



Episode 1,487: The State and the Roots of Collective Violence

Guest: David Gornoski

WOODS: You've covered this topic on *The Bob Murphy Show* and on the podcast of the Libertarian Christians website, and you sent me some stuff recently, and I thought, yeah, it's about time. I should have done this long time ago. So I want to let you set the stage for what we're going to talk about today by explaining to folks – give us the overview, and take as long as you need, to give us a workable overview of mimetic theory. And then I want you to give us some tantalizing hints as to how it can help us make sense of various things.

GORNOSKI: Sure. Well, mimetic theory is a social science theory developed by a late anthropologist named Rene Girard. He was a Catholic and someone who was very strong and took his faith very seriously. But he was one who he kind of converted to his faith, first as an intellectual conversion, and then he came into the spiritual realm of taking the tenants of his faith seriously.

And it was through the study of the great works of literature – he looked at Western novels, and he looked at Shakespeare, and he started looking and seeing a similar pattern within these great works that just totally resonated with the human spirit, the human intuition about how human behavior and conflict and relationships work. And then he turned his attention towards ancient texts. He started looking at mythology and studying great myths and archaic stories and primitive tribal mythologies.

And throughout all of these different exercises, he was a person who – he taught at many universities. His most famous university he landed at eventually was Stanford. But he was kind of a throwback to an older type of intellectual in the social sciences, kind of akin to a Charles Darwin, in the sense that Rene Girard mimetic theory is a grand unified theory. It's one of those epic, overarching, grand-sweep theories that looks for the patterns that link the different works of literature and then eventually the works of mythology into a comprehensive picture.

And he was convinced through his research of first, again, modern literature and Western works and then ancient mythology, and then finally, he tied it back into the Bible, he was convinced that the Bible was the key to unlocking the science of man, is what he would say, that the Bible was the key to all knowledge, particularly as it relates to understanding human culture, where we came from as a species in terms of our ability to have a common bond or a common sense of transcendence that unites us. And he concluded that the Bible is not just the study of God, but it's also the study of man. And it's only through the adherents of the Judeo-Christian tradition, meaning the full anthology of the books in the Old Testament and the New Testament – it is only in that shadow that Western civilization has been able to

advance to the degree it has in its understanding of even the physical sciences, because we've been able to understand the need to reject what he would call sacred violence. And so that's kind of a big grand opening.

But to start off, mimetic theory is very intuitive and very down to earth. Rene Girard says that human beings, we're the animal that imitates. We're the masters of imitation. Other animals imitate, but they don't imitate to the degree that we do. We don't just imitate on a monkey-see-monkey-do level. We imitate on a perception level. We imitate what we perceive the desires and intentions that our neighbor has. So that means we look at what our neighbor has in terms of a car or a house or a social status within the circles that we wish to be received well in. Or we look at a position in the job environment. Our friendly rival in the workplace seems to get promoted faster than we do, or our neighbor, the Joneses, have a car that we would like, or their kids have nicer toys at Christmastime than ours. All these things that really drive a lot of our desires are imitating. We are not creating desires from some kind of unknown fount of our heart. But rather, we're borrowing, we're copying the desires, sometimes consciously and other times unconsciously, of those around us.

A great way to help illustrate this for people, we can all see this, is if you see two toddlers at a playground or playpen setting where there's a bunch of toys. If one child picks up a particular toy, all of a sudden the other toddler immediately is like a magnet towards that toy. They want to pull it back. They want to play with that toy. And so the first child just was playing with it kind of lackadaisical, but now that his neighbor is grabbing and pulling the toy away from him, that mimetically makes him desire the object even more. It catches the bug. The bug is caught, so to speak; you know, it's caught, as you say. So they desire it back, and so they pull away. You say, "No, it's my toy," or whatever. And eventually, they'll get into a state of pushing sometimes, and name calling, or whatever it is that little kids do. We see this in all kinds of examples. And it becomes kind of an obsessive tug of war. And that's an example of, on a primordial level, humans desiring what our neighbor desires. Even if there's to duplicate toys, there's something special that the child sees in what their neighbor perceives to have.

