A Pastoral Theological Approach to Restorative Practices in the Australian Catholic School Context

by

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Abstract

Restorative practices are a suite of interventions designed to improve social discipline and grow social capital through participatory learning and decision making. Participants involved in restorative conferences often report a powerful sense of transformation leading them to responses of surprise and wonder. This research examines what is really going on in these transformative experiences through a pastoral theological approach to restorative practices.

The contention of this thesis is that Catholic school communities that adopt and practice a restorative philosophy can invite their members to participate in the resurrection: Christ’s work of forgiveness as risen victim in the unbinding of human beings from the necessity of victimhood and division, and inviting active participation in the unfolding of a new creation. The principles, philosophy and processes of restorative practices as used by Catholic schools in Australia are described and understood from the perspective of the evangelising mission of the Catholic school. Read through the lens of René Girard’s mimetic theory and its development in the theology of James Alison, restorative practices illuminates the central Christian mystery of the resurrection in a most tangible and practical way. A case study narrative describes the transformative experience of a restorative conference through the eyes of the participants; two students and two teachers from a Catholic school. Their interpretation both affirms and challenges the pastoral theological approach,
leading the researcher into an engagement with the thought of Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran. The result is a deeper and more adequate rendering of the nature of the transformation wrought by the restorative conference in the lives of the students. Finally, the pastoral theological approach offers Catholic schools and systems of Catholic schools opportunities for the explicit formation of staff in a thoroughly pastoral and practical theology and in a spirituality of hope.
Declaration of Originality

I hereby certify that this thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or academic institution. I affirm that to the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except that which is appropriately referenced in the text and footnotes of the thesis.

Christopher Cotter

Candidate

30 June 2019
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The inspiration for this research came from my work with the Principals, teachers, students and families of the 31 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga. Their commitment to the day-in day-out work of creating and recreating spirit-filled communities of faith and learning have been an important touchstone and regular reality check for this research. I am especially indebted to: Mr Greg Miller, Principal (2007-2014) and the staff at Mater Dei Catholic College Wagga Wagga; Mrs Brenda King, Principal (2004-2015) and the staff at St Francis De Sales Regional College Leeton; Mr David Adams-Jones, Principal (2013-2016) and the staff at St Patrick’s Primary School Griffith; Mrs Mary-Jane Sims, Principal (2002-2015) and the staff at St Mary’s
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professional development programs with teachers. Gerard intuited the initial direction of this research, backed some of my early thinking and helped me to test it out. I am very grateful to Gerard for this small but important start.

In late 2015, it was apparent that the case study was giving rise to even more complex questions than I had anticipated. Dr Jake Mudge encouraged me to investigate the development of Lonergan’s thought by Prof Robert Doran SJ. I had just discovered Bob’s work myself but Jake’s intervention motivated me to contact him directly. Following a few email exchanges, we arranged to meet in July 2017 and I spent a week as a visiting scholar at the Lonergan Research Institute (LRI) at Regis College, University of Toronto. Over a cup of tea on a summer morning in Toronto, Bob listened deeply to my questions, and responded with warmth and enthusiasm for my research. Thank-you Bob for kindly giving me the direction I needed to begin to understand the Girard-Lonergan question. Thank-you Jake for kindly sharing your discoveries with me. I would also like to thank Dr Brian Bajzek who was a post-graduate research assistant at LRI when I was there in 2017. Brian’s practical assistance over the week was invaluable.

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Note

Australian English spelling is used throughout this thesis, except where an original quotation follows American spelling.
Chapter 1: Introduction

A prevailing and popular belief in western culture is that the only way to effectively change behaviour is through punishment. A punitive and authoritarian approach to social discipline based on this belief has typically been employed in schools (including Catholic schools). The punitive and authoritarian approach has been achieved through the enforcement of rules and the sanctioning of those who break the rules. Sanctions have included: inflicting physical pain on students through corporal punishment; verbal abuse of students; assigning menial tasks to students; withdrawal of student privileges; and (more recently) through the suspension, expulsion and exclusion of students from schools and systems of schools. The efficacy of the punitive and authoritarian approach to changing behaviour has been challenged by educators. Furthermore, the needs of those affected by the wrongdoing, the victims, were usually ignored or treated in a paternalistic manner by those in authority. Viewed through a Girardian lens, the punitive or authoritarian approach to social discipline, with its focus on rules (or taboos), can be seen as the maintenance of social order in school communities by sidelining the victims of wrongdoing and punishing or removing, creating more victims, out of those who break the rules.

Restorative practices, a way of “building social capital and achieving social discipline through participatory learning and decision making”, offers an alternative approach. Teachers, students and parents who have been participants in restorative interventions often express surprise at the strong impact it has on them. Many Catholic schools have adopted restorative practices and, as will be shown in Chapter 2, this is consonant with their educational mission in the Church. Chapter 3 outlines the mimetic theory of René Girard. Mimetic theory describes human beings as socially and culturally shaped animals who resolve violence and create community by expelling victims, and how the Hebrew-Christian revelation, most explicitly through the death and resurrection of Christ, simultaneously exposes this human violence for what it is and is generative of a community not reliant on the creation of victims. Building on these insights and claims of René Girard, Chapter 4 proposes the central contention of this thesis: that the restorative approach to social control illuminates a central Christian mystery, the atoning sacrifice of Christ, in a most tangible and practical way. Furthermore, those Catholic school communities who adopt and practice a restorative philosophy can invite their members to participate in the resurrection: Christ’s work of forgiveness as risen victim in the liturgical atonement as both the unbinding of human beings and the opening up of a new creation. The ‘pastoral theological approach to restorative practices’ proposes that when Catholic school staff, students and parents participate in a restorative meeting they may know and come to understand themselves as active recipients in the unfolding drama of

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salvation. Chapter 5 presents a case study of a restorative practices intervention from a Catholic secondary school. Teachers’ and students’ recollections of and insights into their experience of a formal restorative conference yields qualitative data that critically informs the pastoral theological approach to restorative practice. The case study provides working examples that both demonstrate and question the viability of the pastoral theological approach to restorative practices proposed. Because the human subjects in the case study provided such a rich and stimulating description and interpretation of their experience in the restorative conference, further pastoral-theological reflection and research was required. Therefore, Chapter 6 draws on the insights of Bernard Lonergan and the Lonerganian scholar Robert Doran to elucidate more clearly the nature of the transformation experienced by the students and witnessed by the teachers. Chapter 7 recommends that the human experience of the restorative conference, informed by the pastoral theological approach of this thesis, provides a focus for the formation and theological education of teachers and leaders in Catholic schools.

The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices offers hope in a divided world. Cultures, institutions and social groups will often survive through negative belonging, by perpetuating a sense of ‘us’ against ‘them’. Human survival when based on this kind of distorted desire, which creates victims or seeks to become a victim, requires a loving response. Restorative practices begin with simple strategies that

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address the emotional exchanges that build and re-build relationships and communities, and culminates in rituals of inclusion that gently and firmly release participants from their dependency on creating victims or being victims. Restorative practices transform individual human subjects and entire communities. This thesis will demonstrate that, when viewed through the lens of the pastoral theological approach, restorative practices are a sign of the theological virtue of hope.

1.1 A Pastoral Theological contribution to Australian Catholic Schools ‘at a Crossroads’

This thesis is concerned with proposing a pastoral theological approach to restorative practices as used in Australian Catholic schools. Schools are a significant ministry of the Catholic Church in Australia. Over twenty percent of all school-aged children are educated in Australian Catholic schools. There are over 1,706 Catholic schools in Australia. In their Pastoral Letter Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, the Catholic Bishops of New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) have described Catholic schools as one of the “jewels in the crown of the Catholic community” in Australia. These same Bishops also describe Catholic schools as ‘at a crossroads’ because of changing enrolment patterns. The features of these changing

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enrolment patterns of concern to the Bishops include: a decrease in the number of Catholic students enrolled in Catholic schools; the doubling of other-than-Catholic enrolments; and the under-participation of students from poorer families. The diocesan pastors also identify a number of societal trends placing significant pressures on Catholic schools: the forces of secularisation, consumerism, family dysfunction and values disorientation. In the face of these trends the Bishops of NSW and the ACT have noted that some in the Catholic community argue for a downsizing of “our school system to a scale at which we can choose students and staff who readily embrace the mission of the Catholic school”. Instead, the Bishops have chosen to re-affirm their commitment to:

the essential elements of the Catholic school while recognising, and even embracing, changing enrolment patterns as ‘signs of the times’ and of a new mission for Catholic education.

The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices presented in this thesis will assist Catholic schools in meeting the challenge of the Bishops to all involved in Catholic schools, issued in Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, to ensure that Catholic schools:

1. are truly Catholic in their identity and life;
2. are centers of ‘the new evangelisation’;
3. enable our students to achieve high levels of ‘Catholic religious literacy’ and practice;
4. are led and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals.

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10 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 3.
11 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 8.
12 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 8.
13 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 8.
14 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 5.
It is precisely the practical origins of the pastoral theological approach enunciated in this thesis that grounds any claim made regarding its usefulness (or otherwise) towards the Bishops’ goals.

1.2 The pastoral and practical theology of this thesis

The terms ‘pastoral theology’ and ‘practical theology’ are often used interchangeably in the literature. It is important to clarify these terms. The field of pastoral or practical theology is relatively new in the discipline of theology.¹⁵ There can be a tendency to set pastoral or practical theology over against doctrine and systematic theologies. Savage, for example, implies that pastoral theology is practical and a much needed corrective to the theoretical approach to theology with its foundations in the theoretical philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.¹⁶ “Pastoral theology being a theology of the church’s practice rather than a theology of the church’s doctrine, is set within the context of self-reflection.”¹⁷ The traditional division between systematic theology and pastoral theology is not helpful (a division which Savage would appear to perpetuate) since it creates and perpetuates an artificial distinction between thinking and acting. Veling argues that practical theology “is an attempt to heal this division so that pastoral theology is not simply an afterthought or a derivative of systematic theology.

¹⁵ See, for example, Terry Veling, Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven (New York: Orbis, 2005).
¹⁷ Savage, “Pastoral Theology/Practice,” (emphasis added).
So that theological reflection can regain its intrinsic connection to life”.\textsuperscript{18} Alison describes this same temptation to put theory before practice in the Christian life as “physics envy”.\textsuperscript{19} Under the heavy influence of the Cartesianism of clear and distinct ideas, (Western) Christianity can be reduced to mentally grasping a theory that is then put into practice:

“[f]or you can only get the theory right once, and then hold onto it. Thereafter everything is reduced to how you should behave, to morals...[t]here is little more tedious and joyless than morals when these are how you put into practice something which you are supposed to have learned already.”\textsuperscript{20}

Alison contends that Christianity is something altogether different from grasping a theory and putting it into practice. Christianity is a gradual discovery of being recognised, loved and delighted in by God, and of receiving God’s gentle and powerful forgiveness for complicity (mostly unwitting) in the violence that sustains human belonging and of daring to take a place as co-creator of a new community not reliant on the expulsion of victims, namely ekklēśia or ‘church’. In short, God and the Christian life is something persons undergo and experience in their subjectivity.\textsuperscript{21} The life into which Christians are being drawn is always contextual and practical. Therefore, theology is (or at least should be) practical and have pastoral influence. Veling suggests that this is what the field of practical theology is trying to reclaim "a certain reintegration of theology into the weave and fabric of human living, in which theology becomes a ‘practice’ or a way of life".\textsuperscript{22} This thesis is intentionally practical and

\textsuperscript{18} Veling, Practical Theology, 5.
\textsuperscript{19} Alison, Jesus the Forgiving Victim: Listening for the Unheard Voice, Bk. 1 (Glenview, IL: Doers Publishing, 2013), 11.
\textsuperscript{20} Alison, Jesus the Forgiving Victim, Bk. 1, 12.
\textsuperscript{22} Veling, Practical Theology, 3.
pastoral and seeks to suggest a way in which the practices of school life can be the data for theological engagement.

This thesis has its foundations in ‘practical theology’ in the sense that it is a systematic reflection on a present practice of a ministry in the Church, namely restorative practices in Australian Catholic schools. The thesis is ‘pastoral theology’ in as much as the systematic reflection produces a ‘pastoral theological approach’ that is aimed at enriching and deepening the experience of restorative practices in Australian Catholic schools and thereby making apparent the evangelising potential latent within it. For Swinton and Mowett practical theology is:

critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.\(^23\)

This definition is illustrated graphically as a system process in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A Model of Practical Theological Reflection\(^\text{24}\)

\(^{24}\) Adapted from Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology*, 95.
Swinton and Mowett’s definition and this adaptation of their process-model provides
guidance to this project: the theological method in this thesis is this researcher’s
sustained reflection on the contemporary situation and practices of Australian
Catholic schools (an educational practice of the Church), in particular the use of the
restorative approach to social control (a practice of the world). Moreover, the mimetic
theory of Girard and his followers, such as Alison, and the theological-anthropology of
Lonergan and his followers, such as Doran, provide particular interpretative and
critical tools that aid and advance theological reflection on restorative practices as
they are used in Catholic schools. These tools assist in what Swinton and Mowett
name as the “complex excavation of meanings within the situation”,25 and also enable
understanding of the situation “from the perspective of critical faithfulness”.26
Complexification of meanings and theologising in the light of Christian revelation,
facilitated by the critical and interpretative tools provided by Girard and Lonergan and
their followers, facilitates a pastoral theological approach to restorative practices that
may enable and ensure “faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and
for the world” among those who lead, staff, attend and support Catholic schools. The
contention of this thesis is that restorative practices can be precisely “participation in
God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world”, namely, the liturgical atonement,
of human beings experiencing themselves being unbound from distorted desires,
through the forgiveness of the risen Christ. In other words, restorative practices can
make real and tangible the saving power of Christ’s death and resurrection. The
descriptive case study provides qualitative data that both validates and challenges this

25 Swinton and Mowatt, Practical Theology, 95.
26 Swinton and Mowatt, 95.
contention, and provides some direction for the implications and suggestions for the Catholic school system and its imperative to form staff who will support its distinctive educational mission as an ecclesial community and its response to *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*.

### 1.2.1 Mimetic theory: an interpretative and critical tool for the tradition and the present context

It is notable that by employing the interpretative and critical tools of Girard in this thesis the interpretation of the tradition and the interpretation of the present situation can be achieved almost simultaneously. Tracy has outlined the role of the practical theologian:

...she or he is bound by the very nature of the enterprise as theological to show how one interprets the tradition and how one interprets the present situation and how these two interpretations correlate: as either identities of meaning, analogies, or radical non-identities...the particular question of particular individuals or groups within particular situations can decide what form the correlation must take to prove both practical and theological or, more exactly, practical-theological.  

In other words, practical theology is mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation. Girard’s insight, that as human beings learn to interpret the present context from the perspective of the victim, an interpretative insight from the Hebrew-Christian revelation, human beings open themselves to the possibility of being forgiven for their complicity in the acts of violence that demand victims and

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begin to seek new ways of creating community. Restorative practices are a way of renewing communities without creating victims and in the context of Catholic education disclose the possibility of an “identity of meaning” correlation between the interpretation of tradition and the interpretation of the contemporary context. An “identity of meaning” correlation is the goal of the pastoral theological approach proposed in this thesis and a sign of ekkléśia, of “participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world”.  

Girard has been described as a theoretician of desire and a reader and interpreter of texts. As a ‘theoretician of desire’ Girard proposes that desire, the energy of human wanting, is mimetic and constitutive of the person. That is, human beings desire according to the desire of another, and the self is called forth through these ‘borrowed’ desires of others. Where the object(s) of desire cannot be shared, mimesis leads to rivalry and violence which is resolved through sacrifice (or expulsion) of a victim; the victimage or scapegoat mechanism. Girard came to these insights as a reader and interpreter of texts, initially of the novel and later of religious myths and the Bible. Girard argues that the Bible uncovers the truth of the scapegoat mechanism and reveals its antidote: the forgiving victimhood of Jesus. It is in this sense that Alison can claim that Girard’s insight gives access to an anthropology “that is simultaneously pre-modern and quite outside post-modern nihilism...[and possibly] compatible with the Catholic faith”. 

28Swinton and Mowatt, Practical Theology, 95.
The term “text” as Girard uses it must be understood in a broad sense. Thus Kirwan notes that, for Girard, a text is “any cultural product that presents itself for interpretation”. Given this definition, restorative practices are texts: rituals that facilitate an inclusive approach to social discipline. Understood mimetically, restorative practices provide a way of ‘decoding’ episodes of victimisation: first, by recognising and giving a voice to those members of the community who have been harmed, and second, making visible those students who are at risk of being expelled from Catholic school communities for the sake of order. Furthermore, Girard’s mimetic theory provides a way of “inhabiting the story alongside those oppressed and victimised”. As such it is a “text of celebration”. Restorative practices are a way of inhabiting the stories of violence and wrongdoing alongside victims and are creative of the condition of the possibility of renewing communities without generating more victims.

Mimetic theory therefore provides a much richer, more three-dimensional way of telling the restorative story as text. Alison insists that it is Jesus, the crucified and living Messiah, who is the interpretative key for these texts. This thesis aims to interpret the restorative practices narrative, in the Catholic school context, through the eyes of Christ. Alison points out that human cultures and discourses are not used to telling

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31 Michael Kirwan, Discovering Girard (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), 120.
33 Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 119.
34 James Alison, Jesus the Forgiving Victim: Listening for the Unheard Voice, Bk. 2 (Glenview, IL: Doers Publishing, 2013), 121.
the story of overcoming death and violence in the way Christianity does. Catholic schools are founded on Christ, and are called to be places of “personal encounter with Christ”. Catholic schools are places where teachers and leaders, those in authority, are to be and become Christ-like. Restorative practices employed in Catholic schools provide a way for school community members, in particular the teachers and leaders, to inhabit the text alongside victims, creating a space for victims to tell their story, and for schools to stop creating new victims by victimising and expelling wrong-doers. This thesis suggests refreshed understandings of the exercise of authority by teachers and leaders in schools through restorative practices: understandings grounded in the authority of Christ the teacher. As such restorative practices can transform and even transfigure the human experience of conflict and violence within the Catholic school community by opening up a space where creation and redemption can be made tangible in the human experience of being forgiven. In the process mimetic theory unlocks the possibility of transcending the subject-object dichotomy: transformation of the school (human) community “passes through the recognition of the complicity in its structures of the person seeking transformation”. It is the willingness of the participants to undergo being forgiven that allows them to forgive others and seek “constructive and creative involvement in new forms of togetherness and

36 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 13.
enjoyment”. Understood mimetically, restorative practices can support Catholic school communities in their ongoing conversion as ‘church’.

1.3 The qualitative research method of ‘Case Study’

A descriptive case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred. In this thesis it is in the form of a series of structured interviews with Catholic secondary school students and teachers who were participants in restorative meetings facilitated by this researcher. The narrative of the case study makes concrete and exemplifies the deep reflection and sustained inquiry undertaken by the researcher over time which has resulted in this thesis and its chief contention: that the restorative ritual makes real and tangible the resurrection of Christ. It also tests, qualifies and validates the claims of the pastoral theological approach. Finally, the case study provides hints of the kind of connection that exists between personal experience and social structures that create the condition of the possibility of both personal change and social change. The readiness of participants in the case study to be part of the initial restorative meeting and the subsequent interviews is a co-creative move, possibly an indication of being possessed by Christ and gently held together as ‘Church’. Furthermore, the depth and quality of the reflection and insights of the participants in the case study led the researcher to consider further questions regarding the nature the transformation experienced by

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the students in the restorative conference; to ask again, ‘what is actually going on here?’ Additional theological resources, namely the work of Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran, are called upon in Chapter 6 to aid a deeper and more nuanced theological reflection on the meanings of the experience proposed by the students and teachers.

1.4 The theological anthropology of Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran

The human experience of transformation or conversion is central to the research of Lonergan and Lonerganians such as Doran. Doran’s development of psychic conversion makes explicit use of Girard’s mimetic theory and is an elaboration of Lonergan’s insight regarding the ways of being conscious. Furthermore, ‘desire’ is central to Lonergan’s systematic treatment of human subjectivity, although Lonergan’s use of the term is quite different to Girard’s ‘mimetic desire’. Therefore, Doran’s ‘dialectic of desire’ is explored through concrete examples from the case study. This ‘dialectic of desire’ both accommodates and creatively relates and connects the original insights of Lonergan and Girard regarding desire and religious, moral, intellectual and psychic conversion. Consideration of Lonergan’s ‘scale of values’ provides an alternate perspective that transcends the subject-object dichotomy and, provoked by an observation of one of the teachers, opens the way to a discussion on operative and cooperative grace in human affairs. Finally, engagement with Lonergan’s “Law of the Cross” in dialogue with a Girardian ‘theology of

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atonement’ delivers a sophisticated interpretation of the of healing interpersonal relationships as an experience which makes the gift of Jesus’ resurrection available through a restorative conference.
Chapter 2: An Introduction to Restorative Practices and their use in Australian Catholic Schools

2.1 General principles and philosophy of restorative practices

Restorative practices are emerging as a study within social science in its own right and draws together theory, research and practice from many disciplines. It has its origins in a significant breakthrough that occurred during the 1970’s and 1980’s in the criminal justice field called ‘restorative justice’, which itself emerged from attempts to mediate between victims and offenders in juvenile criminal cases.\(^1\) Most modern justice systems operate from a retributive model, namely, by authorities punishing offenders for their wrongdoing. V. E. Jaantzi in his overview of restorative justice in New Zealand, asserts that restorative justice is distinguished from retributive justice in that it seeks to seriously consider needs of both victim and perpetrator in the justice process.\(^2\) Retributive justice typically excludes the needs of the victim and focuses solely on punishing the perpetrator. Restorative justice is an inclusive process that:

seeks to rehabilitate both victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he or she has injured by his or her offence.\(^3\)

The restorative approach to justice seeks to include all people affected by the offender’s behaviour in the justice process and, where possible, to restore

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\(^1\) Wachtel, “What is Restorative Practices?”


\(^3\) Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Random House, 1999), 54-55.
relationships: between victim and perpetrator, between the perpetrator and the wider community and between the victim and the community. In other words:

...to be “restorative” means to believe that decisions are best made and conflicts best resolved by those most directly involved in them. The restorative practices movement seeks to develop good relationships and restore a sense of community in an increasingly disconnected world. These practices have been applied in justice systems, families, workplaces and neighbourhoods, as well as in schools.4

Thus, personal responsibility, the giving and receiving of forgiveness, the possibility of reconciliation and a different understanding of the role of authority are key values and principles in restorative practice. Punishments or sanctions are not precluded from restorative practice; however they are secondary to the principle of inclusion and the emphasis on the possibility of restoring relationships.5 Restorative practices are foremost “the science of building social capital and achieving social discipline through participatory learning and decision making”.6 In the following sections the interrelated domains will each be examined in turn: social capital, social discipline, participatory learning and decision making, and the principles and philosophy they disclose. The appropriateness of each domain to schools and the Catholic school in particular, will be discussed.

6 Wachtel, “What is Restorative Practices?”
2.2 The applicability of principles and philosophy of restorative practices applicable to schools and the Catholic school in particular

2.2.1 Schools and the Building of Social Capital

Schools are places with social capital and places where social capital can be built. The definition of the term social capital has created much debate amongst social scientists.\(^7\) Stone and Hughes define social capital as:

[the]networks of social relationships characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity and which lead to outcomes of mutual benefit...social capital reflects the ability of community members to participate, cooperate, organise and interact.\(^8\)

Social capital would seem to refer to the capacity people have to construct and maintain community. This capacity is relational; it is also for the advancement and growth of community and at the same time takes place in community.

2.2.1.1 School as community

The notion of school as community itself and as a place to contribute to the construction of community has currency and significance. For example, in April 2011 the then newly elected New South Wales (NSW) state government announced that the Department of Education and Training would be known as the Department of Education and Community (emphasis added). The Department describes its own purpose: “[t]o provide world class education and support strong, vibrant communities

\(^7\) There are twenty-three different definitions of social capital, T. Claridge, “Social Capital and Natural Resource Management: An important role for social capital?” (PhD diss., University of Queensland, Brisbane, 2004), [https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/literature/definition/](https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/literature/definition/).

to ensure the economic and social well-being of New South Wales”. The Catholic Bishops of NSW and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in their 2007 Pastoral Letter Catholic Schools at a Crossroads affirm the contribution of Catholic schools to the Church community and the wider community. The Bishops hope that this contribution will continue, as they “look with confidence to those educated in our schools to be prominent among the future leaders and disciples of our Church and community”. The notion of school as a community itself, and as a place that supports the growth of the whole community, is recognised by secular and Church educational authorities.

2.2.1.2 Catholic schools: a theological dimension

However, there is a theological understanding underpinning the use of the term community when employed by the Church with regard to Catholic schools. It connotes communio, a deep personal intimacy with God (in Christ) and among the people of God. This notion of the sanctorum communio militates against the

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10 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 6.

11 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 3.

12 This is a relatively recent development in Catholic teaching in regard to schools: “The declaration Gravissimum Educationis notes an important advance in the way a Catholic school is thought of: the transition from the school as an institution to the school as a community. This community dimension is, perhaps, one result of the new awareness of the Church’s nature as developed by the Council. In the Council texts, the community dimension is primarily a theological concept rather than a sociological category.” Congregation for Catholic Education, The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, (Vatican City, 1988), 31, accessed 20 May 2012, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19880407_catholic-school_en.html.

13 As the Catechism of the Catholic Church notes: “Communion in charity. In the sanctorum communio, ‘None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.’ If one member suffers, all
tendency in modern western cultures towards an individualism that diminishes and even denies the social and communal dimension of the person. As Miller notes:

such an emphasis proposes an alternative model for Catholic schools to that of an individualistic society. This communal dimension is rooted both in the social nature of the human person and the reality of the Church as ‘the home and school of communion’. That the Catholic school is an educational community is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school.14

Moreover, the Church has always taught that this communio exits for a purpose: missio. The Catholic school community shares in the mission of the triune God entrusted to the Church: to proclaim the good news of Christ to the world through Christian witness and ministry of the Word. The goal of the Catholic school is to contribute to the humanisation of the world. Catholic schools do this by forming...

...men and women who will be ready to take their place in society, preparing them in such a way that they will make the kind of social commitment which will enable them to work for the improvement of social structures, making these structures more conformed to the principles of the Gospel. Thus, they will form human beings who will make human society more peaceful, fraternal, and communitarian.15

The universal Church teaches that Catholic schools as community contribute to the building of social capital and to the mission of Christ entrusted to it. It is important to note that the sociological notion of community, at its best, is not obliterated by the theological notion, but is enriched or sublated by it.16 For example, a sociological

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suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd rev., ed., (Strathfield, NSW: St Paul’s, 2012), 953.


16 Sublated in the sense used by Lonergan (drawing on Rahner): “to mean what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct puts everything on a new basis, yet far from

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notion of community, and of the role and significance of social capital for community, may promote the role of schools in forming women and men committed to making society more peaceful, fraternal and communitarian but would stop short of the supernatural vision of the person revealed in Christ and his proclamation of the reign of God. Concomitantly, any representation of the sociological understanding of schools that views their role in the development of the human person simply as a means to achieving the economic ends of government, commerce or industry must be critiqued, challenged and opposed by Catholic schools. Catholic schools communicate Christ and his gospel, this is the key distinction between Catholic schools and state run schools. The Vatican Congregational document *The Catholic School* states it simply: “Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school”.\(^{17}\) Catholic schools must avoid placing academic success or social status first at the expense of the gospel: Christ is the “vital principle” of the Catholic school and cannot be simply “fitted-in” as an afterthought.\(^{18}\)

As an example of the expectations of the Australian Catholic Bishops’, the local Church in Wagga Wagga expresses a theological sense of community in its vision statement for all diocesan Catholic schools: “Our Catholic School communities encounter and engage with Jesus and His message”.\(^{19}\) In *Continuing the Adventure: Bishop Hanna’s*

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\(^{18}\) Miller, *The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools*, 26.

\(^{19}\) Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Wagga Wagga, *Vision and Mission Statement*, (Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2008), see Appendix I.
Mandate to all Involved in Catholic Schools Catholic schools of the Wagga Wagga diocese are described as “welcoming, compassionate and inclusive communities of faith, learning, care, service and stewardship”.\textsuperscript{20} Catholic schools in the Wagga Wagga diocese are places of communion with Christ, with others and with creation. Bishop Hanna describes Catholic schools as places that should reflect the radical inclusiveness of Christ. He quotes directly from the Vatican document \textit{The Catholic School at the Threshold of the Third Millennium}: “[t]he Catholic school is a school for all, with special attention to those who are weakest”.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, Catholic schools in the Wagga Wagga diocese are to be communities where learning promotes the mission:

the purpose of all learning in Catholic schools is both for the good of the individual persons and the common good leading to the authentic transformation of persons and society as a whole.\textsuperscript{22}

Catholic school communities in the Wagga diocese contribute to the building of networks of relationships that contribute to human flourishing and the advancement of the common good. They are communities that support the creation of social capital and are therefore suited to restorative practices.

2.2.2 Schools and social discipline

If social capital is the capacity of individuals and groups to create and maintain community, social discipline refers to the consistent operationalisation of these capacities. Ideally this occurs through self-monitoring by individuals and groups in ways that are internal and habitual to those individuals and groups. However, as

\textsuperscript{20} Bishop Gerard Hanna, \textit{Continuing the Adventure: Bishop Hanna’s Mandate to all Involved in Catholic Schools} (Wagga Wagga, NSW: Catholic Schools Office, 2011), see Appendix II.

\textsuperscript{21} Congregation for Catholic Education, \textit{The Catholic School at the Threshold of the Third Millennium}, (Vatican City, 1997), 15, in Hanna, \textit{Continuing the Adventure}.

\textsuperscript{22} Hanna, \textit{Continuing the Adventure}. 
individuals and groups move to this ideal level of social discipline they require others, those in authority, to provide guidance and direction. In schools, authority usually refers to teachers, leaders and principals.

Social discipline has come to be understood as part of the curriculum; as part of learning and teaching. Restorative practices have found a place among other innovative approaches to social discipline which also make explicit connections with the school’s core business of learning, including: ‘positive behaviour support’,23 ‘positive discipline’24 and ‘pedagogy of hope’.25 This important development will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.2.1 Restorative practices support the development of social discipline, or the consistent operationalisation of social capital, in schools

In schools, restorative practices are used as an alternative to the traditional punitive or adversarial systems of social discipline and classroom management. Similar to retributive justice systems, punitive systems of behavior management in schools focus on the wrongdoer, the person in authority, the rules broken and the punishment to be given.26 In this context punishment is defined as coercive discipline. Coercive discipline includes the imposition of sanctions or the withdrawal of privileges by a person in authority as a consequence for violating a school rule. The belief underlying

24 Wachtel, “What is Restorative Practices?”
the punitive approach to social discipline, that punishment by those with authority will change behavior, is not supported by evidence.\textsuperscript{27} “Punishment works only superficially, primarily when the misbehaving students are in view of those in authority.”\textsuperscript{28} The commitment to change behaviour is not internalised, so the inappropriate behaviour soon reappears. Moreover, punishment often makes misconduct in schools worse, leading to an escalation of conflict. Educators in the field conclude: “coercive discipline aggravates problem behaviour”.\textsuperscript{29} Since “coercive discipline” or punishment in educational settings often involves exclusion from the community, such as withdrawal from class or suspension from school, it can lead to the stigmatisation and alienation of these students.\textsuperscript{30} They can become disconnected from the school community, including teachers and well-behaved peers (that is, most students). “This alienation means they seek out others who have been excluded also, creating a ‘negative sub-culture’ in the school.”\textsuperscript{31} There is also evidence to suggest that the use of withdrawal and suspension as punishment in schools lowers high school completion rates, especially among minority groups.\textsuperscript{32}


\textsuperscript{29} Seeshing Yeeung, et. al., “Does School-wide Positive Behaviour System Improve Learning in Primary schools?” 18.


