although certainly many people can become much "more" and much else than they became and are. Being "possibility", all humans have endless many possibilities. Having these endless many possibilities means that there certainly too are impossibilities. The amount and diversity of the possibilities of every human however are very big. Of some of them we might be conscious or at least we have a premonition, a dim supposition of something like possibilities. Now and then in our lives possibilities about we never thought show up. By far the most of our possibilities certainly always remain hidden, dormant.

We inherit our possibilities from our ancestors. In the endless long and multifarious learning processes humans experienced, in the endlessly repeated spatial processes of learning processes, the results were stored in the cells, in order to repeat them when useful or necessary. Parts of the storage are given further to the descendants, partly through the stories and the learning processes we go through. So we get our possibilities from our parents, our ancestors, both the good ones and the bad ones.

Possibilities of course are not only positive, good ones. There too are negative, weak ones. Susceptibility for illnesses is an example of the latter.

The development of a human being begins already in the womb. The mother, and, via the mother, everybody who gets along with her, influences the growing foetus. If she rejects the child, growing in her womb, she makes life for the child harder. When she sings children's songs, the child will love them the whole of her/his life, giving her/him a feeling of safety. From the

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sociological and biological, of biological and sociological, in the language of Oughourlian: of psycho sociological processes. Our ancestors were all different from everybody else. So the heritages of all of us, which we get through temporal mimesis, are different from each other. We all had, after conception, different experiences in the womb and during the first years of our life. So we all certainly have different possibilities and different difficulties.

So it is clear that our possibilities as such are limited. In the same time they are for everybody still so endless many, that we never can complain about the limits of the possibilities. If we complain, something else is at stake.

### **3. The limitations of the possibilities.**

Possibilities can't be endless. Endless possibilities would not be human. We would be devils or angels or whatever, although I suppose that even they are not endless in their possibilities. Maybe in such a general sense even God's possibilities are limited. He can't be cruel, he can't be a scapegoater or side with the scapegoaters.

Which are the limitations?

3.1 Every culture limits in its own manner, in order to make life together possible. Structures, prohibitions, customs, they all limit the possibilities, in order to give life shape, character, to make (cultural) happiness possible.

3.2 Everybody of us has her/his own inherited possibilities, and impossibilities. Both are certainly many, but we probably never will know what exactly is possible and what impossible. We all gather our knowledge out of experience, but this experience is limited. Possibilities are often, because of one reason or another, blocked. Blocks which again are acquired, in the surrounding world, sociological ones, or in our being, psychological ones.

3.3 Very important is that we are living in a world, dominated by the mimesis of desire. Which are the consequences of this?

3.3.1 Desiring always makes us unfree. It shuts possibilities off. We don't even see them, because we are fascinated by our desiring, and, if we see them, our desiring blocks them again. Our very possibilities become model-rivals or model-obstacles. We organise them in the context of our eternal rivalling with everybody and everything.

3.3.2 Culture tried to prevent this rivalling, with rituals, myths, prohibitions, laws, with as one of the consequences that certain human possibilities got more chance. Now that culture is breaking down, differences are disappearing, transcendence is fading away, out of our world. Consequently we all are rivalling like mad with everybody. We all become more and more the same, doubles. That again means, that we "simply" never know about most of the possibilities we have or that they never get a real chance. All our energies are used up in the fight. The contents of the fight is never ours, never chosen by us, taking our possibilities into account. The contents of the rivalry is always given. Our possibilities don't count as such. They are organised in and for the fighting.

### **4. The story of the Fall in Paradise.**

Our mimetic being, our being enslaved by the mimesis of desire, was already for the authors of the OT an enigma. For them it was totally clear that humans are responsible for what

happens to them. We cannot get rid of our responsibility by saying that we are enslaved, thus... In the same time and nevertheless it is clear that we are enslaved. How can that be?

The result of the thinking about this problem is written in the beginning of Genesis, the story of Paradise and of the ejection out of it, in fact one of the youngest parts of the OT, one of the end results of more than a thousand years of anthropological thinking.

It is stated in that story:

4.1 Humans could have and are destined to have everything they need, to be happy and free.

4.2 They are and they remain free and happy when they obey God. Just by obeying him, being in the mimesis with him, they are free, as he is free. Obeying him is not obeying a tyrannical, arbitrary law of a tyrannical, arbitrary superbeing. It is: Remaining in his world, being with him, being like him, free.

4.3 But, inexplicably, there is the stumbling stone, the possibility to be seduced into rivalry, the devil, to choose another way. Humans are that free that they can make their fantasies about how life and the world would be without God, just doing everything we wish, really being "free", having all possibilities. Listening to this seduction in our heart, following it, we change God into a tyrant and our freedom into slavery. We do exactly the opposite of what we think we do. We say goodbye to God, supposing that we leave the tyrant behind us and choose freedom. With the real result that we choose the arbitrary tyrant we imagined we left behind us, becoming unfree, enslaved, the victims of what we choose, the mimesis of desire.

4.4 In the consequences of this our choosing we certainly are victims. Pretending time and again we are free just because of that choice we are in fact driven forward by our desires, ending up in unhappiness of all sorts.

4.5 But in the same time, this is the central thesis of the Genesis story, our responsibility for the choosing is clear and remains clear. That means in the same time that this choice too is not determination. We still are able to choose and still are able to choose either freedom or unfreedom.

At first sight it is curious that a story, found in the beginning of Genesis, in the very beginning of Genesis, in the very beginning of the Old Testament, is one of the last ones written. But it is a result of all the experiencing and thinking of a small people, struggling with the many adversities of life and in the end with its very destruction. It is a result which makes several aspects of what happened and was experienced clear. In fact the story only could be written after the Jews got a clear insight, especially as a result of the struggle of the prophets to get an understanding of what happened, culminating in the "songs of the servant of Yahweh in "Trito-Isaiah", who exactly YAHWEH is, the God of the scapegoats, in whose presence there is peace and abundance. How was it possible that, God being who he is, we lead this life we are leading? How did we get astray?

## **5. To choose freedom**

To choose freedom is the choice whom we follow. Freedom in the cultural sense is the freedom just to do what we ever wish to do. It is an empty freedom, ending up in utter

unfreedom, in slavery. Always fighting to be free we are extremely unfree. This modern world, full of this sort of freedom, becomes more and more exasperated.

Hidden behind that freedom which we aspire at and fight for, concealed, is a choice, which is made as soon as we opt for this cultural freedom:

The choice to follow God, to belong to him who is freedom, to be in his world, in his atmosphere, so being outside of the mimesis of desire, so being free really to see the world and its possibilities, which are the real possibilities of our life, or to follow the ways of this world, to be in the mimesis of desire, in which we are in that totally other manner free, in which we are free as long as we win, as long as we are one-up, and in which we are unfree, enslaved, unhappy, distressed when we lose, when we are one-down.

Hengelo, 19.3.92

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