Now, again, this is something that that Rene Girard is interested in in the world of desire, not needs. So we have basic human needs, like we have a need for shelter, we have a need for food, we have a need for basic mating and things like that, that are just functional needs that are more instinctual. But beyond that, our high-powered brains have all this capacity for wants, and that matrix of wants and passions that stir us seem to be the things that drive us to the most conflict.

WOODS: What I want to know is, well, first of all, is this more than — and obviously it is. This is more of a rhetorical question — but is this more than just a matter of people are envious of things other people have? This is going beyond that.

GORNOSKI: Right, it's stationing desire as something external to most of our choices. Desire is something we catch contagiously. It's mediated on an interindividual level. That's not to say it's totally socially constructed, like in a postmodern sense. It just simply means that we copy people on a deeper level than we fully understand, so that it's not all about envy. Of course, if you're imitating your neighbor towards achieving art or creativity or things where it feels as if there's room enough for both to flourish, well, that's an example of imitation that's a positive thing. There may be a little bit of jealousy, but ultimately, your admiration is what's

really fueling you. But the problem with what Girard is getting at with desire is that admiration can also have a fine line that leads to murder.

We can see this in the Bible story of Cain and Abel, where Cain was jealous of his brother's sacrifice being considered more pleasing, and he killed his brother. And it's interesting, because after he kills his brother out of desire, they're both doing the same thing. Cain covets his brother's good standing with God, and so he slays him out of covetousness, out of envy. And from that moment, the text says that he goes on to found the first city. So if we want to look for an example – again, whether we take that story literally as some do, or whether we see that as a kind of high-view distillation of what's happening to human societies as they work out the practice of sacrifice, in this case, the Bible's kind of summarizing at a high, helicopter view what's happening with the transition of humanity – that they're moving towards a place in which the founding murder is the place for politics to begin.

So we know about ribbon cuttings for whenever we open a new bakery or a new piece of marketplace activity, right? The mayor comes out and we cut the ribbon, we celebrate the business. Well, the ribbon cutting for government, the ribbon cutting for our political origins is, what Girard would say, human sacrifice. It's the killing of another. And you can contrast that with Romulus and Remus, right, where Romulus kills Remus, and on the slaying of his brother, he founds the city of Rome. So this is an illustration of how the Bible is helping us understand what other mythologies – including that example of Rome, but you can look at Egypt with Horace and his brother – of this desire that cities should be founded through bloodshed, and the winners of that story write the history.

But what's unique about the Bible, Girard found, was that, whereas Romulus was in the driver's seat of the narrative – he kills Remus, and then on his murder of his brother, he founds Rome in its glory – in the Bible, it takes the standpoint of the person being persecuted and being killed. And so when Cain kills Abel, God in the story says, "Your brother's blood cries out to me for vindication." Something has happened wrong here. So now we're getting the vantage point of the victim, of the person slaughtered that's covered up. In all world mythology, the Bible, Girard found – and you can see it if you read it yourself – is always showing the vantage point of the underdog, of the scapegoat, of the misfit, and vindicating their voice up against the collective.

WOODS: Now, this may seem like kind of a dumb-guy example, but just going back to some of what you were saying earlier, if what you're saying is true about the locus of desire and where it comes from, then this would presumably help to account for why, in a world in which there is greater and greater material abundance and poverty is being conquered at a rate never before seen, people still have a sense of uneasiness, a feeling of uneasiness. Instead of gratitude, they have uneasiness because they're looking outside themselves at other people and when other people have, and maybe other people are outpacing them, even though they themselves are doing better than anybody in the 17th century could have imagined anybody would do.

GORNOSKI: Right. Yeah, that's an example of what we're talking about here, is that sometimes when you have – in the ancient world, there was a high stratification with hierarchy, and everybody kind of had their own place, and there was clear taboos that you did not break to move up or down that hierarchy. If you were in a certain class, you were there. If you were the priestly class, you're there, and if you're noble – you've got all this different stratification of human life. And that was a way of preventing conflict from brewing,

because you're right, when we have sameness, that's where conflict is oftentimes going to stir up the most. It has something to do with our feeling of our loss of self that we have when someone copies us so much that we feel like we've lost our sense of self.