\textsuperscript{31} Croxford, “A Restorative Practice Framework,” 33.

Furthermore, punishment does not normally create empathy in students; they are not given the opportunity to understand how their behaviour has affected others. In other words, there is no explicit opportunity for learning growth in the domain of affectivity and human relationships, guided by those in authority. There is a growing body of research regarding the role of authorities (such as school discipline systems) in supporting and maximising the affective learning and thereby improving the ‘emotional intelligence’ of young people.\(^{33}\) This is especially the case for those young people whose attention to emotional cues is less well developed than their peers.\(^{34}\) In schools that adopt restorative practices, misbehaviour is viewed as an opportunity to learn, or a “teachable moment” for all involved, individually and collectively. Here, the principle of inclusion is especially salient. In restorative practices the voice of both the victim and the wrongdoer are valued in creating the opportunity for affective learning,

\(^{33}\) Emotional intelligence involves having or developing an ability to assess and influence the emotions of self and others. Students with well-developed emotional intelligence: do better academically; make better transitions from home to school and from school to the workplace; experience better psychosocial adjustment; develop better quality friendships; are rated by peers and teachers as higher in leadership capabilities. See Simmons, “Unbelievable [sic],” 25; Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, “Emotional Intelligence,” *imagination, Cognition and Personality* 9, no. 3 (1990):185-211; and Daniel Goleman, who popularised Salovey and Mayer’s research in *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More Than IQ*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2005).

\(^{34}\) The evidence base in the field of affective neuroscience on the role of parents (especially mothers) and carers in the development of the human brain during childhood and adolescence is growing. As Alison B. Wismer Fries and Seth D. Pollak in their study of the role of the amygdala in emotion processing and learning suggest: “one benefit of increased neuro-science based approaches in emotion research has been a finer conceptualisation and examination of behavioral constructs. Adaptive emotional behaviour does involve perception of, and attention to, relevant information. But at some point, signals from the environment become elaborated and take on motivational meaning and significance. For example, a happy facial expression, although recognised by young infants, may not take on meaning (e.g., approach) until the child has been exposed to repeated pairings of happy facial expressions and positive outcomes following approach behaviors. A lack of such associative learning experiences (as occurs in neglected infants, who experience fewer pairings of emotional expressions and reliable or predicted outcomes) may lead to an insufficiency of stored associations and subsequent difficulties in interpreting and understanding emotional cues.” Alison B. Wismer Fries and Seth D. Pollak, “Emotion Processing and the Adolescent Brain,” in *Human Behaviour Learning and the Developing Brain: Typical Development*, ed. Donna Coch, Kurt W. Fischer and Geraldine Dawson (New York: Guilford Press, 2010), 342. See also, Laura M. Padilla-Walker, “‘My Mom Makes Me So Angry!’ Adolescent Perceptions of Mother-Child Interactions as Correlates of Adolescent Emotions,” *Social Development* 17, no. 2 (2008): 306-325; Gary M. Ingersoll, *Normal Adolescence* (Bloomington, Indiana: Centre for Adolescent Studies, 1989), 329-361.
growth in emotional intelligence, and the development of empathy. Wachtel and McCold describe this as the “psychology of affect”. They argue that the “psychology of affect” is foundational to restorative practices and its role in building community:

[t]he late Silvan S. Tomkins’s writings about the psychology of affect assert that human relationships are best and healthiest when there is free expression of affect—or emotion—minimising the negative, maximising the positive, but allowing for free expression. Donald Nathanson, director of the Silvan S. Tomkins Institute, adds that it is through the mutual exchange of expressed affect that we build community, creating the emotional bonds that tie us all together. Restorative practices provide a safe environment for people to express and exchange intense emotion.

The expression and exchange of intense emotion may well occur in schools with traditional punitive approaches to discipline, however the victim is rarely given the opportunity to give voice to their experience. As in the criminal justice system, usually it is the authority figure who speaks for the victim and metes out justice (usually a form of punishment) to the wrongdoer on the victim’s behalf.

O’Callaghan argues that while this approach usually restores order, it also teaches victims that, “silence is the way to peace, where resentment and pain can be buried deep”. In other words, the punitive approach denies the victim the opportunity to claim their human dignity and come to terms with their own affective reality. In schools that adopt the restorative approach to social control, the authority figure’s role, be they teacher, principal or other school leader is crucial in creating the “safe

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36 Wachtel and McCold, “From Restorative Justice”.
environment” for the authentic expression and exchange of emotion that, following Tomkins’s argument, can build, and re-build, community. This safe environment is one characterised by inclusivity: respecting the needs and dignity of victims and wrongdoers is important to the growth of the whole community.

2.2.2.2 Catholic schools: a theological dimension

In Catholic schools, the mutual exchange of affect has a theological dimension. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church suggests, the emotional bonds that unite people can be called ‘communion in charity’:

In the sanctorum communio, ‘None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.’ ‘If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.’

At a local Church level the document Continuing the Adventure argues that:

learning [including affective learning] in Catholic school is for the good of the individual and the common good leading to the authentic transformation of persons and society as a whole.

From a Catholic school perspective, affective learning and the development of empathy within young people can contribute to the in-breaking of the reign of God; to a moment of encounter and engagement with Jesus and his message. In other words, there is an evangelising dimension to restorative practices that could be realised. This last point is a major contention of this thesis which will be taken up in Chapters 4 and 7.

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38 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 953.
39 Hanna, Continuing the Adventure.
40 Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Wagga Wagga, Vision and Mission Statement.
2.2.3 The role of Authority in the restorative school

It is worth noting that when a school adopts restorative practices there is a paradigm shift regarding the role of authority from the traditional or ‘punitive’ approach to social control. Much of what has been discussed in terms of this philosophical difference between the role of the authority figure in the two systems of social control is best illustrated through the ‘Social Control Window’ or ‘Social Discipline Window’ (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Social Control Window

Authority, here defined as teachers and school leaders, in the traditional punitive system of social control operates typically up and down the vertical axis in Figure 2.

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The social control of students is measured in terms of the authorities’ ability to hold students to account against clearly delineated limits and expectations or rules. When the boundaries and rules are broken, a punishment is issued. In other words, those in authority will do things to others to maintain social discipline; mostly by punishing wrongdoers. This “authoritarian” system of social control operates out of the top left pane of the window.

The horizontal axis of the Social Control Window is marked “support”: thus teachers, principals and school leaders support, encourage and nurture students to be socially disciplined. In contrast with the authoritarian system, which gives prominence to keeping rules and issuing sanctions against students who infringe the rules, the nurturing approach can be characterised as emphasising and maximising positive relationships between teachers and students, and between students. Typically, the supportive approach includes the tactical ignoring of misbehaviour and the reinforcement of desired behaviour with praise and encouragement. The reinforcement of desired behaviour often includes school-wide or class-wide systems of merit-awards, in which students are publically recognised and rewarded for their positive behaviour.\(^{42}\) The supportive approach also promotes the belief that all behaviour is meaningful; therefore, when misbehaviour occurs teachers seek to understand student misbehaviour so that they can respond to it more empathetically.

\(^{42}\) Some educators argue that merit systems rely on the same manipulative power as punitive systems of social control and are counter-productive in the long term. For example, Kohn cites seventy studies which demonstrate “...that extrinsic motivators – including A’s, sometimes praise, and other rewards – are not merely ineffective over the long haul but counterproductive with respect to the things that concern us most: desire to learn, commitment to good values, and so on.” Ron Brandt, “Punished By Rewards? A Conversation with Alfie Kohn,” *Educational Leadership* 53, no. 1 (1995) http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/pdf/Punished%20by%20Rewards.pdf (accessed 23 June, 2013).
In the supportive approach teachers also promote empathetic understanding between students. The involvement of parents and carers in this process is also valued. Whilst emphasising positive relationships is important, a teacher who relies solely on this approach runs the risk of making excuses for student misbehaviour, failing to follow-up and hold students to account, and even completing the tasks and duties for the student. Since this approach runs the risk of taking responsibility for student misbehaviour, these practitioners work from the bottom right pane of the window. They may encourage a permissive, protective or undemanding social culture to operate within a classroom or school.

Sometimes, those in authority can treat one group or individual in a school punitively and at the same time a different group or individual can be treated supportively. As noted above, in a punitive system of student management, it is the authority figure that gives punishment to the wrongdoer on the victim’s behalf and speaks for the victim. Therefore, if the authoritarian teacher does consider the victim she or he operates out of the top left corner of the window when dealing with wrongdoers and the bottom right corner when supporting victims. There is an inherent paternalism operating: teachers are doing things to one group and for another.

The bottom left pane describes the ‘neglectful’ teacher, principal or school leader, who hold low expectations of themselves and their community and offers little support for them. This is a dereliction of duty on two levels. On the second or ‘outer level’ there are, in NSW, the obligations that school principals, classroom teachers and staff have to parents, statutory authorities and, in the case of Catholic schools, to
Canonical Administrators to provide a quality curriculum and safe and supportive schools and classrooms. The NSW Minister for Education through the statutory authority of the NSW Board of Studies requires State and Catholic schools to comply with the NSW Education Act (1990). This Act requires that Catholic schools are registered and accredited every five years so that they meet standards set by law regarding provision of curriculum, discipline and safe and supportive environments.

Teachers in all NSW schools are also subject to the *NSW Institute of Teachers Professional Standards*. Among other expectations, these Standards require them to demonstrate that they “know their students and know how they learn” and “maintain safe and challenging learning environments” to a level of professional competence.

Bishop Hanna directs those involved in Wagga Wagga diocesan schools to ensure the highest standards of care and service, reminding Principals, teachers and staff that this is a “clear expression of and witness to Christ’s life and teaching”. On the inner or ‘first’ level, educators have an obligation to themselves to set high expectations for students (and each other) and to provide high levels of support and encouragement to achieve these expectations. Acts of Parliament, accreditation processes, professional standards and Bishops’ statements are drivers of performance and reminders of the duty to provide high levels of expectation and support, but they are external to the person as educator and the community of educators.

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43 Through the NSW Education Act (1990), various other Acts of Parliament also impose requirements on schools, such as The Ombudsman Act (1974), Commission for Children and Young Peoples Act (1998), Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act (1998).
45 New South Wales Institute of Teachers, *Professional Teaching Standards* (Sydney, 2010), 4-10.
46 Hanna, *Continuing the Adventure*. The Congregation for Catholic Education also affirms these responsibilities regarding Catholic schools, for example in *The Catholic School*, 39.
Unless there is a drive or sense of purpose from within the teacher, leader or principal then the exchange of intense emotion within a safe environment that can lead to the authentic transformation of relationships within a community is unlikely to occur. As Palmer has observed: “external tools of power have occasional utility in teaching, but they are no substitute for authority, the authority that comes from the teacher’s inner life”.  

Here, Palmer is using the word authority to convey a sense of integrity within the person who teaches:

The clue is in the word itself, which has author at its core. Authority is granted to people who are perceived as authoring their own words, their own actions, their own lives, rather than playing a scripted role at great remove from their own hearts.  

Palmer’s reflections have resonances with the significance of the authentic witness of the teacher in a Catholic school: as one who makes Christ visible and real to students. As Pope Paul VI observed: “modern man [sic] listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses”. Fullan speaks of moral purpose for principals as the key to the continual improvement and transformation of an entire school community.  

The central moral purpose consists of constantly improving student achievement and ensuring that achievement gaps, wherever they exist, are

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50 Fullan admits that the moral purpose of the principal does influence individual teachers and students in a school. However, “[m]oral purpose becomes more prominent when we shift our focus to encompass the whole school. The criteria of moral purpose are the following: that all students and teachers benefit in terms of identified desirable goals, that the gap between high and low performers becomes less as the bar for all is raised, that ever-deeper educational goals are pursued, and that a culture of continuous improvement relative to the previous components becomes built-in.” Michael Fullan, The Moral Imperative of School Leadership (Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, 2003), 31.
narrowed. In short, it’s about raising the bar and narrowing the gap.\textsuperscript{51}

In the context of school education in NSW and the Wagga Wagga diocese, ‘neglectful’ principals, teachers and leaders violate both external and internal loci of authority. Clearly, they are neglectful of their duty and \textbf{not} seeking to create a safe environment of social control with its aim to maximise the possibility of the learning growth of all.

A restorative approach to social control in schools combines high levels of accountability with high levels of support. This approach is ‘authoritative’, drawing on a strong sense of moral purpose within and among the teachers and leaders of a school community. Restorative teachers and leaders in schools operate in the top right pane of the window in Figure 2, to work \textit{with} all students, other staff, and parents and carers, to set and maintain norms and high expectations. Norms are a short list of rules or guidelines that describe acceptable behaviour in classrooms, year groups and even whole school communities. Restorative teachers work \textit{with} their students to construct and regularly review an agreed list of norms or guidelines for their classroom. These norms and guidelines are articulated using positive language and are descriptive of a classroom or year group that is exhibiting behaviour conducive to maximising learning growth. Some schools set the bar higher, working with teacher and students to create ‘ideal classroom’ statements.\textsuperscript{52} Whatever the outcome, effective teachers and leaders draw on and explicitly refer to their moral purpose as they lead and guide students through the norming process. Restorative teachers and leaders also work \textit{with} students, other staff and parents to emphasise, highlight and magnify positive

\textsuperscript{52} See Appendix III for an example from Mater Dei Catholic College, Wagga Wagga.
relationships between individuals and groups. Restorative teachers and leaders also seek ways to give negative feedback in a constructive manner and they regularly seek feedback about their own performance as teachers and leaders. Restorative leaders and teachers understand that some students, and staff and parents, need greater support and encouragement than others to meet the agreed expectations and standards. For example, they may need more explicit or concrete demonstration or reiteration of what is expected. When relationships are affected by behaviour that violates these agreed expectations, restorative teachers work with those most directly involved to understand what has happened and who has been affected and how they have been affected. They work with those affected to restore relationships and to support and encourage their learning growth through the experience of misconduct or harm.

Because the restorative approach to social discipline encourages those in authority to be inclusive by working with those most directly involved in the conflict it is likely to be effective since it aligns with what researchers in the field of business management have described as “fair process”. As Croxford suggests:

(P)eople are most likely to trust and co-operate freely with systems – whether they win or lose by those systems – when fair process is observed. Fair process involves three principles: engagement (an opportunity to have a say); explanation (so the reasons for the decision are understood); and clear expectations (shared understanding in terms of behaviour). Fair process builds trust, respect and cooperation, which enhances problem solving, development of social skills, and helps build stronger relationships.53

Moreover, restorative practices focus on maintaining and building relationships aligns

with quality learning principles for schools and classrooms. The Relationship Continuum in Figure 3 shows graphically how learning growth is empowered by positive relationships between teachers and students.

Figure 3: The Relationship Continuum

Students who are actively involved in the learning process, are involved in goal setting and creating the standards for evaluation and tracking learning, participate in classroom planning and decision making and have the opportunity to give feedback to their peers and teachers, are more likely to experience continuous and sustainable improvement in their learning. In the Catholic school, there has long been an emphasis on the importance of the quality of relationship between the teacher and students.


the student. Catholic education is understood to be of and for the whole person: physically, intellectually, emotionally, morally, spiritually and religiously. The authentic growth of the person in all these domains “requires the personalised accompanying of a teacher.” Therefore “a student needs to experience personal relations with outstanding educators”. The Congregation for Catholic Education outlines the nature of this relationship:

[a] personal relationship is always a dialogue rather than a monologue, and the teacher must be convinced that the enrichment in the relationship is mutual. But the mission must never be lost sight of: the educator can never forget that students need a companion and guide during their period of growth; they need help from others in order to overcome doubts and disorientation. Also, rapport with the students ought to be a prudent combination of familiarity and distance; and this must be adapted to the need of each individual student. Familiarity will make a personal relationship easier, but a certain distance is also needed.

The Catholic school prizes the teacher-student relationship as fundamental to the learning growth of students, a learning growth the Catholic school envisions as holistic. Restorative practices both requires and fosters quality relationships between students and those in authority.

2.2.4 Participatory learning and decision making in schools

The focus on participatory learning and decision making makes restorative practices especially applicable to the school and classroom setting. Given the contemporary notion of school as community, it is noteworthy that participatory learning and

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56 Miller, The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools, 36.
58 Lay Catholics in Schools, 33.
decision making (or action) is an approach to supporting the development of communities. Participatory learning:

promotes the active participation of communities in the issues and interventions that shape their lives...[i]t enables local people to share their perceptions and identify, prioritise and appraise issues from their knowledge of local conditions.  

In the school setting participatory learning refers to a pedagogy that actively involves the learner and their immediate experience, with their questions and concerns about that experience, in the learning process. In the 1980’s David Kolb developed an experiential learning theory, arguing, “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”. Inquiry-Based Learning (or Guided Inquiry) is a contemporary articulation of this pedagogy:

[s]chool has traditionally focused on having children answer questions; inquiry based learning turns that on its head involving children in formulating engaging questions and then participating in various language and literacy experiences to answer them.

Schools in the Wagga Wagga diocese are presently involved in developing Inquiry-Based and Guided Inquiry approach to their pedagogy. Restorative practices learning emerges from proximate experience and is a ‘Guided Inquiry’ into the experience of wrongdoing, which honours the experience of the wrongdoer and the victim and may even transform this experience into knowledge and wisdom. It is a major contention of this thesis that in the context of the Catholic school community, restorative practices may become a guided inquiry into an experience of resurrection faith.

The participatory learning and decision making approach applies equally to the adults involved in restorative practices. In fact, since adults are by definition, more experienced than students, it is critical that their experience is honoured in the learning process. Moreover, with the present emphasis on schools as a network of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the science of schools building social capital, or community, and social discipline through participatory learning and decision making is underscored:

A PLC is composed of collaborative teams whose members work collaboratively to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable...[m]embers of PLC’s...understand that the most powerful learning always occurs in the context of taking action, and they value engagement and experience as the most effective teachers.62

Key Wagga Wagga diocesan documents also endorse schools as networks of PLCs where participatory learning and decision making are featured. The Wagga Wagga diocese’s mission statement claims that Catholic schools are about “inspiring, informing and engaging communities in learning”.63 The Wagga Wagga diocesan Learning Framework describes schools as places where there is a “dynamic relationship between...learning and life experience”.64 Restorative practices makes visible the relationship between learning and life experience: it is a philosophy and a continuum of participatory learning and decision making processes that support

63 Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Wagga Wagga, Vision and Mission Statement.
64 Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Wagga Wagga, Framework for Learning, (Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2011), see Appendix IV.
teachers and leaders in schools to take action by engaging in the experience of conflict and wrongdoing with the hope that affective learning growth will lead to restored relationships. Whilst adults usually support and often guide students through the guided inquiry that are restorative practices, adults can also teach the process to students so that they can use it to guide their peers through experiences of conflict to a restored relationship. Sometimes the adults are involved in the experience of wrongdoing as victim or wrongdoer. Whatever the role of the adults in the process, it is clear that restorative practices align with and make visible contemporary understandings of learning in schools.

Restorative practices align with participatory learning and decision making in school communities and are a means to achieving the creation of stronger communities. The next section describes the processes used in schools to include victims and wrongdoers in participatory learning and decision making.

2.3 The processes of Restorative Practices used in schools

The processes of restorative practices form a continuum from low level, informal interactions to high level and formal interventions. These processes can be used with individual students and staff-members, with small groups and whole class groups and year groups. The processes are modeled by teachers and school leaders and can be taught to students and to parents. They are illustrated in Figure 4.
The details of each of these processes will be explained in turn beginning with the informal Affective statements and concluding with the Formal Conference. The less formal processes are constitutive of and integral to the formal processes.

### 2.3.1 Affective statements

Affective statements enable, magnify and encourage the sharing of emotion or affect between people, mostly between teachers and students. Affective statements can enable teachers and students to express emotions that create and reinforce the bonds of community.\(^{66}\) For example, students are talking whilst a teacher is explaining a task to the class. A typical teacher response to the unwanted side-chatter is “stop talking”. An affective response is “I am frustrated that you are not listening to me”. In the second response, not only is the teacher focusing on the behaviour she wants to stop, there is also a low-level sharing of how the behaviour is affecting her. The

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\(^{66}\) See, Wachtel and McCold, “From Restorative Justice”.
communication of the teacher’s feelings is key here. The teacher, a potential ‘victim’ of (possible) ongoing classroom disruption gives voice to their feelings. These affective statements are not a panacea for disruptive classrooms or school yards, but over time exchanges of this kind can impact positively on relationships between teachers and students. Teachers use their professional judgement and emotional intelligence as to the most suitable timing of the affective statements. Sometimes these are more effective when given ‘in the moment’ of the behaviour. At other times, they are best given after the incident in a private setting. The skill of using affective statements is foundational to the entire continuum of processes that are employed in restorative practices.

2.3.2 Affective questions

Affective questions are designed to create awareness in students about their thoughts and feelings. Affective questions can be used to challenge behaviour and invite students whose behaviour has impacted negatively on others to consider the affect their behaviours and attitudes have on themselves and others in the community. Affective questions can also be used to assist those affected by the behaviour of others to have their own needs and feelings validated. In both cases, affective questions are designed to elicit affective statements from students and others involved; creating the emotional bonds, the exchange of affect, that build and re-build community. In the early stages of using affective questions teachers use a scaffold on

a card or sheet as they become accustomed to the restorative process. In the diocese of Wagga Wagga, Catholic schools use the Affective Questions illustrated in Figure 5.

![Affective Questions](image)

**Figure 5: Affective Questions Scaffold**

The questions are designed to move smoothly through a four-step process: 1) Incident, exploring what happened; 2) Affect, finding out who was affected and how they were affected; 3) Solution, discussing what needs to happen to put things right; and, 4) Learning, with the knowledge gained from the conversation what would those involved do differently next time. The four-step process encourages students to take ownership of their behaviour and become involved in the process of finding solutions to problems, rather than relying on adults to control and manage behaviour. Teachers are trained to ask the questions calmly and with a low tonality, and to de-personalise

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The incident. ‘De-personalising the incident’ means that the teacher learns to mentally separate the unwanted behaviour from the student. This can assist in defusing the emotion of the incident for the teacher, which Richmond argues leads to typically more intelligent teacher responses in difficult situations.\textsuperscript{69} When teachers become proficient they are also encouraged to develop their own questions that follow the four-step process.

The solution-focus and learning-centered goal of affective questioning can also restrict the tendency of some teachers to become like ‘crime scene investigators’; obsessed about finding all the facts in the ‘case’. Teachers are strongly advised to accept ambiguity; that the full truth of what happened may never emerge.\textsuperscript{70} Moreover, the affective questioning process encourages teachers to refrain from micro-managing young people and taking responsibility for their behaviour. As Costello, Wachtell and Wachtell have observed:

Getting students to speak and find solutions is a significant shift or teachers and administrators...[teachers] have come to believe that telling children what not to do is a necessary part of our job and we don’t see any options or alternatives. The affective questions can be helpful here because they let [the teacher] turn the tables. You still address the inappropriate behaviour but in a way that asks students to think for themselves about their actions and to reflect on how they affect people. That shifts responsibility away from [the teacher] and places it on the students whose behaviour is causing the problem.\textsuperscript{71}

The affective questions used in restorative practices can create the conditions for students to take responsibility for their actions and for victims to claim their dignity

\textsuperscript{69} Christine Richmond, \textit{Teach More, Manage Less: A Minimalist Approach to Behaviour Management} (Lindfield, NSW: Scholastic, 2007), 88-89.

\textsuperscript{70} Marist Youth Care, \textit{Restorative Justice Resources}. See Appendix V.

by being given a voice. Often it emerges that students who are wrongdoers are also victims, of incidents at home or at school earlier in the day, during that week or at other times during the year.

2.3.3 Small impromptu conferences

Teachers typically call small impromptu conferences in immediate response to an incident or situation. By gathering those involved and stepping through the restorative questions with wrongdoers and the people affected, an incident can often be quickly resolved. Furthermore, just as affective statements give teachers the opportunity to speak from their victimhood, affective questions used in the context of a conference also seek to include the perspective of the victim. In traditional school behaviour management systems, the victim is excluded from the process, they are not given a voice. The authority figure, usually a teacher or the school principal, simply ‘arbitrates’ the case in a forensic style, hearing evidence and deciding consequences or punishments. In a small impromptu conference affective questions, such as those in Figure 5, are used at once to create awareness and empathy among students with regard to the proximate experience of wrongdoing or hurt. Teachers use the series of questions that leads the students through a process of awareness-raising about the incident, who it has affected, through to a solution and possible learning outcome(s). Expert teachers will seize opportunities throughout the process and immediately after to appropriately affirm students in relation to their strengths, willingness to take responsibility for their actions and insights into themselves and their learning in relation to the incident.
As well as being modeled by teachers, leaders and principals, affective questions (and statements) can be explicitly taught to students. They can be taught to use them to manage and resolve conflict at school and at home, with or without the direct involvement of adults who know and understand the processes. The language of the questions can be modified for use with and in the explicit teaching of, students in the early years of school.\footnote{72}

### 2.3.4 Circle or Group

Circles or groups give the opportunity for students and teachers to sit together and speak in turn about a relevant issue or common experience. Circles themselves are a powerful symbol of inclusion, they symbolise the importance of each person to the whole group. Lavallée claims that sharing circles of some North American Aboriginal people manifest the intrinsic value of participants and the power of sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences with others:

> Sharing circles use a healing method in which all participants (including the facilitator) are viewed as equal and information, spirituality, and emotionality are shared...[c]ircles are acts of sharing all aspects of the individual – heart, mind, body, and spirit.\footnote{73}

Sharing of this ‘healing’ and ‘holistic’ nature is a goal of a restorative circle when used in a classroom or school, particularly in a Catholic school. Depending on the issue or experience in focus, restorative circles can give participants the opportunity to practice affective statements and questions with regard to an issue or experience that

\footnote{72}{See Appendix VI.}
has transpired. The issue or experience can be related to an incident of misbehaviour in the group or a stimulus from outside the group that has affected members of the group.

The circle process is explicitly taught to students and led and managed by an expert teacher. A key expectation of the circle is that while each person is given the opportunity to speak, no person is required to speak. Ideally each person in the circle sits at the same height, no one above or below the other, to enhance the sense of equality in the group. A ‘talking symbol’ can be used: a stick, stone or other object can be held by the teacher as he explains the process or topic for the circle time, and is then passed around the circle and held by each participant when it is their turn to speak.\textsuperscript{74} After the process has been taught, ideally the first circle experience should be conducted immediately and involve a low-key and yet personal focus. It is important that the group experience initial success with the process. For example, students could be asked: “Talk about the best day at school you have ever had or what the best day at school would be like”. The teacher models an appropriate response and the students follow. After some positive experiences the process can be used to encourage the sharing of affective responses to medium to higher-level foci, such as experiences of failure, hurt, and wrongdoing or after viewing a film or listening to a story with strong emotional content. In the circle students can also practice articulating affective statements and questions as well as responding to them. The

\textsuperscript{74} The ‘talking symbol’ is also a feature of North American Aboriginal healing circles. See Lavallée, “Practical Application of an Indigenous Research Framework,” 29.
circle process can also be used by teachers to quickly share insights and learning among students and generate solutions to problems.

2.3.5 Formal Conference

A formal conference is conducted following a serious incident of misbehaviour. A senior teacher or school leader who is highly skilled in restorative practices and not directly involved in the incident usually conducts or facilitates formal conferences. It is strongly recommended that the facilitator follow a script, such as in Figure 6, so that their role allows maximum participation of those involved. “The facilitator is...to avoid interfering in the discussion and decisions made by the participants in the conference.”⁷⁵ All who have been affected by the incident are invited to the conference and are given the opportunity to respond to the restorative questions in a set order, as outlined in Figure 6. It is possible that the student who has done wrong may have been withdrawn from class or suspended from attending school to ensure their safety and the safety of others. Therefore, the facilitator will be mindful of the fact that the formal conference may be the offending student’s first contact with school since the incident.

Other community members may be involved in the conference. For example, it may be appropriate for parents and other family members who have been affected to be present and included in the process. Students can also bring a friend or a support person to sit with them and offer their perspective on the incident: who was affected

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and how, the possible solutions and learning from the incident. No one is compelled to take part, however the student who has offended may be advised that choosing not to take part in the Conference could jeopardize their ongoing enrolment in the school. The conference facilitator speaks with every participant prior to the meeting ensuring that they are aware of the core purpose: to restore damaged relationships and maximise the learning growth of all. Consequences for the wrongdoer may result from the conference. Consequences may include negative sanctions such as the withdrawal of privileges. However, they can also include positive or constructive sanctions such as assisting the person who has been harmed in some meaningful way. Ideally, if sanctions are given they will arise from the conference participants and are relevant and meaningful. Nevertheless, consequences such as sanctions are ancillary to the core purpose: to restore damaged relationships and maximise the learning growth of all.

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76 Expulsion from individual schools and exclusion from systems of schools is a consequence rarely countenanced by present day school Principals and system Directors. See Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Wagga Wagga, Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Procedures (Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2007), see Appendix VII.
Restorative Practices in Formal Conferences

GOALS:
The Restorative Conference with Key Stakeholders aims to:

1. Maximise the possibility of learning from misbehaviour.
2. Increase relational thinking – understanding how people are affected.
3. Devise a positive plan as a way forward.

SEVEN LINEAR STEPS:

1. Keep a high degree of structure – Establish purpose and process.
   Key words:
   • “This is a highly structured process aimed at this young person learning something out of this incident. There are two parts to this meeting –
     o First we will talk about how people have been affected.
     o Second we will make a plan for a positive way forward.”

2. Introduce each person and explain why they are there.
   • Include the student, parents, peers, Year Coordinator and teacher (if there was a specific incident).

3. Ask student to talk about the behaviour, who was affected and how.
   Key words:
   • “This is not about us judging your character. We are here to talk specifically about your behaviour, who was affected by that behaviour and how they were affected.”

4. Have each person talk about how they were affected. Interject when there is blaming, personal comments or dredging up of the past.
   • Order of questioning is indicated on the seating arrangement diagram.

5. Talk about the student’s strengths, refer especially to strengths that have been visible during the Conference.
   • “While we clearly disapprove of what has happened we need to also acknowledge your strengths.”

6. Ask the student if there is anything they wish to say to each of the people affected by their behaviour.
   • “I want you to think about how each person has been affected. Is there anything you would like to say to anyone here that you think would be helpful?”

7. Devise a plan for positive change that is realistic and achievable. Incorporate in the plan, support and management of setbacks. The plan is not a contract that if broken, results in suspension or expulsion.
   • “What needs to happen for us to see a positive way forward?”
   • “What needs to happen to make amends/repair to the damaged relationships?”
   • “If the same situation happens again, how could you act differently?”
   • “When you leave this meeting the other students might quiz you about what has happened here. What could you say in reply that might be helpful?”

Figure 6: Formal Conference Goals and Steps

Adapted from Marist Youth Care, Restorative Justice Resources.
2.4 Conclusion

The five processes of restorative practices that are used in schools to include victims and wrongdoers in participatory learning and decision making are a means to achieving stronger communities. In Catholic schools when victim and wrongdoer come together, with support of the community, and forgiveness, healing and reconciliation; this is an encounter with Christ. The stronger community, the *sanctorum communio*, that may emerge is a sign of a new creation, the first fruits of those born in the Spirit. Central to this is the victim and the victim’s sense and awareness of their victimhood. The contribution restorative practices make here is the inclusion of the victim in the process; the centrality of the voice of the victim who learns to speak from the heart and with dignity.

