

Contemporary Russian Conservatism

Problems, Paradoxes, and Perspectives

Edited by

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Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Contributors x

PART 1

Introduction

- 1 Dilemmas and Paradoxes of Contemporary Russian Conservatism:
Introduction 3
Mikhail Suslov and Dmitry Uzlaner
- 2 A History of Russian Conservatism, from the 18th Century to the End of
the 20th Century 36
*Mikhail Loukianov, Kåre Johan Mjør, Susanna Rabow-Edling and Mikhail
Suslov*

PART 2

Conceptualizing Conservatism

- 3 Russian Conservatism as an Ideology: The Logic of Isolationism 77
Mikhail Suslov
- 4 The Logic of Scapegoating in Contemporary Russian Moral
Conservatism 103
Dmitry Uzlaner
- 5 Postmodernity and Modernity as Political Terms in Russia's New
Conservatism 128
Katharina Bluhm

PART 3

Russian Conservative Tradition in the Post-Soviet and International Context

- 6 The Great Expectations of Russian Young Conservatism 153
Alexander Pavlov

- 7 Mirror Games? Ideological Resonances between Russian and US Radical Conservatism 177
Marlene Laruelle

PART 4

The Geopolitical Dimension

- 8 Russia's Contemporary Exceptionalism and Geopolitical Conservatism 207
Alicja Curanović
- 9 "Making Europe Great Again": Anti-Western Criticism from Orthodox Conservative Actors Online 234
Ekaterina Grishaeva
- 10 From Expansion to Seclusion and Back Again: Boris Mezhuev's Isolationism and Its Roots in Solzhenitsyn and Tsymbursky 257
Irina Karlsohn

PART 5

History and Memory Narratives in Russian Conservatism

- 11 "Russia's Thousand-Year History": Claiming a Past in Contemporary Russian Conservative Thought 281
Kåre Johan Mjør
- 12 The Monument to Grand Prince Vladimir in Moscow and the Problem of Conservatism 304
Per-Arne Bodin

PART 6

Religion and Traditional Values

- 13 Eastern Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and (Neo)Palamite Tradition in Post-Soviet Russia 321
Andrey Shishkov

- 14 Russian Neoconservatism and Apocalyptic Imperialism 347
Victor Shnirelman
- 15 Framing “Gay Propaganda”: Morality Policy Arguments and the Russian
Orthodox Church 379
Caroline Hill
- Index 399

The Logic of Scapegoating in Contemporary Russian Moral Conservatism

Dmitry Uzlaner

“Human beings are narrative creatures. Narrativity ... is at the heart of our identity.” This observation by Robert Bellah¹ serves as the point of departure for my research on moral conservatism, which I examine as a particular narrative, tale, or story that people tell each other and into which they interweave concrete arguments with respect to one or another issue. This essay, based on Russian sources, presents the results of reflections concerning the “turn to traditional spiritual-moral values,” which took place in Russian policy in 2012² and which has brought the issues of morals, values, and civilizational distinctiveness to the foreground of sociopolitical discussions. Marlene Laruelle calls this situation the “morality turn.”³ I have already reflected on this issue with respect to the ideas of Jacques Lacan, and this essay constitutes a development of some positions from my previous work.⁴

My analysis is based on the idea that the Russian storyline is merely a local refraction of a universal and transcultural phenomenon. Its characteristics, for instance, might be traced to the observable rise in conservatism throughout the entire Western world. This conservatism is visible in both Viktor Orbán, the

- 1 Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge, MA: 2011), 34.
- 2 Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, “The Pussy Riot Affair and Putin’s Démarche from Sovereign Democracy to Sovereign Morality,” *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (2014): 615–21; Elena Stepanova, “The Spiritual and Moral Foundation of Civilization in Every Nation for Thousands of Years: The Traditional Values Discourse in Russia,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 16, nos. 2–3 (2015): 119–36; Alexander Agadjanian, “Tradition, Morality and Community: Elaborating Orthodox Identity in Putin’s Russia,” *Religion, State and Society* 1 (2017): 39–60; Jørdar Østbø, “Securitizing ‘Spiritual-Moral Values’ in Russia,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 33, no. 3 (2017): 200–216; Neil Robinson, “Russian Neo-patrimonialism and Putin’s ‘Cultural Turn,’” *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 2 (2017): 348–66.
- 3 Marlene Laruelle, “Beyond Anti-Westernism: The Kremlin’s Narrative about Russia’s European Identity and Mission,” PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo no. 326, *Ponars Eurasia: New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia*, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm326_Laruelle_August2014.pdf>.
- 4 Dmitry Uzlaner, “Perverse Conservatism: A Lacanian Interpretation of Russia’s Turn to Traditional Values,” *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 22, no. 2 (2017): 173–92.

Hungarian leader who speaks of European wealth and prosperity being threatened by a horde of intruders,⁵ and Donald Trump, the president of the United States, who enumerated the Western values being threatened by both internal and external enemies during his speech in Poland.⁶

1 “Raising the Electorate of the Antichrist”: The Fight against Juvenile Justice in Russia

From a narrative standpoint, moral conservatism is not very versatile. One could interpret it as stemming from a single narrative foundation. This narrative’s storyline is rather simple: For any number of reasons, enemies are encircling and hoping to destroy the “beleaguered fortress” of the traditional family, the traditional way of life, “cultural-spiritual distinctiveness,” and “civilizational identity.” Although some of these enemies come from outside, the vast majority of the danger comes particularly from internal enemies who, having opened the gate or having communicated secret entryways, might let in an adversary at any moment. I will call this unsophisticated storyline the “meta-narrative of moral conservatism,” by which I mean the narrative’s common canvas onto which specific storylines, dialogues, and dramatic junctures are painted with assorted variations.⁷

I will illustrate this narrative framework with the concrete example of the opposition by certain individuals in Russia to “juvenile justice” under the guise of the fight for “traditional moral values.” Juvenile justice in and of itself is a complex subject that requires specialized knowledge in the spheres of law, psychology, and other disciplines.⁸ When moral conservatives in Russia bring it up, they approach it only in its narrowest and most particular sense, with the guiding question: is it really necessary to develop mechanisms for the state to interfere in the life of families by allowing children, for example, the right to

5 See a typical speech: “Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s Opening Speech at the Second Budapest Demographic Forum,” About Hungary, 29 May 2017, <<http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-opening-speech-at-the-2nd-budapest-demographic-forum/>>.