So I give an example of that that's a common place. You're an entry-level worker at a large corporation, and you look to the CEO, and you see the CEO, the founder of the company, and he has all these great insights. He's so charismatic. He's got all these brilliant, philosophical ideas about what the company's mission is all about. And so you really want to imitate that person. And so you imitate, and you read their little book, and you pay attention closely to his models for market flourishing, and so forth. Now, if you're the CEO, you look at that young entry-level employee, and you say, *Wow, I want him to imitate me. I love the fact that he gets my vision. He understands what I'm trying to do.* And so you want to encourage him to imitate you.

But suppose after a few years, that person imitating you imitates you so well, that now they're next in line. They're VP. And you're the founder, and your great insights have kind of got muddled through the years and have kind of gotten off the original paths. And you're kind of in a little bit of a tough spot in terms of the business' numbers and finances. And the board is saying, *This VP guy, he's so much younger, he's got all these ideas, he's got the original spirit of the founder. I think we're going to make him the new CEO.*

Now, that's when you're in that point, or even before that even happens, if the imitator of the model is still hyper-imitating the model in the model's perspective, then there's going to feel like there's a loss of difference. I was the Sensei. I was the master, and now I feel like I've been eclipsed. Who does this person think he is? And so in your mind, as someone who's coming into conflict with mimetic rivalry — that's what Girard would call this, mimetic rivalry — you're going to try in your mind to see how much of a gulf exists between you and the person copying you. Because you want to maintain who you are, your unique differentiation that makes you you. Whether it's ideas or a certain skill set, you want to maintain your sense of identity of the world. I am this guy, or this girl. You can go to me for this. This is who I am. Someone comes along, and you're saying, wait a second. Who does this person think they are? And in your mind, you're going to see all the ways that you're different, but from the vantage point of a third party, it's going to be a lot more undifferentiated.

And that can turn into conflict, because then Girard says that when you have conflict emerged in an imitational pattern, you're fighting over, sometimes it's a scarce resource or perceived scarce resource. That could be a mate. *Did you look at my partner? I thought you —* you know, I'm talking in an anthropological sense, a primordial sense. Or it could be over scarce goods. *Did you steal food from my hut? I think I saw you steal food.* No, you stole food two months ago. I saw you. And it goes back and forth. So that's what happens. You get conflict over scarce resources.

And so in the case of the CEO and the apprentice, the scarce resource is the distinction as the unique innovator, right, the creative force of the company, the visionary. That's the perceived object, right? But at some point, that object dissipates, and the rivals become obsessed with themselves. And it becomes irrational, almost. It becomes an obsession, kind of what Girard would call the push-pull of desire. It pushes us away from each other, but then it draws us back because we're obsessed with vanquishing our foe. And that's why in ancient societies, the most primitive societies would have often taboos surrounding the arrival of twins, because in their way of distilling sacred knowledge for how to preserve order, the

arrival of identical twins was an omen that an undifferentiated chaos was going to come. And so they would often kill the twins as a way of trying to avoid, in their mind, a kind of symbol for a cursed state in the community, which would be undifferentiation.

And so humans, if left to this imitational pattern, the Bible is clear — you know, with Cain, he kills his brother, and then it's, what, the mark of Cain is, if you kill me, seven people have to be avenged, right? And then by the time you get to Lamech, it's, what, 70, right? So all of a sudden, the Bible is deconstructing how human societies have this tendency towards out-of-control, reciprocal violence.

And so the only way humans and ancient communities stumbled on a way to resolve this violence in a way that wouldn't lead to a kind of chaotic, undifferentiated war of all-against-all, like Hobbes would paint that picture, we stumbled unconsciously into what Girard calls — and this is the second piece of his great theoretical work. His first is mimetic theory, mimetic desire. The second piece is the scapegoat mechanism, which is that human beings unconsciously stumbled onto a way to avert the rising tension, resentment, and stress that builds in a community when people contagiously catch bad desires.

