

The offer of unforgiving mimesis

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(Presentation at the 2014 COV&R conference 2014 on the relation Girard-Marion, edited and augmented with an excursion on: *The Trinity*)

Introduction: Binding evil

The Indo-Germanic term ‘offer’ connects two key-notions in the work of René Girard and Jean-Luc Marion: sacrifice and donation. Critics rejecting Girard’s way of relating bloody and violent sacrifices to the origin of human culture alternatively advance communication and donation as the true basis of human rituals and culture. Ulrike Dahm has recently analysed the communication aspect of ancient sacrifices (*Opfer*, offers), coming close to Marion’s stress on donation as a key phenomenon. But the Germanic *Opfer* is semantically linked to an operation with ‘binding-evil’ as its core aspect. Binding-evil is the translation for the multiple sacrifices in Ghana-Togo, the Ewe homeland of voodoo (*vodu*). On arrival in 1968, I was surprised that German Protestant pastors had adopted this Ewe term to translate *Opfer*, and that Catholics used it for the Eucharist, dubbed ‘The Sacrifice’ (in both French and German). Girard patently avoids referring to the Eucharist as sacrifice, since his mimetic theory takes victimisation to be the etymological core of the term *sacrum facere*. Without questioning his theory, though, I like to argue that the two terms of ‘binding-evil’ and *Opfer* may actually connect that violent aspect of the sacrifice to the values of communicating and giving.

Girard’s brilliant theory on the mimetic roots of rivalry and the link of sacrifice – *sacrum facere* – to victimisation, relates this analysis to the usual etymology deriving the Germanic *Opfer* (*offer*, *offrir*) from the Latin *ob-ferre*, ‘bringing to’. But if sacrifices are such a pivotal cultural element, the wide-spread Germanic term can hardly stem from a Latin composite. A curious dispute on the Gothic translation of Matthew’s gospel may lead to an alternative. For decades the Gothic term *aibr* in Mt. 5:23 has fuelled hot debates. Jesus tells temple devotees to leave their offering at the altar and first settle their conflicts. While the Greek *dôron* (gift) reads *munus* in the Latin Vulgate, the etymologies for the enigmatic Gothic *aibr* vary from a distortion of *zebar* (a term for victim in the Bible) to *ebr* (a Hebrew coin used at the temple). But why not link the Gothic *aibr* to the common Indo-European term *offer* (*Opfer*, *offiara*)? I remark that in early ecclesial Latin the *ob* in *oblatum* (and *offere*), was connected to that in *officium*, *ob-facere*, doing an *opus* (*operari*). But which ministerial job was meant, if not the ultimate task of what the Ewe dub ‘binding-evil’? And could this not suit both the mimetic theory and what Dahm proffered as ‘communication’? My paper will examine this question in

reference both to Marion's concept of donation, as the saturated phenomenon, and eventually to the notion of Trinity.

Operation aibr

Even as she comments on the bloody ancient sacrifices the Middle-East and in Israel, Ulrike Dahm insists that social communication is their prime goal, rejecting Girard's and Burkert's focus on the violent aspect. Still, granted that bonding rather than destroying is the rites' true aim, Girard's point stands that this communication is achieved at the cost of violence. This is true for the whole range of social exchanges based on differentiation. Mauss' classic study on gift-giving as well as Lévi-Strauss'ian structuralism stress this point, even if the latter refuses to rank rituals above myths as agents of order, and argues that creating harmony and 'binding evil' amidst conflicting interests is the prime purpose. Girard borrowing Freud's thesis on the originary murder may distract from the true role of violence in culture, which is obfuscated by *méconnaissance*, and needs a constant ritual reframing. In Mt 5:23, Jesus actually adopts the prophetic calling for that deep revision of the temple's sacrificial system.

When the term *offer* (*offrir*, *opfer*, as verb and noun) got liturgical prominence, this prophetic call was silenced. As from the 11th century, in fact, *Opfer* turned a shorthand for the Mass, or Eucharist, viewed as the re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. The priestly role in 'offering the sacrifice (*Opfer*) of the mass' and the dogma of Christ's undoing of the debt incurred by Adam's Fall took central stage. Augustine and Anselm are often associated with this twist. But Girard's frequent quotes, as well as Marion's latest study on Augustine, urge a review. The Eucharistic prayer II that has the priest give God thanks for "allowing us to stand before Him and perform his work" also calls for this review by calling it the liturgical act of unifying with Christ's body, since its context is anything but sacrificial. Using an inclusive *we* to imply the people it speaks of doing the work of God's reign. Whereas clergy tend to apply this to their role in the transubstantiation, an alternative reading imposes itself.