6 Commentary on Trump’s speech in Poland is available here: Christian Davies, Patrick Wintour, and Jamie Grierson, “Trump Says West Is at Risk, during Nationalist Speech in Poland,” *The Guardian*, 6 July 2017, <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/06/donald-trump-warn-future-west-in-doubt-warsaw-speech>>.

7 For the basic elements of this construction, see Uzlaner, “Perverse Conservatism.”

8 For a history of the juvenile justice system in Russia, see E. Bystrova and M. Tcherni, “Juvenile Justice in Russia,” in *The Handbook of Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*, ed. Marvin D. Krohn and Jodi Lane (Oxford: 2015), 40–48.

complain to special services about their parents and ultimately to have these children removed from their homes if some kind of danger threatens their lives or well-being?

Arguments for and against this question are possible. The question of the public significance of juvenile justice, however, only begins when this specialized discussion fits into a narrative and becomes a captivating story that some people tell others. Elena Bystrova and Maria Tcherni write:

Some powerful forces interested in maintaining the status quo stirred up a media campaign against juvenile justice reform in Russia, painting it (in the “best” traditions of Soviet propaganda) as attempts by the West, under the auspices of caring for the rights of children, to break apart Russian families and taint Russian traditions of child-rearing involving strict discipline (corporal punishment).⁹

These powers are closely connected with the Russian Orthodox Church, which Bystrova and Tcherni argue “is one of the most vocal opponents of juvenile justice reform” and likely serves as the major institutional authority of this moral conservatism.¹⁰

As the result of such a narrative framework, the issue of juvenile justice is expanding to an unbelievable scale.¹¹ It seamlessly combines with other topics—be they LGBT rights, abortion, or euthanasia—and is entwined into the epic storyline about the battle between good and evil and about the approaching end times, the culmination of which must be the coming of the Antichrist. According to this narrative, we are supposedly faced not merely with a series of technical legislative projects designed to secure a child’s rights or to limit domestic abuse; rather, we are faced with a conscious and well-planned campaign for the systematic destruction of society. The purported aim consists of women giving birth to as few children as possible, thus eliminating the multi-child family so that the institution of the (traditional) family as such will be irreparably destroyed. Characteristically merging all issues into a single mass, those who fight against the juvenile justice system write:

9 Bystrova and Tcherni, “Juvenile Justice,” 47.

10 Ibid.

11 This narrative is reconstructed on the basis of the materials of primary web-based sources that specialize in the war against juvenile justice, including “Russkaia narodnaia liniia” (The pathway of the Russian people), “Sem’ia, liubov’, otechestvo” (Family, love, fatherland), and the anti-juvenile-justice site of the Ivan-Chai informational agency, along with several others.

The advancement of LGBT rights, added to the armory of the USA, serves as a powerful weapon for the destruction of culture, morality, the family, and finally, state sovereignty, since the robust, morally healthy family is the bulwark of an independent government. Greed, egoism, and treachery flourish at the very locations where the boundaries of cultural-moral norms are eroded and perverted. And of course, such degenerate people are not fit for defending the interests of the state. In pursuit of pleasures, they even betray and cast aside their own children.¹²

According to this narrative, the emergence of a totalitarian society of a new type must be the result of this campaign to destroy moral principles:

It is a dictatorship of perversion. And this is not only perversion of a sexual nature. Juvenile “care for children” is also a perversion. And the murder of sick people, supposedly for their good, is also a perversion. And all of these theatrics, hypocrisy, and sheep in wolves’ clothing are also perversions. And it could not be otherwise.¹³

In the logic of this storyline—at least in its religious variant—it is not simply an abstract West that stands behind the efforts to destroy the traditional Russian way of life. No, the West itself has already been destroyed and turned into the kingdom of a “comfortable Sodom” where same-sex marriage is allowed, the rights of “perverts” are acknowledged, women are emancipated, and children are taken from traditional families in order to transfer them into the clutches of “perverts.”¹⁴ Behind everything stands a worldwide “Deep State” that is realizing a project to dehumanize humanity with the goal of “constructing the kingdom of the Antichrist” and “raising an electorate for the future Antichrist.”¹⁵ The warriors against juvenile justice think of themselves as a

12 Irina Medvedeva and Tat’iana Shishova, “LGBT-spetsoperatsiia ‘Deti,’” *Regnum Informatsionnoe Agentstvo*, 22 August 2016, <<https://regnum.ru/news/2169394.html>>.

13 Tat’iana Shishova and Irina Medvedeva, “Politseiskoe gosudarstvo novogo tipa,” *Pravoslavie.ru*, 16 August 2016, <<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/96211.html>>.

14 Irina Medvedeva and Tat’iana Shishova, for example, write: “Before our very eyes stand the Western countries, where perverts have swept into political power and have violently forced the people to submit to their unnatural orientations by means of ‘lawlessness in law.’” Medvedeva and Shishova, “‘Oderzhimye seksom,’ transgendery i pedofily: Iuvenaly vo vlasti protiv sem’i,” *Regnum Informatsionnoe Agentstvo*, 19 July 2016, <<https://regnum.ru/news/2158582.html>>.

15 Irina Medvedeva, *Globalizatsiia protiv sem’i*, part 1 of the film series *Sem’ia v sovremennom mire*, film project *Istina Sem’i*, 2007, produced and directed by Sergei Andriushkin, in

heroic minority of partisans contending with the superior numbers of an opponent that has more money, authority, and power on its side.

Of interest here is the figure of the “Source of Abomination,” one who consciously creates such heinous things and contaminates the healthy fabric of the traditional way of life. In the narrative now under consideration, the figure of the “pervert” is adopted as the “Source of Abomination.” A pervert is a certain composite representation of a proponent of “non-traditional sexual relations” and of a “liberal”—a person who supports perversion owing to his or her forfeiture of any notion of sin or of the norms of interpersonal cooperation. On the one hand, this composite representation is endowed with certain completely repugnant, unnatural traits.¹⁶ On the other hand, it is acknowledged to have incredible might, for it is within its power to commit nefarious activity on a global scale. Considering the extent of the danger they represent to society, it is not altogether clear what should be done with such perverts. This point in the narrative becomes murky; the storytellers merely confine themselves to hints. Admittedly, it is not difficult to guess at the direction in which such hints will lead, but we will return to that question further below.

