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Transforming Space

Creativity, Destruction, and Mimesis in Winnicott and Girard

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The potential space between baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society and the world, depends on experience which leads to trust. It can be looked upon as sacred to the individual, in that it is here that the individual experiences creative living.

—D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*¹

In the fall of 1968, British psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott shared with the New York Freudian Society a new analysis of primary dynamics of human development. Arguing for the positive role of aggression in processes of infant and child maturation, he expanded on his well-known notion of a transitional space between the subject and its other. According to Winnicott, necessary to a young child's full experience of that transitional space are moments of ruthless violence. Aggression precedes and founds the human capacity for creativity and relationships. Winnicott's paper was coldly received by the assembled audience. Devastated, Winnicott returned to his

hotel and suffered a coronary attack from which he never fully recovered. Two years later, he died.²

Although Winnicott's insights did not receive support in his own lifetime, Ann Belford Ulanov, a Union Theological Seminary professor and practicing psychoanalyst, gives Winnicott's treatment of aggression a careful and appreciative hearing in her book *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality*. Indeed, for Ulanov, not only is aggression a prerequisite for healthy adult relationships, but also these currents of rage and anger in the child make possible at a later date humans' genuine encounters with the sacred.

In this essay, I build on Ulanov's positive assessment of Winnicott's work on aggression.³ I demonstrate that key themes of Winnicott's object relations theory echo in the work of René Girard. These echoes magnify and strengthen both theorists' voices. On the one hand, Winnicott benefits from a comparison with Girard. For some time, Girard's mimetic theory has been engaged seriously by scholars in multiple fields, resulting in a critical and constructive hearing for Girard's work on violence. Winnicott's innovative reflections on the role of aggression in human development never received or benefited from such a hearing. Documenting similarities in the ideas of these two theorists, I show that Winnicott's theory of aggression is also worthy of serious attention, especially from scholars who have already found value in Girard.

On the other hand, Girard, too, gains from a comparison with Winnicott, particularly in view of Ulanov's extended commentary on Winnicott. Winnicott emphasizes positive and life-affirming features that emerge on the far side of human ruthlessness. Because readers of Girard sometimes downplay the constructive potential in mimesis when they focus on Girard's articulation of the destructive features of acquisitive mimesis, my documentation of similarities in Winnicott and Girard's work invites those who study Girard to attend more closely to ways in which even aggressive mimesis is positive and creative.

In support of my argument, I establish points of commonality between mimetic processes described by Girard and developmental processes described by Winnicott. Although their language differs, Girard and Winnicott describe similar phenomena. Subsequently, I turn to Rebecca Adams' work (2000) in order to precisely differentiate between two kinds of mimesis in Girard: "loving mimesis" (as named by Adams) and "acquisitive mimesis." I confirm a like distinction in my reading of Winnicott in order to show that, for Girard *and* Winnicott (as read by Ulanov), mimetic desire is also the desire for God. Ulanov, drawing on Winnicott, understands the potentially transformative possibilities of a crossover to a God beyond our projections of God. Moreover, Winnicott's "primary creativity," to which we are brought by this crossover,

holds much in common with Girard's "loving mimesis." As a consequence, Winnicott's developmental theory helpfully contributes to Girard's concept of mimesis. Loving mimesis is visible primarily in Girard's reflections on the nature of a nonpersecutory God, a God of victims. Girard is more reticent about ascribing loving mimesis to humans in their interactions with each other. In that respect, Winnicott's developmental perspective on primary creativity offers suggestive possibilities for Girard. Building on Winnicott's insights, opportunities arise for locating loving mimesis within the living creativity of human experience.

ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR DIALOGUE: GIRARD'S CRITICISM OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

The conversation that I promote between Girard and Winnicott may initially appear problematic. After all, Girard has regularly expressed skepticism about psychoanalysis. Girard acknowledges that Freud very nearly uncovered the scapegoat mechanism in his analysis of the fort/da game of his nephew, Ernst, coming as close as anyone to recognizing the centrality of mimetic desire to the human story.⁴ But Freud "saw the path of mimetic desire stretching out before him and deliberately turned aside."⁵ Had Freud continued to focus on the conflictual nature of imitation, pursuing it to its final conclusion, his great myths of Oedipus and Narcissus would have been shattered, and acquisitive mimesis would have been revealed to him.⁶ Because Freud did not, after all, engage the sacrificial mechanism, Girard locates no fundamental insights in Freud's work.