Both Girard and Marion prefer to speak of sacrifice as a verb, rather than as a noun. But if we extend this to the Germanic term 'to offer' (Gm. *opferen*), we note that up the 6th century the term was understood, not as *obferre* (bringing something), but rather as '*operari*' i.e. doing a work of service. In line with Jesus' injunction in Mt 5:23, I suggest that settling rivalries is the Eucharistic operation that has always counted as the apex, the *opus magnum*.

Given the conflicts caused by the clerics' sacrificial view of the Mass and the Protestant rejection, we understand Girard's initial criticism of the Letter to the Hebrews, which he later revoked. He tackled the notion of a ritual re-enactment of the Cross in the Mass as

an antique mode of the society to neutralise its inner strife by inculcating an arbitrary victim. He suspected Hebrews of relapsing into the old vision that the Bible was all about redressing. Later, in revoking his critique of that text as a modernist short-sightedness, and rehabilitating the idea of self-sacrifice in non-submissive sense, he forestalled the misgivings of defenders of Christian traditions like Marion. In terms of phenomenality, however, a huge dichotomy was yet to be bridged. For, how can the positive act of giving and communicating neutralise the violent root, and implement the Ewe idea of 'binding evil'? To clear this quandary I shall call on Marion's analysis of donation and Augustine's perception of self, which permits to accommodate not just Dahm's and others' critique, but also an ancient Trinitarian view of the Eucharistic sacrifice, which has recently been revamped within a Girardian context by fr. Robert Daly SJ.

From mimetic taking to giving

It is seldom noted that Augustine's *Confessions* lament his previous mimetic obsessions. This precious book is usually read in line with his later dogmatic writings that stress the role of the original sin and the indispensable act of Christ's salvation. The fight with the Manichaeans and Donatists captures most attention and turns him into a prototypical cleric using philosophy for doctrinal purposes to portray Christ's Cross as a sacrifice for Adam's sin. Jean-Luc Marion, crowning a long journey centred on the idea of 'donation', though, stresses that Augustine initiated a line of thought that now comes to fruition in our post-metaphysical era. But while Girard will sympathize with Marion's tenets, his idea of mimesis rather seems to oppose that of donation and its alleged metaphysical connotations. Before the notion of religious offering can be reviewed, therefore, this apparent variance needs addressing.

Marion and Girard are both committed Catholic members of the venerable Académie Française, where they voiced their religious conviction. Girard returned to the biblical faith via insights won by literary criticism. Marion, a cofounder of the Catholic journal *Communio*, by contrast, has always felt defied to rethink the link between theology and philosophy, and notably to tackle its facile debunking after Nietzsche and Heidegger's fierce attack on what was termed the Western onto-theology. Arguing that the Cartesian concept of being and its connection with the famous *Cogito* has often been misconstrued, he proved its compatibility with the basic tenets of Husserl and Heidegger, as becomes

clear if one accepts the premises of their phenomenology as analyzed by Levinas and Henry. While Husserl's *epochè* undercut the positivist line of Cartesian empiricism, his French followers, since Levinas, have lambasted the idealist remnants in both him and Heidegger, which, as Levinas argues, made the latter attack Western metaphysics as the root of empiricism and yet allow its grip to drive him to his Nazi-sympathy. Marion sets out from Heidegger's analysis, but rereads the philosophical method of *epochè* as an erotic love of truth, which is bound to reveal 'givenness'. He argues that all our knowing anchors in what Henry calls a 'manifestation' of the self replying to the incursion of the other who resists objectification. Like Henry he stresses that only Husserl's fourth basic principle of *epochè* (reduction) holds. It means that any noetic grip must be reduced to an erotic self-manifestation of giving-in to the awareness of being loved. All evidence point to this basic idea of loving that rests on being-loved. It is crucial for the mimetic approach, too, and also for a theological understanding of offerings. This deserves some scrutiny since it touches on the core of Marion's project to fight all idolizing that ignores the iconic. His fierce critique of Hegel's dialectical attempts to integrate the idealist and positivist strands that derive from Descartes' revolution pivots on this non-objectifying cognitive action that depends on the invading input. Phenomenologists like Husserl and Heidegger no less than Hegel himself tend to ignore this. While reflecting on the German *Es gibt*, Marion finds in the Descartes' *cogito*, less a self-contained being, but an *existence* that implies a two-sided givenness. He holds that the quandary can be surmounted if one accepts the fact of being 'given and loved from elsewhere' (*d'ailleurs*), rather than being self-contained.