So when we're doing well, imitation is the fount of innovation and capital creation and music and all the great things that make us human. That's positive mimesis. But negative mimesis is when we start to fight and we start to have jealousy, and it's very contagious, and then we get other people to join us through gossip and accusations about the Other. And it becomes very, very toxic; very, very polarized. I don't think we know anything about that today, right? But there has to be a way to resolve this bad blood, this bad juju — those words we've borrowed from those past times.

And in order to do that, people, if everybody's — think about it. We can imitate each other through smiles. Tom, I see you, and I smile, and you give me the biggest smile, or I give you a good, hearty handshake after you gave a good lecture, and you shake back and you just feel — you're imitating. But if you reached out your hand to shake my hand and I pulled back and gave you a snotty look, you'd mimetically, automatically feel, *Well, what's wrong with this guy?* You'd catch the same perceived desire that you saw me doing, and you might indicate to me: well, I saw what you did, and I noticed what you did was naughty or rude or whatever, so I'll indicate a body language back to you that, *See, I don't like you anyways*. We do this, and all of a sudden, it builds up into fighting in many cases in human history.

And so if everybody's pointing fingers at everybody, and it's just — and I'm not saying this happens in an acute sense, like in one day. It can happen that way. But it's just a bad blood that's brewing. Tensions are growing. There has to be a way to release that tension in a safe way. And so when everybody's pointing fingers at everybody else, it's very easy for that imitational pattern to start slipping into one direction, towards a common enemy.

And that person that's usually targeted is an arbitrary scapegoat. Typically, it's someone who has an aspect of external differentiation; that is, in a sea of sameness, when everybody's caught up in groupthink and kind of a hive-mind mentality, as humans are prone to be, someone who stands out in a very distinct and kind of arbitrary way is an easy, classic example of a scapegoat. And that could be someone who is disabled, someone who's got a hunchback, could be someone who's old or someone too rich, who, he's a wealthy king who stayed on the throne one day too many. We know that's a scapegoat. Or someone who's a little poor, and they're very destitute in poverty. And people say, I think that person's poor,

because they're a witch. Perhaps the gods made them poor because of their wickedness, you know? Someone who's easy to target without a big faction giving revenge, right? Because if you pick out someone who's got a ready faction ready to retaliate, that's not going to be an effective scapegoat. It's got to be someone who kind of stands out, singularly, or a group of people.

And then you scapegoat those people, and they would scapegoat them usually by killing them. And in ancient communities all over the world, we see evidence of ritual cannibalism. Why is this? Why do we see all over the world this pattern of ritual cannibalism at the earliest layers of human community evidence? We see it in communities that aren't even in relationship. They don't even have communication to each other. Where are they getting this practice of ritually devouring an enemy? It's gruesome, but we need to investigate this if we want to understand the origins of our politics and government.

And so we devour, or we expel, or we kill this common enemy, and we pour our accusations that they are the witch. So if you and I are fighting over who stole whose chicken — you know, we've got five chickens, and someone's got two, and all of a sudden, one of my chickens is missing. I say, "Did you steal my chicken?" because it's tight. There's a famine, or whatever. There could be a crisis that triggers this resentment or suspicion. But all of a sudden, we can turn to that person with the crooked nose, with the warts on the face. We say, "That witch did it." You know, that witch. Or someone who travels from a far-off land. That must be a witch doctor. That must be a demon. She put a spell on us.

And so we get enough groupthink around this, and then for those who are not active participants, they're locked in a bystander effect of submission to the will of where everybody else is going and the peer pressure, and they kill or expel this common enemy. And that ability to vanquish a human being creates a cathartic effect. It creates a transcendent unity, wherein the people who just participated in this collective killing now feel a sense of peace and satisfaction that the culprit was duly dispatched. And we can all kind of relax in the killing of this person, that our vanquished foe — you know, Darth Vader has thrown Emperor Palpatine down the reactor.