Girard finds Lacan more problematic. Lacan is preoccupied with signification in the symbolic order and fails to account for the emergence of violence within that order. Because Lacan insists on an "over-absolute separation" between symbolic structures and the mimetic relations that attend the Imaginary, his system is wholly static. It also lacks a temporal dimension that would enable him to account adequately for human conflict if he attended to it.⁷ As a consequence, Lacan is dismissed by Girard for his "linguistic fetishism."⁸ As for the object relations theorists, such as Melanie Klein, Girard states that "there is nothing but conflict" in Klein. Girard claims that this conflict has "no real existence," because it "is fixed and given an almost other worldly status by the notion of the first relationships with the mother."⁹

Notwithstanding Girard's skepticism, I suggest that possibilities exist for constructive dialogue with psychoanalysis from a perspective grounded

in mimetic theory. I have argued elsewhere in support of the salience of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to analyses of mimetic violence and desire.¹⁰ Here, I focus on Winnicott and locate reasons to explore his object relations theory, as this theory is presented by Ulanov. Specifically, Winnicott's concept of ruthlessness does engage the sacrificial mechanism. Further, in contrast to Lacan, who focuses almost exclusively on the speaking subject, Winnicott looks at the nascent subject of human infancy and at practices of acquisitive mimesis that are already well in hand before that subject takes his or her place in language. Finally, Winnicott's work belies Girard's dismissal of object relations theory. Because the relations of the nascent subject with its objects (for example, the mother) are not fixed but dynamic, Winnicott reaches down into the messiness of "real existence." He does not fix human life on a rigid grid of theory. Moreover, for Winnicott, object relations remain fluid, aiming beyond sacrificial conflict toward moments of genuine creativity.

Indeed, the fact that Winnicott acknowledges a trajectory of desire not bound by conflict turns Girard's criticism of object relations theory back on Girard. Girard has mused that "there is nothing but conflict" in object relations theory; but he too has been criticized for appearing to collapse all mimetic relations into those of mimetic rivalry.¹¹ Whereas Girard only sketches alternatives to acquisitive mimesis and the violent sacred, Winnicott, as interpreted by Ulanov, delineates acquisitive mimesis and a violent sacred as well as creative mimesis and a nonviolent sacred. A further comparison of Winnicott and Girard's work will ground these claims, making reflective dialogue possible.

AGGRESSION AND MIMESIS IN WINNICOTT AND GIRARD

Winnicott and Girard share in common the notion that the process of becoming a human subject is fundamentally intersubjective. The Girardian subject emerges on a field of hominizng activities, structured, above all, by mimetic relations.¹² No subject preexists or exists apart from its relations with others. So also does Winnicott trace the inauguration of the subject to a social space, which he names "transitional." Although the word "transitional" suggests a space to be reconnoitered and surpassed, for Winnicott and other object relations theorists who embrace the concept, humans are lifelong inhabitants of the transitional space. This space is the site of symbol-making and the locus for all relations with others, including the sacred.¹³

For Girard, the interindividual field of hominization is home to an acquisitive mimesis that ultimately becomes violent. Desire arises in the subject because it lacks being. Looking to an other to inform it of what it should desire in order to be, the subject finds that its attention is not drawn toward the object that the other recommends but toward the other, who “must surely be capable of conferring an even greater plenitude of being.”¹⁴ Desire is shaped in imitation of an other whom Girard names the model.¹⁵ In contrast to Freud, desire is not directed toward the object of the model’s desire; rather, desire is rooted simply in the quest to be like the other. Desiring what the other desires because of the prior, and more basic, desire to be like the other, the human subject notes that the closer it comes to the acquisition of the object of the model’s desire and through that acquisition, the closer it comes to the model, the greater is the rejection or refusal of the subject by the model.¹⁶ Veneration and rejection, mimesis and difference structure the subject’s experience of the world until, in a shocking denouement in the dynamics of rivalry that sees the difference between the subject and its model obliterated by their common desire, the model becomes the monstrous double by whom the subject is repulsed and from whom it seeks distance.¹⁷ Desire has become death. So announced, the mimetic crisis ends in the violent resolution of the subject’s quest for being. Having sought in the model the being it lacks, the subject finds that its quest culminates when sacrifice confers a plenitude of being.¹⁸