Marion's studies on the notions of donation and receptivity, with their elaborate philosophical and theological hue, are as anti-sacrificial as Girard's project, even if the two have gone very different routes in respect of the divine. While Girard sees deities as a cultural spin-off of the mimetic crisis, eventually to be transformed by a biblical critique, Marion rather tackles the onto-theological aspect that has accrued to the biblical idea. Both share the critique of a deity that exacts a humiliating submission to the centre of a sacrificial scheme as the anchor of a timeless order imposed on man. But the question facing Marion is how to apply the idea of donation to the divine without aggravating the atheists' critique. Derrida had spelled out this quandary by citing the insight from Mauss' classic study on the gift to the effect that every giving turns the receiver into a debtor, or in Girard's terms: into a victim. In reply, Marion uses the notion of 'pardon', seen as a second gift erasing the indebtedness. To find out how he

may avoid the threatening *regressio ad infinitum* and a slip into neo-orthodox onto-theology, I'll connect his study on Augustine's *Confessiones* to the Girardian mimetic theory.

Unforgiving mimesis

Since confession and forgiving are notions that suggest a divine grip on man, we wonder how Augustine can help dismantle rather than bolster onto-theology. Marion's solution to this quandary comes close to Girardian insights. Mimesis actually implies the acceptance of an input from the other, to whom I become indebted as if receiving a gift. This causes a tension leading either to a victimising rivalry or to pacification by acknowledgment of common indebtedness. That each of us is a receiver of values we both desire means that my model too is giver and debtor in dual ways. The model gets admired by the imitator, but also counts as receiver from a third source. In this complex setting, rivalry and scapegoating brood amidst what Girard dubbed *méconnaissance*, a subconscious cover-up of our mutual victimisations, which implies a constant giving as taking.

With earlier studies on donation in mind, Marion's *Au lieu de soi* analyses the self-perception of Augustine, in which mimetic rivalry plays a mayor role. He stresses the Saint's erotic love of truth and wisdom, showing that this surpasses the divide between theology and philosophy and roots in the ethical bond to the other. He portrays mutual giving and taking as an opening to the divine, provided an ever-oscillating move of seizing and letting go prevents annulment of the other's uniqueness. Here, he brings to bear his phenomenological motto "the more reduction, the more donation", claiming that the givenness of being appears in proportion to the willingness to suspend intentional perception. Augustine's *Confessions* contains a deep insight in what Girard would describe as the interindividual recognition arising from the will to suspend scapegoating. Its practical implications are spelled out more clearly in Augustine's commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians. This sole, full-length commentary on a biblical book, which he wrote simultaneously with a spiritual guide for his fellow monks, is too often ignored. The key perspective of his monastic ideal is the mutual gift monks hold out to one another in their strife for spiritual growth. Since mutual 'giving' and mimesis are his focus, Augustine chooses the Letter to the Galatians for a specific reason.

While modern commentaries align Galatians with Romans to bolster the Reformation's tenets about salvation through faith in Jesus' sacrificial act, for Augustine the key of the letter lies in Peter's humble magnanimity in submitting to Paul, exemplifying the mutual help in evangelic spirituality. This agrees with the kenotic tone of Augustine's view of self that Marion discerns in *Confessions*, where God forms the binding factor between me and the other. In Augustine,

Marion reads the radical ‘reduction’ that ties in with Christ’s kenotic self-offering, in a God-inspired reply to the invading other. This he links to Levinas’ shift from the cognitive to the ethical, stressing that the invading other is the path to the self. Augustine indeed confesses that he cannot access the Absolute but in the other’s absolute call to refrain from victimising. Affirming the value that the other offers for my mimetic following, I may offer an unreserved, non-indebting gift of recognition which is an ‘unforgiving mimesis’ in two ways: unreserved, and a gift of the self’s subservience to the other’s valued primacy.