It is the contention of this thesis that the contribution of Catholic theology could be from the perspective of the resurrected Christ. Christ is the Catholic school teacher who asks those in Catholic schools to imitate him in his victimhood and to become that ecclesial community which stretches its heart to those whose desires are distorted. Christ reveals how to be the victim without being defined by victimhood and Christ gives the school community the grace to be ministers of reconciliation. If “Catholic schools have the task of being the living and provocative memory of Christ”,78 perhaps restorative practices could provide a ‘place’ where the school community receives and lives this reality.

78 Miller, *The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools*, 26.
Understanding and grounding this reality through an authentic theology and communicating it effectively is a significant challenge. In the next two chapters the cultural and anthropological insights of René Girard will be employed to provide a scaffold for constructing a pastoral theological approach for Catholic schools, which may come to life through the processes of restorative practices. This ‘aliveness’ is principally through victims speaking truly to those who have harmed them, inviting them to become more than the small people they think they are in the small worlds they imagine they inhabit.
Chapter 3: A Christian Anthropology Based on the Mimetic Theory of René Girard

The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices in Catholic schools that will be proposed in Chapter Three is founded on an anthropology that characterises the human person as sacred and social. The work of René Girard provides an original and controversial perspective on the social make-up and origins of the human person, and the Hebrew-Christian revelation is indispensable to his theory.

This chapter offers an explication of Girard’s insights with regard to anthropology and human culture. Girard’s insights have three main interrelated parts:¹

1. Mimetic theory: human desire is mimetic or imitated, that is, humans desire according to the desire of the other;

2. The scapegoat or victimage mechanism: human cultures use scapegoats or victims to resolve mimetic conflict and create unity; and,

3. The revelation of God to humanity as expressed in Jewish and Christian traditions: in contrast to myth and sacrificial ritual, reveals the scapegoat mechanism within culture as well as human desire as mimetic, and provides a different way for shaping desire and culture.

¹ This structure has been adapted from one proposed by Hodge, Resisting Violence, 20.
Each of these parts will be examined in turn, using both the original work of Girard and of others, such as English theologian James Alison, who seek to understand, develop, apply and systematise Girard’s thinking.²

3.1 Mimetic Theory: how the human person and desire are formed by the social other

The human capacity to learn by imitation is a distinguishing quality of human beings from other animals. Aristotle remarks in the Poetics:

> the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures.³

Humans learn language mimetically, which is where philosophy and psychology generally leave mimesis. Girard insists that humans also learn desire mimetically. That is, people form their desires according to the desires of others. For Girard, fundamentally ‘desire’ is the energy that drives human beings, the desire for being.⁴

Desire is often directed by ‘acquisitive mimesis’, wanting what another possess or seems to possess. This desire, in contradistinction to its definition in most modern psychology, is not linear and directly object oriented. Rather, the object desired by the subject is mediated by the desire of an ‘other’ (an individual or social ‘other’). People imitate, or mime, the desire of others because they do not know what to desire:

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² Girard’s work arises from understandings of the concrete and particular experiences of being human, such as those found in literature and anthropology. This means “Girard does not operate systematically by treating all necessary questions that arise from the development of his thought, but rather follows and develops his insights as they shed light on human experience. In this regard, Girard himself has acknowledged the need to develop his basic insights and place them into a systematic framework (such as a Catholic theological framework).” Hodge, Resisting Violence, 44.
³ Aristotle, Poetics, Part IV.
⁴ Girard, When These Things Begin, 12.
Man [sic] is the creature who does not know what to desire, and he turns to others to make up his mind. We desire what others desire because we imitate their desires.  

In other words, desire is “secondary to our instinctual mimesis of others.”  

Girard and his followers point to the experience of watching children at play: two toddlers are playing in a room full of toys. Very soon one toy becomes the object desired by both toddlers. Girard and his followers claim mimetic desire “conforms perfectly with everyone’s lived experience, if not with their interpretation of it”.  

This truth about the triangular nature of human desire is something generally hidden from people’s consciousness and yet is foundational to consciousness. Moreover, “[t]his desire is so basic to humans that they do not even realise its true nature, which leads to the attempt to posses and control it”.  

Girard maintains that this truth has been uncovered or revealed over time through certain novelists and ultimately in the Judaeo-Christian scriptures. Girard’s own discovery began with a study of literature and was published in his seminal work Deceit, Desire and the Novel in the late 1950’s.

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5 Violent Origins: René Girard, et. al, on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1987), 122. Neil Ormerod proposes a distinction between Girardian mimetic desire and Bernard Lonergan’s understanding: “Lonergan’s desire allows for the possibility of a desire that is not mimetic, a desire which in some sense defines our identity, not simply empirically, but normatively; that is, he identifies a desire that demands from us a fidelity which defines our success or failure in the task of becoming an authentic human being.” Neil Ormerod, “Is all Desire Mimetic?” in Violence, Desire and the Sacred: Girardian Mimetic Theory Across the Disciplines, ed. Scott Cowdell, Chris Fleming and Joel Hodge (London: Continuum, 2012), 251-252. However, from a Girardian perspective, the task of becoming an authentic human being is itself part of the mimetic process, it is mediated by the social other. See Hodge, Resisting Violence, 44-46. Robert Doran suggests that in fact there exists a ‘dialectic of desire’ within the person, “The Dialectic of Desire,” in The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions, Vol. 1: Missions and Processions (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 196-226. The “dialectic of desire” will be discussed in Chapter 6.


8 Hodge, Resisting Violence, 27.
In *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* Girard cites the example of the fictional Don Quixote in Cervantes’ novel of the same name. Don Quixote desires to be the perfect knight, he has this desire because he wishes to *imitate* the great knight Amadis de Gaul. To help illustrate this Girard uses a geometric model of a triangle; see Figure 7.

![Figure 7: Mediation of mimetic desire](image)

At the base of the triangle Don Quixote occupies one corner and the object ‘perfect knighthood’ the other. At the apex is the ‘model’ Amadis de Gaul who mediates the object of Don Quixote’s desire, ‘perfect knighthood’. For Girard, desire thus configured is *a priori* and endemic to human personhood. In other words, the human self is constituted as the person imitates the desire of others; humans desire *according to* the desire of another. Mimetic desire is “what makes possible the coming into being

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of the self of any one of us.”¹¹ This process begins in infancy as the child receives his or her selfhood from those who care for him or her. Each human being has their person ‘suggested into being’ by those who parent them.

### 3.1.1 How the self is nurtured through mimetic desire

A newborn child’s complete dependence on and attraction to their parents leads the child to imitate sounds and gestures. The capacity to repeat sounds and gestures leads to the formation of memory, and thence language, since without memory there cannot be language.¹² Psychologists have established that infants are able to repeat gestures from the very first day of birth.¹³ As Alison has observed “[i]mitation is pre-cognitive and it is as a result of the flowering of our highly developed imitative capacity that we come to know”.¹⁴ Later, the imitation of adult gestures by infants can be observed to be deferred in time, so that if a baby is restrained from sticking out its tongue, for example by a dummy, the baby will repeat the gesture once the dummy is removed. Not only can infants imitate adult activity but, much earlier than previously thought, they can also imitate adult intention. For example, if an adult is holding a rubber ring and a stick on which the ring can be threaded and gestures as if to thread the ring onto the stick but ‘misses’, a baby (who is holding a similar rubber ring and

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¹¹ James Alison, “Girard’s breakthrough”.
stick) will get right what the adult got ‘wrong’. Alison and Cowdell have pointed out that this activity illustrates Girard’s primary insight: *human beings are fundamentally oriented to knowing and responding to the desire of another.* It must be noted that this infantile imitative desire is in the same triangular pattern identified by Girard in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*: the infant is drawn to imitate the adult and what the adult has and wants to have or achieve. In fact, the beginnings of the child’s independent selfhood, distinct from the adults around him, is being brought into being by this process: “[i]t is this movement toward an object that is exterior to the model which we call desire, and it is this which pulls us away from the model and begins to make us autonomous.” However, doing what another does and having what they have is not enough to form the self. The repetition of these two desires over time and the interplay between them, structures within the infant a deeper desire, a desire to be who the other is. This ontological or metaphysical desire “draws us to others and to imitate them in order to acquire a sense of being, something felt as a lack”. It is important to note here that in the Girardian schema, imitating what a model has leads to rivalry and rivalry is resolved by the expulsion of a victim. The child’s parents, who are models for the child, soon become rivals with the child in pursuit of the same object. Due to the relative power imbalance that exists in the beginnings of the parent-child relationship, infants are in an impossible rivalry with their caring adult and can only receive what they want by it being given to them. However, psychologically speaking, infants do assert their emerging self over against the model in various ways,

leading in time to a “psychological death” of the model.\textsuperscript{19} In a lengthy footnote Alison quotes the work of Oughourlian, who describes the impact of the socio-cultural forces, which are massively prior to the child and structure his reality at the individual and psychological level.\textsuperscript{20} Despite the child’s reliance on caring parents, the scapegoat mechanism leads to the psychological death of the model as the child appropriates the parent’s being.\textsuperscript{21} This is not a once and for all experience for the child, but a struggle over time, in the experience of the child both (violently) acquiring and being given a sense of self from parents and others who care for them.

Furthermore, if a baby is perceived by his parents as lovable and to be cherished, the baby will receive and imitate this love, or as Brooks suggests, learn “how love feels and works from the inside”.\textsuperscript{22} It follows that if a baby is perceived by parents as a threat or something to be feared, the baby will receive, learn and imitate threat and fear. However, the reality is never so simple: children do not experience growing up within a human family as being either loved or feared. As Alison has observed “all of us are used to any number of variations of the mixture of love and fear in the eyes of those before whom we are vulnerable”.\textsuperscript{23} Even the most affectionate and kind parents’ love of their child is inflected with some fear, albeit concealed and unconscious.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[19] Alison,\textit{ The Joy of Being Wrong}, 30.
\item[20] These massively prior cultural forces are explained below.
\item[21] Alison,\textit{ The Joy of Being Wrong}, 30. Oughourlian is a psychiatrist who collaborated with Girard for many years.
\item[22] Brooks,\textit{ The Social Animal}, 40.
\item[23] Alison,\textit{ Broken Hearts}, 162.
\end{footnotes}
Finally, even when parents parent well and in the very best interests of the child, the mimetic draw of the child to their parents inevitably leads to what Girard has termed the ‘double bind’ of ‘desire as I do/don’t desire as I do’. For example, a child watches their mother setting a table in preparation for a meal and assists with this task and is warmly praised and encouraged; ‘desire as I do’. The mother then attends to hot saucepans on the stovetop. The child wants to assist with this task, reaches for the dangerously hot pans and is scolded and strongly discouraged; ‘don’t desire as I do’.

For a child to learn:

that certain things are prohibited us because we lack the physical capability to deal with them or because touching them would do us harm is a highly complex apprenticeship involving being able to begin to sort out the double bind: ‘imitate me here because to do so does you good’ / ‘do not imitate me here, because imitating me will get you into trouble’.

Moreover, the mimetic ‘double bind’ means that the child’s desire will always be inflected in this rivalrous way. From the very beginning, human desire is competitive and given to violence: “wanting to have what the other has instead of the other; wanting to be what the other is instead of the other”. However, because human desire is according to the desire of another, a mixture of reception of and rivalry with the other, desire is not necessarily violent and given to conflict. Thus, the more effective the parenting the more securely the ‘self’ is received. The key insight here is that to be human is to receive. Through this complex of mimetic activity, both

25 Alison, 18.
26 Here Girard is to be distinguished from Hegel, who also argued that desire is key to human consciousness. Hegel maintained that human desire is for the desire of another, and that the confrontation with the other leads to the development of consciousness and human subjectivity. Girard’s view includes Hegel’s as but one of the many (distorted) ways in which desire moves according to the desire of another. See Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 39; Hodge, *Resisting Violence*, 29.
27 “Receptivity is the fundamental and original way of being human, which allows humans to gain identity, meaning and being in a relational manner.” Hodge, *Resisting Violence*, 47.
receiving and acquiring, the child’s ‘self’ arises: capable of autonomous, self-creative action and consciousness.\[28\]

### 3.1.2 A social theory of human becoming

Because desire is mimetic and ‘triangular’, mimetic desire is also a social theory. Oughourlian uses the analogy of gravity to assist the understanding of how mimetic desire is essential in the formation of personhood and the complex of those persons in human relationship that constitutes society:

Just as the cosmos, the planets, stars and galaxies are simultaneously held together and kept apart by gravity, so also mimesis keeps human beings together and apart, assuring at one and the same time the cohesion of the social fabric and the relative autonomy of the members that make it up. In physics, it is the force of attraction, gravity, that holds bodies together in space. They would be pitilessly hurled against each other into a final fusion if gravity did not preserve their autonomy, and hence their existence, through motion. In psychology, the movement of mimesis that renders one autonomous and relative individual is called ‘desire’...I have always thought that what one customarily calls the ‘I’ or ‘self’ in psychology is an unstable, evanescent structure. I think, to evoke the intuitions of Hegel on this point, that only desire brings the self into existence. Because desire is the only psychological motion, it alone, it seems to me, is capable of producing the self and breathing life into it. The first hypothesis that I would formulate in this regard is this: desire gives rise to the self and, by its movement, animates it. The second hypothesis, which I have adopted unreservedly since I first became aware of it, is that desire is mimetic.\[29\]

Thus the ‘self’ or sense of ‘I’ that is held by a person is not static, but is rather more unstable and constantly changing. This contradicts modern notions of absolute personal autonomy and the stability of the person: ‘the independent self’. For example, de Cervantes’ Don Quixote allows a fictional character to choose for him all

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\[28\] Hodge, Resisting Violence, 28.

\[29\] Quoted in Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 17-18.
that he desires, thereby abandoning his own independent judgment or independent self. Alison gives the example of the way in which fans emulate Hollywood film stars’ clothing choices, from film to film.\(^{30}\) A mysterious and infinite mimetic human desire can only give rise to a sense of self, which is ephemeral and unsteady. Furthermore, Oughlourian notes that desire causes repulsion as well as attraction between people. As has been outlined above, desire has a darker side; in the formation of individual consciousness and personhood through mimesis, desire is inclined to rivalry and violence as the self is defined ‘over against’ the other.

### 3.1.3 Mimetic desire and interpersonal violence

Girard rejects the pessimistic, negative and simplistic view that desire is the root cause of human suffering and must therefore be restrained and controlled by sanctions (usually imposed by religious institutions), taboos and law. He is equally dismissive of the opposite view: that the root cause of human suffering is the restraint and control of ‘natural’ human desires by (religious) sanctions, taboos and law. This last view, coupled with the above-mentioned notion of the autonomy and stability of the self, are key components of what Girard calls ‘romanticism’:

> Modern people still fondly imagine that their discomfort and unease is a product of the straightjacket of religious taboos, cultural prohibitions and...even the legal forms of protection guaranteed by the judiciary system place upon desire. They think that once this confinement is over, desire will be able to blossom forth; its wonderful innocence will finally be able to bear fruit...None of this comes true.\(^{31}\)

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\(^{30}\) James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 10. It is instructive that the English word ‘desire’ has its root in the Latin phrase *desiderare*, “long for, wish for”, originally, “await what the stars will bring”.


Unregulated desire can be directed in two ways: 1) competitive pursuits, which are highly creative, but ultimately unsatisfying; and, 2) “sterile conflict and anarchic confusion, with a corresponding increase in the sense of anguish”. Girard acknowledges that unfettered desire has certainly led to the blossoming of human thought and creativity in the modern (Western) world. And yet, conflict, confusion and anguish abound, because desire is mimetic and the model, the one whose desire I imitate can readily become an obstacle and a rival to acquiring the desired object. The model becomes rival when the desired object is not available for general use or is not divisible:

as is the case in sexual relationships, or jockeying for social prestige, mimesis will lead to competition. Once the desiring subject wants to possess the object for him or herself, the person who first brought the desired object to recognition becomes a rival and an obstacle.

Girard also calls this ‘acquisitive mimesis’, where desire is directed towards a specific and more or less concrete object. ‘Acquisitive mimesis’ is to be distinguished from ‘metaphysical mimesis’, where the energy of longing is directed towards something intangible: a ‘completeness of being’.

Furthermore, in serious conflicts mimesis can escalate from acquisitive to metaphysical. A rivalry can begin over something quite concrete, but “as the rivalry intensifies, the object will become less important, and the rivals will become locked into a fascination with each other in a battle for prestige or recognition”. For example, a staff member seeks the approval of their boss and notes the bonus won

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32 Girard, 285.
33 Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 20-21.
34 As discussed above, Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 33; Hodge, Resisting Violence, 28, footnote.
35 Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 41-42.
by a colleague who has performed well. The colleague and model soon becomes a rival and obstacle to attaining a future bonus. The staff member finds ways to undermine their colleague, resorting to gossip and character assassination. The rival colleague discovers the staff member’s attempts to damage their standing within the organisation and becomes an enemy, seeking out ways to ruin the other’s prospects and prestige. The rivalry is now ‘personal’: subject and model are rivals caught in a web of mimetic desire, the object is in the background. Desire is ‘distorted’. For Girard, the imitation of desire explains why competition, jealousy, envy, rivalry and violence are never far from the experience of human relating.

3.1.4 Modernity exacerbates mimetic desire

In the modern context, the structural obstacles, the prohibitions and taboos of traditional societies that worked to keep desire in check, are replaced with what Girard calls ‘the living obstacle’ or stumbling block (skandalon, in New Testament Greek). This living obstacle is “active, mobile and fierce”. the model undergoes a metamorphosis and is transformed into a rival, and as in the example outlined above, is ready to draw swords with the desiring subject and do them harm. Paradoxically, the model (now rival and obstacle) and subject are what Girard terms ‘doubles’ of each other. In situations of conflict actions intended to establish difference often have just the opposite effect: they usually imitate the hostility and violence of the other.

36 In a real sense Girard also proposes a theory of modernity, which he and his followers believe deals effectively with the challenge posed by such thinkers as Hegel, Freud and, most significantly, Nietzsche. “Girard has set us free from both Freud and Hegel, and given us access to an anthropology that is simultaneously pre-modern and quite outside post-modern nihilism.” Alison, “Girard’s breakthrough”.

37 Girard, Things Hidden, 286.
For Girard, conflict is “a subtle destroyer of the differential meaning it tries to inflate.” Subject and model “are caught in desire’s double bind (‘desire as I do’/’don’t desire as I do’)”. Those involved in the conflict deny this, since they do not recognise the objective reality of the alterity of desire: each believes that ‘my desire’ is prior to the other. Girard names the belief in the autonomy of human desire, the unrecognised operation of mimetic desire in human beings, as meconnaissance. Reconnaissance is the recognition of the operation of mimetic desire in one’s life and indeed human society and culture. Alison argues that the movement from meconnaissance to reconnaissance in any one person or group is consonant with the Christian process of conversion.

Moreover, the interrelated structure of human consciousness means that each person has no access to their inner life except through another person. This is particularly the case with an ‘other’ who irritates, disturbs and annoys. This ‘other’ who is often ‘like me’ will tend to dispose me to project my self-rejection onto them. This ‘other’ is a ‘mirror’ for me and therefore has the potential to offer a gift of self-knowledge, access to my inner-life: “[i]t is only relationally that we can detect and modify our lives”. In other words, the very possibility of even beginning the movement from reconnaissance to meconnaissance is through another person.

Girard identifies this process through his study of the development of the novel. Comparing Cervantes with Dostoevsky he notes that the social stratification found in traditional societies has been eroded in modern times with the promotion of equality.

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38 Girard quoted in Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 40.
39 Loughlin, “René Girard,” 98.
40 Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 62. The exact nature of this conversion is examined in Chapter 6.
41 Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 32.
and democracy. The hierarchical safeguards that separated individual people, namely the desiring subject and her or his model, have been eroded. So, in the geometric model the apex of the triangle is much closer to the base, drawing the subject and model dangerously closer: the potential for mimetic activity, conflict and violence, is far greater, see Figure 8.

![Figure 8: 'Internal' mediation of desire](image)

Thus, Girard speaks of forms of mediation: ‘safe’ external mediation of rivalry and ‘unsafe’ internal mediation of rivalry. In Figure 7 the distance between A ‘subject’ and C ‘model’ is clear and therefore ‘safe’. Protected by the barriers of social distinction they are safe (and in the case of Don Quixote his hero Amadis de Gaul is fictional, they are protected by the barrier between the real world and the world of fiction). However, if subject and model are closer, as in Figure 8, the danger that conflict and violence will be mediated internally is real. Girard sees this exemplified by the
characters in Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* who move on the same social level and occupy a “frenzied world of destructive mimetic interaction”, which culminates in the alleged parricide. And here is the end game for mimetic desire trapped in rivalry: reciprocal violence ending in the lynch-death of an innocent victim. At this point, Girard approaches a cultural anthropology founded on the uncovering of what he calls the ‘scapegoat mechanism’.

### 3.1.5 The role of literature in mimetic theory

The efficacy of literature in revealing the truth of human desire and relating is fundamental to Girard’s mimetic theory. Girard’s mimetic theory arose from his study of a handful of European novels, the plays of Shakespeare and later the Bible. For Girard, literature (and very select literature, at that) is a more certain guide to the truth of the human condition than modern human and social sciences. This stance places Girard at odds with many philologists, cultural theorists and philosophers. In an interview that is quoted by Kirwan, Girard explains:

> [t]he writers who interest me are obsessed with conflict as a subtle destroyer of the differential meaning it seems to inflate. I must share somewhat in that obsession...not literature as such, I believe, but certain literary texts are vital to my whole ‘enterprise’ as a researcher, much more vital than contemporary theory. Mine is a very selfish and pragmatic use of literary texts. If they cannot serve me I leave them alone.43

A ‘coincidence of obsessions’ seems to be enough for Girard: what some artists explore through narrative, Girard abstracts through the development of his theory of mimetic desire. Girard firmly believes that literature has much to do with the reality

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of human life: story is a vehicle for the truth about human relationships, mimesis, desire, conflict and violence. Girard has conceptualised what he believes to be a fundamental truth: humans desire according to the desire of others and imitative desire leads to conflict and violence. Most literature masks this reality. Reading the text reinforces the ‘romantic lie’: human desire left unfettered by law, religious sanctions and taboos will lead to human freedom and social cohesion. In some literature, the ‘Girardian canon’, the texts read the person. They unmask the destructive patterns of mimetic desire for human relating: rivalry and conflict, jealousy and envy, violence and death.

As has been noted, the trajectory of imitative desire toward violence is not a necessary reality of human being. As discussed above, through ‘good’ parenting the child does receive the self, through the more or less non-rivalrous imitation of her or his parents. Alison calls this a naïve form of pacific mimesis:

However, in its naïve form pacific mimesis always threatens to degenerate into rivalistic mimesis as the disciple and the model grow closer together, and so the model becomes what Girard calls an ‘internal’ mediator to the disciple, who is thus in rivalry with the model, and the model in rivalry with the disciple, the two having become obstacles to each other. More importantly, there is a non-naïve form of pacific mimesis, which is arduously acquired. Girard shows the depth and difficulty of the kind of conversion necessary to step outside rivalistic mimesis by illustrating conversions, at the level of desire, of such believers as Cervantes, Dostoevsky, and Shakespeare, and such nonbelievers as Proust and Stendahl, showing how the same phenomena is at work in all these writers. Girard sees the Gospels as teaching exactly this pacific mimesis. Humans cannot renounce desire as such, for it is what constitutes us, but we can learn desire anew, without obstacles, which is to have our very being re-created. For Girard, even the darkest permutations of rivalistic desire leading to pride and suicide (Kirillov, Nietzsche) testify in favour of an original transcendence of pacific mimetic desire.44

Not only do texts illuminate this dark reality and point to the way in which it is kept in check, for Girard selected writers and the Jewish and Christian scriptures also offer a way out of the tangle of mimetic desire that leads to violence and death. An investigation of Girard’s general theory of social behaviour and the maintenance of social order leads into the realm of myth, religion and the sacred.

3.1.6 Evidence from the sciences to support mimetic theory

For Oughourlian, mimetic theory answers the question: why is there movement and attraction of children toward adults? This process of movement towards and attraction of children to their parents is described above.\(^{45}\) Since the individuality of each person is formed by imitation of the desires of others, “there is no ‘real me’ at the bottom of it all, when I’ve scraped away all the things I’ve learned, all the influences I’ve undergone”.\(^{46}\) Thus Girard and Oughourlian speak of the ‘interdividual’ psychology that emerges from mimetic theory: a psychology that takes seriously the human person constituted by imitative desire and the possibility of the movement from misrecognition to recognition of its operation in structuring the self and sociality.

Concurrently, through their study of infant growth and development, Meltzhoff and Moore have proposed a hypothesis describing the process through which children’s minds are formed by “learning to experience the mental state of another through

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\(^{45}\) This draw of children towards others is not automatic, as in the case of children with autism.

bodily synchrony [namely, imitation]. Meltzhoff and Moore maintain that children learn human intentions imitatively.

Quite independently of Girard, in the last decade of the twentieth century neuro-scientists discovered the existence of ‘mirror-neurons’, first in monkeys and then in humans. Mirror neurons are brain cell structures that mirror the activity of another person as one is watching them. The existence of mirror-neurons would seem to account for the imitative capacity of higher apes and human beings. In humans, the mirror neuron system (MNS) is far more sophisticated than in monkeys. A brain pathway connects the MNS via the insula to the amygdala and other parts of the brain where emotions are experienced; witnessing and simulating emotions in others fires the brain as if the person was experiencing the emotion themselves. The MNS underpins human capacity for empathy and the possibility of compassion. Recent experiments show that MNS activity is most intense when the subject is experiencing envy or rivalry.

47 Cowdell, “Hard Evidence,” 221.
50 Cowdell, 223.
3.2 The Scapegoat Mechanism: the maintenance of social order through sacrifice of the victim

Girard’s ‘scapegoat mechanism’ is a description of a process that restores and maintains social order following outbreaks of mimetic rivalry and violence. Here literature and myth come together to establish a link between mimetic desire and victimisation. Girard’s book *Violence and the Sacred* and all his subsequent work is an attempt to uncover this connection and explore the way in which violence is the “heart and secret soul of the sacred”.  

3.2.1 From interpersonal mimetic desire to scapegoats

The ‘scapegoat mechanism’ begins with an outburst and escalation of mimetic desire within a group, which leads to a crisis. With the original object of desire forgotten, or at least in the background, there is ‘collective obsession’ characterised by ‘undifferentiation’, conflict is a subtle destroyer of the differential meaning it seeks to inflate, those locked in conflict become ‘monstrous doubles’ of each other. This leads to a potential ‘war of all against all’. At this point the undifferentiation that mimesis has wrought begins to work in reverse, the group is united in an unexpected way:

> the ineradicable character of mimetic rivalry means that the importance of any object at stake in conflict will ultimately be annulled and surpassed and that acquisitive mimesis, which sets members of the community against each other, will give way to antagonistic mimesis, which eventually unites and reconciles all members of a community at the expense of a victim.  

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The ‘war of all against all’ becomes the ‘war of all against one’: “all the violence and hate that they had previously directed at one another are now vented upon a single victim”. Significantly, this victim is chosen randomly from within the community and is falsely accused of causing the violence and unrest. Invariably the victim (or victims) is vulnerable or marginal to the group, and in some way viewed as abnormal or defective. The victim or ‘scapegoat’ is held responsible for the crisis and is expelled or murdered. The violence can also be channeled outwardly upon a common enemy external to the community, for example, by starting a war. For Girard, this action of the group reconciles its members; it creates harmony and unites them. Girard and his followers suggest looking no further than everyday experiences to verify this pattern: in the school playground, in workplaces and in families. The scapegoat mechanism is an unconscious and spontaneous psychological phenomenon that has two important effects on a community: it limits and channels violence and brings reconciliation and harmony.

Now Girard takes a further step. By claiming that this newfound peace and harmony apparently comes from ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ the group, the victim takes on a divine status for the very group that lynched the victim. Being at once an embodiment of ‘evil’ (the victim was to blame for the crisis) and ‘good’ (the sacrifice of the victim resolves the crisis) the victim occupies a sacred space that transcends the community. Thus, Girard maintains that the scapegoat mechanism is central to human social origins and the development of religion.

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53 Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 49.
3.2.2 Myth, religion, pre-history and the scapegoat mechanism

Girard’s proposal, that the scapegoat is central to human social origins and the development of religion, is based on his understanding of myth in general and myths in particular.\footnote{Girard, Things Hidden, 176.} Girard is suspicious of the view held by many anthropologists that myths are “sacred stories with a heuristic purpose”,\footnote{Denham Grierson, Uluru Journey: An Exploration of Narrative Theology (Melbourne: The Joint Board of Christian Education, 1996), 119.} or “clues to the spiritual potentialities of human life”.\footnote{Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth, ed. Betty Sue Flowers (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 5.} For Girard, when correctly interpreted, myths reveal that the evolutionary process of becoming human, or ‘hominisation’, is brought about through a primal murder. By examining the oral and written myths from many cultures Girard locates the scapegoat mechanism in prehistory; at the very foundation of human civilisation there is violence and murder.

When we examine the great stories of origin and the founding myths, we notice that they themselves proclaim the fundamental and founding role of the single victim and his or her unanimous murder. The idea is present in every culture. In Sumerian mythology cultural institutions emerge from a single victim: Ea, Tiamat, Kingu. The same in India: the dismemberment of a primordial victim, Purusha, by a mob offering sacrifices produces a caste system. We find similar myths in Egypt, in China, among the Germanic peoples – everywhere.\footnote{René Girard, I See Satan Fall Like Lightning, trans. James G. Williams, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 82.}

Girard’s particular understanding of myth and its revelatory power is predicated on an important assumption: that there is no radical disjunction between what is historical and real, and myth. Therefore, Girard insists “all myths must have their roots in real...
acts of violence against real people.”

Girard argues that the proof lies in the fact that despite differences in detail, the basic structure is always the same. “It is obviously the model of collective spontaneous violence that inspires them.” Myth has its genesis in real events.

The original act of violence is also an originating act of violence: it is the process of transition of early hominids from higher apes to human beings. There is no access to the historical phenomena; however, Monod has argued that as the brain capacity of apes increased prior to hominisation, so did their imitative capacity. Girard theorises that this increase in imitative capacity among apes, along with the diminishing presence of dominant males, led to outbreaks of violence and the creation of victims. Over time and through an extended and gradual process (perhaps millions of years), victims were cordoned-off and prohibitions established to prevent eruptions of violence. This led to long periods of calm and order where infant humans could be nurtured, and allowed for the flourishing of human culture and socialisation through increasing mimetic activity.

Thus, simultaneously, the emergence of culture, of human socialisation, and of the enormous increase in the capacity for mimesis which characterises the human brain were brought about by a collective murder, which alone provides for the genesis of human culture in nature.

Myth is the collective record and misremembering of the foundational murder; it is also a religious phenomenon and a rationalisation of an original act of violence.