The narrative described above resembles a conspiracy theory.¹⁷ More importantly, it is the narrative of a marginal group, which does not have very much sociopolitical influence. After the “turn to traditional values,” however, the narrative, including its structure, rhetoric, and driving logic, is no longer simply a marginal development disseminated by small groups. Scholars have long noticed the popularity of similar theories in Russia and within the entire post-Soviet space.¹⁸ Since 2012, however, such narratives have nearly become

association with Bishop Mark Egor'evskii, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZaMiIZUQU>>.

16 For example, Shishova and Medvedeva (“Politseiskoe gosudarstvo novogo tipa”) state that “perverts’ entire array of thoughts, feelings, and actions grow more and more pathological.”

17 See Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: 2008).

18 Stephanie Ortmann and John Heathershaw, “Conspiracy Theories in the Post-Soviet Space,” *The Russian Review* 71, no. 4 (2012): 551–64; Marlene Laruelle, “Conspiracy and Alternate History in Russia: A Nationalist Equation for Success?” *The Russian Review* 71 (2012): 565–80; Richard Sakwa, “Conspiracy Narratives as a Mode of Engagement in International Politics: The Case of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War,” *The Russian Review* 71 (2012): 581–609. The change in status of similar narratives can be observed through the fate of one particular personality, Aleksandr Dugin, who underwent a surprising transformation from a marginal conspiracy theorist to a prominent Russian ideologue. See Andreas Umland, “Aleksandr Dugin’s Transformation from a Lunatic Fringe Figure into a Mainstream Political Publicist, 1980–1998: A Case Study in the Rise of Late and Post-Soviet Russian Fascism,” *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 1, no. 2 (2010): 144–52; Victor Shnirelman, “Aleksandr

the ideological mainstream in both foreign and domestic policy.¹⁹ As Ilya Yablokov rightly observes, they are a means of constructing the nation and national identity in contemporary Russia.²⁰ Narratives of this kind occupy a hegemonic position in the media, which are controlled by the state. This constitutes a new quality of domestic policy, a new stage in sociopolitical dynamics that requires thoughtful reflection. Insights concerning the aforementioned narrative, therefore, no longer pertain to the state of affairs within the confines of a concrete group or subculture, but rather to a much wider context—the society and the Russian nation as a whole.

In this context, the grotesqueness of the example selected above conversely becomes an advantage, since it makes the structure of the already-pervasive narrative utterly conspicuous and glaring. Analogous narratives exist around all other points of the “morality turn,” beginning with abortion and ending with a general alarm concerning the “spiritual-cultural identity” of Russian civilization, which powerful enemies are threatening from all sides.²¹ These narratives may be more secular or more religious. They may place varied stresses on varied threats. They may visualize the “Source of Abomination” in another way. But the common narrative canvas will remain unchanged—a “besieged fortress” teeming with traitors and encircled by enemies, a chaotic world of evil ganging up on a community of the righteous.²²

2 Analyzing This Narrative: The Deficiencies of “Instrumentalization” and “Intellectualization”

Stylistically, the very structure of this narrative—essentially leading to a story about powerful enemy forces threatening the nation, the culture, and the lifestyle of millions—strongly resembles paranoia and paranoid fantasy. Here,

Dugin: Vozvedenie mosta mezhdru eskhatologii i konspirologiei,” *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov’ v Rossii i za rubezhom* 4 (2016): 194–221.

19 Ilya Yablokov, “Pussy Riot as Agent Provocateur: Conspiracy Theories and the Media Construction of Nation in Putin’s Russia,” *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 42, no. 4 (2014): 622–36; Yablokov, “Conspiracy Theories as a Russian Public Diplomacy Tool: The Case of Russia Today (RT),” *Politics* 35, nos. 3–4 (2015): 301–15.

20 Yablokov, “Pussy Riot,” 633–34.

21 Compare with Caroline Hill’s chapter in this volume.

22 Bishop Tikhon (Shevkunov)’s 2008 “historical” film *Gibel’ imperii: Vizantiiskii urok* (The Fall of an Empire: The Lesson of Byzantium) serves as a common example of this. The film recounts the sad fate of the Eastern Roman Empire—which forfeited its spiritual core and fell as a result of a plot of internal and external enemies—and conjectures that Russia will follow. See the film here: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohs3o5O5kX4>>.

one might recall the classic work of Richard Hofstadter (1996), *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, which addresses the way similar stylistics constantly replicate themselves in American sociopolitical debate. I will return to the issue of the psychological basis of moral conservatism in subsequent sections of this essay.

There are essentially two basic approaches to the interpretation of this paranoid narrative in scholarly literature: “intellectualization” and “instrumentalization.” Within the confines of the former approach, efforts are underway to analyze the ideas behind this narrative, along with their subsequent interpolation into the tradition of Russian conservative thought.²³ This approach is undoubtedly useful, since it helps scholars to understand the specific imaginative content of this narrative. Why does the West regularly figure as the enemy? And from where do the religious motifs, images, and phrases that give this narrative its specific Russian character derive? Despite its value, however, this approach is unlikely to describe comprehensively that with which we are concerned. This is primarily because it is difficult to consider this specific narrative—any more than all the other conspiracy theories—a part of intellectual history or a continuation of the tradition of Russian Slavophilism, for example.²⁴ Intellectual conservatism exists, but more often than not it remains inside the confines of universities and other academic circles. The particular moral conservatism considered here can hardly have any intellectual depth, for it is difficult to analyze it from the standpoint of its ideational and intellectual content.

The “intellectualization” interpretation, however, is not the only existing approach to this narrative. Many scholars are prone to see in such narratives instruments for the achievement of political goals, whether to strengthen a regime’s legitimacy or to consolidate a community in the face of an imminent enemy.²⁵ Such scholars propose that behind these narratives stands a certain rational actor who employs them for his or her own benefit and who is all the while not held captive by these storylines. This seems to be a dominant approach. Elena Stepanova, for example, concludes her work on Russia’s “conservative turn” as follows:

23 Marlene Laruelle, “The Izborsky Club, or the New Conservative Avant-Garde in Russia,” *The Russian Review* 75 (2016): 626–44.

24 Andrei Tsygankov draws such parallels (“Crafting the State-Civilization: Vladimir Putin’s Turn to Distinct Values,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 63, no. 3 [2016]: 146–58), but he conflates “the history of ideas” with other approaches, particularly with the approach of instrumentalization.