Anticipating Girard’s discovery of the novelists’ unmasking of mimetic grasps, which either efface the other or distort any acknowledgement of their source, Augustine advocates to his fellow-monks an operation of subservient mimesis. Marion denotes the kenotic aspect of what Augustine calls this key operation of faith. To accept a value offered for imitation is a non-competitive act of communicative giving, rooted in a specific vision of God as the Creator-Protector, who urges a relentless effort to undo all victimising in one’s mimesis. Helped by his triple *epoché* of donation, elaborated in reply to the triple challenge by Derrida, Marion actually perceives an analogy to a triadic perspective that accords with the Girardian views of appropriative mimesis, while still prioritising ‘donation’.

The Trinitarian binding of evil

In linking Marion’s reading of Augustine to Girard we may reconsider the linguistic, social, and theological aspects of sacrificing, understood as ‘offering’. As noted above *offertorium* – the act of offering – used to be read as *operari*. Eucharistic prayers thus relate Christ’s *Opfer* to the work God allows us to do. The rite appears as a divinely ordered act of communication, to use Dahm’s words, aimed at ‘binding’ society’s evil. This underscores, rather than denies, Girard’s vision of the sacrifice’s violent side, provided we follow Augustine, who stresses God’s order not to let the third person being reduced to the self. To respond to the victim’s outcry is at the heart of the divine act of giving. It is precisely because Girard sees culture as rooted in the sacrificial religion, that he can also view it as an agency to bar rivalry, via rites that contain a mild travesty of a first derailed act of self-giving. This is what Girard has felicitously dubbed *méconnaissance*, a re-enactment and reconsideration at the same time of the ritual violence. So, there is no ground for Dahm’s rebuttal of Girard’s idea of sacrificial violence, even if the routine of Semitic temple killings silences the disgust of it.

Still, Dahm’s claim that the will to communicate precedes the urge for violence holds good. In fact, the two may be harmonised by Marion’s reading of Augustine and by Robert Daly’s Trinitarian vision of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Phenomenology shows that, in mimesis as in

donation, competitive rivalry, while universal, is not primordial. At the root of mimesis itself lies a 'love of truth' that seeks to imitate value. This desire 'communicates' with the other, as it is critically defied to honour the other that is at risk of victimisation. In any reaching out for a value there is what Marion, following Augustine and Levinas, detects as a testing, facing all donation as well as all mimesis. This helps him radically tackle the idol of onto-theology by reading the biblical God in iconic terms as the source of a Spirit that binds evil by forestalling victimisation and scapegoating. Augustine thus allows integrating the notions of sacrifice and giving, provided both are taken as initiated in God seen as the triadic source of all giving and communication. A sacrificial giving to God implies accepting Him as defender of the other's primacy. Augustine's way of making God the source of all identity allows Marion to join the insight that Robert Daly deduced from his Girardian reading of the Church's liturgy and translate it as a Trinitarian take on the Eucharist. In line with the Letter to the Hebrews, which Girard eventually came to embrace, Daly offers a Trinitarian model of the sacrifice as rooted in the Father's gift of love to which Jesus replies by his kenotic imitation.

Just as Marion's Augustinian outlook anchors human communication in God's call for mutual respect, Daly speaks of God's initiative starting the inversion of mimetic violence via the Son whose kenosis the believers are urged to imitate. In this perspective Dahm's view of sacrifices as communication can meet Girard's rightful gripe that the rites root in lies about violence. For any communication is subject to challenge to reject idols and scapegoats, and to accept God's option for the victimised model, whose entity is grabbed in mimesis. In this light we recall how Daly's Girardian way of reading the Eucharistic in Trinitarian terms evokes the Lev 16 scapegoat ritual, where a white-clad priest represents God's own initiative of self-giving. This Hebrews relates to Jesus' non-rivalistic mimesis of the Father's love, turning mimesis into donation and initiating the new priesthood of Melchisedek's order. Offering is an operation of restoring communication and partaking in Christ's imitation of the Father's work in the Spirit by unforgivingly restoring the other as model. While, at first, Marion saw forgiveness as the highest form of the self-giving, Augustine allows him to see the gift of grace, less as a pardon for humanity's original indebtedness through Christ's blood, but as an offer emanating from the Father and inspiring the ministerial service by the disciples in Christ's Spirit. Understood as a sacrifice, it may be an idol or an icon: either a violent brawl's ritual end, or YHWH's sign to spread his order "Don't kill, I am the one saying 'I am'". If the latter, it helps us turn the model from an idol into an icon, from a rival into an image of the creative force that builds the City of God, the new Jerusalem.