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59 Girard, I See Satan Fall, 79.
60 Girard, Things Hidden, 3-47.
62 Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 34.
For Girard religion, through myth, rationalises and justifies violence. In *The Scapegoat* Girard also refers to myths as “persecution texts”,\(^6^3\) since they are invariably written from the perspective of the persecutor and never from the point of view of the victim. This is an interpretive key for *all* texts, including myths. Concomitantly, as myths evolve they *mask* violence: “[m]ythological transformation moves only in one direction, towards the elimination of any traces of violence”.\(^6^4\) Responsibility for the violence is at first shifted from the group to the victim and to the sacred. Eventually the violence is erased altogether. Therefore, since myths justify and mask violence, Girard believes that the common usage of the term ‘myth’ as ‘lie’ is correct.\(^6^5\)

The elements outlined above can be identified in myths generally: 1) the escalation of mimetic activity culminating in a crisis of undifferentiation and ‘monstrous doubles’; 2) the selection of the weak and marginal victim, whose violent death (or expulsion) brings about the reconciliation of the group and, 3) the elevation of the victim to divine status. Certainly, these myths are *sacred*; the gods themselves approve, ordain or even instigate the sacrifice of the victim. But more fundamentally, since the victim seems to bring reconciliation and peace from beyond the group, the victim becomes sacred. Girard describes this seemingly contradictory effect as a ‘double transference’: “as well as a transference of aggressivity [‘monstrous doubles’] by the persecutors onto the victim, there is also a transference of reconciliation, as the victim is

\(^{63}\) Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 12ff.
\(^{64}\) Girard, 94.
\(^{65}\) Girard, *I See Satan Fall*, 115.
associated with the catharsis that has come about.” The group is now caught up in the mysterious ‘omnipotence of the victim’: the one responsible for causing the crisis is the one responsible for ending it. The sacred brings chaos to the group and, through violence or ‘sacrifice’, the sacred restores peace and harmony to the group. This is, or appears to be a, religious experience for the community. “The experience of a supremely evil and then beneficent being, whose appearance and disappearance are punctuated by a collective murder, cannot fail to be literally gripping.” Girard explains that this is the primal experience of religious ‘awe’: mysterium fascinosum et tremendum. Therefore, he argues, the origin of religion is sacrifice, which is nothing more than the execution of the innocent victim: “the victim is a scapegoat.”

Interpreted this way, Girard claims that myths reveal human violence ‘hidden since the foundation of the world’ and the way in which the scapegoat mechanism is rationalised and justified by religion. There is, of course, more to religious phenomena than myth. For Girard, the genius of religion is not the legitimisation of violence, but that it plays a significant role in containing and minimising outbreaks of mimetic violence.

If the mimetic crisis and the founding murder are real events, and if in fact human communities are capable of periodically breaking apart and dissolving into mimetic violence, saving themselves, finally, in extremis, by means of the surrogate victim, then religious systems...are based on keen observation both of the kinds of behaviour that lead human beings into violence and of the strange process that puts an end to violence. These are generally the kinds of behaviours that religious systems prohibit, and it is this process, roughly, that they reproduce in ritual.

66 Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 52.
67 Girard, Things Hidden, 28. Italics original.
68 Girard, The Scapegoat, 39.
In other words, religious prohibitions or taboos cordon off objects that lead to mimetic rivalry and violence, and religious rituals relax those prohibitions by allowing the reenactment of sacrifice when there is an outbreak of mimetic rivalry. Sacrificial rituals allow society to direct and order mimetic rivalry and violence. Hence ‘violence is the heart and secret soul of religion’.

3.2.2.1 Modern secular institutions and culture and the ‘scapegoat mechanism’

Contrary to most modern ‘anti-religion’ and ‘rationalist’ anthropology Girard asserts that religion is most likely the source of all human institutions and culture.

The possibility is that religion is at the heart of every social system, the true origin and form of all institutions, the universal basis of human culture. This solution is all the more difficult to avoid because since the golden days of rationalism we have learned more about ancient societies. Among many of these societies the institutions that the Enlightenment took for indispensable to humanity didn’t yet exist: in their place there were only sacrificial rituals.  

The secular institutions of modern society have grown from sacrificial rituals that anteceded them. For some time, it is likely that institution and ritual co-existed, with the ritual reinforcing and supplementing the institution. For example, the rite of execution as described in Leviticus (24:10-18) continued in medieval quasi-legal institutions. In I See Satan Fall Like Lightning Girard gives the example of the modern institution of education. In primitive societies traditional rites conducted by the entire community over a period of time formally and solemnly initiated the young into

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70 Girard, I See Satan Fall, 89.
71 The rite of execution is extant in some way today as a form of institutional punishment in the penal codes of some nation-states.
72 Girard, I See Satan Fall, 90-91.
the culture. These rituals included painful ordeals that the initiate was required to ‘pass’; some initiates would die which reinforced the sacrificial character of the rite of passage. Modern society retains a sense of this in requiring individuals to ‘pass’ an exam, in order to be admitted to a degree, for example. Perhaps the primitive ritual is illustrated more vividly by the dangerous binge behaviour of some young adults as they negotiate the ‘crisis’ of moving from one state of life to another.

3.2.2.2 Cultural distinctions and the ‘scapegoat mechanism’

In antique societies the sacrifice of victims can be seen to establish important socio-cultural distinctions and relations. Kirwan suggests three. On the cosmic level there is the distinction between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’: ‘god’, in the form of the victim, who is sacred, and the society is profane. Time can be said to be divided by the event of sacrifice into a ‘before’ (the time of crisis) and ‘after’ (the time of reconciliation). Space can also be determined by the scapegoat mechanism. There is an ‘inside’, occupied by the group and an ‘outside’ where the victim belongs. Furthermore, the importance of tombs, the hearth, ‘barrows’, of places where the dead reside for ancient society and the prevalence of the foundational murder in myth (and literature) all point to the role of sacrifice in establishing society. For Girard, humanity is the offspring of religion and sacrifice is the heart and secret soul of religion. For Girard the way out of the mimetic cycle of rivalry and violence, sacrifice and the sacred and the ‘lies’ that perpetuate it is found in a text: the Hebrew and Christian Bible.

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73 Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 53.
74 Girard, I See Satan Fall, 93.
3.3 The Hebrew-Christian Revelation: a different way to shape human desire and social order

Girard’s thesis is that the Bible, beginning with the Old Testament, invites the reader to interpret texts from a new perspective; from the point of view of the victim. A classic example is to compare the myth of Romulus and Remus in Roman mythology with the story of Cain and Abel in the book of Genesis. Both narrate the story of brothers as rivalrous ‘doubles’: Romulus kills Remus and founds Rome; Cain kills Abel and founds ‘civilisation’. Both are myths of a founding murder, but for Girard there is a crucial difference. The murder of Remus is regretted but justified because his transgression, leaping over the ideal city limit drawn on the ground by Romulus, is at once insignificant and crucial. This is because myth brings together human social origins and the sacred, as Girard explains:

[I]n order for the city to exist, no one can be allowed to flout with impunity the rules it prescribes. So Romulus is justified. His status is that of sacrificer and High Priest; he incarnates Roman authority under all its forms at one and the same time. The legislative, the judiciary, and the military forms cannot be distinguished from the religious; everything is already present from the last.75

By contrast, in the Genesis text Cain is presented as a gross murderer. Abel’s death may have led to the development of all human culture, but it is never justified. Indeed, the sacred has an entirely different ‘voice’ in Genesis, when God asks Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” (Gen 4:9). Girard claims that by issuing a law against murder and by placing a mark on Cain, God in fact recognises that Abel’s murder has a founding character. However, this recognition is the inauguration of a different kind of ‘order’ or ‘system’ in the world. This is a system that works “to discourage mimetic rivalry and

75 Girard, Things Hidden, 46-47.
generalised conflict”.\textsuperscript{76} And, although the Cain and Abel story itself disguises the collective murder, this new ‘differential’ system begins to unmask the mimesis and violence that is concealed by myth and draws attention to the reality of the victim. As Girard traces the emergence of this differential system through many such stories, he singles out the Hebrew Scriptures as unique texts that begin the process of illuminating the “principalities and powers of this world”.\textsuperscript{77} the scapegoat mechanism, and its legitimisation and ordering of human violence through religious myth and ritual. Girard notes that victims in the Old Testament are never associated with the sacred or deified. At the same time, and over many generations, there is a gradual realisation among the Hebrew people that their God, YHWH, is unlike any of the other ‘gods’ who are part of the ‘principalities and powers of this world’. The Hebrew people come to understand that YHWH exists outside this order. The New Testament gospels continue to develop these themes which desacralise violence and draw attention to the reality of the victim.

\subsection*{3.3.1 Girard and the gospels}

Parallel to Girard’s selected novels that disclose the power of mimetic desire operative in interpersonal relating, the gospels bring the scapegoat mechanism and the lie of false religion out into the open. For Girard, the gospel is radically opposed to myth. Myth covers up the truth of violent origins. The gospel reveals and names scapegoating for what it is and the false transcendence it brought into being.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{76} Girard, Things Hidden, 146.
\textsuperscript{77} Girard, I See Satan Fall, 93-120.
\textsuperscript{78} Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 69.
3.3.2 The Gospels name the scapegoat mechanism and offer true transcendence

The gospels centre on a violent drama: the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the same drama found in all myths and is needed to create more myths that legitimate the violence of persecutors and the lynching of victims. The passion narratives use an identical myth to subvert the logic of the scapegoat mechanism: “this same drama is also needed to present the perspective of a victim dedicated to the rejection of the illusions of the persecutors”.\(^\text{79}\) The gospels, written from the perspective of the victim, are the beginning of the end of the efficacious and illusory “system of powers of Satan”.\(^\text{80}\) The mythology that has gripped humankind, its culture and institutions since the ‘beginning of the world’. In other words, the passion narratives ‘undo’ mythology from within. It is Jesus as victim, but not as a victim who has internalised victimhood, which is self-inflicted scapegoating. It is Jesus as victim who exposes and negates the scapegoat mechanism. Jesus is the ‘reconciled victim’ or as Alison proposes, Jesus is in pacific possession of “the intelligence of the victim”.\(^\text{81}\) That is, since Jesus is not caught in mimetic rivalry with any other, he does not allow the world and its system of victimhood to control him.

For example, Jesus’ utterance from the cross “Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing”,\(^\text{82}\) is for Girard one of most unequivocal signs of his rejection of the ‘illusions of the persecutors’ (and his compassion for them). Those gathered around Jesus, their scapegoat, must be pardoned because they do not know

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\(^{79}\) Girard, The Scapegoat, 101.
\(^{80}\) Girard, I See Satan Fall, 96.
\(^{81}\) James Alison, Knowing Jesus (London: SPCK, 1993), 45.
what they are doing. They are unaware or unconscious of what they are participating in. According to Girard the gospels unveil the unconscious in a far superior manner to any modern psychology. “Once understood, the [scapegoat] mechanisms can no longer operate; we believe less and less in the culpability of the victims they demand.” Girard maintains that the fruits of this “undoing”, consciousness of the scapegoat mechanism operative within and without, can be observed in the concern for victims that is not uncommon in western societies today. This is a sign of the effectiveness of the gospels in transforming human thinking. Many modern scholars dismiss the gospels as ‘just another myth’, parallel to the ‘romanticism’ of those who profess the autonomy of human desire and the stability of individual identity. However, Girard upholds the uniqueness of the gospels claiming that they have had a “corrosive” effect on the scapegoat mechanism as a device that underpins social order.

Because myth has such a hold on humanity, its undoing and unmasking requires a truly transcendent power, from outside the world and its systems. The sacred, as Girard defines it, has no role in the death of Jesus. Jesus’ despairing cry from the cross “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani” (Mark 15:34, Matt 27:46) and the three days in the tomb are not intended to diminish the power of God the Father. Rather they are to show that what is happening in Christ’s passion, death and resurrection is unlike ‘the sacred’:

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83 Girard contends that “[i]n this passage we are given the first definition of the unconscious in human history, that from which all the others originate and develop in weaker form: the Freudians will push the dimensions of persecution into the background and the Jungians will deny it all together.” Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 111.
 Violence and death have nothing to do with the God of Jesus Christ, who is the living God and God of the living. Christ’s crucifixion is not ‘sacrificial’ nor is it a ‘penal substitution’ for human disobedience. Girard names these as completely human projections, unbiblical and reflective of the human need for scapegoats.

### 3.3.2.1 Clarifying Jesus’ victimhood and sacrifice

Girard has been criticised for a one-dimensional reading of sacrifice, that is, through the lens of the ‘violent sacred’.\(^8^7\) Coakley argues that Girard, especially in his highly influential early work, has ignored and undermined the ‘rationality’ or ‘logic’ of sacrifice in the Christian tradition.\(^8^8\) Girard has acknowledged and corrected his ‘scapegoating’ of sacrifice and the solely negative portrayal of mimetic desire in his early work.\(^8^9\)

As orthodox Christianity has affirmed, Jesus’ divinity is not a result of his crucifixion and resurrection; rather he is divine from the beginning (John 1). And, because “Jesus has his origin, not in the will of man, not urge of the flesh, but in God, a perfect non-violent love is possible for him”.\(^9^0\) In the Gospels, especially in John and Mark, Jesus’

\(^8^6\) Girard, *Things Hidden*, 233.
\(^9^0\) Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 84.
identity is discovered at the moment of his expulsion: the ‘Lamb of God’ and ‘Son of God’ is revealed and expelled on the cross. Clearly, as victim, God can never be one of the persecutors. Girard’s good news of Jesus Christ is that God is not in rivalrous competition with humankind and is offering a gift of love as “children of God” (John 1:13) and knowledge of the truth of being human without victimising others. As Alison expresses it, Jesus inhabits the intelligence of the victim, a non-rivalrous mimesis, because he has his imagination fixed on the utter deathlessness of God.91 Furthermore, Jesus says “follow [imitate] me” (John 21:19), for in following and believing in me (John 14:1ff) you will know the Father and do even greater works than me (John 14:12). Jesus has faith in those who follow him: they will also come to a peaceful possession of the intelligence of the victim. In the encounter with the incarnated love of Christ:

...humans overcome their fundamental fear resulting from distorted desire, namely that they have no ontological density and need to grasp for it. In the encounter with the risen and forgiving victim, Jesus Christ, humans are given faith to believe in themselves – that they are lovable and loving, and that this is enough to satisfy their mimetic existence – through faith in the Other who lives them and wants to share life with them. The chasm between creature and Creator is overcome: the Creator has become a creature – a brother – in order to overcome humanity’s rejection of him in violence and victimage, so to share his life with human beings (a life for which human were always intended).92

The gospels, in particular the Passion narratives, interpreted correctly, reveal the true divinity and a true anthropology.

Girard decries ‘sacrificial’ re-readings of the crucifixion and death of Christ that have reversed this process at different times in history, re-instating violence as the ‘heart

91 Alison, Living In The End Times, 40.
92 Hodge, Resisting Violence, 43.
and secret soul’ of religion and aligning the passion with myth. This can be seen, for example, in a particular version of substitutionary atonement theory: that the crucifixion is God’s punishment due to humankind for Adam’s sin but borne by Jesus as a human substitute. Behind this theory is an image of God as an angry divinity requiring appeasement through sacrifice. Readings such as these are for Girard false reading of the gospel: because for Girard it is the gospels that read human persons and their need for scapegoats.93 Once this truth is understood and known, it is possible that desire can begin to change. In other words, this is the ministry of Jesus: calling and teaching his disciples to have their desire shaped not by the social other, but by another ‘Other’, Jesus’ heavenly Father. So, the Church is the community gathered around Jesus, the risen and forgiving victim; receiving forgiveness for their complicity in the way they form group unity over against the expelled other; and, being called to create community and culture in new ways.

3.4 Conclusion

Girard’s anthropology is profoundly social and confronts the reality of human conflict. It proposes a way that human victimising and victimhood can be transformed through the grace-filled encounter with Christ Jesus, the crucified and risen One, and a new community that is formed in his name. Restorative practices are about the formation of social capital and the rebuilding of community following conflict, they are an

93 The angry divinity demanding sacrifice in the passion narratives is us, not God. See James Alison, Undergoing God: Dispatches from the Scene of a Break-In (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006), 50-67.
especially appropriate foundation from which to establish a pastoral theological approach to its ongoing implementation in Catholic schools.
Chapter 4: A Pastoral Theological Approach to Restorative Practices in Australian Catholic Schools

In this Chapter a pastoral theological approach to restorative practices in Catholic schools will be proposed. Foundational to this pastoral theological approach are two interrelated arguments: 1) restorative practices are a ‘ritual of inclusion’; 2) that restorative practices as a ‘ritual of inclusion’ in Catholic schools is founded on Christ, the ‘forgiving victim’ who unbinds human beings and opens up the new creation, revealed in what Alison describes as the ‘Liturgical Atonement’.\(^1\) Put simply, Girard’s insight is that as mimetically formed creatures, humans are inclined to resolve violence through scapegoating and its rituals of exclusion. However, Girard’s insight can also work the other way. That is, through rituals of inclusion humans can learn to resolve conflictual violence through forgiveness because of the positive mimesis offered by Jesus. At the heart of this pastoral theological approach to restorative practices is an understanding of restorative practices as rituals of inclusion.

4.1 Restorative Practices as a ‘ritual of inclusion’

The understanding of restorative practices as a ‘ritual of inclusion’ is predicated on the assumption that Girard is accurate and convincing in his analysis of rituals: that they are founded on an original communal transcendence and sense of awe gained through

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the murder of an innocent victim; that they are therefore undeniably religious; and that they reinforce and reconstitute the community and its legal and cultural norms through ritualised re-enactment of the original violent transcendence, often in a way that masks the original violence. The victim is central to the ritual: the victim’s death or expulsion resolves the collective violence and brings peace, and at the same time the victim is blamed as the cause of the violence. However, as Girard points out, it is in fact “the unifying mimesis of the collective violence” that restores the unity to the group, not the victim. Finally, the victim becomes obscured and then forgotten through the collective misremembering that is myth.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Girard identifies the central role that religion has played in controlling human violence through prohibition and ritual, and that religion (and ritual) lie behind all modern institutions.

In discussing the value of the restorative approach to social control to the reform of Western juvenile justice systems (a modern institution) Osborne notes “Girard’s insight that we shift from one ‘religious’ practice to another seems to give credence to suggestions that reforms should include rituals”. From a Girardian perspective this is the key advantage of restorative practices over other forms of social control: they are rituals, repetition of habits of the heart and a powerful source of unity. Ritual has

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3 Girard, 48.
4 Girard, 48.
5 The mythical scapegoating structure is present in more modern texts of persecution, as Girard demonstrates in his analysis of Guillaume de Machaut’s fourteenth century poem ‘Judgment of the King of Navarre’, Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 2-11.
7 Osborne, “The Role,” 102. Schirch also advocates for the use of ritual in conflict resolution: “ritual does not solve problems by negotiating the best solution, but by creating a new frame for
been used throughout human history to mimetically reinforce and regenerate social norms and, according to Girard, all rituals have their origins in the scapegoating mechanism. However, restorative practices are a ritual of inclusion, as opposed to a ritual of exclusion or expulsion. The rituals of inclusion correspond with the continuum of restorative processes as outlined in Chapter 1, namely restorative statements, questions, circles, informal conferences and formal conferences. Restorative practice, as ritual, requires Catholic school teachers and leaders, those in authority, to know themselves as forgiven and believed-in by Christ, the ‘forgiving victim’. Jesus as ‘forgiving victim’ is most clearly revealed through his passion, death and resurrection. A rich pastoral theological approach to the processes of restorative practices as ‘rituals of inclusion’ in the context of Catholic schools is reliant upon a particular understanding of the saving power of Christ’s death as atonement: that Jesus’ death is a ‘liturgy of atonement’ enacted by Christ the High Priest and forgiving victim.

4.2 Understanding Jesus’ Death as ‘Liturgy of Atonement’

Prior to exploring the understanding of Jesus’ death as liturgical atonement, it is important to clarify the terms ‘liturgy’ and ‘atonement’. Drawing on the ancient interpreting the problem”. Lisa Schirch, Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2005), 104.
9 Each of the processes of restorative practices on the continuum contains elements of ritual. However, the restorative circles, and informal and formal conferences most explicitly mimetically reinforce and regenerate inclusive social norms. In this thesis the descriptive case study is the narrative of a formal restorative conference.
meaning of the term, bringing together the Greek words lēitos and -ergos (‘public’ and ‘working’) liturgy here refers to the public sacramental and ‘priestly’ working of Christ: that the “mystery of salvation is made present [in liturgy] by the power of his Holy Spirit”. 11 ‘Atonement’ refers to God’s mysterious work of salvation in the crucifixion, death and resurrection in Jesus. Furthermore, ‘atonement’ is to be interpreted in light of the ancient Hebrew ‘Day of Atonement’.

4.2.1 The Hebrew ‘Day of Atonement’

Drawing on recent scholarship on the influence of Jewish notions of priesthood and Temple liturgy on early Christianity, together with the insights of Girard, Alison proposes that God’s work of salvation in the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ, or atonement, is an overcoming of our human inclination to sacrificial violence by replacing the victim of our characteristic sacrifices with himself. 12 In order to understand how this works, an acquaintance with what is known of the ancient First Temple liturgy of atonement is vital. From Alison’s explanation of the liturgy four key moments stand out. 13

1) After ritual cleansing of his sins, the high priest who conducted the liturgy put on a brilliant white robe and doing so he ‘became’ an angel of YHWY; one of the angel’s titles is ‘the son of God’.

2) Two goats were required for the liturgy. One of the goats was designated as ‘the Lord’ and was taken into the Holy of Holies and sacrificed by the high

11 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1111.
12 Alison, Undergoing God, 53-55.
priest. Its blood, the Lord’s blood, was sprinkled about the place by the high priest as YHWY to remove any impurities, for the Holy of Holies was the dwelling place of the Creator, transcending time, matter and space.

3) The high priest, as YHWY, came from the Holy of Holies through the Temple Veil wearing a robe of similar material to the Veil. The Veil was made of very rich material representing the material world, all that is created. The high priest then began sprinkling blood all over the rest of the Temple. This symbolised the Lord himself coming from his dwelling place into the world of creation, and by his own blood restoring creation and setting it free from sin.

4) The high priest then placed all the sins on the head of the second goat, named ‘Azazel’ or ‘the devil’ (‘the scapegoat’). The goat was then driven out of town and over the cliff to its destruction.

Alison points out that the ancient Jewish ritual of atonement is the complete opposite of what is usually understood by sacrifice. In pagan religion priests sacrificed victims to appease their deity and keep creation going. This means that a ‘substitutionary atonement theory’ that is reliant on the imagery of an angry God who must be appeased by the sacrifice of his son is a pagan idea. In the Jewish ritual, it is God who takes the initiative:

it was actually God who was doing the work, it was God who was coming out wanting to restore creation, out of love for his people...it is YHWY who emerges from the Holy of Holies dressed in white in order to forgive people their sins and, more importantly, in order to allow creation to flow.14

14 Alison, Undergoing God, 53. Italics are original.
How does Alison connect this with Jesus’ death and resurrection? Alison assumes Jesus and his contemporaries knew the priestly rituals of the Second Temple and regarded them as an impoverished and corrupt replication of the First Temple ritual. It seems that Jesus understood that what he was doing in his passion, death and resurrection was *priestly* and in time the early Christians came to see this. This becomes especially evident in John’s Gospel and Alison provides a list of examples: Jesus’ speech in Chapter 17 that is based on the high priest’s atonement prayer and “Jesus then goes off to act out the role of the high priest who is making available the new temple in his body”15; Jesus’ seamless robe, a priest’s robe (Jn 19:23); Jesus’ identification with the Passover lambs, their being slaughtered as he dies and not one of his bones being broken (Jn 19:36) after he dies; and, Jesus’ cry on the cross “it is finished” (Jn 19:30) referring to the completion of atonement and the renewal of creation. These are very familiar and Alison insists that there is a need learn to see them from the perspective of Jesus being the authentic high priest.16 Finally, the resurrection narratives reveal creation flowing from the tomb where two angels sit with a space between them (Jn 20:12). Alison points out that the place where Jesus’ body lay is the ‘mercy seat’ (*hilastērion*) in the Holy of Holies now opened up for all.17 Jesus, the true high priest, has gone into the holy place and come out again. Therefore, Jesus’ atonement is a fulfillment of the Jewish liturgy, although in a somewhat unexpected key: it happened as a lynch-death on the town dump. Nonetheless, by

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16 Alison, 56.
17 Alison, 56. Eberhart prefers to describe Jesus as the place of atonement: “the motif of Christ being the ‘place of atonement’ imagines him as the location of God’s presence on earth and depicts God as the agent of human salvation”. Christian A. Eberhart, *The Sacrifice of Jesus: Understanding Atonement Biblically* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 117.
making secure the relationship between salvation and creation it follows what Alison calls the pattern of the Jewish priestly activity; the liturgical atonement.

4.2.2 Jesus’ ‘intelligence of the victim’: the subversion of sacrifice

The Hebrew atonement liturgy was certainly an advance on pagan ritual, however it still masked and permitted sacrificial violence, albeit with substitutes for human victims. In Jesus’ atonement liturgy he substitutes himself, a human being, for all those things humans use as substitutes for human beings in sacrifices. Jesus the priest becomes the victim and reveals what the sacrificial system is all about: murder and death. All sacrificial systems are substitutionary:

but what we have with Jesus is an exact inversion of the sacrificial system: him going backwards and occupying the space so as to make it clear that this is simply murder. And it needn’t be.18

Jesus does this without blame, with complete freedom and offering forgiveness to those who murder and betray him as the substitute for all victims: every one of them. This can be seen most clearly in the way the risen Jesus interacts with his disciples: offering comfort, healing, forgiveness and peace, and promising and gifting the Spirit.19

This realisation involves a gradual change of heart, an ongoing conversion to seeing and understanding human complicity in the systems of violence that sustain order. Alison suggests that this is the purpose of the Eucharist: it is Jesus’ interpretation of his own death so that it is remembered and experienced as Jesus the forgiving victim.

18 Alison, Undergoing God, 59. Italics are original.
In the institution narrative Jesus’ instruction is clear: ‘Do this in memory of me’. In other words: ‘imitate me’. In the Eucharist the Christian community is continually ‘undergoing being forgiven’; both a de-stabilising experience and an invitation to live in a much bigger universe. Alison argues that this is what the Pauline writer means: “even though you were dead in your sins he has made you alive together in Christ” (Ephesians 2:5).

Jesus can do all this because he possesses what Alison calls the ‘intelligence of the victim’:

The intelligence of the victim comes from a freedom in giving oneself to others, in not being moved by the violence of others, even when it perceives that this free self-giving is going to be lynched as a result. The free self-giving is not seeking to be lynched, but is completely open-eyed about the probability of that happening.

Elsewhere Alison says the intelligence of the victim is having the imagination formed by the deathlessness of God. Alison argues that Jesus’ entire ministry is a call to learn and inhabit the intelligence of the victim, to learn to become a ‘forgiving victim’ for others. As humans become ‘forgiving victims’ they realise their dependence on a system of death: of rivalry and violence, of creating victims and sacrificing them. However, it is only in the dark light of the resurrection, in the completion of the atonement liturgy and in the unbinding of creation by Jesus, the true high priest, that the disciples begin to see the way death has ruled them and can begin to live without sacrifice, to live “as if death were not”, both liturgically and humanly speaking.

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20 Alison, Undergoing God, 65.
21 Alison, Knowing Jesus, 45.
22 Alison, Living in the End Times, 40.
23 Alison, Undergoing God, 65.
4.2.3 A theology of atonement and creation

A theology of creation is co-extensive with and emerges from this rendering of the mystery of God’s salvation, that can be termed ‘liturgical atonement’. Jesus, the priest and victim, emerges from the ‘new’ Holy of Holies (the tomb) offering forgiveness for every attempt of human beings to keep order through substitutionary violence. The stability that human sacrificial systems provide is being de-stabilised by God in Jesus, by the “I AM”, who approaches human beings as the victim who is forgiving. As John of the Cross teaches, the authentic experience of God is always unfamiliar, in other words, de-stabilising. God does this because our vision for ourselves and creation needs to be expanded.

The reason he has done that is because we are too small; we live in a snarled-up version of creation because, we are frightened of death – human beings experience within themselves a metaphysical ‘lack’. What Jesus was doing was opening up the creator’s vision, which knows not death, so that we can live as though death were not.

Jesus invites each person to be a co-creator in the ongoing and unfolding story of creation, confident that “you will do even greater things” (Jn 14:12). Key to living ‘as though death were not’ is the understanding that “human desire is in principle a good thing, however distorted and inflected it may become by the differing sorts of violence in practice.” It is the resurrection that reveals Jesus the forgiving victim, who opens

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24 “God...is not only all that is strange in undiscovered islands, but His ways, judgments, and works are also strange, new, and marvelous.” St John of the Cross, A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and The Bridegroom of Christ, XIV-XV.9.
25 Alison, Undergoing God, 65.
26 Alison, “Girard’s breakthrough”. 

the door to the possibility of distorted desire being re-formed by a positive and non-rivalistic mimesis, God’s mimesis. 27

The relationship between atonement and creation is novel. It challenges assumptions of scholars such as Coloe who categorise atonement as a theological framework of the Synoptic Gospels and therefore alien to the Johannine text. 28 Atonement, understood liturgically rather than as a theory, conforms with the Hebrew understanding of a God who is creating and restoring creation. The point here is that the recovery of biblical, Hebraic understanding of creation and redemption, aided by the insights of Girard and Girardians, is critical in the development of more adequate contemporary theologies of creation and redemption. 29

Positive mimesis is God’s mimesis. Remembering that in the Girardian theory human being is constituted by mimetic desire, Alison posits that if human being and culture can be formed by distorted desire and the self-deception surrounding an act of victimisation it can also, at the same time be formed by a positive and non-rivalistic desire. This non-rivalistic desire is revealed in Jesus who is one of our sacrificial victims but who returns offering forgiveness and peace, a new creation, and a new intelligence formed by his fully human imagination.

It is from the opening up of the human imagination to the deathless nature of God and God gratuitously and urgently making available of his true creative reality as something that each one can hope for as good for me that we begin to be able to set our minds on the things that are above (Col 3:2), and so, nourished by the reality of real creation, begin to have our desire re-formed

27 Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 224-225.
29 Tracy, “Practical Theology in the Situation of Global Pluralism,” 150.
and so to overcome the different ways we are tied and drawn in by the desires that constitute ‘this world’.  

Human desire can be re-formed by God’s mimesis since God’s mimesis is anterior to the distortion of acquisitive mimesis.

4.2.4 Anterior positive mimesis

Positive mimesis is anterior because before the Fall, desire had no inclination towards rivalry. Desire itself is not evil, like all created things it is in itself good. But desire can be transcendent (positive) or distorted (rivalrous). The Fall, Girard’s originating murder, an actual event, was the beginning of distorted desire and of sin, of being constituted by another who is model and then rival, ending in a ‘lynch-death’ that brought unexpected peace and order. This is the ‘snarled-up version of creation’, reliant on the sacrifice of victims to maintain order, where as a consequence, the human construction of time is deformed and memory is structured to deny and forget human complicity in the scapegoating taking place.  

However, positive, non-rivalrous mimesis is not about returning to some blissful original state before the Fall, where all desire was truly transcendent. It is rather a process: it is an undergoing being forgiven through Jesus’ liturgical atonement. Non-rivalrous and positive mimesis makes possible over time a full human participation in the new creation.  

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30 Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 225. Italics original.
31 For Girard the sacrifice of victims brings about and structures important human concepts such as time and myth, masking human responsibility for violence, which affects memory. See Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 53. Also Chapter 2.
32 Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 283.
of a divinely instituted and fully human desire in non-rivalrous imitation of God, the deathless one, where temporality and memory are reordered. The Eucharist as Jesus’ self-giving gift helps the Christian community to live in positive imitation of the God of Jesus Christ. What this means is that through the Eucharist human beings receive Jesus and become one with him, and with the Holy Spirit as their Advocate, human beings can avoid the ‘accusatory tendency’ that leads to rivalry and violence. In the next sections the liturgical atonement enacted by Christ will be used to enrich the understanding of restorative practices as a ‘ritual of inclusion’.

4.2.4.1 Positive mimesis and ‘non-naïve’ positive mimesis

Before proceeding it is important to distinguish between these two types of positive mimesis for the purposes of this thesis. Positive mimesis is a non-rivalrous form of mimesis. The subject who is ‘positively mimetic’ may or may not be aware of the operation of mimetic desire in human beings. ‘Non-naïve’ positive mimesis is non-rivalrous form of mimesis, in which the subject is aware of the operation of mimetic desire in human beings. Positive mimesis is a step between meconnaissance to reconnaissance in the Girardian schema. God’s mimesis is ‘non-naïve’ positive mimesis. The term ‘positive mimesis’ will be used in this thesis since staff in Catholic schools are more likely to be unaware of the operation of mimetic desire in human beings. As professional educators, teachers and leaders would be expected to offer a non-rivalrous mimesis to their students.