25 See Sharafutdinova, “The Pussy Riot Affair,” 615–21; Østbø, “Securitizing ‘Spiritual-Moral Values,’” 200–216.

the “traditional values” discourse is aimed at cohering the nation around certain meanings that are presented as having both historical and ideological integrity. The question is whether this artificial construction, based on a mythologization of history and opposition to various “enemies,” could be convincing enough for the Russian people.²⁶

Three things are of note here. First, Stepanova uses the phrase “aimed at...,” as if certain elite figures, who are directing this narrative to particular ends, stand behind them. Second, “for the Russian people” suggests that this narrative is created *for* someone with instrumental objectives. Third, “artificial construction” again suggests that Stepanova is discussing something that has been specially designed.

The “instrumentalization” interpretation does allow scholars to understand various important dimensions of the conservative narrative. Despite its value, however, it resembles a conspiracy theory itself. One could regard it as a defense mechanism that is used to protect the researcher from frightening thoughts such as “we are not facing an altogether artificial construct designed by elites; we are facing instead something independent, something organic that is rooted in the very foundations of the social order.” The final hope in such a defensive construction is the certainty that a rational agent stands behind the paranoid narrative, to which he is immune, and will not allow it to develop into its full irrational force. Surprisingly, even those scholars who justifiably place these narratives within the context of the research on conspiracy theories continue to regard them as a result of rational efforts of political actors who are pursuing the strengthening of a regime’s legitimacy while also uniting a “people” against “others” who are threatening that “people.”²⁷ In other words, one conspiracy theory is employed to explain another.

In my view, both the “intellectualization” and “instrumentalization” approaches, despite their merits, should be supplemented by an additional analytical dimension. Otherwise, discussion is trivialized within the confines of these approaches. For the “intellectualization” approach, the discussion concerns the space of ideas, where moral conservatism ends up being only one branch on the intellectual tree of Russian conservative thought. For the “instrumentalization” approach, the discussion concerns the space of political machinations, where moral conservatism is derived from the efforts of elites who are pursuing the maintenance of power and the spread of their personal influence. Both approaches neglect the essential fact that we are facing not

²⁶ Stepanova, “Spiritual and Moral Foundation,” 135.

²⁷ Yablokov, “Pussy Riot.”

merely ideas and not merely someone's strategic plan, but we are also facing a narrative reflection of something more fundamental, a prevailing cultural mechanism.

3 A Cultural Approach to Moral Conservatism

What exactly is the mechanism whose reflection turns out to be the narrative discussed here? The ideas of the French philosopher, René Girard, constitute a point of departure for our analysis. Girard analyzed the mechanism through which a community is capable of overcoming an inner crisis that is connected particularly with accumulating internal hostilities that threaten a descent into an uncontrolled spiral of violence. He called this the “scapegoat mechanism.” The point is simple: at the very moment when a community faces a real threat of chaos and “a war of everyone against everyone,” the logic of “all against one” plays out.²⁸ In this case, the community focuses its anger upon a particular individual whom they have begun to perceive as a guilty party posing a threat of impending danger to the community. The reprisal against the guilty party appeases the community and binds its members together. As a result, a “sacrificial crisis” is overcome, a truce takes place, and solidarity reigns.²⁹ Hostility is directed outward thanks to the victim, who in this case has played the role of a living lightning rod.

A cultural approach allows us to understand something that frequently confounds observers. Why do people place so much significance upon seemingly secondary things, such as gender difference, sexual taboo, and the regulation of family relationships?³⁰ In fact, it is precisely here that we advance toward the very heart of a culture; it is here that the community's experience of crisis becomes sharpest and most unhealthy. According to Girard, cultural order “is nothing more than a regulated system of distinctions in which the differences among individuals are used to establish their ‘identity’ and their mutual relationships.”³¹

The themes of sexuality and sexual difference are explosive. Entering into this territory ignites an entire cascade of “moral panic” to varying degrees of

28 René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (London: 1978), 24.

29 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: 1977), 56.

30 Thomas Frank, the author of a noteworthy work on conservatism in the USA, is particularly concerned with this question. See Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: 2004).

31 Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 49.

intensity. Stanley Cohen in particular has written about this in his already-classic work:

We find it important to point out that many moral panics are about sex. For a variety of reasons, humans are fearful and insecure about their own sexuality and the sexual doings of their neighbors and fellow citizens. Sex is a special and unique sphere in which rules are abundant, and strict, and within which the human drama plays out and the status of wrongdoing and even abnormality is applied.³²

In this line of thought, the erasure of differences—whether sexual, moral, or generational—can lead to an outburst of uncontrolled violence. The modern rational consciousness finds it difficult to comprehend this connection between non-differentiation and violence. Yet, as Girard writes:

the primitive mind, in contrast, has no difficulty imagining an affiliation between violence and nondifferentiation and, indeed, is often obsessed by the possible consequences of such a union. Natural differences are conceived in terms of cultural differences, and vice versa. Where we would view the loss of a distinctive quality as a wholly natural phenomenon having no bearing on human relationships, the primitive man might well view this occurrence with deep dread. Because there is no real difference between the various modes of differentiation, there is in consequence no difference between the manner in which things fail to differ; the disappearance of natural differences can thus bring to mind the dissolution of regulations pertaining to the individual's proper place in society—that is, can instigate a sacrificial crisis.³³

Rather than understanding the phrase “primitive mind” in the sense of some kind of archaic past, it is better to recognize that the “primitive mind,” with its specific logic and the archaic mechanisms based upon it, has not disappeared, nor will it disappear any time soon. For modern scholars, who are prone to exaggerate not only the degree of secularity in modern societies but also their own rationality, this “mind” is becoming imperceptible. Scholars who are called to understand the processes going on around them are making themselves “sightless” by renouncing the earnest embrace of religion and mythology and designating them as relics of long-defunct traditional societies.

³² Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: 2002), 18.

³³ Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 56.