It is not evident on a first reading of Winnicott that he identifies a sacrificial mechanism within the transitional space of human becoming. After all, Winnicott begins, not with acquisitive mimesis, but with infant play. Only later will sacrificial currents emerge in his explorations of human development. Attending first to play, Winnicott observes that prior to its acquisition of language, the infant constructs a fragile link between an outward reality, potentially indifferent to it, and its hopes and desires for a reality that is always present and responsive.¹⁹ The transitional object, a toy or blanket that the infant begins to favor as early as five months of age, enables the infant to explore its world. Arising from the infant’s imagination (as any parent who fails to recognize the special status of its child’s teddy bear will affirm) as well as constituting a real object in the world, the transitional object is a first symbol.²⁰ As such, it is both a subjective-object—a thing that is perceived by the infant to mirror its desires—and an objective-object, an entity in the toy box that exists without reference to the infant’s desires.²¹

The transitional also object announces in the human child a capacity to symbolize the sacred: like the child’s teddy bear, when God appears, God will not be totally transcendent to human life nor totally immanent within

it. God will be neither a projection nor a disinterested object located among other objects in the world. The mystery of the transitional space, harboring the mystery of God, lies in the capacity of the symbol to exist as the core of human being and as its other.²²

The human experience of the transitional space is informed by the infant's initial moments of existence. Its parents,²³ described by Winnicott in terms of a "holding environment," offer the infant a world formed of heat and coolness, breathing rhythms, soothing murmurs, and the scent of the body.²⁴ Significantly, the quality of holding varies and is never perfectly expressed. Even when an infant has what Winnicott calls "good enough" parents, the infant experiences moments of disintegration. An infant need not be neglected for it to experience gaps in relationship that introduce the infant to the fragility of life and to the coming and going of being.²⁵ Because no parents can be present for the infant at every moment, as parents come into focus and then fade away, they take with them the infant's own sense of being. Moreover, in responding to such threats, the infant typically overcorrects. Hungry, it aggressively gobbles the breast. Alone, it raises its voice to scream.²⁶ In each case, when the holding environment holds, the infant sustains a sense of continuity through gaps in time and space, which it takes as a reassuring invitation to further explore the world: "going all out," it flexes, bounces, and reaches out to touch the world, integrating ruthlessness and tempering it.²⁷

The ruthlessness of the infant alerts Winnicott to the positive role of aggression in human life. Aggression enables the child to establish the externality of the other.²⁸ Aggression is embraced "all stops full out" as a type of fierce loving. Infants and children attack the world, yelling, hitting, biting lustily, and just as ruthlessly dropping into deep and total sleep. Such aggression is unguarded and unwatched, lived rather than intellectualized.²⁹ So also when adults drive to the finish line, immerse themselves totally in a project, or celebrate with gusto, their "no holds barred" ruthlessness too is a subject *and* world-creating aggression.³⁰ Aggression is world creating because it makes things real, existing in their own right. When the infant howls as an object of its desire exceeds its grasp, when adults bang their legs on a table, the environment announces itself: it will open its riches to us if we can transform our aggression and cross over within transitional space, exchanging what Winnicott calls "me-objects" for objects that exist outside of us. Ruthlessness is a prerequisite to genuine encounters with the other.³¹

Preparations for crossovers to the other are made in infancy. Holding the infant child when it cannot hold itself, a good-enough parental environment supports such ongoing discoveries, enabling the infant to differentiate itself

from its environment and become a subject in a world of relations with others. By contrast, in the failure of the holding environment, a subject splits, hoping for protection against further loss. Going all out, it experiences no transporting of aggression into a space of possibility. Instead, its attacks are turned back, by either indifferent or retaliating objects. Turned back, the subject encounters only those “me-objects” that mirror what now becomes the subject’s own problematic aggression and absence of being. Rigid, defensive, sometimes hostile, a brittle self meets the world with doubt and suspicion. Frightened by its own aggression, it runs from it and buries it.³²