Excursion. A Girardian musing on Augustine's view of the Trinity

Girard and Augustine not only share a keen sense of the mimetic nature of human activities, and the rivalries that ensue from it, but also a christocentric approach of the salvation, the key of which lies in Jesus' embodiment of the God's healing action. Despite his apologetics of the Christian faith, Girard unlike Augustine does not claim to offer a theology nor a philosophical reply to the debates on the Absolute. Still, he formulates a vision on the divine to suggest that the Bible inverts the common idea of God as the support of cultural rules and the base of all authority. He claims that the prophetic message on YHWH, which culminates in the Christ, confronts any victimisation and sides with the marginalised. The theologians following his mimetic theory elaborate this view that the biblical God is identifying with the scapegoat and unmasking the lie that underpins all sacrificial practices. In final analysis, this entails a basic suspicion toward any cultural institution for being tools that subjects employ to subdue or dominate any object. In this sense, Girard follows the ethical call by Levinas, urging the subject to acknowledge one's position of sub-jectum, being under-lying, inferior and serving, rather than dominant and superior to others. Augustine's conversion story in *Confessiones* already implies this way of seeing God as a basic challenge to man's drive to overlordship. The theological implications, however, of the mimetic relationship between the I and the other demands a further elaboration, taking the subject's *haecceity* – in the sense defined by Duns Scotus – as a starting point. Irrespective of whether the subject is pictured in a dominant or subservient position, it presents the sole source of one's worldview. Recent phenomenology values Augustine's way of placing the subject's consciousness in the centre, as the eye of the *haecceity* and the sole useful base of reflection on reality. But mimetic theory stresses that this conscious self is ambiguous from the start. While being the sole source of all conceptualised being, including the divine, the self borrows its content from a model, appropriating it to seek control. The self is a centre that produces perceptions, but its prime insight concerns its own incapacity to control its production. While Girard points to the mimetic origin of desires and concepts, including the ordering of sensations, Augustine and most Western philosophy since Plato suggest another source, namely a mixture of its ratio and external information. Phenomenologically this appears as the self being robbed of its autonomy and overruled by what feels as a transcendent being. The dominance of the sense object is aggravated by that of the rivalling model, or the other that demands total respect. In Girard's scheme this appears as the victim being transformed into a deity, constantly demanding sacrifices. This external entity is both the overlord and the self's scapegoat, blamed for the loss of one's control. The

reluctant acceptance of this ambiguity is further complicated by a sense of guilt over one's attempts to appropriate and manipulate reality.

Augustine accepts the Christian solution of this quandary by personalising the transcendent as a loving Father and taking the outer reality's vulnerability onto oneself. In Girardian terms, it means that the divinised culprit and its demand of sacrifices is turned into the sublimated self, who translates a submission to the outer reality into a self-giving. This form of sublimation of the inner ambivalence relies on the spirit's force of trouncing the dichotomy by a love of the self that turns into love of the non-self. While in apparent contradiction to a belief that speaks of three divine Persons, in terms that border on tri-theism, where the Spirit is hailed as the third person in the Trinity, this idea of a sublimation of inner duality is nonetheless in line, I think, with Dun Scotus' medieval rewording of the Augustinian insights in terms of God's love of the Word that embodies the divine essence.