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33 Alison, Undergoing God, 65-66.
34 Alison warns that unless the conversion from meconnaissance to reconnaissance has been made, as the subjects are drawn closer together it is unlikely that a non-rivalrous mimesis can be maintained, The Joy of Being Wrong, 13-14. The professional code of conduct expected of teachers and leaders in schools, should, in most cases, hold the subjects at a ‘safe’ distance. See, Diocese of Wagga Wagga,
4.3 Restorative Practices as a ‘ritual of inclusion’ in the midst of those undergoing the liturgical atonement

Restorative practices are primarily an experience, something persons within school communities ‘undergo’. The fact that it is something that communities ‘undergo’ is a primary point of contact with the liturgical atonement enacted by Christ the High Priest and forgiving victim. Jesus, in the priestly tradition of Israel, but by extending and transposing it in his own body, subverts a ritual act of murderous expulsion by becoming the communities’ ‘forgiving victim’. Remembered in and through the mystery of the Eucharist, this is the ritual of inclusion par excellence for all rituals of inclusion, such as the informal and formal conferences of restorative practice.

4.3.1 Jesus the forgiving victim and ‘Ultimate Authority’: transcendent power of the ritual of inclusion

Central to the success of sacrificial rituals is the powerfully unifying sense of religious transcendence experienced by the participants. Girard maintains that violence is the secret heart and soul of the sacred, and it has also been the role of religion to control human violence through taboo and ritual. Osborne suggests ‘Ultimate Authority’ is a more appropriate term to use for the transcendent and unifying power that lies behind human culture and institutions such as justice systems and secular ideology.35

“Ultimate Authority is first a shared transcendent experience from which cultural norms are derived and deemed sacred, then perpetuated and sustained through the mimetic process.” Catholic schools that employ restorative practices consider Jesus as ‘Ultimate Authority’, ‘the teacher behind all the teaching’. However, in contradistinction to the ‘Ultimate Authority’ of sacrificial rituals which demand unity through a strong presence, gripping the participant with excitement and fear that both fascinates and terrifies, the ‘Ultimate Authority’ communicated in Jesus’ sacrificial act is one of gentle power, tenderness and strength, of one who is victim but is not subject to being dominated by victimhood.

4.3.1.1 Transcending victimhood

It is arguable that in contemporary Western society that ‘victimhood’ is a sought-after state. The Girardian scholar Dumouchel postulates that the process of secularisation includes the “slow historical transformation from societies where victims are sacred, to societies where the position of victim can be exploited for one’s own advantage.”

Radcliffe agrees:

Western society is soured by a pervasive sense of victimhood. It is the underbelly of the mentality of the Free World, the resentment that freedom has not always given us the happiness which we had been promised. People feel themselves to be the victims of prejudice, or history, or their genes, or their upbringing. A particular characteristic of modernity...is the sense of mutual victimhood, where everyone claims the status of victim...This is not to deny that there are people who have been profoundly victimised, such as children who are sold for sexual exploitation and women in many parts of the world. But the Church can never accept that anyone is just a victim. Freedom begins when people grasp the choices that they can make, even if they are extremely limited.

36 Osborne, “The Role,” 84.
In the light of this assessment of the secularisation of victimhood, Alison’s argument that Jesus as our ‘forgiving victim’, his refusal to allow victimhood to dominate him, appears to be a powerful act of freedom. In *Quand ces choses commenceront* Girard describes Jesus’ sacrificial act as one of “creative renunciation...if you want to put an end to mimetic rivalry, you must surrender everything to your rival”.39 This is most clearly seen in the crucified Jesus, the ‘Ultimate Authority’ who surrenders all and occupies the space of vulnerability, the one place no person wants to be.40 From that place Jesus turns the annihilation of victimhood into something creative: forgiveness. *Forgiveness toward human beings* for their complicity in acts of mimetic violence in order to create group unity and, *belief in human beings* that, by receiving and following Jesus, they can imitate him peacefully and find new ways of building and renewing community.41

### 4.3.1.2 Forgiveness and creation

In *Living in the End Times* Alison makes the point that through the resurrection Jesus is ‘making something out of nothing’ and that this is the only way the God of the Hebrew people has ever created.42 Following the logic of the priestly atonement

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40 As St Paul expressed it “…we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor. 1:23).

41 Jesus’ *forgiveness towards and belief in* human beings is fundamental in the pastoral theological approach to restorative practices described in this thesis. It is hoped that, through their relationship with Jesus, leaders and teachers in Catholic schools experience Jesus’ forgiveness and belief in them and are offering it to others in the inclusive rituals of restorative practice.

outlined above, creation and salvation come together in the crucifixion and are made available in the resurrection. Forgiveness is pivotal in the creative activity of salvation:

forgiveness is our access to creation...in the degree to which we move on from relationships of violence among ourselves, and relationships whose violence is guaranteed ‘sacredly’, in that degree we come to be able to understand what [creation] is and find ourselves within it.

 Forgiveness allows human beings to become unhooked from violence and systems of violence. Forgiveness is sharing in God’s life. Thus, the person who is open to receive forgiveness and being believed-in experiences a transcendent power qualitatively different to excitement and fear of the sacrificial ritual, as Alison explains:

[T]he form which forgiveness takes in the life of a person is contrition, that is, a breaking of heart, a deep shift in attitudinal patterns of the sort: ‘Oh my God, I thought I was doing something good, or at least normal, and only now do I begin to see that what I was doing was deeply sinful against God and profoundly hurtful to my neighbour, and thus of myself. I must undo in as far as I can what I have done wrong and make sure never to do it again.’ This breaking of heart is received as an extraordinary gift, that of being given to be someone else who I didn’t know myself to be and who is much bigger and more splendid than I took myself to be. That is what forgiveness looks like in someone’s life.

If this description of being forgiven appears altogether too straightforward, the example of the younger son in the parable in Lk 15:11-32, known variously as the ‘Forgiving Father’ or the ‘Prodigal Son’, can be helpful in illustrating at least some of the difficult human dynamics at play. The younger son, having spent everything he had taken (or grasped) from his father and tending swine (unthinkable for a respectable Jew), eventually “came to himself” (v. 17) and, names his behaviour as

43 Alison, On Being Liked, 43.
44 Alison, 59.
45 “To Err is humane; to Forgive, Divine.” Alexander Pope, An Essay on Criticism.
46 Alison, 36.
sinful toward his father and God. The younger son offers himself as a hired servant to his father and finds himself being given a new heart by his father. It is noteworthy that for the father in the parable, it is not a sin-forgiveness movement that defines what has happened to the younger son, but a movement from death to life and from being lost to being found (15:24, 32). For Luke, this parable exemplifies the creative activity of salvation through forgiveness. All of this is profoundly de-stabilising to the older brother, whose world is bowed down in obligation, sacrifice and fear; he describes himself as working “like a slave” (15:29) for his father.

4.3.1.3 Beyond rivalry, fear and violent reciprocity

In the inclusive ritual where the Ultimate Authority is Christ, there is no rivalry and fear that one’s identity is under threat or will be lost, no sense of necessary compliance compelled by fear, of having ‘grasp for being’ through the same desire which animates being. To ‘grasp at being’ is the result of the human experience of an existential lack of being, a fear of death, a distortion of human desire (which is, in principle, a good thing). In Lk 15, the prodigal son who requests his share of the father’s property is an example of ‘grasping at being’. In a Girardian context, Byrne’s insight that the younger son’s “demand for it now in some sense says to the father, ‘You’re as good as dead as far as I’m concerned’”, is significant. The violence of the son is visited upon the father and leads to the psychological death of the father in the

48 Hodge, Resisting Violence, 32.
49 Byrne, The Hospitality of God, 129.
eyes of the son. Later in the Lukan parable, as in the restorative ritual, there is a sense of human desire being undistorted, of the son being unbound and of being made a new creation (‘being given to be someone else who I didn’t know myself to be’) and being able to relax in the presence of the One (in the parable, the father) who can only like people and believe in them. Jesus, the forgiving victim is the ‘Ultimate Authority’ human beings can imitate peacefully because in him there is no rivalry with creation, since as Aquinas has noted, God (and the Word of God) is outside the order of existing beings. Jesus is the truly transcendent power who does not grasp for being. He is offering a pattern of desire, a positive mimesis:

which is not in any way at all run by what the other is doing to it; which is not in reaction in any way at all, but is purely creative, dynamic, outward going, and able to bring things into being and flourishing.

Furthermore, in the Gospels Jesus is explicitly imitative and desires to be imitated: he invites his followers to imitate him as he imitates the Father.

Jesus, the forgiving victim, who desires to share his ‘intelligence of the victim’, is the ‘Ultimate Authority’ of the inclusive ritual of restorative practices in Catholic schools, because in him there is no rivalry and no inclination to violent reciprocity.

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50 As outlined in Chapter 2, this is a part of a child’s struggle over time to gain a sense of self from their parents: the child both (violently) acquires and is being given a sense of self from parents and others who care for them. See Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 30.

51 In reply to Objection 3: “As the creature proceeds from God in diversity of nature, God is outside the order of the whole creation, nor does any relation to the creature arise from His nature; for He does not produce the creature by necessity of His nature, but by His intellect and will, as is above explained”, Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologia I, q.28, a.1.

52 Alison, Broken Hearts, 166. Italics original. There is a strong sense here of Jesus as the “Wisdom of God”.

4.3.2 Catholic school authorities imitating the ‘Ultimate Authority’ of Christ the forgiving victim in the inclusive ritual of Restorative Practice

As discussed in Chapter 2, the role and significance of Catholic school teachers and leaders is critical in creating the safe environment for free expression and exchange of emotion that, through the various strategies of restorative practices, can build and re-build community. Teacher and leaders in Catholic schools can learn to be and become increasingly 
authentic and authoritative in their exercise of their authority.54 Since “Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school”,55 those in authority in Catholic schools can quite explicitly imitate Christ’s presence as ‘Ultimate Authority’, the forgiving victim, in the ‘inclusive ritual’ of restorative practice: gently and firmly believing-in and forgiving, knowing themselves to be forgiven and believed-in. Indeed, this requirement is explicitly stated by the Vatican:

[Education need also to cultivate their spiritual formation in order to develop their relationship with Jesus Christ and become a Master like Him. In this sense, the formational journey of both lay and consecrated educators must be combined with the moulding of the person towards greater conformity with Christ (cf. Rm 8:29) and of the educational community around Christ the Master.56 It is important at this point to highlight and progress the meaning and significance of ‘being forgiven’ and ‘believing-in’ for school authorities who use restorative practice.

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54 See Chapter 1.
55 The Catholic School, 34.
56 Educating Together in Catholic Schools, 26.
4.3.2.1 The importance of ‘being forgiven’

Each person experiences being a victim: by being bullied, picked-on, excluded. However, from a Girardian perspective what Jesus reveals in the Gospel is our complicity, either actively or passively, in being a victimiser:

[t]he person who thinks of him or herself as the victim is quick to divide the world into ‘we’ and ‘they’. In the knowledge of the risen [forgiving] victim there is only a ‘we’, because we no longer need to define ourselves against anyone at all.\(^{57}\)

If teachers and leaders in Catholic schools are to cease perpetuating a divided world from a divided self, to model and make real the forgiveness of Christ, to forgive ‘from the heart’ (Matt 18:35) through the restorative model of social control, then the first step is a gradual coming to see oneself not as a victim, but as a recipient of forgiveness.

Alison suggests that the experience of being forgiven is…

...in short, not someone who is primarily a victim and secondarily a forgiver, but someone who is primarily forgiven, and for that reason capable of being a forgiving victim for another, without grasping on to that, or being defined by it. This is a huge emotional and spiritual task, but without it, we will not...understand the salvation which we are receiving from Christ.\(^{58}\)

Teachers and leaders who use restorative practices understand themselves as undergoing being forgiven. They are undergoing being forgiven for their complicity in the massively prior socio-cultural forces that mimetically structure reality around the expulsion of victims to create community.\(^{59}\) Teachers and leaders who use restorative practices are experiencing themselves as being unbound from this and as participants

\(^{57}\) Alison, Knowing Jesus, 92.  
\(^{58}\) Alison, On Being Liked, 37-38.  
\(^{59}\) The “massively prior socio-cultural forces” are described in Chapter 3. The socio-cultural forces are foundational to human being and becoming, they mimetically reproduce (the largely unintended) rivalry set up through the mixture of love and fear communicated by the people and institutions that nurture and induct infants into being human. These same socio-cultural forces keep rivalry in check through the various forms of exclusion or scapegoating exercised by groups of humans to create and renew community.
in the resurrection, and know themselves as St Paul did: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:19c-20). Therefore, Catholic school teachers and leaders who have a sense of receiving their own identity and being transformed through their ongoing relationship with Christ may be able to offer a positive mimesis towards others and explicitly so through restorative practices. This is so that those who have been affected by the wrongdoing and the wrongdoers themselves, may mimetically learn to become ‘forgiving victims’ and experience themselves as participants in the resurrection and part of a new creation.

4.3.2.1.1 Being forgiven by offering forgiveness

A further Girardian insight connected with the human experience of ‘being forgiven’, is that forgiveness is received projectively, that is, through offering forgiveness toward the other. For example, in teaching about prayer (the Lord’s Prayer) Jesus teaches that the disciples should pray that our heavenly Father “forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matt 6:12). The meaning is clear as we forgive the other, so we receive forgiveness. In his article on forgiveness in the National Catholic Reporter (10 March, 2009) John Dear expresses it bluntly: “[t]he forgiveness we receive hinges on the forgiveness we give”. It is arguable that the understanding behind Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-6) assumes the projective and mimetic nature of human being and becoming. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes it clear that only path to a non-divided self is by loving and praying for

60 The NT Greek adverb ὅσος in v.12 is consistently rendered ‘as’ in various English translations.
61 See also Mark 11:25, “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”
62 Alison, Broken Hearts, 170.
enemies. This is because it is only through relationship with others ‘beyond ourselves’, that anyone has access to what comprises the self ‘within’. (This is an example of what Girard means by the term ‘interindividuality’.) Therefore, self-forgiveness can only be initiated projectively. This is the interrelated structure of reality, of human beings that are formed socially and mimetically.

‘Being forgiven’, understanding oneself as primarily forgiven and having one’s heart broken and remade into something new and more splendid, is critical to those teachers and leaders in Catholic schools who would seek to imitate Jesus the Ultimate Authority of the inclusive ritual that is restorative practice. ‘Being forgiven’ is closely related to the importance of ‘believing-in’.

4.3.2.2 The importance of ‘believing-in’

Alison defines what is intended by the term ‘believing-in’:

...it is quite right that believing in someone can be both a relationship towards someone which ends in them as an object of one’s belief; and it can also be a powerful attitude of yours which enters into the person as subject such that they, knowing themselves believed in, can do much more than they might have done.

The second italicized definition is significant for this discussion. Teachers and other school authorities who lead the ritual of inclusion that are restorative practices,

Alison, Broken Hearts, 170.


Some writers on the topic of forgiveness intuit that there is a relationship between forgiving and self-forgiveness, without making their understanding explicit. Stephanie Dowrick, for example: “[s]elf-forgiveness and the forgiveness of others seem inextricably intertwined.” Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love (The Women’s Press: London, 1997), 334.

Alison, “Girard and the Analogy of Desire”. Italics added.
experience themselves as ‘believed-in’ by Jesus. This is congruent with St Paul’s understanding in the previously mentioned Letter to the Galatians “…it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (2:20). It also makes sense humanly speaking, that a person can experience another believing-in them as a potent force for their good within them:

…[t]hey can clearly see more to me than I can myself. They can imagine me doing things that I can’t, can see some of the pitfalls to which I am prone, and which I will interpret as dead-ends by which I will be discouraged. But they can envision these apparent dead-ends as crucibles through which I may be turned into something much bigger than I could have imagined. And as I take on board that they believe in me, it is in fact their imagination, their vision, their pattern of desire which will come to ‘run’ my relationship to the events, the people, and the situations in which I find myself. I will start to look at these situations ‘through their eyes’. I will start to think my way through such and such a situation ‘as if’ they were thinking inside me, as if it were their mind thinking through me. However, it will not be their mind thinking through me instead of me. It will be their mind thinking in me as me. I will be in the process of receiving a new ‘I’ that is in principle inseparable from the ‘I’ of the one believing in me.

This is how God, though Jesus and in the Spirit, works with and within human beings: to quote St Paul again, the “power at work within us [who] is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine” (Eph 3:20). In Girardian terms, this is an example of positive mimesis, of moving another without undermining them, displacing them, or in other ways threatening their ever-fragile sense of being. Rather it is a gesture toward the other that expresses a belief in the emergent possibility of the other. ‘Believing-in’ says to the other: “I know you have potential for a much much [sic] richer way of being than you yet know”. Here ‘believing-in’ is very close to ‘being-forgiven’ in that it can be a condition of the possibility of a person experiencing the breaking of heart that is forgiveness.

67 Alison, “Girard and the Analogy of Desire.” Italics original.
68 Alison, “Girard and the Analogy of Desire.”
4.3.2.2.1 ‘Believing-in’ and the transformation of shame

‘Believing-in’ may prevent one’s desire being controlled by the shame that can occur when one starts to receive forgiveness. Shame, understood as a negative emotion that combines feelings of dishonour, unworthiness and embarrassment, is a “powerful feeling of self-annihilation comparable to the psychic death of Girardian undifferentiation”. Shame can be stigmatising and reinforce the distortion of desire that leads to the false transcendence of retribution and scapegoating. In the presence of an Ultimate Authority who is ‘believing-in’ the person who has done wrong, shame can also be re-integrative. That is, shame can be creative of the potential for something new in the person and the community. Shame is a probably the most mimetic sentiment. To experience shame a person must look through the eyes of whoever makes them ashamed. Theologically, it is Jesus who occupies the place of shame and annihilation on the cross but is not controlled by being in the place of shame:

Jesus’ occupation of the place of shame, of loss, of death and annihilation...was the ‘Creator of all things’ way of opening up for us the possibility of entering into the full meaning, weight and flow of creation.

The significance of re-integrative shame for the restorative ritual will be discussed further below.

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69 Osborne, “The Role,” 103.
71 Girard, The Scapegoat, 155.
72 Alison, Undergoing God, 117.
4.3.2.2 ‘Believing-in’ others

Not only is ‘believing-in’ what teachers who lead the inclusive ritual of restorative practices receive from Jesus, it is what teachers and school authorities offer toward other teachers, parents and young people through restorative practices. Restorative practices are about ‘believing-in’ young people, so that they might experience being believed-in as they approach something tricky, difficult and even shameful: such as facing someone who has harmed them, or hearing about how their behaviour has affected the community. For the one who has done wrong, a teacher (or other supportive person) ‘believing-in’ them can create the possibility of change without the person in authority having to be, or even threatening to be, punitive. The message is clear: this Catholic school does not create community through the violent rituals of expulsion. Through the ritual of inclusion this Catholic school offers the possibility of desire becoming liberated from rivalry and violence. ‘Believing-in’ says to the person who has done wrong and the person affected by the wrongdoing: ‘I am not ‘out-to-get-you’, but I am inviting you to participate in the life of this school [the Church, the sanctorum communio] in a way that is unimaginably good for you and good for the community’.

4.3.2.2.3 A process of ‘becoming’

‘Being-forgiven’ and ‘believing-in’ are indicators that teachers and leaders are becoming ‘forgiving victims’ for their school community. The use of the verb ‘becoming’ is deliberate. It communicates the reality that the teacher or leader is always in the process of receiving their status as ‘forgiving victim’: it is a process of conversion, or transformation, that happens over time. The human tendency to blame
and create group unity at the expense of someone (a victim) is deeply socially and culturally entrenched and masked. Teachers and leaders in Catholic schools are undergoing the atonement described above; they “are constantly in the process of being approached by someone who is forgiving”, 73 and are offering forgiveness in order to continue undergoing being forgiven. 74 Through the experience of receiving forgiveness, the breaking of heart that is contrition, teachers and leaders experience being given a bigger heart, a sign of their participation in a ‘new creation’. 75 These teachers and leaders in turn offer this towards others in the school community, not exclusively but in a special way, through the inclusive ritual that is restorative practices. As Schreiter indicates, forgiveness and reconciliation is God’s work, in which human beings participate. 76 In this way teachers and leaders in Catholic schools who are learning to become ‘forgiving victims’ and offering a positive mimesis can be a sacramental presence of God’s reconciling activity in the world.

4.3.2.3 Teachers and leaders imitating the ‘Ultimate Authority’ with credibility

A condition of the possibility of victims and wrongdoers becoming ‘forgiving victims’ and experiencing themselves as a new creation is that they find their teachers and leaders in Catholic schools compelling and credible models to imitate. Key to this are quality relationships between teacher and students. As discussed in Chapter 2, in Catholic schools “a student needs to experience personal relations with outstanding

73 Alison, Undergoing God, 64.
74 Alison, 65.
75 Alison suggests that an origin of the English word ‘contrition’ is the Latin cor triturare, to have one’s heart broken [literally ‘threshed’], Undergoing God, 65.
76 Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation, 25.
educators”.

High levels of support and accountability mark the personal relationship between authoritative teachers and their students. High levels of support and accountability are built on trust, respect and cooperation. From a Girardian perspective these teachers and leaders can be powerfully attractive because, in imitating Christ, they avoid being drawn into rivalry and the temptation to scapegoat. Additionally, through the inclusive ritual of restorative practices the mimetic attraction of these credible teachers and leaders means that for some students who lack stable authority figures (such as fathers and mothers) they will be ‘carried’ into this “[a]uthority void via persons who have not so much learned to forgive, but how to ‘be forgiven’ ”. The influence of these teachers and leaders is not to be underestimated.

However, it is not enough for individual teachers and leaders to imitate Christ in inclusive rituals of restorative practices. Osborne argues that the stabilising structures of ‘institutions’ are important for restorative practices to influence culture. This aligns with Croxford’s contention that for restorative practices to transform a school culture they must be introduced systemically, with a whole-school approach to training and implementation. Therefore, teachers and leaders who make manifest the ‘forgiving victim’ of Christ do so within the context of the Catholic school community. The whole Catholic school community shares in the mission of the triune

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77 The Catholic School at the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 18.
78 Osborne, “The Role,” 100.
79 Osborne, 105.
82 Croxford, “A Restorative Practice Framework,” 34.
God entrusted to the Church: to proclaim the good news of Christ the ‘forgiving victim’ to the world through Christian witness and ministry of the Word. The credibility of teacher and leaders as models to imitate will be strengthened in the school where Christ is the “vital principle” of the Catholic school and not simply “fitted-in” as an afterthought.  

4.3.3 Key theological moments in the inclusive ritual of restorative practices

There are key moments within the inclusive ritual of restorative practices that have the potential to disclose in a particular way the unbinding of human beings and opening up of the new creation, Alison’s ‘Liturgical Atonement’. The credible teacher or leader who uses affective statements and questions, especially in the context of formal and informal conferences, can create the condition of the possibility where wrongdoers may experience contrition, having their heart broken, so that they may experience themselves as a new creation. Similarly, through those same processes used in restorative conferences, those who have been affected by the wrongdoing can find themselves unbound from their victimhood. In Chapter 2 the ‘psychology of affect’, the free expression of intense emotion, was designated as foundational to restorative practices. Wachtel and McCold argue that “[r]estorative practices...provide a safe environment for people to express and exchange intense emotion”. Mimetic theory provides a simple intellectual tool to explain why it is that the exchange of intense emotion has the power to build and rebuild community.

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Wachtel and McCold, "From Restorative Justice".
4.3.3.1 Mimetic theory, the exchange of emotion and the Paraclete

First, humans are projective and mimetic beings. As has been noted, it is only through relationship or exchange with the other ‘beyond ourselves’, that anyone has access to what comprises the self ‘within’. Second, Girard has pointed out that from the very beginning of the human species the exchange of intense emotion has been central to the creation and re-creation of community: the escalation of mimetic desire and undifferentiated violence resolved through the blaming and sacrifice or expulsion of a victim, was such an intense exchange of emotion it was understood as an experience of the sacred.\footnote{Girard describes the foundational experiences of scapegoating as “literally gripping” in Things Hidden, 28. Italics original.} Restorative practices can support the creation and re-creation group unity \textit{without} creating victims. It provides safe places where the tendency of those who have been harmed (or those who care for them) to blame and create (more) victims, the ‘accusatory tendency’, can be avoided. The accusatory tendency is the human tendency to blame that perpetuates cycles of reciprocal violence. As Girard notes ‘Accuser’ is a primary meaning of the Hebrew name ‘Satan’.\footnote{Girard, I See Satan Fall, 190; Alison, Undergoing God, 66.} In the Last Supper discourse of John’s Gospel, Jesus promises to send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to speak for them and lead them into truth (Jn 14:26, 16:12-14).\footnote{Alison, On Being Liked, 44-45.} Girard maintains that the \textit{Paraclete} (a word that signifies ‘the lawyer for the defence’ and a transliteration of the Greek \textit{paraklētos}) is the source of the increasing power to demystify scapegoating.\footnote{Girard, I See Satan Fall, 2-3.} The inclusive rituals of restorative practices create safe environments in which the tendency to accuse is limited and spaces for participants to learn to speak and live in the truth.
The affective questions used by the teacher or leader in the formal and informal conference are central to avoiding the accusatory tendency. The educational and pastoral purpose of these questions and the affective statements they seek to elicit have been extensively described in Chapter 2. The affective questions: 1) invite the person who has been affected by the wrongdoing to have a voice, to have their dignity respected, to experience being included; and, 2) invite the person who has done wrong to experience empathy and affective learning. These two aspects of the affective questions will be considered in turn.

### 4.3.3.2 Affective questions and the creative renunciation of victimhood

When deployed by a credible teacher or leader, the affective questions contribute to making possible a response from the victim towards the person who has harmed them that does not reciprocate the violence that they have had inflicted upon them. This is because the victim is given the space in the ritual to respond to the questions, to share how they have been affected and how they would like things to be put right. And, as their responses are listened to and taken seriously by the teacher or leader they experience being believed-in. Because the teacher or leader as Ultimate Authority is mediating a Christ-like positive desire, the conditions are created to unbind the victim from a fear of death: to let go of the desire to create a sense of self over against the one who has harmed them. The victim is drawn toward the risen Christ who with, through and in them, is making something bold and creative from the annihilation of

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89 Chapter 2.
victimhood. From the place of sorrow, pain and shame, from nothing, from the place where no-one wants to be, where nothing appears to exist; forgiveness, or the desire to forgive, can emerge. Christ, the Ultimate Authority acting in and through the teacher leading the ritual, can create something out of nothing: for this is the only way the God of the Hebrew people has ever created. Moreover, the mimetic and social nature of human being means that as the person who has been harmed finds themselves offering something even faintly resembling forgiveness toward the one who has harmed them, it is likely that they will reap a lasting sense of self acceptance and peace.

4.3.3.3 Affective questions and contrition

The affective questions can also create conditions conducive to the gift of forgiveness being given to the one who has done wrong. As the person who has done wrong hears the person who has been affected describe how their behaviour has harmed them, without blame or accusation and as the person who has done wrong describes how they imagine their behaviour has affected and harmed others, they might begin to experience contrition: a breaking of heart that is their emergence into the receiving of forgiveness. This could be described as the wrong-doers heart being ‘threshed’ by the Holy Spirit as he or she listens to the affective responses. The metaphysical poet John Donne describes his desire for contrition of this kind in the opening lines of one of his “Holy Sonnets”:

Batter my heart, three person’d God; for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;

90 Alison, Living in the End Times, 49-56.
91 Self-forgiveness is received projectively. See, Alison, Broken Hearts, 170.
That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow mee, ‘and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.  

When forgiveness is received it is as an extraordinary gift, as the poet intimates, of being made new. As Alison suggests: “that of being given to be someone else who I didn’t know myself to be and who is much bigger and more splendid than I took myself to be”. Being given a new and more expansive heart, a new sense of self by someone coming towards me and forgiving me can be a profoundly disturbing and destabilising experience. Therefore, it can often be accompanied by shame.

4.3.3.4 Re-integrative Shame and the Divine regard

As has been noted above, shame can be a stigmatising experience, further complicating the disturbance and de-stabilisation of being forgiven. However, shaming is not necessarily stigmatising. Osborne is correct in her assessment that it is inaccurate to equate shaming with stigmatising and therefore scapegoating. The experience of shame can be a key moment in the inclusive ritual that is restorative practice. As noted above, Braithwaite argues that in the right conditions shame can be re-integrative. The ‘right conditions’ are those in which an Ultimate Authority offers the wrongdoer “intolerant understanding” and the possibility of forgiveness. Intolerant understanding consists in separating the offending behaviour from the person who has done wrong and maintaining the assumption that “the disapproved

93 Alison, On Being Liked, 36.
94 Osborne, “The Role,” 103. As noted above.
95 Braithwaite, Crime, Shame and Reintegration, 54-68.
96 Osborne, “The Role,” 103.
behaviour is transient, performed by an essentially good person”. There is a sense here of the (Christian) adage: love the sinner, hate the sin. Indeed, the “Marist Youth Care Principles for Conferences” suggest that it is important to “[s]eparate the deed from the doer...[to] recognise a student’s worth, their virtues and accomplishments while disapproving of their wrongdoing”. In other words ‘believing-in’ the wrongdoer that he or she can be a much bigger and more splendid person than they suppose.

4.3.3.4.1 Communicating a Divine regard that both loves and likes the person

A more nuanced and probably less moralising way of understanding what ‘believing-in’ looks like in the midst of re-integrative shame would be to say that the person embodying Ultimate Authority seeks to communicate to the person who has done wrong that they like them. As Higgins has argued:

young people must know that they are really liked by their teacher(s) and it is a complete sham to talk of ‘loving all children’ and ‘respecting their dignity’ if a child actually senses that you don’t even like them – and the more difficult the family circumstances of that child, the more critical it is for them to know that they are liked really liked.99

In this instance it could be said that the more shameful and difficult the incident, the more critical it is for the person who has done wrong to know that they are (still) liked.