Intimations of a sacrificial mechanism emerge at this point in Winnicott. Failures within infancy and early childhood render transitional space suspect. This short-circuiting of aggression identified by Winnicott and brought to our attention by Ulanov is reminiscent of the failure of the modeling relation described by Girard. Girard states that, when the fullness of being promised to the subject by its acquisition of the model boomerangs, the subject is confronted by a monstrous double by whom it is repulsed.³³ Girard does not typify this confrontation in terms of a familial drama. Nor does Winnicott ascribe uniquely to parents those losses within the transitional space that place the child-subject at risk. But the mechanism of loss Winnicott does describe is more generalized than is Girard’s subject/model relation. Therefore, points of commonality in Winnicott and Girard’s views of failures in relationships are revealed in more subtle ways.

I want to access these points of commonality by recalling that, for Girard, the subject deploys itself in intersubjective space in ways that suggest rivalry.³⁴ Fitting the pattern of what Girard calls “internal mediation,” the object that the subject desires is perceived to be desirable, not because of any intrinsic feature, but because the model has named it as such. Desire is attributed to the other rather than to objects. Not only is the subject’s identity not strengthened by this mediation, but also as the model and the subject move closer to each other, becoming doubles in their object-quest, the subject is caught in a “double bind.” The subject hears in the model the demand “imitate me”; however, when the subject actually succeeds in responding to this command, converging with the model on the same object of desire, the model appears to issue a warning, “don’t imitate me.”

Clearly, their rivalry is not generated out of an unfortunate paucity of available objects. An entire field of like objects would not abate this rivalry. Instead, Girard claims that the double bind itself, framed by the subject’s quest for being, fuels desire.³⁵ For this reason, the double bind has ontological implications. The subject has imitated the model through a want of being:

“imitative desire is always a desire to be Another.”³⁶ The one who exudes a self-sufficiency and autonomy suggestive of the fullness of being is the other whom the subject wants to be. Quoting Shakespeare, Girard observes that the subject’s “would-be transformation into a God turns [it] into an ass.”³⁷

Mimetic desire now degenerates into forms of masochism or sadism. Disappointed by each model he/she embraces, the subject invests in lost causes precisely as such—as obstacles to being that must be embraced even though they always remain obstacles. Or the subject may reverse the direction of the impasse. Adopting the role of the model, the subject will deny objects to others.³⁸

The destructive patterns in human interactions that Girard ascribes to mimetic rivalry are ascribed by Winnicott to relational distortions of transitional space. That space has invited a crossover by the subject to full intersubjective relations. But if the subject experiences gaps in its nascent intersubjective relationships, it experiences free fall within that space. In response, it will attempt to recoup being in ways reminiscent of Girard’s rivalrous subject. It may direct destructiveness against itself in masochism. Or it may live a life of purported compliance with others, acquiring what Winnicott calls a “false self.” Vulnerable to stress, the subject “lives atop an emptiness, a gap that [it] dreads falling into but cannot fill.”³⁹

Alternatively, the subject who has experienced a loss of bearings within transitional space may veer into sadism, lashing out in its failure to connect with others. Ulanov illuminates such actions with reference to a popular cartoon. Like Linus, who is so wildly attracted to a new girl on the block that he just has to hit her,⁴⁰ the subject may respond aggressively to someone with whom the subject would actually like to forge a connection.⁴¹ In whatever multiple ways the subject short-circuits ruthlessness, exchanging the creativity of transitional space for violence, the identifications it pursues with others fail. Constantly on guard, the subject risks the total collapse of transitional space.