The threat of chaos that emanates from the erasure of differences leads to a demand for a purge and for the restoration of these eroded distinctions. The logic of purge follows the logic of the scapegoat. Girard writes:

The persecutors always convince themselves that a small number of people, or a single individual, despite his relative weakness, is extremely harmful to the whole of society. The stereotypical accusation justifies and facilitates this belief by ostensibly acting the role of mediator. It bridges the gap between the insignificance of the individual and the enormity of the social body.³⁴

Playing the role of the scapegoat in the narration is a figure, person, or group of people who combine physical and moral deformities or, alternatively, certain evidence of invalid membership in the community (for example, terrible or amoral behaviors).³⁵ According to Girard, “The victim is considered a polluted object, whose living presence contaminates everything that comes in contact with it and whose death purges the community of its ills—as the subsequent restoration of public tranquility clearly testifies.”³⁶ By and large, “the crisis is seen as a mysterious illness introduced into the community by an outsider. The cure lies in ridding the community of the sole malignant element.”³⁷

Between the narrative of moral conservatism and the mythological narrative of the scapegoat there is a distinct structural similarity: the totalizing threat hanging over the community that is propelling this community into chaos by way of the erasure of fundamental cultural differences. For what is moral conservatism but fear of the disappearing differences between men and women, between parents and children, between norms and pathologies? What is the dismay over the erosion of cultural-spiritual distinctiveness but fear of the indistinguishability between “us” and “them”? The source and cause of this threat is the cunning evildoer or group of evildoers—“perverts” who are the Antichrist’s lackeys and who inject decay and corruption into the healthy body of the traditional civilizational way of life. Yet, the final element of this structure—reprisal against the evildoer and the restoration of customary order—is absent from the moral conservative narrative. This makes sense, for we are encountering the narrative *before* its enactment within the historical trajectory of this community. The reflection of the “scapegoat mechanism” stands before us,

34 Ibid., 15.

35 Ibid., 34–35.

36 Ibid., 95.

37 Ibid., 83.

but only as though it were half suspended, as though it were (temporarily?) deprived of the decisive impulse required for it to swing into action.

Thus, we are faced not merely with ideas and not merely with the manipulative tricks of crafty elites, but also with the narrative reflection of a basic cultural process: a community at the moment of the experience of an acute internal crisis that triggers the archaic (but no less vibrant) mechanism, which, according to a very specific logic, is called upon to overcome this crisis.

4 Moral Conservatism and Mythological Logic

The conservative narrative, however, is not simply the reflection of a crisis that has been translated into the language of dramatic storytelling. The very concept of “reflection” assumes a reflection itself and that which it actually reflects. Yet, with respect to the conservative narrative, this is not necessarily the case. Thus, it is not simply about depraved social, political, cultural, and demographic transformations, which in the mirror of human consciousness morph into a story about “the forces of evil” that are tormenting “Russia, with its thousand-year history,” thereby propelling it into chaos. Rather, it is about the translation of this crisis into another dimension in which it begins to take on a life of its own and to subject itself to its own “specific” logic.

In fact, Girard himself made note of such a factor. After all, we know about the scapegoat mechanism thanks to mythological storytelling. These tales appear to be a narrative reflection of this mechanism. But it is not merely a reflection; it is also a concealment of the scapegoat mechanism, camouflaging it as something acceptable to members of a given community.³⁸ By means of a mythological transformation, the story of how a community has resolved its internal problems through a reprisal against an innocent person morphs into a tale about a terrifying chaos having engulfed the community and having threatened its complete destruction. Through the lens of the myth, the guilty party appears to be an evildoer who has committed some atrocity. The justifiable reprisal against this person restores order and returns life back to its normal course.

This narrative’s curious peculiarity is its invulnerability to rational criticism. For example, it is impossible to bring up statistics that would demonstrate the baselessness of the apprehensions concerning juvenile justice. This is not because such statistics do not exist, but rather because they would not even be taken into consideration. Those who believe this narrative and perpetuate it

38 René Girard, *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore: 1986), 24–44.

will simply build these statistics into the narrative as yet one more proof of the wiles of enemies who are attempting to confuse people with numbers and to deprive them of the ability to resist.³⁹ The notion of an “information war” enters the moral conservatives’ tale at this particular point. According to this storyline, a war is being conducted against Russia, one aspect of which is informational. The enemy attempts to discredit us and to indoctrinate us with a false picture of the world. In order to accomplish this, the enemy foists upon us “pseudo-research” and “pseudo-statistics” that we can simply ignore once the enemy’s wicked design has been exposed. The narrative is beyond a rational analysis, for its perpetrators do not allow it to be contrasted with the true state of affairs or to make note of its correct or incorrect elements. As Girard notes, those who are held captive to the logic of the “scapegoat” are not interested in the natural causes of the crisis or in those naturally responsible for what has taken place. Rather, the magical causation of the scapegoat is being played out: “Instead of natural, distant, and inaccessible causes, humanity has always preferred causes that are significant from a social perspective and permit of [*sic*] corrective intervention—victims.”⁴⁰

That said, this narrative cannot be deemed completely arbitrary. It unfolds in conjunction with a definite—let’s say “specific”—logic. In other words, the elements of this narrative are not simply stacked one on top of another, but they occur in a specific sequence. Moreover, since we are observing this sequence not only in the particular context of the fight against juvenile justice reform, its emergence is not coincidental, and elements of this tale are interconnected in conjunction with a definite logic. But what exactly *is* this logic if we cannot deem it rational or classical and if it does not operate according to the laws of logic, argumentation, and factual evidence? It is a logic that I will call “mythological” or, referencing the ideas of Carl Gustav Jung, archetypical.⁴¹

By “mythological logic” I mean the constantly encountered interconnections between elements that eventually fall into place in a recognizable mythological storyline.⁴² In mythological logic, the elements of a certain narrative are interconnected, but not in a rational way. This is not a rational tale where one element logically derives from another, as happens in scholarly texts or in

39 Olga Skopina and Aleksandr Savchenko, “Evropeiskie korni ‘kazhdogo piatogo,’” *Krasnaia Vesna*, 11 November 2016, <<http://rossaprimavera.ru/article/evropeyskie-korni-kazhdogo-pyatogo>>.

40 Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 204.

41 C.G. Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 2nd ed., trans. R.C.F. Hull, Bollinger Series 20 (Princeton: 1968).

42 Iakov Golosovker (*Logika mifa* [Moscow: 1987]) has also written on the logic of myth, albeit in a completely different sense.

an attempt to get to the bottom of the natural causes of a certain occurrence in a logical way, for example. In mythological logic, elements are not connected to one another in conjunction with any rational bases; rather, it is a matter of course that one element of the tale must follow another, which must then follow another by sheer necessity. Scholars of mythology and scholars of narrative focus their attention on the way these narratives, despite the seemingly unlimited possibilities of human imagination, are extremely sparse, with a very limited repertoire of plot lines. One scholar speaks of only seven basic plots, while another speaks of a single metaplot with thousands of variations.⁴³ Whether considering artistic narratives (in books or films, for example) or political narratives, one and the same sequence of elements, which is subject to mythological logic and mythological necessity, is apparent in all cases.