And so that's an inheritance we have, in our most popular movies in Hollywood, are all having the same pattern of that scapegoat mechanism, although completely Christianized — because of our Christian inheritance, it's been modified in a very dramatic way, which we could get into at another time. But that scapegoat mechanism, we all feel it whenever we go to a movie and we get that catharsis. We go into a movie, there's big tension, there's big tension, and then the bad guy's doing everything, destroying the whole world, poisoning the water, destroying the atmosphere, whatever it is. And then at the last second, we kill the bad guy, they fall away, and that, *Ahhh*, release. And then you walk out of that movie, if it was a good movie and you were really caught up in the suspension of disbelief, and you feel kind of high, a little bit, like, *Wow, wasn't that fun? Yeah, that was great*. And that's the catharsis that our ancient ancestors felt in a more visceral, deeper way when they were trying to make sense of the world and they were trying to prohibit a runaway desire from being too out of control.

WOODS: All right, David, you've given us a lot to think about here. And as I said, you've talked about this in a number of contexts around the libertarian world. So what I want to know is, okay, I listen to Rene Girard and I imbibe this information that you're giving me. How does this help me understand the world better, so that I can — like in other words, how would the

liberty movement be better off if we all understood the sorts of things you're talking about? What do these insights help us grasp better and, therefore, help us accomplish better?

GORNOSKI: That's a great question, and it's one that I've been fascinated in seeing how I believe mimetic theory provides a missing link to the libertarian world to a more grounded anthropology. It's a field in anthropology that is often kind of disparaged among some folks who are not in the academic world or left-wing because of how leftist it is and how deconstruction-oriented it is, and how social-construct-theory-oriented it is. And so there's a potential danger in that of throwing out anthropology because there is a great, rational, scientifically validated, sweeping case for an anthropological understanding that I think gives those who love liberty and love the human person tremendous insight into understanding why is it that, no matter what we do to explain rational, reasonable arguments for why the state is necessarily predatorial at its core, and wasteful in its effect – why is it that we most neighbors persist in their devotion to it?

Now, it's a common thought in libertarian circles that, well, the state is like a religion. And I would say, take the word "like" out, and then you have something about how important Rene Girard's theory is on the violence of government. It's not like a religion. The state is religion. It is a vestige of sacrificial religion. You see, after human beings fell into this practice of scapegoat lynching, of scapegoat immolation of a common victim, it becomes codified through repetition. Every time there's another crisis or something that might trigger a sense of scarcity, whether that's a famine or a plague, humans, the elders, they pass on this oral tradition, kind of a wisdom about how to restore order, how to how to restore the hierarchy, how to restore a sense of the differentiation between people when we get caught up in a feeling of losing ourselves.

And so scapegoat violence becomes ritualized when we have ritual human sacrifice. And again, that's another feature that we find ubiquitous around the world in our earliest forms of human government. In fact, Girard makes a really good case that the office of monarchs was itself a kind of, what we would say may be a product of a scapegoat that in some sense becomes delayed, because one of the things that ritual sacrifices have to put up with is being mocked as a king. Whenever a slave or someone is selected in ancient communities for ritual sacrifice to the gods, they are paraded with wine and orgy and all the pleasures and delights of the best of their society or whatever. And then they're then executed, as if they have to get them to violate enough taboos in order to make them an effective bearer of the wrath of the gods.

But that monarch is a position that – basically Girard is saying that, over time, these candidates for ritual sacrifice that get these glorification rituals prior to their murder, over time, they find ways to delay their sacrificial murder, and they find ways to preserve their station as a kind of sacred avatar of the life of the people. And that's where we get this monarchy. But you notice that monarchs often end in sacrifice once things go wrong, so it's almost like a great delayed sacrificial process, sometimes passing through their descendants before it becomes another time to execute the kings to preserve the people's goodwill. And so that's kind of evidence for how that sacrificial ritual has promulgated and evolved through the way.

But Girard is keen to show that Jesus' story in the Gospels really unmask and deconstructs the whole scapegoat mechanism process that all world mythology has concealed in the form of symbol and very extravagant language that you read in mythology. In mythology, the

violence is not gritty. It doesn't read like a news report; it reads like weird stuff, like Marduk falls on his head and out pops humans out of this head, and this person slices this person's ear and that pops something out. It's very weird and cartoonized to us.