To situate this I briefly recall the historical setting of the concept of Trinity. Theologians have always rejected any form of pagan tri-theism, but were open notably to (neo)-Platonic triadic models and their emanism. Rather than the threesome deities that were common around the Mediterranean; it was the Platonic polarity between the ideal and the material order viewed as an outflow of the divine essence into multiple reality that impressed them. They related it to the biblical reading of the opposition between God and the forces of evil. While presented as the internal order of the transcendent Deity, the concept of Trinity must needs to be related to the issue good and evil. The three divine Persons often appear as dividing tasks between them with the idea of common divinity being reduced to a shared quality, almost like the name of a holy family. Linked to the tripartite cosmology (heaven earth, spheres) and psychology (body, soul, spirit) the notion mostly referred to beings rather than the enigma of being itself. The medieval and modern conflicts over this doctrine, leading to various versions of Unitarianism, are quite understandable. Even when mainline Christianity readily accepted the conciliar and Athanasian doctrine, and while the triadic imagery increased its grip on church traditions, the issue of trinitarianism lost much interest. This arguably was paralleled by the decline of the church's influence and of the interest in the divine as a transcendent dimension. Approaching the tradition from the mimetic perspective and connecting the Girard-Augustine approach with Marion's phenomenological approach arguably offers a useful opening

Augustine's *De Trinitate* famously introduced the psychological triadic analogies in what now counts as a proto-phenomenological approach. In respect of the divine Persons, he follows the Platonic model, opposing the worldly to the divine realm, while arguing that God is not-alooof, but totally engaged in human reality, being actually more intimate to me than I am myself. He

translates the divine Trinity into terms of human similarity, referring Gen 1:26, and presents the mind's knowledge and love of itself in a triadic mode that returns in varying wordings. The triadic analogies clearly remind one of Hegelian dialectics, with the self gaining self-consciousness in a confrontation with the non-self, which affirms rather than destroys the self. This has justifiably been viewed as the root of the natural theology, which neo-orthodox blames for deriving the faith from reason and thus causing its present demise. Girard himself has also been blamed for basing faith on human factors. But when related to Marion's reading of Augustine the reply seems adequate and instructive precisely on this score.

Augustine's *Confessions* deals with the knowing and loving self-awareness. The non-self as object of desire or as hated rival is prominently present. While the theocentric focus seems to block its appearance, it clearly emerges, when Marion translates Augustine's main focus in terms of his own analysis of self-giving, particularly in erotic sense, as modified by Levinas, and indirectly by Girard, who point to the challenge hidden in that donation. The other is a challenge (Levinas) and mimetic obstacle (Girard) facing the self. It means that the true figure of the divine creativity is the overcoming of the threat this challenge entails. The other is both the source of my being and its challenging obstacle. In theological terms this translates as the God creator who asks for a sacrifice in the form of unselfish justice by becoming the defender of the scapegoated other. In phenomenological terms it means that self is requested to identify as the one who accepts to be scapegoated, so as to honour the primacy of the non-self. Marion infers that this strident conflict is the very origin of human being if the two sides are united by the force of love. The Trinity is less the pacific integration of the knowing (the Word) than the dramatic reality of a surmounted antinomy. It is like Hegel's dialectical sublimation, surely, but infinitely more dramatic. The God that rejects the sacrificial victimisation is incarnated by the image-Son offering himself as food, rather than reducing the other to an ego-supporting prey or scapegoat. While recognizing the dependence on a non-self source, this paradoxical union of being an image both of the self-founding and the self-giving is what the Bible depicts as the victory over the (mimetic) chaos by the spirit, or the paraclete defending the marginal. As such, it unites the first and second creation account. The initial chaos of an all-against-all was overcome by the spirit but returned in Adam's Fall, when he obtained knowledge of good and evil and abused it to start the boastful habit of rivalry and inculcation, which the Christ, naked on the cross, was to rectify. The operative principle of overcoming the chaotic division between the self and non-self is what may be termed the Trinitarian mystery celebrated in the Eucharistic Offer, not as the exchange of goods and grace, in terms of old orthodoxy, but as a neutralisation of a dramatic divergence that is radically beyond human kin.

Trinity and anti-sacrificial religion. A basic revision

There is little doubt that the Trinitarian understanding of the divine has been characteristic of the Christian version of Biblical religion. Both the Islam and many reformist movements over the centuries have tackled this perspective, which taxes the religious core of the Scriptures.