Interestingly, both Girard and Ulanov, (the latter inspired by Winnicott), turn to religion in order to inquire into the outcomes of these patterns of human destructiveness. Girard observes that mimetic crises associated with monstrous doubling are writ large in society when social conflict escalates into widespread violence and culminates in the sacrifice of a surrogate victim. In fact, religion becomes the primary cultural institution for the enactment of a double transference associated with the sacrificial mechanism.⁴² Violence passes through and among a gathered community, centers on a victim, and returns to the group. “It leaves as violence and returns as hominization,

religion, and culture.⁴³ For her part, Ulanov draws on Winnicott in order to assert also that violence passes through and among human subjects, returning as religion. However, from Ulanov's Winnicott-inspired perspective on religion, religion is not about sacrifice but about healing: "religion encourages us to return to the gaps in ourselves, to go back for what we missed, to look for the dependence that someone failed to meet, and so bring our needs to God."⁴⁴ Here we are born again into the spirit where dependencies that others failed to meet; God welcomes us. Most instructively, in this path of faith, "we neither produce nor originate being; we receive it."⁴⁵

Girard and Winnicott's assessments of religion stand in stark contrast to one another. Girard asserts that "violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred."⁴⁶ Claiming to set aside "egregious misrepresentations of religion," Girard labels Durkheim's intuition of the "identity of social and religious domains" as the "greatest anthropological intuition of our time."⁴⁷ Religion is what religion does, and sacrificial violence encapsulates its historical expression. Diverging from that grim assessment of religion, Winnicott grounds religion in his concept of a transitional space. Indeed, a "spirit of hope is the governing texture of religion."⁴⁸

Given Girard and Winnicott's different perspectives on religion and its role in human society, it initially appears unlikely that they would share any common ground. However, in recent years, Girard has elaborated on his theory of mimetic desire in ways that open a door to dialogue with Winnicott. Responding to persons who have questioned his apparent identification, in *Violence and the Sacred*, of mimetic desire with scapegoating, Girard has qualified his position on the function of religion in human society. For example, in a 1992 interview with Rebecca Adams, Girard acknowledges that "occasionally I say 'mimetic desire' when I really mean only the type of mimetic desire that generates mimetic rivalry."⁴⁹ He goes on to identify a positive model of imitation that is "intrinsically good" and expressed in "openness to others."⁵⁰ Such positive desire for others shows the presence of "some kind of divine grace."⁵¹ More recently, in his essay "Literature and Christianity" (1999), Girard names as "conversion" this sense of "personal intervention of God in our lives"⁵² and links it with the apostles' experience of "the descent of the Holy Spirit and Pentecost when they were filled with a grace which was not theirs when Jesus was still alive."⁵³

Notwithstanding his tantalizing references to the constructive work of religion in human lives, Girard's efforts to identify a positive model of imitation are uneven. Although Girard locates the one who is worthy of imitation in the Christian gospels, an anthropological framework for positive mimesis

remains incomplete in his writings. As Adams perspicaciously notes in her essay on loving mimesis (2000), Girard's mimetic framework seems split between an *anthropology* that documents "bad desire" in humans and a *theology* that establishes "good desire" in God. However, Girard's bifurcation of the processes of mimetic desire into two distinct arenas—human life and God's life—risks scapegoating everything human: one imitates Christ and shares in nonviolent love only by "renouncing or expelling a fundamentally violent human nature/culture."⁵⁴ Girard does not fully explicate a theological anthropology of human desire that would demonstrate that humans have capabilities that equip them to receive the gift of grace.

TOWARD A CREATIVE AND LOVING MIMESIS: INSIGHTS IN WINNICOTT FOR GIRARD

Winnicott's work proves helpful at this juncture. As his work is interpreted by Ulanov, religion is an environment "provided by a God who holds us in being."⁵⁵ This environment is healing to humans because each human's infancy and childhood has inevitably included gaps that have led them to falter in their reconnoitering of transitional space. Ulanov finds Julian of Norwich's words descriptive of God's work: God "knits" humans into divine being, "oneing" them into God's being.⁵⁶ Likened to a mother, God stays with humans through all their ruthless attacks, surviving these attacks "out of her own resilience" and, remaining empathetic, "mothering us into one whole person living through her shared experience with us."⁵⁷

Religious experience that supports human maturation into the transitional space promised by early childhood typically follows initially problematic experiences. Drawing on Winnicott, Ulanov suggests that, ideally, this space should include the subjective experience of a world existing for me and the objective experience of a world existing independent of me. However, in the absence of childhood experiences that result in a well-mapped transitional space, subjects either foist their being on others or find the being of others foisted on them. Ulanov describes catastrophic social consequences: "We feel entitled to act against others who do not accept the reality of our beliefs; we discard those who reject symbols that are meaningful to us as enemies of society; as groups to be discriminated against, even persecuted."⁵⁸ Ulanov here portrays suffering that Girard would ascribe to acquisitive mimesis. For Ulanov, religious experience becomes critical to subjects at this juncture, facilitating the rebuilding of collapsed transitional space.