It is here that I must bring up a challenge to Girard—if not a disagreement, then at minimum a misunderstanding of his position. Girard invokes the classic debate about the primacy of myth or ritual. For him, neither one nor the other is primary; rather, the collective reprisal against an innocent scapegoat that establishes or reestablishes a community (i.e., that aspect whose reflection becomes *both* ritual and myth) is primary.⁴⁴ Girard writes about the reality of the victims who stand behind mythological storylines. For him, action precedes the symbolization of that action in such storylines. As Girard rhetorically inquires: “If the victims of the medieval witch-hunts are real, why wouldn’t the victims of these myths also be?”⁴⁵ According to Girard, a myth is a reflection of an event in that it arises after collective violence. For him, the real physical event is primary—the violence of “all against one” that later is enshrined in myth, morphing into a tale that is acceptable to the persecutors, or that algorithmically recurs in ritual with the observance of all safety measures. Yet, in the context of such an argument, it is not completely clear how narratives of collective violence can exist *before* the commitment of such violent acts and in some sense independent from them.

In my view, and here I am following the Jungian school, the archetypal overtone of mythological narratives is the psychic truth of the scapegoat mechanism and the guarantee of the psychological force of this narrative through which a person or community (as a “collective soul”) lives through particular psychic events that end by way of cathartic experiences. This is the precise reason that mythological narratives exist with such consistency and so

43 Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (London: 2006); Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: 1949).

44 For a fuller account of Girard’s interpretation of myth, see Richard Golsan, *Rene Girard and Myth: An Introduction* (London: 2002).

45 René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (Maryknoll, NY: 2001), 84.

frequently replicate themselves. They are rooted in “trans-subjective, largely autonomous psychic systems which on that account are only very conditionally under the control of the conscious mind and for the most part escape it altogether.”⁴⁶ In other words, the mythological narrative as I interpret it does not merely reflect a certain real event, but it is the opposite side of that event—the psychological basis without which the mechanism in question would not come to fruition. It is the preparation of the event, as well as its anticipation and experience in a phantasmic dimension of collective representations.

The rotation of mythological logic leads to a renewal of the “collective soul.” It is the psychological dimension of the process of overcoming the crisis. A material rotation of the scapegoat mechanism exists (that is, a physical reduction of tension by way of displacing animosity and hatred onto an innocent victim), but it also resides on the level of the “collective soul” and exists as an archetypical corroborator. The scapegoat and the chaos engendered by it do not exist from the point of view of a positivistic approach to reality, but they are real in mythological logic. In other words, they correspond to the real subjective (and even intersubjective) experiences of a community that imagines itself in the midst of a “sacrificial crisis” and that deploys a mythological drama, the finale and apogee of which must be collective murder.

5 Cultural Mechanisms for Overcoming a Crisis

This is certainly not the first attempt to utilize Girard’s ideas toward an interpretation of moral conservatism and the community that stands behind the production of this ideology. Mark Vasey-Saunders, for example, draws upon Girard to understand the reasons for the extreme hostility toward the subject of homosexuality among British evangelicals in the late 20th century. He points to this religious community’s crisis and two interrelated sources of the crisis—an internal crisis of evangelical identity itself, in connection with the loss of clarity regarding who is a genuine evangelical Christian, and an external crisis due to the general context set forth by the processes of late modernity (particularly secularization).⁴⁷ Vasey-Saunders demonstrates the way the LGBT “issue” has transformed from a private and inconsequential matter to an issue of symbolic significance—a symbol of resistance to secular culture

46 C.G. Jung, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, 2nd ed., trans. R.C.F. Hull, Bollinger Series 20 (Princeton: 1966), 141–42.

47 Mark Vasey-Saunders, *The Scandal of Evangelicals and Homosexuality: English Evangelical Texts, 1960–2010* (London: 2015), 51.

behind which evangelicals see Satan's schemes and a liberal and gay conspiracy. The rejection of LGBT rights morphs into a symbol of the preservation of genuine evangelical identity in a rapidly changing world. As Vasey-Saunders argues, "by the mid-1990s ... , the consensus position [with respect to gay rights] was functioning as an evangelical shibboleth—a first-order issue of faith that could determine whether someone was a faithful Christian or had been led astray by sinful pride and the machinations of an insidious gay-liberal satanic conspiracy."⁴⁸ He continues: "the consensus position on homosexuality was a gospel truth to be defended against a world that did not wish to hear it."⁴⁹ The issue was not with homosexuality as such; rather, "homosexuality is simply the presenting issue for a crisis of undifferentiation that has developed around the question of evangelical identity, and which has had a profoundly distorting effect on evangelical spirituality."⁵⁰

With respect to conspiracy theories, Emma Jane and Chris Fleming have also utilized Girard's ideas. In their book *Modern Conspiracy*, they come to analogous conclusions regarding the logic of the scapegoat in such narratives:

As complex as conspiracy theories may sometimes market themselves to be, they invariably furnish causal accounts that allow for simple, mono-causal attributions of malevolent actions, carried out by a specific individual or groups of individuals. Conspiracies, in other words, look for *scapegoats*—allow their subscribers to attribute blame in such a way that it exculpates those who discover the "hidden truth."⁵¹

In the Russian context, Aleksei Zygmunt was the first to employ Girard's ideas for an analysis of the Orthodox subculture.⁵² In his work, he has focused on the acute form of the "sacrificial crisis" experienced by the so-called "parish milieu." The author, however, completely ignores the next necessary element of the "sacrificial crisis"—the appearance of the scapegoat. In such logic, which is presumably closer to the true Girard, the scapegoat mechanism is no longer active—after all, the scapegoat has already been exposed! In its stead,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 219.

⁵¹ Emma Jane and Chris Fleming, *Modern Conspiracy: The Importance of Being Paranoid* (London: 2014), 94.