Moreover, Alison contends that use of the word ‘love’, particularly in the Christian context, can be easily distorted to mean: “My love for you means that I will like you if

97 Braithwaite, Crime, Shame and Reintegration, 55.
98 Marist Youth Care, “Marist Youth Care Principles for Conferences,” in Restorative Justice Resources, Sydney, 2010. See Appendix V.
you become someone else”.¹⁰⁰ This sets up a Girardian ‘double-bind’, a bind in which neither party can move in one direction or the other. If they do attempt to move it will cause them to stumble, it is a ‘scandal’. Scandal is a translation of the New Testament Greek, skandalon meaning “stumbling block”.¹⁰¹ Scandal comes about when:

[a] person or group of persons feel themselves blocked or obstructed as they desire a specific object of power, prestige, or property that their model possesses or is imagined to possess. They cannot obtain it either because they cannot displace the model and acquire what he or she has or because the rivalry with others in the group is so intense that everyone prevents everyone else from succeeding.¹⁰²

In this case, the love of the community mediated by the Ultimate Authority is conditional and captures the person in a ‘double bind’: ‘you must change to be liked’, or ‘you are loved in spite of you being you’. Being loved is something good and desirable, however it has become an obstacle that is impossible for the person who has done wrong to avoid and for the person mediating the object. It will cause one or both of them to stumble. Therefore, if shame is to be re-integrative, in the inclusive ritual that is restorative practice, it is crucial that the person who has done wrong knows and understands that they are liked. The Ultimate Authority is called to make present the saving power of Christ:

[our faith is that the eyes of God that are in Christ, and thus the divine regard through which we can receive new being, are eyes that like us, from alongside, at the same level as us. Which means, they do not control us, so not try to

¹⁰⁰ Alison, On Being Liked, 107.
¹⁰¹ Girard, Things Hidden, 416. Girard insists that the word ‘scandal’ should not be replaced with others in translations of the Gospel text: “If most translators were not so anxious to jettison the word skandalon for terms which they consider more intelligible, we would have a better chance of seeing that the scandal invariably involves an obsessional obstacle, raised up by mimetic desire with all its empty ambitions and ridiculous antagonisms. It is not an obstacle that just happens to be there and merely has to be got out of the way; it is the model exerting its special form of temptation, causing attraction to the extent that it is an obstacle and forming an obstacle to the extent that it can attract. The skandalon is the obstacle/model of mimetic rivalry; it is the model in so far as he works counter to the undertakings of the disciple and so becomes an inexhaustible source of morbid fascination.” Girard, Things Hidden, 416.
¹⁰² Girard, I See Satan Fall, xi.
know better than us who we are, but want to participate in the discovery with us of who we are to become.\textsuperscript{103}

Elsewhere Alison has described this process as the Creator moving “us from within, bringing us into being, without displacing us”.\textsuperscript{104} This means that the power of God, through positive mimesis, can create change in a person without threatening their ever-fragile sense of being. In this case, the power of God is working through a person, embodying Ultimate Authority (the one with whom there is no rivalry), in and through the restorative ritual. The Ultimate Authority offering this kind of positive mimesis, through ‘liking’ the wrongdoer can be the teacher or leader who is conducting the restorative ritual. In a formal conference, it can also be the presence of a supporting adult or friend of the student. In some circumstances the person who has been harmed (the ‘victim’) can become one who embodies the Ultimate Authority as they offer forgiveness toward the person who has harmed them. This can be the case especially, but not exclusively, when a teacher is the one who has been harmed.\textsuperscript{105}

There are many potential avenues for the one who has done wrong to be mimetically drawn away from stigmatising shame into re-integrative shame. Whoever provides the Ultimate Authority, in the context of the Catholic school community it is an experience of the sanctorum communio:

[i]n the sanctorum communio, ‘None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.’ ‘If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it’.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{103} Alison, \textit{On Being Liked}, 108. Italics added.
\textsuperscript{104} James Alison, “Prayer: A Case Study in Mimetic Anthropology,” James Alison, Theology, February 2009, \url{http://www.jamesalison.co.uk/texts/eng54.html}.
\textsuperscript{105} If a teacher is the person who has been harmed finds themselves offering forgiveness toward a student who has harmed them, it is likely that they will grow in credibility in the eyes of the one receiving that forgiveness.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}, 953.
It is also the moment where they may begin to experience themselves as a new creation.

Furthermore, the person affected by the wrongdoing, the victim, may also experience shame during the restorative ritual. As they describe what happened in the situation of conflict they may find themselves ashamed as they describe what was done to them, their reaction and the reaction of others, and their own inability to resist violence. This can especially be the case if the person harmed is a teacher in the school community. The teacher may experience a sense of shame regarding his or her own professional competence at not being able to effectively manage a student’s misbehaviour. Remembering that shame is akin to the psychic death of undifferentiation, a teacher may return the violence directed at them by a student by retaliating, or by turning the violence inward, or both. The movement toward becoming a forgiving victim, of having one’s desire undistorted through the processes of restorative practice, will often follow a similar pattern to the person who has done wrong: of being mimetically drawn away from stigmatising shame into re-integrative shame by an Ultimate Authority who likes them.

4.3.4 Cautions

If a pastoral theological approach to restorative practices in Australian Catholic schools is to illuminate the mystery of the resurrection in a practical and tangible way there are four cautions to heed.
First, the process must not be used to expedite a positive outcome. Pressure can be on teachers and leaders in schools to ‘make things right’ in the shortest possible time. Parents, teachers and other members of the community can be anxious to ‘move on’, to get things ‘fixed’ and ‘put the past behind’ them. This may lead to a dishonouring of the restorative processes, precipitating a shallow retreat by the victim (the one who was most affected) into being dominated by victimhood. The withdrawal into victimhood can be accompanied by a pronouncement of forgiveness to the wrongdoer as a feeble form of retaliation dressed in sanctimony, confirming Nietzsche’s suspicion that forgiveness is nothing more than a weak form of revenge. Furthermore, an overly expeditious intent puts at risk the creation of the right conditions for the breaking of heart, the experience of contrition, in the person who has done wrong; forgiveness is not likely to be received. Jones warns of forgiveness that does not require our participation in Christ’s dying and rising, describing it as cheap, symbolic or therapeutic. Honouring the processes of restorative practices by setting up the rituals to succeed is critical. This includes: ensuring that teachers and leaders are well trained and supported; that sufficient time is given to prepare and conduct conferences, especially formal conferences; that the processes are clearly explained and agreed to by all participants prior to a formal conference.

Second, requiring the person who has done wrong to apologise. Requiring a person to apologise is a distortion of forgiveness and how it works. Alison contends that:

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in the traditional framework of theology, forgiveness precedes confession...the actual verbal confession, the apology...comes way down the line, and is usually a sign that the person is already receiving forgiveness.\textsuperscript{109}

Furthermore, such an emphasis on the person who has done wrong displaces the victim, the person who has been most affected, from the centre of restorative practice. As Schreiter has argued, “it is through the victim that the wrongdoer is called to repentance and forgiveness.”\textsuperscript{110} After all, it is the priestly activity of Jesus our forgiving victim that school communities are called to imitate through this inclusive ritual.

Third, underestimating the importance of accepting ambiguity in the restorative ritual.\textsuperscript{111} When participants share what happened the full truth of what happened might not ever emerge. It is important that those who lead the process navigate wisely and gently this “complex mix of reactions, dispositions, events, company, character, personal history and hopes”.\textsuperscript{112} For, as Cherry suggests, this is the ground from which forgiveness might begin to make sense in a person’s life.\textsuperscript{113} Moreover, the result of the ritual may appear ambiguous or at least fall short of the ideal. The new creation, the new ‘we’ between the person most affected and the person who has done wrong may never look like a friendship. It may be what Cherry describes as a ‘distasteful empathy’ leading to a re-imagining of the humanity of both parties.\textsuperscript{114} The result may

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{109} Alison, \textit{On Being Liked}, 36.  \\
\textsuperscript{110} Schreiter, \textit{The Ministry of Reconciliation}, 15.  \\
\textsuperscript{111} Chapter 1.  \\
\textsuperscript{112} Stephen Cherry, \textit{Healing Agony: Re-Imagining Forgiveness} (London: Continuum, 2012), 81.  \\
\textsuperscript{113} Cherry, \textit{Healing Agony}, 81.  \\
\textsuperscript{114} Cherry, 185. In his reflection on the creativity of forgiveness, Cherry does not include the offender (person who has done wrong) as re-imagining the humanity of the victim.
\end{flushleft}
simply be an increased level of tolerance between the two. The process may lead to a short-term solution, but the conflict may recur.

The fact that conflict may re-emerge after a restorative meeting points to the fourth caution: that despite the best efforts of teachers and leaders the inclusive rituals of restorative practices may not transform relationships, or even nudge them towards a ‘distasteful empathy’. Those affected and those who have done wrong may not be ready to receive the healing grace of the forgiving victim through this ritual. The unbinding of human beings takes time and respects human freedom. The liturgical atonement makes human participation in the resurrection as forgiveness of sins and the opening up of a new creation possible, but not mandatory. All teachers and leaders can do is create the condition of the possibility where those affected by wrongdoing might learn to imitate Christ, the forgiving victim, and those who have done wrong might learn that they too are undergoing being forgiven and are believed-in.

4.4 Conclusion

In the context of the Catholic school community the educational purpose of restorative practices as inclusive rituals is twofold: 1) the affective learning growth of those who participate in the ritual; and, 2) an encounter with the resurrected Christ our forgiving victim, through the breaking of heart and receiving ‘being forgiven’ and ‘believed in’. The teachers and other leaders who facilitate the inclusive rituals of restorative practices are experiencing themselves as undergoing conversion, of being
forgiven and believed-in. Through the processes of restorative practices these same teachers and leaders offer forgiveness and believing-in to other members of the community, in the hope that they might be mimetically drawn, by having their hearts broken and stretched into new ways of being and togetherness. These teachers and leaders know and understand that Christ is the Ultimate Authority they are imitating, each in their own way.
Chapter 5: A Restorative Practices Case Study from the Catholic School Context

Two students and two teachers from a Catholic high school in a regional area are the subjects in this descriptive case study of a formal restorative conference. The case study narrative is constructed from four in-depth interviews with these participants and the researcher who was also a participant in the restorative conference.

5.1 Justification

The case study method was chosen to explore how and why the restorative approach to social control works and in so doing illuminates the mystery of resurrection in a practical and tangible way. Case study enables an in-depth analysis of an event and involves the compilation of detailed information about that event over a sustained time period.¹ Case study also examines the event and its real-world context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident.² This is precisely the situation of the phenomena of the restorative conference, this restorative event cannot be detached from its context. The restorative conference only makes sense in its context, the complex network of relationships between and among teachers, students, parents and the wider community in a Catholic high school in a regional area of NSW. The case study method

is particularly appropriate for this inquiry because case study relies on multiple and variable sources of evidence which converges in a triangulating fashion. The four in-depth interviews provide this triangulating convergence on the phenomena, providing both confirmability and a rich and thick descriptive case-study narrative. Case study research also permits the researcher to expand and generalise theory. The theory expounded in this thesis will be supported and challenged by analysing the case study.

5.2 Methodology

5.2.1 Interviews

Interviews were conducted by the researcher with the four participants. These were designed as open-ended conversations with guiding questions. It is well established by social scientists that interviews are a valuable approach to inquiry. Interviews have two particular strengths: 1) they are very effective means to explore the way in which human subjects experience and understand their worlds, and; 2) they are a powerful method of producing new knowledge of the human condition. Therefore interview technique is perfectly suited to exploring the students’ and teachers’ subjective experience conflict and the restorative conference, as well as the development of the pastoral theological insights of this thesis.

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5.2.2 Research Questions

The central research question posed in this thesis flows from the researcher’s reflection on the experience of facilitating restorative conferences: how and why does the restorative approach to social control, as used in Catholic schools of the Wagga Wagga diocese in NSW, illuminate the mystery of resurrection in a practical and tangible way? A series of questions were used to guide the interviews (see Figure 10). The questions are an example of what Yin describes as “Level 1 questions”, which are designed to be tributary to and understood in the light of the primary research question. It is notable that the interview questions are not explicitly theological. This was a deliberate decision by the researcher: the intention being to allow the interviewees the freedom to describe and explore their experience without an external expectation of producing responses with overt religious or theological content. Nevertheless, assuming that Girard is correct in his argument that the foundation of all culture and institutions is religious, the questions do have a religious (and hence theological) foundation. Given the co-creative nature of in-depth interviews the decision to use questions that were not explicitly theological was an attempt by the researcher to demonstrate reflexive sensitivity.

As Swinton and Mowatt warn: “[s]ensitivity towards and awareness of the complex dynamics of the interview situation is crucial if [the] co-narration is not to turn into a colonisation”. It was the desire of the researcher to explore and record the perspective and interpretation of each interviewee’s experience of the restorative conference, rather

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8 Yin, Case Study Research, 90.
9 Girard, Things Hidden, 28.
10 Yin, Case Study Research, 110-113.
11 Swinton and Mowatt, Practical Theology, 61.
than impose the researcher’s perspective or interpretation, although this was shared during the interview.

The recollection of each participant’s thoughts, feelings and concerns in relation to the restorative conference is of significance to the researcher as these thoughts feelings and concerns are the vectors through which pastoral theological approach to restorative practices will be developed and communicated. Furthermore, the general and secular questions reflect a reality of Catholic schools in Australia, where staff and students would generally not have access to sophisticated religious or theological language to describe their experiences. Indeed, it is hoped that this thesis may suggest ways in which this particular practice may be understood and practiced theologically. Again, imposing explicitly religious or theological language and meaning onto people’s experiences will not achieve theological understanding. Inducting staff and students over time into a new way of naming and understanding their experience as religious and theologically grounded may be more likely to bear fruit.

5.2.3 Design

The design of this case study reflects a single case within a holistic design. An understanding of the context of this case is important to a proper understanding of the case itself. The restorative conference under consideration makes little sense apart from its context: the relationships between the students and the teachers and students; the setting inside a Catholic high school in regional New South Wales,

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13 Yin, Case Study Research, 53.
Australia. The complexity and quality of the relationships between the students and the students and the teachers involved will be described in the case study narrative. The Catholic high school has an enrolment of over seven-hundred students. The majority of students live in the suburban areas of the large rural city in which the school is situated, with a not insignificant minority travelling daily to the school from outlying smaller towns, villages and farming communities. A small number of students who attend the school are also enrolled in a local weekly boarding facility. Students who attend the school are slightly more educationally advantaged than the Australian average, according to the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).14

Additionally, the case represents what is known as a “critical case”.15 In Chapter 4, a clear set of circumstances were specified in which the proposed pastoral theological approach to restorative practices in the Australian Catholic school context is an accurate description of what is actually going on in a restorative conference. The case study will be used to determine if the theoretical propositions of this thesis, as described in Chapter 4, are confirmed, or need to be challenged or extended.

5.2.4 Data Collected

The data was collected as four individual interviews, which were recorded and later transcribed. The names of the interviewees are given as pseudonyms, a standard practice when reporting qualitative research data. The details are listed in Figure 9.

14 Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, “My School,” https://myschool.edu.au (accessed 26 September, 2019). The complete URL has not been given in order to maintain the anonymity of the school.
15 Yin, Case Study Research, 52.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Interview Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imogen</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>47 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>1 hour 9 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>51 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1 hour 4 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: Interview Participants

Each interview participant was asked the research questions (see Figure 10) to assist them in recollecting their experience of the restorative conference.

5.2.5 Analysis Methods

5.2.5.1 Data Analysis

Following the interviews the responses were analysed according to key theoretical propositions of this thesis: mimetic theory, inclusive ritual of the restorative conference, believing-in, receiving forgiveness, the authority of the teacher, and experience of the resurrection. In the Restorative Conference narrative these theoretical propositions are both affirmed and challenged.16

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16 Yin, Case Study Research, 62.
5.2.5.2 Analytical Technique

In this case study, the analytical technique deployed is explanatory; it is an attempt to explain how and why a restorative conference works, to excavate a complex matrix of meaning from within the situation.¹⁷ As Yin clarifies:

> [t]o explain a phenomenon is to stipulate a presumed set of causal links about it, or how or why something happened. The casual links may be complex and difficult to measure in any precise manner...[i]n most cases explanation building occurs in narrative form. Because such narratives cannot be precise, the better case studies are the ones in which the explanations reflect some theoretically significant propositions.¹⁸

This case study builds a narrative, based on the recollections of the four participants in the conference, and reflects a theoretically significant proposition: that the restorative approach to social control can create the condition of the possibility for human subjects to participate in an experience of the resurrection.¹⁹ The case study narrative not only reflects a theoretically significant position but it assists in its development. Explanations are not static but are open to correction, elaboration and growth; hence the outgrowth of Chapter 6 from the case-study. Yin describes this as the iterative nature of explanation building.²⁰ This case-study both assists and develops a theoretically significant position.

¹⁷ See Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology*, 95.
¹⁹ The theoretical significance of this position is dependent on the theoretical significance of Girard’s mimetic theory.
²⁰ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 149.
5.2.6 Caveats

Some time had elapsed between the restorative conference and the interviews.\(^{21}\) However, the presence of strong emotional connection with the incident expressed by participants during the interview suggests that while memory of some of the details of the restorative conference had been affected by the time that had elapsed between the conference and the interviews, each participant’s connection to the event was strong. Furthermore, the participants were living the consequences of the conference each day. As noted above the conference could not be removed or understood outside of its context, a Catholic high school in a regional town.

\(^{21}\) This was due to a number of factors outside the researcher’s control, including but not limited to: 1) acquiring ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee; 2) gaining the necessary consents to conduct the research from persons responsible for school administration and governance; 3) gaining consent from the student’s guardians; 4) accessing teachers and students for interview at mutually convenient times during school business hours.
Interview Questions

These questions require you to recall your experience of a restorative conference in which you were a participant.

1. Describe what was happening for you before the restorative conference. What were your thoughts, feelings and concerns?

2. What happened during the restorative conference? Recall and describe any key questions or moments for you. What thoughts and feelings do you associate with those key moments?

3. What were the most difficult and/or embarrassing questions and/or times during the conference? Describe them as best you can.

4. What thoughts and feelings do you associate with those difficult and/or embarrassing questions and/or times?

5. When did things start to change for the better for you during the conference? What question(s), understanding(s) or insight(s) led to that change?

6. What was it like for you immediately after the conclusion of the conference? What thoughts and feelings do you associate with that time?

7. Why do you think the conference worked?

8. What did the facilitator of the conference say and/or do that helped to make the conference work?

9. What did the supporting teachers say and/or do that helped to make the conference work?

10. What did the other participant say and/or do that helped to make the conference work?

11. What did you say and/or do that helped to make the conference work?

12. Is this relationship better or stronger as a result of the restorative conference? If it is better or stronger, how is it better and what thoughts and feelings do you associate with this relationship now?

Figure 10: Case Study Interview Questions
5.3 Case Study Narrative

The following narrative describes the recollection of the experience of a restorative conference by two teachers, Miriam and Deborah, and two students, Imogen and Hannah. Their memories of the incident and its consequences, the days leading up to the conference after it was proposed by the school leaders, the time immediately after the conference and the subsequent days and weeks are also valuable and are incorporated into the narrative. The narrative also highlights how key theoretical propositions in this thesis are both supported and questioned by their recollections of the experience.

5.3.1 Background

Imogen and Hannah were both high performing students who regularly achieved results that placed them at the top of their classes. They had chosen exactly the same program of study, were timetabled in the same classes and regularly achieved first place and second place in assessment tasks. Hannah usually achieved first place, Imogen second place. They were also friends who, according to Imogen, “shared everything”. Both Hannah and Imogen described themselves and their relationship as competitive. Hannah observed Imogen as often “being annoyed that she [Imogen] didn’t get first [place]”. One of the teachers, Miriam, described the students and their relationship this way:

Hannah is very, naïve would be the best word for it, and would just love everything to be rosey and pink and ‘everybody’s beautiful’, so she was sort of accepting that behaviour and not knowing, not having the skills to just actually change it. She did feel that at times that Imogen would be nasty to her but she didn’t really know how to get out of it or how to change that behaviour, without hurting Imogen’s feelings. So Hannah’s very much a beautiful girl who would love everybody to be nice, would love everybody to get along. Imogen’s
similar, but she’s a very strong personality and she likes to have certain things her own way, which, when it came to Hannah, who’s a popular student, she would like Hannah to be her friend, probably only friend.

The relationship between Hannah and Imogen was strongly mimetic, with Hannah as the model mediating to Imogen the desired goals of academic success, beauty and popularity. To explore this further the researcher moved beyond the Interview Questions (in Figure 10) and the students were asked to describe both themselves and the other. With noticeable hesitancy, Imogen described herself as confident, positive, strong, and a hard worker who strives to do her best. When asked to describe Hannah, Imogen said, this time without hesitation: “[h]appy, smart, pretty, funny. She’s confident. She’s very talented. She’s kind to everyone. She’s very accomplished”. “Determination to do well” was a quality Imogen said she she shared with Hannah, but Hannah went about it “in silence” whereas Imogen was “a bit dramatic”. Hannah described Imogen as:

Very bubbly, she’s very driven, determined to do well in everything. She’s hard on herself...[b]ut she can still be proud of herself. But she’s definitely...hard on herself. Overall, she’s just really bubbly and happy and outgoing and determined which is really good.

Remarkably, Hannah described herself in comparative terms with Imogen:

I guess I’m the same. I’d say we are similar. I’d say I’m a pretty happy person. Still determined. I don’t think I’m as hard on myself just because like if I get an exam result back and I haven’t done as well as I’d like, well there’s no point dwelling on that sort of thing. You may as well just try and improve it rather than just sort of dwelling on something I can’t change. I think Imogen’s more sort of disappointed in herself if that happened to her, whereas I would just probably move on. Just because she really wants to do well, she’s determined and if she doesn’t get the result she likes, or not as good as she would like, then she just a bit disappointed with herself. Which isn’t a bad thing. But I just prefer to move on and not sort of dwell on the bad thing. But other than that I’d say we are pretty similar. We have similar attributes.
Later in the interview Hannah added:

Hannah (H): I guess you never really knew what you were going to get with her. Like, she’s a bit unpredictable in that way. Like you didn’t know if she was going to be your best friend one day and ignore you the next day, that sort of thing. When you were close friends that was great but then on the day when she decided that she didn’t want to talk to you it was a bit ‘what did I do to deserve that?’ But you didn’t really think anything of it because you knew like the next day she would probably be your friend again. It was a bit unpredictable, which was weird because none of my other friends are really like that. I guess a lot of Imogen’s friends are like that. I would say that her whole group that she hangs around is sort of like that. They’re all a bit like you don’t really know what you’re going to get, sort of. So you sort of have to tread carefully I suppose, just until you make sure what sort of a mood they’re in, how they’re going to react to a joke or that sort of thing. You just have to be a bit careful.

Researcher (R): And that ‘being careful’, that takes a lot of energy?

H: Yes, well like everyone in my group I guess they are all very similar to me so I never really like had to tread carefully with anyone before. You just say what you say and no one gets offended and if they do, you apologise and they tell you what’s wrong. But with Imogen and I it was never really like that. Like, if someone’s feelings got hurt neither of us would say anything to the other one. And I think that’s because we were so competitive. We were close and we would tell each other personal things but not so close that you would tell the other one how you were feeling about them because of the competitive nature, wanting to go better than the other one, it was sort of like you didn’t want to get rid of that friendship in case you weren’t friends...beating a friend is better than beating an enemy, I guess, that would be worse! So I guess that was sort of our mentality.

Miriam was far more direct than Hannah, labeling Imogen’s behaviour towards Hannah as “bullying” despite the fact they were “friends”. The mimetic relationship between Imogen and Hannah contained the ambivalence necessary for conflict. Imogen’s desire for success, namely to be first in the class, was mediated by Hannah. Hannah was in a very real sense also the obstacle to the achievement of Imogen’s desire. Moreover, the object, achieving first in the class, by definition could not be shared. Only one student could be first and it was regularly Hannah and not Imogen. It seems likely that Imogen was experiencing ressentiment, namely, “a series of
failures, which, by frustrating the desire, seem to reinforce it”. Within a Girardian appropriation of *ressentiment* it is competitive mimesis that leads to the experience of *ressentiment*. It would appear reasonable to conclude that Imogen was caught in a Girardian double bind, experiencing both approval of and loathing for her friend Hannah. It is also highly likely that this experience of *ressentiment* was quite inexplicable to her and Imogen, an experience of *meconnaissance*, the misrecognition of the operation of mimetic desire in one’s life. Hannah (and to an extent Imogen) was experiencing that strange mimetic reality described by Tomelleri as difficult to accept, even for Girardians:

> [t]he people whom we most admire can suddenly turn out to be the people whom we most hate and that our models that are so admired and loved can be transformed into our worst rivals, into the source of our *ressentiment*. Or that in the worst of our rivals may hide a secretly admired and envied model.

This seemingly inexplicable ambivalence of desire was something quite hidden from Hannah’s consciousness and was yet foundational to it: Hannah sense of self was dependent on Imogen.

In a further complication, Hannah and Imogen were friends who, in Imogen’s words, “shared everything”. Friends who “shared everything” communicated a particular intimacy between these students: access to personal belongings, such as a mobile phone, which was especially relevant to the incident outlined below, as well as a deep

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23 Girardians use the term *ressentiment* in the same sense as Nietzsche (and later Scheler). Both promoted *ressentiment* as frustrated desire. Study of Nietzsche in the twentieth century popularised its usage. However, neither Nietzsche nor Scheler recognised the mimetic nature of the phenomenon.

24 Tomelleri, *Ressentiment*, 76.
involvement in each other’s thoughts, feelings and concerns. Therefore, the psychological ‘distance’ between subject and model is small, the conditions are created for what Girard describes as doubling, the potential for the model (Hannah) to imitate the violence directed towards her by the subject (Imogen).

Hannah also seemed to experience inner conflict, a double bind, with regard to her relationship with Imogen. Hannah’s kindness and desire to be a kind (and competitive) friend to Imogen clashed with a growing sense of injustice about the way she had to manage herself around Imogen. Hannah said she had to “tread carefully” around Imogen, to place her feelings second, particularly when Hannah experienced success that relegated Imogen to second place. Hannah didn’t like being treated this way by Imogen but didn’t know how to communicate this to her out of fear of what might happen to the relationship: “I thought she would hate me”.

5.3.2 The Incident

The incident occurred in class. Imogen had possession of Hannah’s mobile phone and was looking through the various mobile ‘apps’, music, videos and personal messages that were stored on the device. In Imogen’s recollection Hannah had given the mobile phone to her because as Imogen observed “we shared everything”. Hannah remembered it differently: Imogen had taken the phone from her. Given the significance of the mobile phone as Hannah’s personal item, Hannah’s recollection of Imogen taking such a personal object could be interpreted as a mimetically acquisitive
and even *metaphysical* move: ‘by taking this personal object I am taking you and your identity for myself’.  

Both agreed on what happened next: a new message appeared on the phone and Hannah snapped, yelled and demanded that Imogen hand the phone back. Hannah tried to take the phone from Imogen. Miriam, reported that “she [Imogen] had wrestled her [Hannah] down for her phone”. Imogen remembered that Hannah “jumped onto me” to get the phone back. The students physically wrestled for the phone in class, in front of their peers and their teacher. Eventually, the phone was handed back and Hannah admitted to swearing (using a profanity) as it was handed back. According to Miriam, Hannah was noticeably upset and crying shortly after the incident. In class earlier in the day Imogen had “made a joke” at Hannah’s expense and in response Hannah had snapped at Imogen. Reflecting on the incident Hannah thought she “must have been having a really bad day because I’m not normally one to snap at people”. Eventually the incident was reported to a senior teacher, Miriam, who, after some investigation, referred the incident to the Principal. The Principal decided that Imogen should be suspended from school. Miriam, as the senior teacher, was required to manage the suspension process which included communicating the Principal’s decision to the student. This was devastating for Imogen:

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25 ‘Acquisitive mimesis’ is to be distinguished from ‘metaphysical mimesis’, where the energy of longing is directed towards something intangible: a ‘completeness of being’. See Chapter 3.

26 A suspension is a formal sanction against a student: “[s]uspension is a strategy within a school’s Student Welfare and Pastoral Responsibilities policies. Suspension is most effective when parent(s) or carer(s) accept and act upon their responsibility to take an active role, in partnership with the school, to modify the inappropriate behaviour of a student. Professional staff of the school and the Catholic Schools Office (CSO) will work with parent(s) or carer(s) with the aim of assisting a suspended student to rejoin the appropriate learning program as quickly as possible. Suspension allows a student time to reflect on his/her behaviour, to acknowledge and accept responsibility for the behaviours which led to the suspension, and to accept responsibility for changing their behaviour to meet the school’s
Imogen (I): ...just at the time, it was just probably one of the hardest things I had to go through at school because I never got into trouble or anything and always did my work and that and all of a sudden there was this big divide between me and one of my closest friends. And I felt like the teachers were against me...

R: So this was something new for you. Being in trouble, being suspended that’s all new.

I: Yeah, very new!

R: What feelings did you have about that? Being suspended, being in trouble?

I: Like I said, betrayed, like I wasn’t being treated fairly, like I didn’t get a chance to say what happened. You, they [the teachers] want you, they treat you like adults but they won’t give you a chance to act like an adult in the situation like that. I s’pose you grow from that though, you know how to handle yourself in those situations. So I was really angry at myself and at the school. It was only for like a few days and then I got over it, but initially.

R: Why were you angry at yourself?

I: I don’t know. I’m pretty hard on myself but I didn’t like that situation. And it was my fault, I’m not saying it wasn’t but I blamed probably a lot more things that I did than what actually made that event happen. So I don’t know if that made sense?

R: You can say a bit more if you like.

I: Probably blamed myself too much. It was just a miscommunication and I did do things wrong but it probably wasn’t as big a deal as I made it out to be. So it was kind of like, I wasn’t happy with myself because I thought it was the end of the world because I’d been suspended from school.

R: It’s a big deal isn’t it, when you’ve had a good record at school?

I: Yep!
Hannah had mixed feelings about the suspension.

R: It must have been fairly serious because Imogen was suspended.

H: Well, I didn’t think it was that serious at the time. I thought it was just sort of, like when it happened like [a long pause] I guess they thought it was more serious because most people know that I’m not really one to get worked up about things or angry about something. So, when I did they sort of, I guess they knew that it was sort of a build-up. Not that that had happened before, just sort of the build-up of like the way that Imogen was treating me I guess, sort of, led to the incident and then that sort of brought on the suspension and everything, the build-up of the way she had been treating me.

R: Schools don’t suspend kids over nothing, it just doesn’t happen, it might look like it from the student’s point of view. Usually it is a build-up of a number of things. So, it must have been fairly serious for a school to say ‘look this is significant enough to suspend Imogen’. Do you have a view on that?

H: Personally, I didn’t think that it was worth a suspension because I guess I didn’t really think it was that big of a deal. But, then looking back I can sort of see where the school was coming from with the build-up of events to the incident and I guess they had the best interests of both her and I when they did the suspension. I think that it, well after the restorative conference it was much better between us, so the suspension obviously helped us both, I guess.

R: How do you think it helped?

H: Well, I’d never stood up to Imogen before. Not that I’m a sook or anything just that I didn’t really think that it was anything to stand for, just competitiveness really, and her making me feel not great if I went well. So I didn’t really think anything of it, to say anything about it because it never really happened before, I didn’t really know if it was a ‘normal thing’ if you know what I mean? So I guess like, the suspension told her that what she was doing wasn’t right and sort of gave me the chance to tell her as well…I felt awful about the suspension to be honest.

Miriam’s perspective was that the incident was very serious and had caused significant harm. Although Miriam reported that Imogen, and to some extent Hannah, didn’t believe that it was “as bad as it looked [to the teacher in the class who witnessed the incident]”.

Miriam (M): Imogen was devastated that Hannah was so upset with her and couldn’t understand why and so the relationship was really damaged. So,
neither of them knew what to do. They thought that the only situation was not to be friends. And it was very evident that that would be very hurtful for both of them.

Deborah expressed similar concerns about the incident causing harm for both students and that neither Hannah nor Imogen could envisage any hope for the future of the relationship. Deborah suspected that Hannah wanted to do something for the relationship, but felt powerless to do anything meaningful. The only solution would be to spend the next eighteen months at school carefully avoiding each other. For Hannah and Imogen the relationship was dead. As Miriam recalls:

...that is when Deborah and I spoke about some restorative, which we then spoke to you [being the Researcher, who also facilitated the restorative conference] about. And that’s when it happened.

The teachers, Miriam and Deborah, understood it as their responsibility to offer an alternative to these students. They believed that Imogen and Hannah could be more than victims of circumstance, that they would not be defined by their victim status.

Deborah had made contact with the facilitator requesting a restorative conference. The facilitator asked that various checks be completed by Deborah and Miriam, namely: that the students were agreeable to participating in the conference with an external facilitator; that the students’ parents were agreeable to their daughters participating in the conference with an external facilitator; and that the Principal was satisfied with this course of action. Important parts of these processes, and the participant’s experience of them, are recounted in the following section. Once these checks were completed, a day and time was made for the conference.
5.3.3 Preparing for the Restorative Conference

Each of the participants, students Imogen and Hannah and the teachers Miriam and Deborah, recalled an initial reluctance in the students to participate in the restorative conference. The students were grateful for their teacher’s support; however, they were wary of sitting down together to talk about what had happened. Imogen said that because she was suspended from school she felt “betrayed...and I felt like the teachers were against me”. Imogen’s parents were also reluctant:

[bp]ecause they knew that I was quite upset. So, they didn't really, you know, want me to go and do a counseling session with Hannah.

