



# Rene Girard: A Biography

*Thomas Jackson*

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René Girard was a French historian, literary critic, and philosopher of social science whose work belongs to the tradition of anthropological philosophy. Girard was the author of nearly thirty books, with his writings spanning many academic domains. Although the reception of his work is different in each of these areas, there is a growing body of secondary literature on his work and his influence on disciplines such as literary criticism, critical theory, anthropology, theology, psychology, mythology, sociology, economics, cultural studies, and philosophy.

Girard's fundamental ideas, which he had developed throughout his career and provided the foundation for his thinking, were that desire is mimetic (i.e. all of our desires are borrowed from other people), that all conflict originates in mimetic desire (mimetic rivalry), that the scapegoat mechanism is the origin of sacrifice and the foundation of human culture, and religion was necessary in human evolution to control the violence that can come from mimetic rivalry, and that the Bible reveals these ideas and denounces the scapegoat mechanism.

Girard was also a member of the Académie française from 2005 until his death on November 4, 2015.

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