⁵² Aleksei Zygmunt, "Sovremennaiia prikhranovaiia sreda kak soobshchestvo v situatsii zhertvennogo krizisa," *Religiovedcheskie issledovaniia* 13, no. 1 (2016): 151–89. See also A. Zygmunt, "Problematika nasiliia v Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi v postsovetskii period," *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* 3 (2014): 117–45.

proponents of such thinking suggest returning to the late Girard, who in his work *Battling to the End* directs the reader's attention to the figure of the enemy, to the "escalation to extremes," and to the unceasing escalation of opposition that to this day cannot be resolved in the customary manner (i.e., through violence toward an innocent victim). In the introduction to this work, Girard elucidates this aspect: "Learning that we have a scapegoat is to lose it forever and to expose ourselves to mimetic conflicts with no possible resolution. This is the implacable law of the escalation to extremes."⁵³ To this I must add that even if we had really unlearned something within the scapegoat mechanism, it would have been the subsequent deification of the victim, but in no way would we have unlearned the violence against the innocent! To ignore the scapegoat mechanism is nothing less than excessive "optimism" regarding the overcoming of scapegoat logic. That being said, this approach to the study of moral conservatism has every right to exist. It is particularly cogent in the context of the ongoing research on the transnational culture wars, where both the liberal and conservative sides truly perceive each other as enemies who are constantly scheming against one another and where an unceasing escalation of opposition, incapable of leading to any sort of resolution, is taking place.⁵⁴

The Russian situation, however, can hardly be regarded as yet another example of such a culture war. The turn to traditional values in Russia is not a repeat scenario of the culture war elsewhere; it is the scenario of a "vulnerable identity," "ontological insecurity," and an "illness that is eating away at the body of society."⁵⁵ The logic of the cure for this illness (much as for the diagnosis, as the narrative of moral conservatism testifies) moves along the mythological tracks of the scapegoat, and not at all along the tracks of an unceasing escalation of opposition! Wolfgang Palaver, one of the foremost authorities on Girard,

53 René Girard, *Battling to the End* (East Lansing, MI: 2007), xiv.

54 For more, see C. Bob, *The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics* (Cambridge: 2012). See also: Kristina Stoeckl, "Lektsiia: Postsekuliarnye konflikty i global'naia bor'ba za traditsionnye tsennosti," *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* 34, no. 4 (2016): 223–41; Andrey Shishkov, "Two Ecumenisms: Conservative Christian Alliances as a New Form of Ecumenical Cooperation," trans. April L. French, *State, Religion and Church* 4, no. 2 (2017): 58–87.

55 Tsygankov, "Crafting the State-Civilization." Alicja Curanović also writes about Russia's "quest for status" in the global arena (*The Guardians of Traditional Values: Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church in the Quest for Status* [Washington: 2015]). By and large, however, scholarly analysis of the Russian situation rarely digs deeply into these storylines, concentrating instead on the rational actions of the elite who are determining their political tasks with the assistance of moral conservatism.

has said, “It is very difficult to have political identity and to avoid scapegoats!”⁵⁶ Yet, one could similarly say, “It is very difficult to have a traditional way of life ... or traditional values ... or to be a *katechon*⁵⁷ without scapegoats!” Girard himself echoes Palaver’s idea: “We easily see now that scapegoats multiply wherever human groups seek to lock themselves into a given identity—communal, local, national, ideological, racial, religious, and so on.”⁵⁸

One could also couch this situation in terms of a slightly different conceptual approach without reference to Girard. The distinguishing characteristic of the narrative of moral conservatism is that it begins to be experienced and broadcast on the level of state institutions not as the crisis of a single private subculture or private community (for instance, Orthodox Christians), but as a fundamental crisis that touches the entire society. In other words, the entire nation, the entire people, the entire country is under threat. This totalization is associated with the *structural* characteristics of conservative ideology, at least in the form in which it is circulated in contemporary Russia. The structural characteristic I have in mind concerns the way this ideology is contingent upon a vision of society and a representation of the social. In the language of social theory, this ideology is marked by the conception of a “social whole” and an “organic unity” as the guiding metaphors for comprehending society. Organic unity is, however, impossible; any society is riddled with hostilities. Hence, the basic tension of the conservative narrative is the externalization of internal hostility and the narrativization of opposition between the harmonious core (“the fortress”) and the hostilities that are personified by internal and external enemies, who threaten this core. And hence, the “paranoid” structure of the entire conservative construction—the obsession with persecution on the part of enemy forces who for some reason seek to enact malicious schemes in order to destroy this precious “social unity.”

“Society does not exist” (recalling the well-known aphorism of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe⁵⁹), since any society is by definition riddled with internal hostilities and contradictions. Yet, the perception of society as a harmonious whole can indeed exist. The essence of ideology is to conceal internal

56 Personal conversation with the author. See also Wolfgang Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture (East Lansing, MI: 2013).

57 *Katechon* refers to St. Paul’s phrase, “the one who withholds” (*o katechōn* [2 Thessalonians 2:6–7]). In Orthodox theology, *katechon* signifies the one who restrains or prevents the coming of the Antichrist.

58 Girard, *I See Satan*, 160. Paul Dumouchel’s book (*The Barren Sacrifice: An Essay on Political Violence*, Studies in Violence, Mimesis, & Culture [East Lansing, MI: 2015]) also proves useful in the context of my analysis.

59 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: 2001), 95–96.

hostilities. Slavoj Žižek admirably described this mechanism of the ideological concealment of internal hostilities in the name of a holistic vision of society: “‘Society as a corporate Body’ is the fundamental ideological fantasy.” He rightly went on to ask, “How then do we take account of the distance between this corporatist vision and the factual society split by antagonistic struggles?”⁶⁰ Owing to the work of ideology, the impossibility of “society” appears to have already been written into the very ideological fantasy as that foreign hostile element that does not allow this utopian vision of social harmony to translate into reality. Connected with this, Žižek explores German anti-Semitism, which in this interpretation turns out to be that mechanism that makes the community’s internal wound invisible. It is embodied in the figure of the Jew and externalized. Effectively, as Žižek writes, “The Jew is a point at which social negativity as such assumes positive existence.”⁶¹

Girard came out of a completely different theoretical paradigm, yet he was also interested in the mechanism that a community uses to establish or reestablish itself, thereby restoring its unity and unanimity. Girard saw this mechanism in a very similar key—the externalization of internal hostility and internal chaos and its embodiment in the figure of a scapegoat who appears to be that foreign element that injects chaos into the social order. The scapegoat could be called that “point at which social negativity ... assumes positive existence.” And after this positive existence has been assumed, social negativity can be eliminated for the good of society.

6 The Uneasiness of Speaking out Fully: Moral Conservatism and the Problem of Violence

I have thus far painstakingly avoided the most important question: the problem of violence. Must this mythological narrative—particularly moral conservatism’s mythological narrative—be resolved through expedient violence against enemies and against embodied “social negativity”? Or are there certain restraining factors that might hinder this enactment of mythological logic?

Girard was profoundly alarmed by the anti-ritualistic nature of modern secular society and by the way it ignored the fundamental problem of violence and the critical need for mechanisms that allowed the permissible externalization

60 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: 2009), 142.