And so human beings in our modern sense, we do not like scandalize our origins, because we're good Rousseauians and people like that, and so we want to say, *Oh, that's just humans, they had time to mythologize, and they just painted their dreams, and it's just kind of a little silly vestige of superstition. That's all it was.* That's what academia tends to see mythology as. What Girard says is if you look at the Bible and understand the Passion story of Jesus' persecution by the collective and then his death, you will see that there's — he would say literally a divine, but some people who don't want to get into the divine aspect would say extraordinarily brilliant, staggering insight into the mechanisms of ritual sacrificial religions around the world and their way of targeting scapegoats for their order.

So what does that mean for today? Well, first, we can see very clearly, politics has a lot of layer of scapegoats. We have scapegoats in politicians. Those are great examples. Those are would-be gods trying to tantalize the crowd and to move the crowd's passion to give them more power over the mechanism of violence within the monopoly that is government. And so certain factions want to scapegoat Trump. I think Trump is the scapegoat supreme of the establishment of culture in the West. And the reason why, of course, is because he is revealing the mechanism of government violence for what it is, because he doesn't use politically correct language. So we see politics are a scapegoat. That's an obvious one.

Political factions scapegoat each other, right? The left scapegoats the right every time there's a shooting. It's those gun owners' faults — even though that's not true. Or the right scapegoats the left and says the reason why we're declining is the left keeps preaching about do whatever drug you want to do, or whatever, so that's why we're going down as a society. So we scandalize each other with accusations, and these things go on forever and ever. So we can see from a big scale that the left and right are mimetic doubles. They're rivals competing for the same object of desire. In this case, it's political power, the ability to have winner-takes-all coercion over the rest of the country. And so the more they fight over that, the more they look the same to everybody who steps out of that matrix of politics.

And then the second thing, which is I think more important, is how real flesh-and-blood scapegoats are produced every day because of our government system. And there's no amount of reason or rationality that we can employ, in my opinion, to get our neighbors to fully reject this violence. And that's what I would suggest is something we need to take away from this, is that we need to employ more deeper, desire-based techniques, which involve telling the story of these victims.

So we see victims produced by the state every day, and I would say it's not a side effect of the state; I would say that the scapegoat mechanism of the state, although it has been Christianized and that's a whole other story, about how the state has been softened in its sacrificial mechanism, particularly in the West, where Christianity has had an influence on the protection of the individual, habeas corpus, rule of law, a common law that's seasoned and leavened by a desire to protect the person in his rights against the collective from just devouring him by passionate envy or whatever it is that triggers him. But you know, there are protections for the person that Christianity has brought into governments.

But still, at the heart of government is a sacrificial need to find people within the community, or abroad if it's other countries, who can get enough of a crowd consensus, that if we punish them by stealing their money through taxation or inflation, or threatening to put them in jail if they violate the minimum wage law — which, you will go to jail if you violate the minimum wage law long enough — they'll put you in a cage with violent people for not paying the decreed wage of 15. One day, it might be 16, and you say, "I would like 15," and they put you in a cage if you try to rebel against that law to the final degree.

So all these things are ways for us to collectively do things to our neighbors that we have this deep resentment towards that we would not do so as individuals. None of us would cage our neighbor for not paying their wages. Most of us would not. They wouldn't put a gun to your neighbor and say, "You're greedy. Pay 16 in minimum wage, or I'm going to put you in a cage with violent murderers and rapists, and you'll just have to fend for yourself. Haha." That's what we do as a society, and it's sociopathic if we really look at it that way. And government is a way for us to ritually do this over and over to each other and absolve ourselves of moral responsibility for what we're doing. And so it's a very outside-the-bounds-of-rational way of doing things. It's in the domain of the sacred. It's a vestige of primitive pagan sacred practices of binding a community together.

And I'll leave you with this: the word "religion," in the Latin, it means to bind together, and that's the root of the word "religion." So just remember, when we're talking about "the state is religion," it is the mechanism that we stubbornly as a human species still want to cling onto as our old-time religion to bind ourselves together based on the unity we find in excluding certain people, whether they're too rich, whether they're too high on a drug we're scared of, whether they don't want to pay the income tax and they get scapegoated, like Irwin Schiff was for protesting an unjust law, where he's caged like a violent person.