The key reason that Imogen chose to participate in the conference was her support teacher Deborah.

R: You said you were reluctant [to participate], but what changed your mind?

I: Deborah!

R: Tell me more about that.

I: She just thought it would be a good opportunity to just say what I was thinking and I didn’t want to let her down. Because she’s like such a kind person to me, she’s helped me out through the whole thing I just kind of wanted, and not to sound rude, but, to get it over with! Stop being hassled to go in there! But I was reluctant and I went in because of Deborah basically.

...

R: Is there anything else as we were going into that conference that you haven’t said that was happening for you, in terms of your thoughts, feeling and concerns? What about your family, your parents?

I: They were reluctant also. Because they knew that I was quite upset. So they didn’t really, you know, want me to go and do a counseling session with Hannah. But, like I said, I wanted to do it for Deborah.

R: And because you parents could see that your relationship with Deborah was important [to you] that were happy to agree?

I: Yep.
Deborah explained that initially Imogen was opposed to the conference. It appeared that Imogen was experiencing shame. As noted in Chapter 4 shame can be stigmatising and reinforce the distortion of desire that leads to the false transcendence of retribution and scapegoating. Imogen’s sense of betrayal and her decision to exile herself discloses a tendency within Imogen towards stigmatising shame in this situation. Shame can also be re-integrative, creative of the potential for something new in the person and the community. A key element in the unbinding distorted desire by transforming shame from a form of self-annihilation into a potential source of renewal is a person in authority who models the Ultimate Authority of Christ: a person who likes you and believes in you. This means that the power of God, through a non-rivalrous positive mimesis, can create change in a person without threatening their ever-fragile sense of being. And so, Deborah worked as a Christ-like presence with Imogen to move her from within, without threatening or displacing her, so that she would join the restorative conference.

D: I thought ‘Oh my gosh. How am I going to get Imogen to do this?’ because she was quite adamant [she wasn’t going to participate]. At one point I’d had a couple of conversations with her and because I had called her on some of her behaviour, she thought I was getting bossy and she had never experienced me being up front before. Like, her only experience of me before was gentle, supportive, encouraging that sort of thing. She’d never experienced me challenging her before. She didn’t like it. So, when I went to speak with her about actually having the conversation, I was apprehensive about her response, she got quite defensive. But, I also knew it had to happen. I knew I couldn’t just leave it. And I knew it would be, I can’t tell you how I knew, I just knew that it would be an experience [long pause] that would be life changing...

R: So, we were talking about your concerns leading up to the conference. Did you have any other concerns or feelings?

D: I was probably concerned that, maybe they wouldn’t be honest or real and probably too that if they were honest or real, then what they said could get
Deborah believed that a turning point for Imogen was when she learned that Hannah was prepared to participate.

R: Why do you think it made a difference to Imogen that Hannah was open to it [the Restorative Conference]?

D: I think before that, I think the whole shutting down thing was a protective behaviour and that was how she was going to deal with not being hurt again. Though I think that once she heard that Hannah was open to it, she thought ‘Oh, so she actually does care, I might be worth having this conversation with’. So even her behaviour of striking out, not physically, but verbally and what have you, well, there was physical, striking out was, a lot of it was to do with how she felt about herself, her own self-concept. So, I think that in some ways she was a bit surprised, that Hannah was open to having the conversation.

As noted in Chapter 4: in some circumstances the person who has been harmed (the ‘victim’) can become one who embodies the Ultimate Authority as they offer forgiveness toward the person who has harmed them. It would appear to be reasonable to conclude that in this case Hannah’s openness, the communication by the teacher of Hannah’s “care” for Imogen and their relationship was communicating forgiveness to Imogen. Before even entering the inclusive ritual that is the formal restorative conference Imogen was beginning to receive forgiveness from her ‘victim’.

Hannah stated that she was “iffy about it [the restorative conference]” right up until she entered the room. Hannah believed that Imogen felt the same. However, in Hannah’s words “we both turned up”. Hannah had very mixed thoughts and feelings about being a participant: reluctant because she didn’t know what a restorative
conference was; hesitant because she didn’t know whether of not she wanted to be friends with a person who had treated her so badly that the school had imposed a suspension on her; optimistic because “perhaps it would be OK because we are all there together”; hopeful that the restorative might help Imogen; philosophical because she felt she had nothing to lose by participating. Ultimately for Hannah, the support and encouragement of her parents, her boyfriend and her teacher Miriam, all contributed to her decision to participate in the conference.

Miriam described Hannah as initially being very cautious.

M: I spoke with Hannah and described that it wasn’t where she wanted to be but we have a process where you basically get to say how you feel and get them to see it from the other point of view, which is your own point of view. Hannah was very hesitant, because she’s very academic, she works really hard on whatever she applies herself to, but the skills when it came to conflict were not great. Because she loves everything to be ‘smooth sailing’ and I think that when you have a high achiever everything comes really easily so relationships should as well. She was hesitant because she didn’t have the skills in place to know how to deal with it. It was a new avenue for her to go ahead and go into places that she hadn’t been before. Because everything had been so easy and relationships had always been so easy because she was a happy go lucky, rosey girl that everybody likes and never probably been in many conflict situations. So it was something she was very hesitant going into. But I gave her time to think about it and it was definitely her decision and spoke with parents and they agreed, but it was never forced on her. It was just an opportunity, if she wanted to be Imogen’s friend to have a go at restoring [the relationship].

R: And were there any other thoughts, feelings and concerns leading into the restorative?

M: I didn’t have any concerns, other than I didn’t know how Hannah was going to handle it. But she’s always been a shining light in my mind and I suppose I had never seen that side of her, that naivety, that wanting everything to be perfect all the time. But because it never had been something she had to deal with, so I didn’t know how she would handle it, but I wasn’t concerned that she’d come out the end in the same place or worse. It was really about moving forward for her. And, she got to have a voice, she got to have her own say, which I don’t think for a long time she felt with Imogen, because Imogen was domineering and a different personality.
Here is a demonstration of the positive power of ‘mimetic draw’: the attraction a subject experiences to an object mediated by a model. The ‘mimetic draw’ of the teachers, Miriam and Deborah, ensured that two initially reluctant students were prepared to enter into a process that neither of them had heard of before.\footnote{It must not be forgotten that mimetic desire as Girard understands it is good in itself. See Girard, \textit{When These Things Begin}, 70-71, 76; Adams, “Violence, Difference, Sacrifice,” 22-26; Petra Steinmar-Pösel, “Original Sin, Grace, and Positive Mimesis,” in \textit{Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture}, no. 14 (2007): 1-12.} This was described in Chapter 4 as the significance of believing-in. ‘Believing-in’ is what teachers and school authorities offer toward other teachers and young people through restorative practices. Restorative practices are about ‘believing-in’ young people, so that they might experience being believed-in as they approach something tricky, difficult and even shameful: such as facing someone who has harmed them, or hearing about how their behaviour has affected the community. For the one who has done wrong, a teacher (or other supportive person) ‘believing-in’ them can create the possibility of change without the person in authority having to be, or even threatening to be, punitive. Deborah and Miriam had established high levels of relational trust with these students. The students also understood that these teachers, people in authority, also had high expectations of them. From a Girardian perspective Deborah and Miriam were able to attract the students to participate in the restorative because they refused to be drawn into rivalry and the temptation to scapegoat. These teachers had their minds fixed on the ‘things of heaven’, the possibility of unbinding the distorted desires of Hannah and Imogen. Furthermore, Hannah and Imogen knew and understood that these teachers liked them. If shame is to be re-integrative, in the inclusive ritual that
is restorative practice, it is crucial that the person who has done wrong and the one who has been harmed knows and understands that they are liked and cared for.

5.3.4 The Restorative Conference

5.3.4.1 Setting-up the restorative conference

On the day of the conference the facilitator met with the two supporting teachers to ensure that they understood their role, who was supporting whom and that the students remained willing to proceed with the conference.

The Restorative Conference was conducted in the school counselor’s room. This was an ideal setting. The room was intimate and yet not confining; it was light, warm and airy with enough seats for the four participants and the facilitator to sit comfortably in a circular fashion. Arranging the seating in a circle allowed the participants to see the others and it communicated a sense of equality and inclusion. The counselor’s room was also physically separate from the administration area of the school therefore removed from the offices of those in authority, away from Miriam’s office, the senior teacher who had recommended Imogen’s suspension, and the Principal’s office, who had authorised the suspension. The counselor’s room was also separate from the regular learning areas of the school, from other students and teachers, and therefore afforded privacy for the participants. The students, Imogen in particular, perceived the room as a neutral space. This contributed to a sense of the Conference being a safe place for the free exchange of emotions.
The facilitator stood inside the entrance to the counselor’s room to meet and greet Imogen and Hannah. They came in separately, each with their supporting teacher. The students recalled their thoughts and feelings just before entering the conference:

R: Reluctantly you went in the restorative conference, you didn’t really have an understanding of what it might be but, you went in because of your trust in Deborah.

I: Yes! I knew that they were bringing in someone from outside the school. That’s kind of all I knew and that me and Hannah would be in there at the same time.

...

R: Going in [to the restorative conference] did you think that there was any hope?

H: Definitely. I definitely thought there was hope. Maybe not for friendship but definitely for moving past it and maybe not hating each other. But I didn’t really have any expectations of coming out ‘best buddies’. I just thought we would come out and move on and not go our separate ways but obviously be able to talk to each other and that sort of thing. Just not ignore each other and not talk because that’s not a fun thing.

The facilitator had pre-arranged with the teachers that they would sit close to the student they were supporting. Deborah sat with Imogen and Miriam with Hannah. The facilitator made explicit the expectations, roles and purpose for the conference (to listen to each other’s perspective on the incident, to learn from the incident and to restore the relationship), with a particular emphasis on taking turns to listen and speak in response to the affective questions. The tone set was firm, clear and invitational. Imogen recalls the effect of the clear expectations that helped create a safe place:

I: [I]t was a controlled environment, we couldn’t fight each other, we couldn’t yell or, we had to, we talked to you and then to each other. There was [sic] questions that, you know, wasn’t just talking about nothing. Because it was, you know, because it was a controlled environment that made it work.
R: It was safe?

I: Yes, it was a safe place!

R: And you talked about having Deborah there as helping make it safe for you?

I: Yes.

R: What else?

I: It was the questions, that me and Hannah were both there probably, that we weren’t being interrogated by ourselves. Just the overall environment.

R: What did I say or do that helped to make the conference work?

I: At the start you said that there was like a talking stick, or something, and that when one was talking the other one couldn’t say anything couldn’t interject or anything. I think that was probably one of the most valuable aspects of it. It gave everyone a chance to say what they were thinking about without being interrupted. That you were very direct when you spoke to us both. You weren’t taking sides. You were almost like just an observer. Your questions derived from what you saw and what you heard.

R: Anything else?

I: You were pretty friendly. I wasn’t intimidated or anything. We kind of sat in a circle too. I don’t know, that kind of popped into my mind.

R: Why is a circle helpful, do you think?

I: Well, we could all see each other, all hear what everyone was saying, no one was facing a different way.

This particular intervention respected the principles and followed the guidelines of a formal restorative restorative conference as described in Chapter 2.

5.3.4.2 Breaking through

Initially progress was very slow, as both Hannah and Imogen were very cautious and guarded. Imogen was angry and defensive, whilst Hannah was quiet and timid. Deborah described Imogen as “lunging forward” and Hannah as “crumpled”. Miriam
remembers both students weeping on a number of occasions. In their own way and for their own reasons both students were seeking to minimise the significance of the incident. It seems that this was partly to avoid taking responsibility for their involvement in an incident that was embarrassing and shameful, particularly for two high performing and successful students. Moreover, Imogen and Hannah wanted to protect themselves from any further potentially embarrassing or shameful outbreaks.

As Deborah remembers:

D: There was lots of squirming and not really looking people in the eyes and focusing on the behaviour and that sort of thing…they weren’t really telling the full story. They were just telling it on a superficial level in some ways, because they were too scared to hurt each other more or hurt themselves, be vulnerable, I think. But that is what was needed to be brought out so that they could deal with it.

Miriam recalls her frustration with Hannah:

M: I just remember sitting there thinking ‘oh, go on, [Hannah] you can say this’. And I find it really hard, I had to say to myself ‘be quiet, be quiet’. And, maybe I did prompt her once or twice, I can’t remember but I was wanting to prompt her all the time: ‘Hannah you can do this, you can do this, you know what you want, you know how you want to be treated and you know how you don’t want to be treated, so say it, and then she’ll have an understanding of how you feel when it happens’.

It was the teachers who believed enough in the students to challenge them to respond more truthfully to the affective questions, to find their voice and move beyond stigmatising shame and beyond old patterns of thinking and behaving, controlled by the double binds of anger and fear.

D: Yeah, I think it was when they actually started to talk about how they felt about each other and themselves…I know there was a shift, there was a, it went from a superficial level to a much more genuine, authentic, ‘this how I really feel’, ‘this is how I felt hurt or this was’, yeah…I think we actually said to Imogen or maybe it was to both, ‘I don’t think you are being real here, like, stop sort of thinking that you are going to hurt people’s feelings and tell us what you really think or feel’, that’s my sense of it…I can’t remember exactly what I said but I think at one stage I challenged one of them, I’m not sure, or
maybe both, about what they were saying and what I had heard them say previously. So, what they were saying in front of each other as opposed to what they had been saying individually to me. I guess it was my way of saying ‘get real’. But, not in a, well my, I would like to believe that I did it in a gentle, yet, assertive way. Like, ‘I’m not going to let you get away with that’, because that doesn’t serve any of us.

Through these risky and provocative interventions Deborah and Miriam were effectively saying to these students: ‘we believe in you and you can do and be so much more than you think’. These teachers made concrete a Christ-like non-rivalrous positive mimesis: of moving the students without undermining them, displacing them, or in other ways threatening their ever-fragile sense of being. By their ‘believing-in’ Hannah and Imogen, Miriam and Deborah were intimating: ‘We are not ‘out-to-get-you’, but we are inviting you to participate in the life of this school [the Church, the sanctorum communio] in a way that is unimaginably good for you and good for the community.’ In Deborah’s own words:

...it’s when somebody else believes in you enough to actually want to journey with you through it rather than cover it up and ignore it, they actually want to be there and hold you hand, if you like, all the way through how painful its been...it’s having like a champion, if you like, somebody who sees your potential when you can’t see it because you’re in the thick of it.

And, Hannah described the experience of being believed-in: “It wasn’t us versus them. It was more everyone there supporting each other”. Imogen remembered the teachers prompting an important shift in the conference when they “were talking about how they felt about our relationship”. The teachers were able to effect a change from the perspective of each participant in the conference.

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28 See Chapter 4.
5.3.4.3 The transformative power of being a forgiving victim

As Hannah gradually found her voice and began to speak truthfully about how Imogen’s behaviour had affected her and had been affecting her over time, the ground began to shift between the two students. This was a turning point, a transformative moment in the conference. It was a strong memory for Miriam:

M: I remember Imogen sitting there thinking, ‘Really? Is that how it is?’ We could have sat there and told her that but she needed to hear it from Hannah to understand it properly...it opened her eyes up. I think it actually went, ‘OK? Really?’ And when she stood back, properly, and watched it in her head, how she would feel if someone was doing that to her, because she’s very bright as well and works really, really hard and is a high achiever as well, but I think she also gets caught up in, ‘[I] need to work a lot harder than others to get to where [Hannah] is’.

R: I remember that being a theme.

M: Yes, ‘It comes so easy to Hannah, and Hannah gets to have it all.’ But when Hannah said, ‘No, I don’t like this and what you do’ Imogen was surprised, ‘but you have everything!’ And she could see it. I think it was like an out-of-body experience, where you go ‘Oh, really?! Am I doing it like that?’ So that is where Imogen saw it, from Hannah’s words.

Here was the ‘breaking of heart’ that is forgiveness, an experience for Imogen of contrition as a deep shift in attitudinal patterns. Imogen thought she was doing something good or at least normal in the way she treated her friend Hannah. But through the powerfully mimetic process of listening to Hannah’s affective statements in response to the affective questions, she was, possibly for the first time in her life, called to reflect critically on her behaviour. Through the restorative ritual Imogen was given eyes to see a part of herself to which she had been previously blind. That is, as Imogen began to see herself projectively, through Hannah’s eyes, she began to have access to the truth of how her behaviour was harming her friend. Imogen also began

29 See Alison, On Being Liked, 36.
to see Hannah more truthfully. Imogen began to see the humanity of another young woman who, like herself, was fragile and struggling, rather than Imogen’s projections: as the ‘perfect princess’ or as the “arrogant little bitch”. Imogen was beginning to receive the forgiveness that Hannah was offering her. Hannah was experiencing something similar: through forgiving and confronting Imogen’s bullying behaviour, in the presence of and with Imogen, Hannah began to see that her self-denial was harmful to herself and her relationships with others.

In a very real way through this ritual Hannah began to forgive herself for her complicity in Imogen’s bullying. Both Imogen and Hannah were experiencing a step on the journey towards an undivided self, the life-long and arduous process of self-discovery which, due to the relational and mimetic nature as humans, can only be undertaken projectively, that is through a relationship with another person. Deborah noted that through this process both students took responsibility for their actions As Miriam observed; if Hannah and Imogen had read about this in a book “they wouldn’t have believed it”; it was an experience they had to undergo. And the experience was transformative for both of them.

In a sense both Hannah and Imogen had experienced themselves as victims. Hannah was the victim of Imogen’s bullying behaviour and her own desire to please and be kind. Imogen was the victim of her own ressentiment toward Hannah. What the restorative ritual allowed was the safe space for both of these students to be forgiving

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30 These were Hannah’s own words: “I just assumed that she was angry at me and she just assumed that I was just this arrogant little bitch”.
31 Alison, Broken Hearts, 170.
victims for each other. They experienced a movement toward being free of the domination of victimhood. As Hannah and Imogen’s responses were listened to and taken seriously by the teachers (and by the conference facilitator) they experienced being believed-in. Miriam and Deborah mediated a Christ-like pacific desire which created the right conditions for Hannah and Imogen to be unbound from the psychic death of stigmatising shame and to be mimetically drawn into re-integrative shame. Both students found themselves able to let go of the desire to create a sense of self over-against the one who had harmed them; they refused to submit to the ‘accusatory tendency’. Rather, the students started to receive a new sense of themselves which was transformative. Deborah recalls that this transformation in the students was communicated almost immediately in the student’s bodies:

D:...their reaction to each other changed. They went from being quite defensive and like I said, not even looking at each other.

R: Protecting themselves?

D: Yes, there was this softening, particularly in Imogen, Hannah was already soft, but, in fact for her [Hannah] it went the other way. She was actually able to sit a little taller and make eye-contact.

R: And that was my recollection, that she [Hannah] started to sit up in the chair and look.

D: Yeah, rather than trying to hide.

R: And Imogen was a relaxing.

D: Yeah, rather than being aggressive. Yeah. Isn’t that funny?!...You know what it was? They became more equal, because their experience of the relationship in the past was of one dominant and the other submissive.

32 The accusatory tendency is the human tendency to blame that perpetuates cycles of reciprocal violence creating more victims, see Chapter 4.
The experience of undifferentiation, which had been so threatening to Imogen in particular, was now a sign of something new coming to be born between Imogen and Hannah. Two previously hostile and defensive students were beginning to relax in each other’s presence. The commitment of the teachers to this ritual of inclusion provided a safe place where the ‘accusatory tendency’ was avoided and the student’s shame could be creative of the potential for something new. In more explicitly theological language, it could be said that though this human experience Hannah and Imogen were drawn toward an experience of the risen Christ who with, through and in them, was making something bold and creative from the annihilation of victimhood.

This is wisdom of the cross; what the risen Christ makes available to Christians as grace. Girard contends that this is the contagion that the gospel has released on the

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33 In Lonergan’s terminology it is the ‘Law of the Cross’. “[T]he Law of the Cross proposes that Christ’s crucifixion is an example and an exhortation to human persons. On the cross, Jesus wisely and lovingly transforms the evil consequences of sin into a twofold communication to humanity of a perfect human and divine (1) knowledge and love for humanity and (2) knowledge and condemnation of sin and evil. This twofold communication invites a twofold human response: the repentance of sin and a love for God and all things. This love and repentance form a reconciled relationship of God and humanity. Furthermore, when reconciled with God, a human person will tend to be moved to participate in Christ’s work by willingly taking on satisfaction for one’s own sin as well as the vicarious satisfaction for others’ sins. Such participatory vicarious activity invites still other human persons to repent and reconcile with God and other persons, and furthermore to engage in their own participatory acts of satisfaction and communication. Thus, Christ’s own work and human participation in his work are objective achievements as well as moving or inspiring examples. However, while Christ’s work and our participation are moving, their movements do not operate by necessity. Nor are the appropriate human responses of repentance, love, personal satisfaction, and vicarious satisfaction in any way forced upon human persons. Consequently, the cross as communication operates in harmony with a world of emergent probability and in cooperation with human freedom. With the cross as communication, redemption is reconciliation, a reconciliation that spreads historically and communally by human participation in the divine initiative. This is God’s solution to the problem of evil, according to Lonergan. Because God wills ultimately for human persons to be united to God and to all things by love, God wills freedom, and God allows the possibility of sin and evil. But sin and evil do not please God. Out of infinite wisdom, God did not do away with evil through power, but converted evil into a communication that preserves, works with, and fulfills the order of creation and the freedom of humanity.” Mark M. Miller, “Why The Passion?: Bernard Lonergan On The Cross As Communication” (PhD diss., Boston College, 2008), Abstract, http://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:101393/datastream/PDF/view. Doran suggests that mimetic theory “…fills out and enriches Lonergan’s theology of the ‘law of the Cross’”. Robert M. Doran, “The Non-Violent Cross: Lonergan and Girard on Redemption,” in Theological Studies 70, no. 1 (2010): 50.
world, both undoing the usual way of creating community, via the victimage or scapegoat mechanism, and creating a new community of inclusion called out from the world, the ekklēsia.\textsuperscript{34} From the place of sorrow, pain and shame, from nothing, from the place where no-one wanted to be, where nothing appeared to exist: Hannah’s desire to offer forgiveness began to emerge for Imogen and could be received by her. In concrete terms, prior to the restorative conference the relationship between Hannah and Imogen was dead. Now, something new was being created out of nothing, this dead relationship. Christ, the Ultimate Authority acting in and through the teachers leading the ritual and now through the students, was creating something out of nothing.\textsuperscript{35} In the eyes of the facilitator Hannah and Imogen were participating in an experience of the resurrection, Christ’s new creation, an experience of mystery.

5.3.4.4 Silence, the breaking of heart and the undistortion of thinking

Before further examining what this new creation consisted in for these students, a few observations follow, relating how silence contributed to creating the conditions for the transformative moment in the ritual and how the teachers and students had experienced the silence.

There were periods of silence following responses to questions. This was a deliberate strategy of the facilitator to allow the participants to consider the responses, to feel the weight of them and give them time to penetrate the mind and heart. The silence can also be uncomfortable and can send a message to the participants that the

\textsuperscript{34} The ekklēsia is the people called out from the world to God.

\textsuperscript{35} “From nothing” is the way the God of the Hebrew people creates. See, Gen 1:2:4a, Is 55:1 and Alison, Living in the End Times, 49-56.
facilitator is not going to rescue them by filling the silence with unnecessary talk. Hannah described these silences as “awkward...but then I guess that gave you time to think about what you just said and think if you wanted to say anything more”. Imogen remembers “there was a stage where Hannah and I didn’t want to work through it [the silence]”.

Miriam noted that it was important “not having to fill the silence. I think that sort of thing works [not having to fill the silence]”. The researcher probed further:

R: So why do you think that works? Why does the silence work, or the space, the gap between the question and the response?

M: Well, I think it gives them time to think. Gives them time to put together a response that truly answers the question. And it’s not about what I think I should say but it’s about how you truly feel and how things make you feel and how you want it to be, which doesn’t come from a textbook. It’s the contemplation time. Just having a space knowing that if I sit here and don’t say anything, I’ll come up with something because I’ve got time and there’s no rush. It’s all those things.

R: You said the word ‘contemplation’. What do you understand by that?

M: Well contemplation is about sitting and reflecting and being able to put lots of thoughts into the right spot, I suppose. It’s about putting it all in perspective and being able to go: ‘Well really, OK, this is how I feel. It’s not what I am supposed to feel, it’s not what I’m supposed to say. And he’s going to sit there and he’s going to wait for me to say something so I need to come up with something, but I’ve got an opportunity to sit and just think and contemplate and reflect or put it together like the jigsaw,’ depending on how your brain works, everybody thinks of it all quite differently, some people don’t need that time and some do. Just to sort of even replay things in your mind, a whole range of things you can do in contemplation.

For Miriam the silence allowed the participants not only to recall events but to enter into “contemplation”, to “put lots of thoughts into the right spot”. In other words, this was a rich experience of learning for Hannah and Imogen. These students were challenged and supported in the development of higher-order levels of thinking and
application. Furthermore, Miriam indicates that the silence encouraged deep thinking and feeling about the experience. The inclusion of cognitive and affective knowledge should be a distinguishing feature of the ‘holistic epistemology’ of the Catholic school. ‘Holistic epistemology’ is an “enterprise that embraces the intellect, emotions, imagination, experience and community and is not just an exercise of the mind or intellect”. The imaginative and mimetic experience of being able to ‘see myself and my behaviour through another eyes’ was also enhanced by silence. The restorative ritual created the right kind of conditions for Hannah and Imogen to contemplate what had happened between them, and the silence in particular allowed deep, rich holistic learning to occur.

Deborah also reflected deeply on the facilitator’s use of silence:

D: ...if it started to get uncomfortable or there was silence you didn’t break that, like you didn’t rescue them from that...

R: Letting the silence happen, in that silence, what sort of things were going on?

D: That’s when the magic happens!

R: Can you describe it? Can you put some words around it?

D: What the magic is?

36 Restorative practices align with contemporary pedagogies that seek to challenge and support students in the development of deep thinking and application, such as the Principles of Learning and Teaching: “Students are challenged to explore, question and engage with significant ideas and practices, so that they move beyond superficial understandings to develop higher order, flexible thinking. To support this, teaching sequences should be sustained and responsive and explore ideas and practices.” Department of Education and Training Victoria, Principles of Learning and Teaching, (Melbourne, 2013). The Principles of Learning and Teaching have subsequently been replaced by the Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/improve/Pages/principlesexcellence.aspx (accessed 30 June, 2019).

R: What the magic is, what that hanging in the silence is.

D:...[i]f I was going to describe how it happens is that, so the words that you hear, how you’ve hurt somebody, comes into your ears, into your brain. But you feel it with your whole body. If you’re honest, you feel it with your whole body. And it has to go to your gut, you have to ruminate on it. That takes time, that’s why you need that silence. I don’t think it breaks your heart to start with. It goes to your gut, it goes to your gut first and then you get that sense of how they’re feeling, because you start to feel it too. And then, however the message or however the, I don’t know, however you digest it and goes back up, I think that pierces the heart. It’s not a breaking, it’s a conversion. It is a breaking, but it’s not a breaking and leaving it exposed. It’s not leaving it in a pile of rubble. It’s a conversion. It’s that, you know, turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. Because that’s how they were! They were protective, they were stone, they were: ‘I’m going to be very guarded here, I’m only to share what I’m comfortable in sharing’. But they got beyond that. They didn’t continue to have the heart of stone. They didn’t intentionally mean to come in with the heart of stone, that was just a protective thing. And then from that flesh, the heart of flesh, then it goes back up into the brain and you just see things so much more clearly. You know things so much more clearly.

The experience of silence is central to the restorative conference and appears to allow a space for the new creation to be generated and emerge. Deborah’s reflection on what happens in the silence comes very close to Alison’s description of forgiveness:

[i]his breaking of heart is received as an extraordinary gift, that of being given to be someone else who I didn’t know myself to be and who is much bigger and more splendid than I took myself to be. That is what forgiveness looks like in someone’s life.38

Deborah’s allusion to the biblical texts of Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26, “…you know, turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh” is especially illuminating. Through this scriptural reference, Deborah also articulates a bodily experience of empathy, a form of affective knowledge, so critical to the success of a restorative conference: “it goes to your gut...then you get the sense of how they are feeling, because you start to feel it

38 Alison, On Being Liked, 36.
too”. The experience of empathy is a consequence of the mimetic and relational nature of human beings. Empathy is the result of the opening of oneself to feel what another is feeling. Empathy enables the experience of un-differentiation to be one that unifies and brings about peace rather than one that divides and brings violence. Deborah also indicates the fruits of transformation or conversion of heart referred to here in terms of the change in thinking and understanding wrought by the experience of silence in the restorative conference: “You know things so much more clearly”. This appears to bear out Girard’s contention that the undistortion of desire leads to a restructuring of knowing and memory. That is, as human beings stop thinking that others are out to get them, as they learn to let go of fear and to stop throwing stones, as ‘hearts of stone are replaced by hearts of flesh’, humans open themselves to the possibility of knowing things as they are, rather than as projections of their own fears and anxieties. In other words, the desire to know is redeemed and liberated. This is an authentic human experience of transcendence rather than the false transcendence of scapegoating and the victimage mechanism. It is notable that this phenomenon is approaching what Lonergan names as the movement to a new horizon or a vertical exercise in freedom: intellectual, moral and religious conversion. The exact nature of the kind of conversion experienced by Hannah and Imogen will be discussed in Chapter 6.

39 “The invention of science is not the reason that there are no longer witch-hunts, but the fact that there are no longer witch-hunts is the reason that science has been invented.” Girard, The Scapegoat, 204, also 198-212; Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 77-83; Kirwan describes the distortions wrought by human violence and scapegoating in Discovering Girard, 53.

40 “This intense and preconscious rivalry adversely affects the ability of the subject to understand and make proper judgements.” Dominic Arcamone, Religion and Violence: A Dialectical Engagement through the Insights of Bernard Lonergan (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2015), 15.

41 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 237-244.
Transformation flows from the restorative ritual as a cross and resurrection experience: Christ as forgiving victim teaching participants how to be forgiving victims for each other and through the gift of the Holy Spirit (the Advocate) refusing to give in to the accusatory tendency. The restorative conference allows those who are prepared to undergo a ‘breaking of heart’ to receive this grace and wisdom. Although they did not have the theological language to express it in these terms, Hannah and Imogen, with the love, encouragement and witness of their Christ-like teachers, experienced it in the concrete reality of the restoration and transformation of their relationship.42

5.3.4.4.1 In the silence the walls “fell down”

Imogen described the breaking of heart, this liberation, using the striking image of a wall falling down:

I: Well I think you asked us to talk to each other, so I did that. Then I was upset because, I don’t know, we were both crying. It was upsetting. And I just, I don’t know, it wasn’t just like a moment. Like, it wasn’t like ‘that’ [Imogen snaps her fingers]! I suppose it built up with everything that I was saying, until all the walls kind of just fell down.

R: OK. Where were those walls?

I: Between me and Hannah and Miriam.

R: And were they inside you? Or were they outside you? Or both?

I: Probably both. Because, yeah, I didn’t, I didn’t want to be friends with her and then kind of felt like a divide in the room, and I know that that’s how it works, but that was initially that was how it just felt like: I’m here, this is my space, you’re over there and I’ll address you when I get told to.

R: And then the walls came down. That’s really powerful that image, the walls coming down, inside and outside.

I: Yeah!

R: Would you say those walls were in your mind, in your heart or both? Or somewhere else in you, if you could describe them in your body?