61 Ibid., 143. Lee Edelman (*No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* [Durham, NC: 2004]) provides a highly interesting analysis along these same lines with respect to the LGBT community.

of violence. After all, the task of ritual is to excise violence from society and to domesticate that violence, subjecting it to the human will, since “all those aspects of the original act that had escaped man’s control—the choice of time and place, the selection of the victim—are now premeditated and fixed by custom. The ritual process aims at removing all element of chance and seeks to extract from the original violence some technique of cathartic appeasement.”⁶² But what about an anti-ritualistic community that regards ritual as something archaic, owing to its rationalism and secularity?

“The modern shedding of ritual brings to light the psychosocial substratum of ritual phenomena,” writes Girard. In place of well-ordered ritual, we get a “nonritualized collective transference,” which frequently ends up being impossible to control.⁶³ So what should be done with this “psychosocial substratum” and the double bind (sociological and psychological) that is pushing the community toward the customary resolution to the problem of internal hostilities? In the absence of rituals that domesticate these “customary resolutions,” what are the real mitigating mechanisms that can protect Russian society in particular from the enactment of ceremonial phenomena in their de-ritualized form?

The French thinker placed great hope in the gospel narrative to overcome scapegoat logic and to redirect humanity toward another line of logic, with the side of the victims (rather than the persecutors) at its heart. The state of the scapegoat mechanism in the situation of modernity becomes unsteady. Yet, the gospel victory over constituent violence is subject to the logic of “almost, but not yet completed.” As Scott Cowdell writes, “the archaic human religious impulse identified by Girard will always attempt to reconstitute this protective sacred, too, which while mortally wounded by the gospel was not killed outright.”⁶⁴ Pierpaolo Antonello and Paul Gifford argue that Christian cultures “themselves are perfectly capable of regressing to archaic patterns of violence.” They then discuss “Girard’s formula for the violence within medieval Christendom [as] the violence of Crusade and pogrom, Inquisition, and, later, witch-hunting—and of the religious civil wars that marked the ending of ‘Christendom’ and the rise of ‘Europe.’”⁶⁵

Girard’s somewhat excessive optimism is noticeable when he writes: “It is easier than in the past to observe collective transferences upon a scapegoat

62 Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 102.

63 Girard, *I See Satan*, 160.

64 Scott Cowdell, *René Girard and Secular Modernity: Christ, Culture, and Crisis* (Notre Dame, IN: 2013), 10.

65 Pierpaolo Antonello and Paul Gifford, *Can We Survive Our Origins?: Readings in René Girard’s Theory of Violence and the Sacred* (East Lansing, MI: 2015), xxxvii.

because they are no longer sanctioned and concealed by religion.”⁶⁶ If the experience of studying modern moral conservatism testifies to anything, it is to the fact that to this day, this phenomenon of scapegoat logic is beautifully concealed by the very religion that, according to Girard’s logic, should have overcome it. We are observing a gradual return to “archaic patterns of violence” and followers of Christ, who are convinced of their own rectitude and blinded by their moral indignation, are in its vanguard.

So what exactly prevents this mythological narrative about “perverts” and their attempts to do away with “spiritual-moral foundations” from “being spoken out fully”? One gets the impression that it is not gospel truths that are holding people back from committing the next logical step, but a certain uneasiness, a certain cowardice to speak out fully that which is silent but is absolutely unambiguously implied by the very logic of the storyline. There is an uneasiness with speaking out fully. The paradox of the situation is that, on the one hand, we are dealing with the eternal logic of the “scapegoat,” thanks to which social negativity acquires positive existence. On the other hand, the usual means of handling this social negativity seemingly depends upon an uneasy indecisiveness. Talk of “monsters” who defile children, destroy the family, and threaten the very existence of millions of people inhabit the storyline of moral conservatism. Yet, to call forth an uncompromising war against such monsters is rather awkward. Or at a minimum, it is not politically correct. And the question of violence simply hangs in the air.

Girard did not place hope only in Christianity, but also in the individualism so characteristic of a modern society, an individualism that breaks up close-knit communities. When the community fragments, separate groups and even individuals with their own personal scapegoats appear. In one sense, this insures against the expansion of scapegoat logic in all its totality. Aside from individualism, one could also rely on rationality and on the fact that there are rational agents who are not held captive by mythological logic but only employ it for their own interests. From all appearances, those who see in the ascent of moral conservatism a reflection of certain strategic plans by elites, who are standing behind the construction of these narratives, rely on this very rationality.

Taking into account the wide condemnation of individualism at the expense of the glorification of the collective and a common “anti-intellectual” disposition (the distrust of the establishment, including the academic

66 Girard, *I See Satan*, 157.

establishment), are these defense mechanisms enough?⁶⁷ There is no definitive answer to this question. It remains open.

7 Conclusion

In my analysis, I have aimed to demonstrate that in the “morality turn,” we are dealing not only with the intellectual cunning of rationally thinking elites who are in pursuit of their own interests in the face of ever new internal and external threats. We are dealing with a process that is subject to its own logic and that risks drawing everyone (including all of the leading bureaucrats) into an unstoppable spiral of violence. The demand of the narratives described above testifies to one thing alone. The milieu that produces and consumes these narratives is pregnant with violence, and it is difficult to conceive of any way out of the acute crisis this milieu is experiencing without a scapegoat. This is not a process specific only to Eastern Christianity;⁶⁸ it is the foundational mechanism that concerns the very evolutionary source of human communities.⁶⁹ Despite centuries of rationalization and secularization, civilization is still a thin membrane that hides archaic forces and chthonic energies that are prepared to break out at any moment, plunging people who believe in their own rationality into turmoil. Mythos everywhere triumphs over logos.

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67 Richard Hofstadter (*Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* [New York: 1966]) wrote much about anti-intellectualism, and Thomas Frank (*What's the Matter with Kansas?*) wrote about how this anti-intellectualism has been actualized in modern American moral conservatism.

68 Islamic Chechnya, under the leadership of Ramzan Kadyrov, is at the head of the advancement of moral conservatism into everyday life. See Elena Milashina, “Ubiistvo chesti: Kak ambitsii izvestnogo LGBT-aktivista razbudili v Chechne strashnyi drevnii obychai,” *Novaya gazeta*, 1 April 2015, <<https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2017/04/01/71983-ubiystvo-chesti>>; Anton Chablin, “Kadyrov zapretit chechentsam razvodit'sia,” *Svobodnaia pressa*, 26 August 2017, <<http://svpressa.ru/society/article/180046/>>.

69 See Antonello and Gifford, *Can We Survive Our Origins?*

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