We're performing a lie when we do that, and we know that if we would look at it. Every time we put a nonviolent, victimless person into a cage as if they're violent, we are performatively bearing false witness against our neighbor. We're treating them as if they're dangerous. Irwin Schiff, was not a threat to anybody if he was allowed to be free with his family. He's not a violent person. But the state, in order to maintain its sacred unity, in order to maintain its transcendent, salvific nature as the religion that it is, has to have examples that are sacrificed in various shapes and fashions.

And unfortunately, this is a practice that we need to equip ourselves with mimetic theory and particularly the insights that it gives us for how the Bible defeats crowd violence, how Jesus exorcised — and I mean that in the "exorcist" sense — he exorcises collective violence out of people that he engages with in his time on earth. And if we can learn to imitate his example, we'll be better equipped to deal with the violence of the state we have today.

WOODS: What should people read on this subject?

GORNOSKI: I would recommend that they check out a book by Rene Girard called *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. It has a lot of implications for how the Bible is this radical, subversive opening of the of the sausage-making factory of statecraft and culture-craft, which is wedded together with the state and culture and religion — and how the Bible is moving us towards a place that we can create society that's volunteeristic, one that honors the person while still recognizing that so much of what we desire is borrowed by our neighbor, but still honoring the human person and not allowing the collective to gobble them up. So I recommend *See*

Satan Fall Like Lightning by Rene Girard. And there's a lot of other psychologists, psychiatrists, literary scholars, theologians, who are doing multidisciplinary work in the field of mimetic theory. It's got a full cast of thinkers that you can dive into in that world.

And another series I'd recommend is, if you type in "Rene Girard" on YouTube or on Google or whatever, you'll find a CBC Canadian broadcast, five-part series that Rene Girard did near the end of his life where he gives — it's a five-hour series you can watch. Each episode's an hour, with David Cayley, a broadcaster from that channel, and it's just a fascinating sweep. You take hour each day or once a week or whatever and get that five-hour digest with Rene Girard himself, and that will give you a good, strong starting point to dive into this exciting world.

So it's very exciting, and it's been a red pill for me. I know that word's used a lot, but a tremendous red pill. My first red pill in terms of politics and understanding government was Ron Paul, and he tremendously changed my life and understanding what the nature of this whole thing is about. And the second red pill that is on that level was Rene Girard. And both of their influences on me have fit like a glove and really made a lot of sense of this silliness that we see and the craziness of our times.

WOODS: And finally, how can people most easily follow you?

GORNOSKI: The best way to follow me to keep up with my work is to subscribe to my YouTube channel, David Gornoski. So just type in my name, David Gornoski, on YouTube, subscribe there, because I do a few different things. My website for kind of like my outline of my values is ANeighborsChoice.com, but if you want to see all my videos — and I do a radio program out of Orlando on FM and AM, so I'm able to engage these ideas with folks that listen to Rush Limbaugh and Dave Ramsey every day, so we're right in the thick of it here. And we're just engaging these strong critiques of the state right into the Zeitgeist of our broadcast friends here, and it's been a lot of fun. So you can follow me that way, as well, on radio. So that's the best way to keep in touch, is that the YouTube channel, or you can email me, David@ANeighborsChoice.com, if you have a question.

WOODS: All right, very good. I'm going to link to that at TomWoods.com/1487. And best of luck. I've been meaning to me — you and I need to have lunch or something one of these days. I know your radio program's out of Orlando, but where are you based?

GORNOSKI: I'm in Lakeland. I'm over in Lakeland, so I'd be glad to meet you anytime.

WOODS: Okay, maybe we could meet halfway.

GORNOSKI: Well, I do the show daily now. Monday, I go into Orlando. I do a live two-hour show from seven to nine here in Maitland, and then I'll record Tuesday's eight o'clock show on Monday, and then I come in on Wednesdays in Orlando and do a live show at 8pm Eastern, and then I record the show for Thursday afterwards. So I come to Orlando two days a week, but if you want to meet halfway, that'd be great too.

WOODS: Yeah, I don't know why I'm trying to plan this with everyone listening. I mean, I'll just drop you a line and take care of it [laughing]. All right, thanks a lot, David. I appreciate it.

GORNOSKI: All right, thank you. Take care.