The religious experience Ulanov describes is founded on Winnicott's developmental paradigm. According to Winnicott, that part of the human subject that "mothers," whether expressed by women or by men (Winnicott counted himself among men who "mother"), offers a positive alternative to the truncation of transitional space that occurs when creative aggression degenerates into violence. A gift⁵⁹ that "woos us into shared love"⁶⁰ and is expressed as *agape*, mothering initially entails full responsiveness to our desires.⁶¹ But slowly, as the human subject is held in this love, the one who is mothering that subject draws back, "making room for objects that do not immediately answer our imagining of them and thus making room for our aggression." Holding fast in the face of destructiveness, the one who expresses *agape* facilitates the transformation of aggression into imaginative work and creative living.⁶²

While it is based on a developmental paradigm, Winnicott's vision, Ulanov claims, has profound theological implications. Ulanov understands that "good enough parents" can facilitate in humans the development of a capacity for symbol-making that supports creative explorations of being within transitional space. However, some of us do inevitably fall through the "developmental net."⁶³ For these persons, it is critical that a bigger net of forces exists. Religious experiences within communities of faith offer a new developmental path that relocates the subject within transitional space in ways so radical that people speak of a "before" and an "after." In conversion, a new relationship is forged by a God who "eternally, graciously, enduringly" offers relationship.⁶⁴ Ulanov describes in precise ways how the Christian community of faith supports transitional space. To meet God within this space, one must undergo *kenosis*, emptying oneself in ways that mirror Christ's emptying himself in order to enter into human life. In emptying ourselves, we experience dependence. However, in becoming dependent, we are not regressing or losing our stance as subjects.⁶⁵ Instead, dependence replaces a brittle independence and fragmentation in being. In the gift of what Christians call grace, we arrive at a true self that is able to expand its relations with others without threat. Ulanov identifies practices of prayer and corporate worship as experiences that facilitate the connections with the sacred within a newly dynamic transitional space.⁶⁶

Ulanov recognizes that the religious experience she sketches may be hard won. Sometimes communities of faith let persons down. Ulanov describes persons today who find religious experience debilitating: rigid rules and the rejection of persons whose experiences and images of God differ from those of others in the faith community make the transitional space of some churches a blighted landscape.⁶⁷ She also cites the Biblical story of Job, who suffered

through the destruction of all the God images he had known and who plunged into a darkness from which all vestiges of support had been excised. For Job, it seemed impossible that there could be a crossover to a different space.⁶⁸ Like Job, we may experience a long, dark night of the soul.

Interestingly, Ulanov's analysis of Job shares much in common with Girard's reading of Job. For Girard, Job is the victim of a community that has targeted him as a scapegoat. That community, as Ulanov too has recognized, summons a God who shares its mimetic perspective and who aids and abets the community in persecuting Job. However, Girard observes that Job glimpses a different God. Ultimately the gaps in the structure of persecution point toward a different sacred.⁶⁹ So also for Ulanov, ongoing struggles and confrontations with the "incommunicable core" of the subject's being are not the end. Just as the God who persecuted Job does not carry the day,⁷⁰ so also does "creation inscribe itself" out of the void. Out of the broken mirrors of being, a new experience emerges that mirrors the mystery of God.⁷¹

Winnicott names this new experience "primary creativity." Winnicott does not reference with this phrase the human capacity to write books, paint, acquire wealth, or reproduce. Instead, for Winnicott, primary creativity refers to living "a shared existence with others but not from compliance, inhibition, or coercion."⁷² In the absence of primary creativity, we lack being. Indeed, because "there is not enough being to go around, we resort to protective and aggressive doing."⁷³