We need to focus sharply on the very origin of this notion within the early followers of Jesus that clearly had no intention to change anything in the pure monotheism of the prophets. Jesus was perceived as the summit of that prophetic tradition eagerly defending the majesty of the one God, over against all kinds of pluralist and polytheist deviations, which had brought untold misery on the people. This means that the Trinitarian reading of the “faith that was in Jesus” can never be read in the tritheist mode that has gradually developed speaking of three hypostases. Girard may help us recover the more fundamental incentive.

There are two crucial facts to be noted here. First is the radical anti-sacrificial option Jesus took in keeping with the prophetic tradition, and secondly the amazing event of the divine spirit urging the disciples not to decline and admit defeat after Jesus had been murdered for his stance. These two facts are to be read against the background of the inter-testamentary Second Temple theology, in which, on the one hand, the fidelity to the monotheist tradition of Moses was radicalized, and on the other hand, God’s unwavering support for the faithful witnesses was stressed. If God is the one who unreservedly sides with the faithful victim of unjust human structures (from the Pharaoh to the Greek-Roman empire and its pilots) and if the faith in this God is embodied in Jesus’ very life, there comes a moment when one needs to recognize a consubstantiality between God and this incarnation of his message. When John has Jesus proclaim that he is doing the Father’s work and, in fact, that he and the Father are one, there is something expressed that asks for a formulation.

A consubstantiality that anchors in the anti-sacrificial option for the victim is clearly the very opposite of the tritheism that started to pervade the discourses after the political rehabilitation of Christendom. It has been argued that Augustine felt urged to rationalize the religious base of the centralised power that now adhered to the faith in Christ as the one on whom God made rest all his power. But this must be understood contrary to the common reading. He perceived the danger involved in the Nicean and Athanasian formula of the Trinitarian creed and tried a reformulation not to prove Christ’s share in the divine Almighty, but rather the redefinition of the divine in Christ’s terms. Considering his conversion and his monastic ideals, we are to invert the perspective. His formula has been dubbed psychological, as if he tried to prove the Trinity on human grounds. But this reductionist approach misreads the *Crede, ut intelligas* which will resound from him onward through the Middle-Ages (notably in Anselm), and

rather contradicts his style of analogical thinking. The Trinitarian dogma does not explain the Christ's share in a divine might, but rather tells us to read the Father in terms of what Jesus made 'credible' and let our faith share in his faith (as Paul intimates). In this sense, the Arian revolt - which continued in the monophysite and eventually Muslim and Unitarian protests - had a point that Augustine factually came to accommodate.

For Augustine the basic analogy is that of a lover and the beloved being united in love, and the knowing subject and the known object being connected by knowledge. These images are more fundamental to his thought than a comparing of the three divine Persons with the mind, emotion and will. Rather than psychological, his view must count as metaphysical, but not in the later Thomist sense, talking about a God who *vult suum esse et suam bonitatem*. It rather refers to a dimension transcending any opposition of entities and 'victimising' rivalries that the human mind perceives. It argues that there is a unifying facet transcending all beings' haecceity, which factually imparts being. From the perspective of Jesus' faith it must be said that his haecceity never confronts the creating Father, as he refuses to oppose (or scapegoat) anyone, but rather identifies with the Father's love for any victimised being. This reading of the Trinity does not look *ad intram*, but rather at God's mediating creative act force that undoes any rivalry in the sense of Cusanus' and Leibnitz' inclusive option. Although it cannot be denied that Augustine defended the Trinitarian vision of the ruling church, it appears that he did so by showing how the divine is to be perceived from Jesus' anti-sacrificial and healing position (cf Jn 17:19 and Hebr 10:5-6). In Marion's reading Augustine sees God's nature in terms of Jesus' immutable dedication to any being, irrespective of competing interests. The Son's unity with Father is a creative Spirit, that transcends all competitive forces of non-identity. Rather than being the slave-servant of a Lord-Master, slaughtered to pacify His wrath, Jesus is the integrating image of a non-victimising consociate, whose faithful fidelity to their unity makes him come to serve and inspire resistance to the mimetic turning a model into an obstacle. We might call it a standing offer to sacrifice all sacrificing.

In this Girardian perspective, it seems to me that the dogma of the Trinity can be given a new Augustine-inspired reading in which *mimesis* becomes *offer* (questioning the power-structures inspired by the previous metaphysical constructs and also unravelling the age-old Thomist vs. Scotian spar over the motive of Incarnation as a false dilemma.)