Why does primary creativity succeed in breaking open this cycle of aggression? When humans assume the mothering role, humans mirror God's own activity. Just as God has lent us God's being, entered into being one with us, and supported our being, so also do those who assume a mothering role lend us being and support our going on in being, wooing us into a creative discovery of that being.⁷⁴ According to Ulanov, primary creativity works because that aspect of human life that expresses *agape* does not compete in the sweepstakes of desire. The reward of one who, like a mother, offers *agape* to a child is the being of the child.⁷⁵

Ulanov's insights about primary creativity share striking similarities with Rebecca Adams's notion of loving mimesis. Adams analyzes the origins of mimesis within the mechanism by which subjectivity is created. Although she does not ascribe to this mechanism a developmental context, she does call the subject of mimesis a "proto-subject," explaining that a subject's "subjectivity is unformed or incomplete prior to the act of imitation."⁷⁶ Therefore, the mechanism she describes lends itself to comparison with a Winnicott-based developmental model of the nascent subject. For her part, Adams suggests

that, in contrast to acquisitive mimesis, positive or loving mimesis takes form when the mediator/model desires as its object the subjectivity of the proto-subject. After all, the proto-subject, being unformed, is not yet truly a subject, but a kind of object. In Adams's scenario, in imitating the desire of the model, the proto-subject would desire his or her own subjectivity. Loving mimesis breaks open the double bind that has threatened to capture the proto-subject within the constraints of acquisitive mimesis. Moreover, if the model reciprocally imitates the proto-subject's desire, the model and the proto-subject mutually embrace the dynamic of loving mimesis, which is generative of transformation in human society, not sacrifice.

In a manner akin to Ulanov's, Jim Fodor, in his essay on Christian mimesis, also links *kenosis* with positive forms of mimesis.⁷⁷ Fodor arrives at *kenosis* in his efforts to describe discipleship that is grounded in God rather than in desires of individuals that typically devolve into acquisitive rivalry. The fact that *kenosis* is understood as a "giving over" and "relinquishing" points to a God who is the very movement of self-giving.⁷⁸ Where Ulanov has drawn on the metaphor of a mother's love to illustrate *kenosis*, Fodor uses the metaphor of a Father's love, the movement of God within the Trinity. Key to *kenosis* is the human capacity to mirror God's self-emptying as it is expressed not only in the doctrine of the Trinity but also in the doctrine of Creation. Citing John Milbank, Fodor notes that creative giving by God is not a loss of being but a self-emptying in order to be. In God's giving up of God's self and in humans' imitating God and giving themselves up in Christian mimesis, both receive back being, but in life-giving rather than sacrificial ways.⁷⁹

Adams and Ulanov's visions, linked with the Christian images of *kenosis* and *agape*, suggest that loving mimesis and primary creativity attest to a common phenomenon. For each, to a nascent or proto-subject is promised a potential for nonsacrificial relationships with others. *Agape*, exemplified by human and divine mothering, is a gift to humans that, when embraced, invites humans into a space characterized by shared creativity and sacred play rather than by sacrifice and a debilitating double bind. *Kenosis* exemplifies the same within the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Creation. Together, Adams and Ulanov's visions enhance our appreciation for the achievements of Winnicott and Girard. Winnicott's theory of aggression can now be acknowledged for its significant insights into key developmental milestones in human lives. So also Winnicott's developmental theory of the emergence of primary creativity can augment Girard's already powerful account of acquisitive mimesis, strengthening Girard's own brief reflections on positive or loving mimesis. The resulting portrait of the multiple currents of mimesis in human lives is

made all the more compelling by its joint association with the work of Girard and Winnicott.

NOTES

1. D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971), 103.
2. Ann Bedford Ulanov, *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 108–9.
3. The vehicle for my discussion of Winnicott's ideas on aggression and religion is Ulanov's commentary on his work. Winnicott never articulated a theory of religion in a focused and systematic way. Therefore, his views on religion are scattered throughout his work. Ulanov has collected from Winnicott's body of work these references to religion and organized them thematically as appendix 2 to *Finding Space*. Drawing on this collection of quotations, Ulanov offers the first systematic perspective on Winnicott's views on religion. Because Ulanov's own critical reflections are closely interwoven, throughout, with her summary of Winnicott, I underscore that my reading of Winnicott in this essay is always Winnicott as presented by Ulanov. I aim to show that the resulting discussion of Winnicott, however much it is encased within Ulanov's own hermeneutic, is highly suggestive for our reflections on creativity, destruction, and mimesis in Girard.
4. René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 407.
5. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 171.
6. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 408.
7. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 402.
8. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 185.
9. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 361.
10. Martha Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
11. Rebecca Adams, "Loving Mimesis and Girard's 'Scapegoat of the Text': A Creative Reassessment of Mimetic Desire," in *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2000), 281–82.
12. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 35, 84–104.
13. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 5–6.
14. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 146.
15. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 170.
16. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 146–47.
17. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 160–61.
18. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 146; Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 29.

19. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 16.
20. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 31.
21. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 16.
22. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 35–36.
23. Winnicott actually specifies mothers, not both parents, as the locus of the holding environment. However, Ulanov argues that Winnicott does not harbor essentialist views about mothers. In our current society, with shared parenting of infants, Winnicott would be comfortable identifying a capacity to mother in fathers as well as mothers (Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 73, 80–82).
24. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 44.
25. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 44.
26. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 50.
27. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 56–57.
28. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 52.
29. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 108.
30. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 55.
31. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 108, 111.
32. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 61.
33. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 160–61.
34. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 146–47.
35. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 147–48.
36. Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), 83.
37. Girard, “Literature and Christianity: A Personal View,” in *Philosophy and Literature* 23 (1999): 36.
38. Chris Fleming, *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 30–34.
39. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 118.
40. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 118.
41. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 118.
42. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 49.
43. Girard in Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, ed., *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 13.
44. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 120.
45. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 120.
46. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 31.
47. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 82.

48. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 6.
49. René Girard, "Violence, Difference, Sacrifice: An Interview with René Girard, with Rebecca Adams," in *Violence, Difference, Sacrifice: Conversations on Myth and Culture in Theology and Literature*, ed. Rebecca Adams, special issue, *Religion and Literature* 25, no. 2 (1992): 23.
50. Girard, "Violence, Difference, Sacrifice," 24.
51. Girard, "Violence, Difference, Sacrifice," 25.
52. Girard, "Literature and Christianity," 35.
53. Girard, "Literature and Christianity," 43.
54. Adams, "Loving Mimesis and Girard's 'Scapegoat of the Text,'" 286.
55. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 49.
56. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 49.
57. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 56. The idealization of mothers has historically had negative consequences for women. Unable to embody the ideal, women have been victims of scapegoating. Moreover, in today's world, valorization of the maternal role plays to cultural stereotypes that the women's movement has repeatedly challenged. Ulanov recognizes that the language of parenthood in Winnicott's developmental account and in her theology carries risks, and she addresses them in defending her decision to characterize primary creativity as maternal. She notes that she makes a nonexclusive claim about connections between human mothers and a maternal model of primary creativity (*Finding Space*, 80). Men can equally well mother children, emulating primary creativity. God, whose being is beyond gender, clearly does so. Moreover, Winnicott has done more than any other psychoanalyst, Ulanov suggests, to challenge the idealization of mothers and the destructive consequences of that idealization for women and their families. His concept of the "good enough" mother and his acknowledgment that real mothers and real analysts sometimes hate their children or clients bring a healthy realism to human relations (*Finding Space*, 81).
58. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 73.
59. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 73.
60. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 74.
61. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 77.
62. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 77.
63. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 121.
64. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 122.
65. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 63.
66. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 64.
67. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 40.
68. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 114.
69. René Girard, *Job, the Victim of His People*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 138–45.

70. Girard, *Job, The Victim of His People*, 125–32.
71. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 129.
72. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 133.
73. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 135.
74. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 137.
75. Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 78.
76. Adams, “Loving Mimesis and Girard’s ‘Scapegoat of the Text,’” 306.
77. Jim Fodor, “Christian Discipleship as Participatory Imitation: Theological Reflection on Girardian Themes,” in *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2000), 256.
78. Fodor, “Christian Discipleship as Participatory Imitation,” 256.
79. Fodor, “Christian Discipleship as Participatory Imitation,” 259, 272.