I: Probably in my mind. Because that’s what I was thinking.

R: What was the thinking after, when the walls came down? Or, as the walls came down and then after? What was the thinking going on to?

I: More to, ‘that it would be better for both of us, if we could just [pause] come back together’. [Long pause]

R: It was clear to me you both wanted a relationship.

I: [Nods]

Hannah designated the liberation as the gift of honesty:

We never really told each other what we actually thought before, like how we felt. So I guess that moment was saying that we will be honest with each other and if we didn't like the way something was going with our friendship we would tell the other one.

Imogen and Hannah were no longer afraid to speak the truth to each other, illustrating the movement from human instinct to deliberate human action: in this case, conversion from fear to genuine human inquiry and the ability to choose and respond by speaking the truth in love. As Lawtoo argues:

...in the process ferocity is replaced by sympathy, the logic of ressentiment by the logic of compassion, the determinism of mirror neurons by the indeterminism of neuroplasticity, the laws of rivalry by the laws of imitation. 43

Deborah also believed that was what was going on in the silences of the restorative conference:

It’s when the neural pathways, they’re being challenged. It’s like the way you have always been used to thinking or conditioned to think or the way you’ve learned to think is challenged. Sometimes it’s like utter confusion, it’s like ‘what the hell?!’ And if I was to describe it visually it’s like moments of darkness and then sparks of light that are sort of like insight, but it’s like: ‘oooh I’ve never thought of it that way before, no that’s really uncomfortable, I don’t want to do that’ or ‘are you for real? Like, just tell me what to do. Why are you making me think so hard?’; ‘I don’t know? How do you expect me to know’; ‘oh, you know what the answer is but you’re not going to tell me.’ So, all this stuff is going on at the same time, like the visual, the audio, the feelings, the you know ‘I’m out of control, I don’t like being out of control, this is all new for me’. But in all of that, if you try to rescue them from that, they don’t learn the new way. They don’t learn the new possibilities. So you actually have to let them continue to go through that confusion, that chaos, till they get to the point where maybe there’s just silence and nothing. Like, I mean we’re still silent, but in their mind there’s just silence and then in that silence comes peace. So there’s no light or darkness, there’s no words, there’s just a sense of [long pause] there’s a sense of ‘I’m OK’. And sometimes I have to, sometimes I have to rest in that for a while. And then there’s a sense of, I don’t know, maybe, ‘oh, ok this silence has gone on for too long’ or ‘in this silence I now have the courage to say something I’ve never been able to say for a long time or I wanted to but I didn’t know how to’. And so, I get the opportunity to formulate how I want to say it and why I want to say it. And then I do. And it’s received well...[and because they’ve always got stuff in their ears, whether it’s music, each other, [the] phone or whatever. We don’t give them a chance to do their own thinking. I’m not sure that I can articulate it any further. It’s almost like in the silence there’s a communal willingness, not, it is like a push, a supportive encouraging push. It’s like giving birth [laughs]! But you’re all in it together. And it’s almost like ‘I’m not on my own here’. It’s the ability to learn to trust that you already know inside what needs to be said or what needs to be done. So, it’s a combination of having the silence, extended silence, a combination of having your champions there willing you on, if you like. It’s the challenging of the neural pathways and thinking of new ways of operating [and] thinking.

The restorative conference led Hannah and Imogen out of a destructive pattern of behaviour. And, through the authority of the teachers, these students were offered exemplary models on which to ground the beginning of a new peaceful and peace-giving relationship.
5.4.1 The new creation: leaving behind a ‘fairy dust’ relationship

A powerful image of what the two students were leaving behind and the emergent new creation was suggested by Imogen during the restorative conference and quite clearly recalled by Hannah:

H: Probably the key moment for me is when Imogen said our friendship was just ‘based on fairy dust’ or something like that. So, there was really no core of the friendship, like I guess that came with the unpredictability... so, because she was so unpredictable, you didn’t know what you were going to get. You had to tread carefully. There was no really core thing that kept us together, it was just ‘fairy dust’. So yes, that was probably the moment in there where we sort of both realised that not a good thing to base your friendship on, it has to be like sort of a solid thing. And that was the moment when we both started moving forward I guess and decided that ‘yes, we want to be friends’. And we would base it on something stronger than just ‘dust’.

R: I have a similar memory. I think Imogen might have even used the word ‘we can be more authentic now’. She used that word ‘authentic’.

H: Yes. Well I definitely think that the ‘fairy dust’ moment was a way of saying ‘yes, let’s be friends but let’s base it on something solid so that we can be honest with each other and be more authentic’. Yes, that was definitely a turning point in both of our mentalities. We both thought that ‘this is a good idea let’s give it a go’.

When reminded, Imogen had a similar recollection.

R: I remember you saying something like this, at that point, just before you hugging, I think: ‘You know Hannah, I thought we had a really good authentic relationship before, but now I realise that maybe it wasn’t.’

I: Yeah!

R: ‘That now there’s something more authentic, or more real.’ And you used that word ‘authentic’.

I: Yep.

R: Can you talk a little bit about that?

I: Ahah [yes]. I think that our relationship was just a lot of surface stuff. Because when we got in there and we started talking about ourselves and how we felt we didn’t know! So, there wasn’t that deeper understanding of each other, so
that’s what I meant by that. That we didn’t fully understand each person’s individual situation. So, then when we came together it was a little bit like fireworks because we weren’t aware of what was going on [long pause].

It is remarkable that it was only as Hannah and Imogen looked back on their relationship that it became clear that it was built on “fairy dust”. They saw an “unpredictable”, superficial and therefore unstable relationship characterised by a lack of deep understanding. This powerful insight by both students illustrates what occurs when a person begins to receive forgiveness: sin is only known as it is being left behind. More importantly, forgiveness is pivotal in the creative activity of salvation:

forgiveness is our access to creation...in the degree to which we move on from relationships of violence among ourselves, and relationships whose violence is guaranteed ‘sacredly’, in that degree we come to be able to understand what [creation] is and find ourselves within it.

Alison again: “forgiveness is...the undoing of a temporary hitch on our way to becoming sharers in God’s life”. Deborah also described this experience of the new creation as emerging during the restorative conference. It was for Deborah “...a shift...it went from a superficial level to a much more genuine, authentic, this how I really feel, this is how I felt hurt.” Miriam explained it as an “evolution” or an “adaptation” in the student’s relationship:

Yes, so it, like, changed the relationship. So it had changed it and made it deeper or at a more mature level than just school-mates and people who sat next to each other in the classroom and didn’t really listen to each other. So Imogen had really listened, probably for the first time. And Hannah had really

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44 “[T]he form which forgiveness takes in the life of a person is contrition, that is, a breaking of heart, a deep shift in attitudinal patterns of the sort: ‘Oh my God, I thought I was doing something good, or at least normal, and only now do I begin to see that what I was doing was deeply sinful against God and profoundly hurtful to my neighbour, and thus of myself. I must undo in as far as I can what I have done wrong and make sure never to do it again.’ This breaking of heart is received as an extraordinary gift, that of being given to be someone else who I didn’t know myself to be and who is much bigger and more splendid than I took myself to be. That is what forgiveness looks like in someone’s life.” Alison, On Being Liked, 36.

45 Alison, On Being Liked, 59.

46 Alison, 44.
spoken for the first time. And for them to actually realise that each of them could do that and then to be able to take that out and use it, hopefully, long term and be able to put checks in place along the way to see that relationship was still working the way they wanted it. For both of them, not just for one party or the other. It was pretty powerful.

Now freed from their thinly veiled ressentiment and double binds Hannah and Imogen could look back with clear eyes at what they had once thought was a friendship and describe it as “fairy dust”, a telling description of their mimetically unstable relationship. They were being given a bigger heart, or a ‘heart of flesh’ (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26), a sign of their participation in the new creation that was concretely realised through the re-forging of their friendship through the restorative ritual. Moreover, Hannah and Imogen were being invited by their teachers to be active participants in the re-forging of their friendship. They were experiencing becoming active participants in the unfolding story of creation by being co-creators of their future relationship. Deborah described this new creation and the effect on all involved in detail in a number of her responses:

I remember the huge, I don’t know exactly, but I just remember this huge rush of ‘oh my God, that was better than I could have even hoped for’, in terms of the way they, the two girls, the way they redesigned themselves what the future relationship would be. And at first I think, I guess this might have been the time, I don’t know, we maybe asked them to get real, they were quite conservative, if you like, or restricting themselves on what they could be hopeful for, you know like, polite indifference almost. But, they went beyond that. It was almost like we gave them permission to do that, it was ok. They got to be really honest with each other and themselves.

... 

I think that they had both pretty much given up any hope of having a relationship, then all of a sudden it was offered to them in a different way and they just went ‘gosh, oh, I hadn’t thought about that, like, as a possibility’. So it was a freeing thing, like, ‘Wow!’ I can’t really put my finger on it; I just know I felt that it was something they had never experienced before.
So, if I explained that my immediate response was to burst into tears, but they were really happy tears, it was like, it was [palpable] the love, the newness, the joy, that they had created themselves in this new relationship, this new possibility of, this new way of moving forward in a relationship. The fact that they were going to continue a relationship was huge, the fact that it was going to be on a more equal basis was really huge as well. I’ve heard it described that the Holy Spirit can bring you the gift of tears, not exactly said that way, but that’s how I felt. It was just amazing to see the contrast between them both being hesitant and resistant and, well not both, Imogen being particularly resistant, and unsure and protective and distrustful and to then see, of I don’t know, something that was just amazing. Just, so, grace-filled, yeah. I guess I was overwhelmed by the fact that I knew it would happen but I just didn’t realise it would be that powerful.

Miriam’s portrayal of this particular aspect of the experience was similar:

So [the relationship] had really repaired, restored, if you want to use the words – more than they had ever expected. I think Deborah and I walked out and [said] ‘Well that went really well didn’t it!’ And we just sort of went ‘Wow’. I think we sat in Deborah’s office and went [said] ‘Wow!’ Like, we just sat there going ‘Wow!’ [laughs]. Because the girls were further along than I think we even imagined that they could be. Not that we doubted them, but their maturity level and the way they expressed, eventually expressed everything to each other was very powerful. I remember saying that to Deborah: ‘Powerful!’ I think we walked around for a couple of days going [saying] ‘Wow! Wow!’

This stuttering and stammering in amazement by the teachers in the aftermath of the restorative conference reflects their struggle to find words having witnessed something quite extraordinary: the passage of a relationship from death to life. The empowering of Hannah and Imogen to be forgiving victims for each other through the restorative conference made something unfamiliar quite palpable. As St Paul knew, the resurrection is difficult to put into words: “What then are we to say about these things?” (Rom 8:31).
5.4.2 The new creation: a foretaste of “The undiscovered Country”

Deborah also expressed a sense in which the teachers (and up to a point the facilitator), imitating the Ultimate Authority of Christ, revealed something quite unfamiliar and even culturally destabilising for the students.

D: There’s sort of two things for me. The first thing was that it was unfamiliar to them [and] it was difficult for them to have a vision for what it could be otherwise. I don’t think they have ever been asked before to create something new, something, you know it was almost like, *it was always this way, therefore it has always got to be this way*. So we really challenged their world view, their thinking about, not just about relationships, about everything. Yeah, you are not defined by your past. So that was very unfamiliar to them. Like when we asked them to basically stop saying what had been and blaming or taking responsibility or what have you and asked them to say ‘well, what could it be?’ that was like, ‘oh, what?!’ [for the students], that was difficult for them. My own sense, I knew it was possible, I just didn’t realise it would be that big [of] a change for them, that big [of] a shift for them. I knew it was possible because I had experienced things like that before, not the same, but like. And it wasn’t just trusting the process it was actually trusting that they had it within them. Does that make sense? It was almost like [pause] we, us as teachers, didn’t actually have to do a real lot, what had to show up showed up within them. Oh, maybe it’s because we believed in them that that happened, yeah.

Having their minds fixed on the ‘things of heaven’ and through their belief in the students, Deborah and Miriam were indicating to Hannah and Imogen that there was an alternative to the distorted version of creation, bound by the necessity of violence and death, that they were accustomed to. In their particular case, the rivalry and ressentiment that led to physical violence and effectively the death of their friendship. This sense of the students’ captivity to this constricted story of creation is neatly summarised by Deborah’s comment with regard to their thinking: “it [creation] was always this way, therefore it has always got to be this way”. Hannah and Imogen’s

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48 Emphasis added.
preference to allow a relationship to die and their hesitancy to move beyond the known is illustrative of Hamlet’s famous soliloquy on death (and suicide):

To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered Country, from whose bourn
No Traveller returns, Puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.

The teachers offered the students a cultural “undiscovered Country”; the possibility that creation could be more than what they thought it could be. More than “a weary life” of known “ills”, that creation could be transformed. This, as Deborah named it, was “unfamiliar” (or a ‘puzzle’) to the students, and took some time for them to adapt their thinking and their imaginations to it. This gradual modification of Hannah and Imogen’s understanding of and vision for their relationship was surprising for Deborah: “I just didn’t realise it would be that big [of] a change for them, that big [of] a shift for them.” This aspect of the case study verifies Alison’s observation that human cultures and discourses are not used to interpreting their stories of violence and death through the eyes of resurrection hope. Furthermore, if the interpretation is truly of Christ then it will be one that is unexpected. As John of the Cross observed, the encounter with the divine is always strange: “God...is not only all that is strange in undiscovered islands, but His ways, judgments, and works are also strange, new, and marvelous”. Thus, while the students and the teachers may not have named it as such, the restorative conference was an encounter with the risen Lord, in a manner analogous to the resurrection narrative of ‘The Road to Emmaus’ (Luke 24:13-35). In

49 Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act III, Scene 1.
50 Alison, Living in the End Times, 28.
51 A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and The Bridegroom of Christ, XIV-XV.9.
this exclusively Lukan pericope there is a twining of the encounter with a stranger who is ‘the Divine’ and the interpretation of a story of violence and death through the eyes of resurrection hope.\footnote{52 Alison, Jesus the Forgiving Victim, Bk. 1, 51-72.} In ‘The Road to Emmaus’ narrative two downcast disciples have their fragmented story of shame and suffering interpreted to them by a stranger, whom they eventually come to see is the risen Lord. These two disciples came away from the encounter with a mysterious stranger, the Lord, transformed and with a story that is whole and makes sense for them. The disciples’ relationship with Jesus is restored, but it is not the same as it was before.

In the same way, Hannah and Imogen’s relationship was restored but it did not return to the status quo ante. Schreiter argues that the human experience of forgiveness and being taken to a “new place” in a relationship is the sign of God’s reconciling presence, a hallmark of the “new creation” in Christ.\footnote{53 Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation, 17-18.} As Hamlet observes, “No Traveller returns”: forgiveness and reconciliation are not about going back.\footnote{54 Schreiter, 18.} The unexpected ‘new place’ in which Hannah and Imogen found themselves led to an immediate embrace and a spontaneous decision to go to the school café and celebrate with a shared lemonade. It is both intriguing and fitting that the students chose to undertake this small ritual action at the conclusion of the conference. Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel recommend participants partaking in a common meal following a formal restorative conference.\footnote{55 Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel, The Restorative Practices Handbook, 50.} Sharing the lemonade at the café was also an occasion of laughter and joy. Hannah recalls sitting with Imogen and laughing:

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\footnote{52 Alison, Jesus the Forgiving Victim, Bk. 1, 51-72.} \footnote{53 Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation, 17-18.} \footnote{54 Schreiter, 18.} \footnote{55 Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel, The Restorative Practices Handbook, 50.}
I think we were both just a little bit surprised and thought it was a bit funny. I just remember laughing a lot when we were sitting drinking that lemonade. Just because it was unexpected I guess, surprising.

There is a sense here of what Radcliffe describes as hilaritas. Hilaritas is what happens when a person encounters the living and active Word of God which has the power to renew and transform all things. “[H]ilaritas here means...exuberance, mirth, ecstatic joy...[h]ilaritas carries us out of ourselves”. Hilaritas is a human response to the God who “makes all things new” (Revelation 21:5). Imogen and Hannah were carried out of themselves, into the joy of a renewed and unexpected relationship. The discovery that creation is not necessarily bound by death is, and should be, delightful.

5.4.2.1 The new creation: in the language of educators

For the most part the teachers and students described the change that happened, the new creation emerging through the breaking of hearts, as new thinking and learning particularly in the interpersonal domains of emotional literacy, self-awareness and assertiveness. It is entirely appropriate that educators and their students would use familiar language. Imogen, for example:

R: So you started to hear some new things from Hannah? Things you’d never heard before.

I: Yes.

R: Can you remember what kinds of things for Hannah?

I: Just how she felt when I, when comments were said, that were perceived as jokes or just banter between friends that she actually took to heart. It made me re-evaluate the types of things that should be said to someone like Hannah, or someone who was in a fragile state or whatever. So that kind of made me

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re-think the things that I was doing. In a way that will allow me to avoid that kind of situation again.

R: So this was something new for you that came out?

I: Yeah.

R: What was it like for you when you started to hear these things from Hannah?

I: A bit of a wake-up call. Because we were in an honest environment it was kind of like, you know, she told me what she really thought which was good to hear. There was, it wasn’t vicious, but there was no holding back, you know, you said exactly what you wanted to say and what you wanted the other person to understand how you were feeling and, you know, that kind of thing. Yeah, it was a bit of an eye-opener to how I am perceived by other people.

R: So there was some big learning going on for you?

I: Yeah. Just about relationship and about myself, really.

R: If you could label that learning, articulate that learning, what else could you say?

I: So, I kind of learnt about how I’m perceived as a person. I learnt that other people, you might not see it, but have things going on. And that the teachers are there for you.

Miriam described Imogen as learning to listen and become more aware of other’s reactions and body language through the restorative conference. Miriam also remarked on how effective the restorative conference was in terms of its impact on Hannah’s learning in the affective domain. Hannah described her learning as being about personal boundaries:

The other thing was about boundaries. Setting boundaries. In fact, that was a big thing for me, learning to put boundaries in place. Not just Imogen but all my friends. I think that was a big turning point...[a]nother thing was to stop feeling bad about trying to look after myself.

In the interview, Hannah went on to describe two situations in which she had applied this new learning about looking after herself and setting boundaries with friends in what she described as a firm but kind manner. It is clear that Hannah and Imogen had
received and were beginning to inhabit a new sense of themselves, a type of non-rivalrous positive mimesis modeled by their teachers. Having made that claim, it is notable that Imogen was close to tears a number of times during the interview and would sigh and pause as she recalled various aspects of the events before, during and after the incident and the conference. An interpretation of this behaviour could be that Imogen was at least to some extent struggling to come to terms with this new sense of herself and her relationship with Hannah. There is also the possibility that there was some lingering shame with regard to the humiliation of being suspended. Perhaps Imogen was experiencing a sense of loss of intimacy and influence in the friendship. When asked by the Researcher “Is this relationship better or stronger as a result of the restorative conference?” Imogen responded:

Yes. I don’t know how to describe it. It’s probably, yes it’s better. We are not as close but when we talk its more, I don’t know, it’s a friendship, it’s not anything spectacular. There’s no drama between us, it’s just, we talk and we message each other and it’s all fine.

...

We’re friends now, stronger friends probably because were not as close but we’re still able to talk to each other.

It is possible that Imogen is still undergoing the transformation of her relationship with Hannah. Perhaps Imogen is still to receive the fullness of healing grace from the forgiving victim through this experience. As noted in Chapter 4 there is nothing mandatory about the liturgical atonement: the unbinding of human beings respects human freedom and takes its own time.

The participants in the case study did not have this kind of theological or spiritual language and understanding of their experience available to them. Perhaps it is
possible that over time and with some catechesis, the participants in this restorative conference could come to understand and name their experience as an encounter with Christ. These possibilities will be taken up in the next chapter of this thesis. Nonetheless, there were signs of this kind of theological and spiritual awareness by at least one of the participants. Early in her interview Deborah remembers being aware of a sense of the sacred in the restorative conference from the beginning:

I recall that you, I am going to use, I’ll use the word ‘invited’ the Holy Spirit to be with us...I just have that sense that we weren’t doing it on our own, it wasn’t under our own steam, put it that way, maybe ‘grace’ [was made available]?

Also toward the end of her interview Deborah referred to the “sacredness of that space” in which the transformation between the Hannah and Imogen occurred. This could be an indication of Deborah’s stage of faith-development relative to the other participants.

5.4.3 Being active participants in the new creation

An additional perspective on the restorative conference opening out to the resurrection experience of the new creation, was the discovery by Hannah and Imogen that they were active participants in building the new relationship between them. In Deborah’s words the students experienced their teachers inviting them “to create something new”, to be co-creators. Hannah and Imogen were led by the Holy Spirit (the Advocate) acting through their teachers and the facilitator of the restorative conference to let go of fear and reject the accusatory tendency. As Alison points out: “[w]hile we accuse, while we live in a conspiracy theory, we never learn what is, so we never learn to take responsibility for it. We never learn to inhabit creation with
fullness.” In summary: learning what is for Imogen was that Hannah was a young woman with her own struggles, just like her; learning what is for Hannah was that she could be both kind and assertive. Miriam observed that Hannah and Imogen had to experience this to believe it was possible, as academically gifted students they could have read it in a book, but they wouldn’t have believed it possible. Because they experienced being believed-in Hannah and Imogen discovered that they could do great things. 

5.4.5 The new creation as transformational of the sanctorum communio

Deborah noted the impact on whole cohort of students to which Imogen and Hannah belonged:

D: ...[i]t’s been a real gift I think for both of them. AND not only for both of them, because if they had have continued on that, if they had continued warring, it would have rubbed off on the rest of the year group. But even the polite [ignoring each other], because it’s a polite ignoring, would have been more covert in terms of toxic energy that would have been playing out in the whole year group. As a year group they could have been really derailed by that relationship if it had continued.

R: Why is that? Are they significant people [in their year group]?

D: Well they both are. Hannah is because she is the head prefect. And if Imogen had got it in her head that ‘OK we’re not going to be friends, but I’m actually not going to support you in anything that you do’ or, not just support, she could’ve, from my understanding Imogen could have been proactive in drumming-up other not to support Hannah in things. Yeah, she could’ve, how can I explain it, I’m trying to think of words. She could have gathered a group of minions to covertly or overtly undermine anything that Hannah tried to bring about for the year group. So, it would have poisoned the whole experience, for not just them, but for everybody else. If the relationship had not had an opportunity to be healed, then it could have led to factions being built in the group and factions that worked against each other rather than towards each other. My observations are that because the relationship was

57 Alison, Undergoing God, 66. Italics original.
58 “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” Jn 14:12.
healed and was made new that in actual fact, they’ve actually behaved in such a way where they’ve shown that they love each other because they’ve encouraged each other to be free to be who they really are and encouraged each other in their own potential in different ways. And it’s almost like in doing that they’ve been really good role models for other students. Not just in terms of encouraging other people to go with their potential, but that things can be worked out. You know, that rifts can be healed. So, they were courageous enough to do that. So, therefore, it is win-win-win. Nobody loses. That was the thing that was so awesome, nobody lost. Nobody continues to lose. And they’ve got this skill, well this experience, of participation in a process that hopefully they can draw on in other areas.

D: And the intention, the intention being for the good of all. That’s it, it’s win-win-win, win-win-win. That’s...[a] win for Imogen, win for Hannah, but win for the greater good. Like, and in Miriam’s [eyes] and my eyes that’s for the school and beyond really. [And the student’s] own relationship beyond the school.

What Deborah is indicating here is the fact that the restorative conference had impact beyond the two students directly involved. It was something good for Hannah and Imogen and for the whole community. The potential for violent reciprocity to be played out through a subtle or direct de-stabilisation of the social order of the year group and the formal leadership exercised by Hannah through rumour, gossip, ‘taking sides’ and back-stabbing was averted. From Deborah’s perspective, a new form of sociality was emerging in which Hannah and Imogen would demonstrate through their restored and transformed friendship that there was no need for group unity to be formed in rivalry with anyone. Deborah believes that since the restorative conference these young women have “been really good role models for other students”, such is the strength of their witness they are “encouraging other people to go with their potential [and] that things can be worked out [when there is conflict]”. This is a particular example of how mimetic theory makes it possible to observe and make concrete the deep complicity between the objective reality of the school community
and subjective reality of these particular students: transformation of the (school) community “passes through the recognition of the complicity in its structures of the person[s] seeking transformation”. Deborah’s reflections clearly demonstrate that the restorative conference was not only unbelievably good for the those directly involved but for the whole sanctorum communio.

Furthermore, Deborah’s belief that Hannah and Imogen would take these learnings “beyond the school” makes concrete the hope of Lawtoo:

[that] over time, via education and other formative practices, such models [of non-violent behaviour] might become customary, at least if we take it upon ourselves not only to inform the brains of future generations but also to form them and, perhaps, also transform them.

The restorative ritual as a means of achieving social discipline within Catholic schools has the power to lead us out of death-dealing ressentiment and violence, at the same time forming exemplary human beings in whom to ground the beginning of peace and so transform the world.

5.5 Conclusion

This case study verifies the researcher’s claim that the restorative approach to social control is a transformative experience for participants that illuminates the mystery of the resurrection in a practical and tangible way, demonstrating that theological reflection can be practical and connected to life. It must be noted that the participants did not make explicit reference to the resurrection in the interviews and, with the

exception of Deborah, none of the participants used spiritual or theological language in their responses. However, this does not invalidate the theological interpretation of the participant’s reflections on their experience of the restorative conference (and its aftermath) by the researcher. The question of how to use the restorative experience to assist participants to know themselves as possessed by Christ and gently formed as Church remains. Chapter 7 will provide responses to this challenge of staff formation, to begin to know and name their experience as a participation “in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world”\textsuperscript{61} through the ritual that is restorative practices. First, a more detailed description of the nature of the transformation experienced by the students in this case study will be presented.

\textsuperscript{61} Swinton and Mowatt, \textit{Practical Theology}, 95.
Chapter 6: The Restorative Ritual as a Transformative Experience of ‘Conversion’

This chapter will develop a more precise understanding of the nature of the transformation that occurred in the case study described in Chapter 5. The argument will be made that what the students experienced was a type of conversion identified by Doran as *psychic conversion*.¹ It is helpful that Doran explicitly connects his thinking on psychic conversion with Girard’s mimetic theory.² Whilst Girard’s mimetic theory provides the basic anthropological insight for this thesis, Girard’s work bears even more fruit in dialogue with the theological anthropology of Lonergan. Therefore, an adequate understanding and application of the phenomenon of psychic conversion to this case includes an engagement with the thinking of Lonergan and Lonerganian researchers as it pertains to desire, conversion and ways of being conscious.

This thesis has argued that the transformation experienced by participants in the restorative conference is a type of death and resurrection experience, a participation in Jesus’ ‘liturgical atonement’. The conversion is cruciform. Therefore, a consideration of points of contact between Lonergan’s “Law of the Cross” and the description of the restorative ritual as “participation in redemption of victimhood”, of “God creating something from nothing” will conclude the chapter.

² Doran, “‘Conversion’?” 9.
6.1 Transforming desire, emotional states, thinking and behaviour

The case study described in Chapter 5 demonstrates that the Restorative ritual can be a transformative experience, that it can create the right conditions for some kind of positive change or even conversion to occur within the participants. This appears to bear out Girard’s contention that the undistortion of desire leads to a restructuring of human knowing and memory. That is, as human beings stop thinking that others are a threat, as they learn to let go of fear and to stop throwing stones, as ‘hearts of stone are replaced by hearts of flesh’, humans open themselves to the possibility of knowing things as they are, rather than as projections of their own fears and anxieties. In other words, as acquisitive desire is transformed, the human capacity to know is redeemed and liberated. It seems that the case study also describes an experience of conversion at the level of emotions, which also impacted positively on the student’s intellectual functions: Hannah and Imogen’s movement from antipathy to empathy seemed to lead to their freedom to “know things much more clearly”, as Deborah (one of their teachers) described it. In summary, the undistortion of desire resulted in both Hannah and Imogen feeling empathy one for the other, to renounce the violence and begin to discover, understand and name the emergence of a new creation in their midst. And yet, at the same time, Hannah and Imogen’s discovery required of them an ability to understand and judge what was really going on for them in this situation, to co-create new knowledge about themselves and their relationship, to decide what to do and then to do it. In other words, their problem could only be solved at a

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4 As Deborah expressed it: “It’s a conversion. It’s that, you know, turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh.” Chapter 5.
different level of thinking from the level of thinking that created the problem. For Imogen, this discovery was signified by the insight: “that it would be better for both of us, if we could just come back together [as friends]”. Hannah’s insight went a step further: “let’s be friends but let’s base it on something solid that we can be honest with each other and be more authentic”.

It seems that for the students there were several interconnected transformative processes or experiences going on in this ritual:

1) transformation of emotional states – experienced as an easing of the emotional tension and the ability to effectively express and communicate ‘feeling’ states;
2) transformation of thinking – experienced as a recognition of the facts of their situation, leading to clarity in their thinking about their feelings;
3) transformation of behaviour – experienced as beginning to make choices to live in ways more aligned with their values.

As Doran proposes:

the only resolution of mimetic violence is the complete renunciation of the rivalry to which triangular acquisitive desire leads us, and that renunciation is an intensely spiritual act flowing from a decision that itself proceeds from a recognition of the facts of the situation.\(^5\)

And, as has been noted these transformative processes can only be undertaken projectively, that is through a relationship with another person, due to the relational

and mimetic nature of human being. Furthermore, all of this took place within a safe community created by the two teachers who believed-in and offered forgiveness toward the students, and the students found within themselves the freedom to participate in the giving and receiving of that particular kind of love that is forgiveness. The loving and forgiving presence of the teachers cannot be underestimated: their unconditional love for the students and their refusal to take sides, their avoidance of the accusatory tendency made Christ present through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Haughton articulates comparable qualities in her description of a mothers’ successful intervention in a sibling conflict, an intervention she describes as a salvation event:

this occurrence clearly depends on the mother’s success in reaching the ‘spiritual’ reality of the two children and communicating with it...her giving of love, her personal decision of self-surrender.

Deborah and Miriam, and to some extent the facilitator of the restorative ritual, created the climate for a transformative journey to be undertaken by Hannah and Imogen.

What follows is a general exposition of Lonergan’s understanding of consciousness and conversion and Doran’s development of Lonergan’s notion of conversion through engagement with the mimetic theory of Girard. At various points key themes and examples from the case study will be introduced in order to clarify and illuminate the nature of the transformation experienced by Hannah and Imogen as conversion or self-transcendence.

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6 Alison, Broken Hearts, 170.
6.2 Lonergan’s theological anthropology and Girard’s mimetic theory: a general introduction

Lonergan’s project concerns the performance of the human subject as subject by articulating a philosophical analysis of the self-transcending subject. Lonergan does not provide a fixed philosophical worldview, but a method. As Arcamone describes it:

[a method] founded in a basic set of invariant and normative operations in human consciousness, the trans-cultural norms of self-transcending inquiry that constitutes all people as knowers and choosers within an explanatory account of insight.\(^8\)

For Lonergan, method is intended not as philosophical straightjacket but as a framework for collaborative creativity.\(^9\) His ‘generalised empirical method’ or ‘critical realism’ extends the success of the empirical methods of the natural sciences to the human sciences, including theology: that knowledge is achieved by an ascent from data, through hypothesis, to verification. As Dunne posits:

\[t\]o account for disciplines that deal with humans as makers of meanings and values, Lonergan generalised the notion of data to include the data of consciousness as well as the data of sense. From that compound data, one may ascend through hypothesis to verification of the operations by which humans deal with what is meaningful and what is valuable.\(^10\)

In a fractured world, Lonergan sought to find a common ground for meaning making by drawing the attention of the human subject to the “methodological criteria by which we judge what is real, choose what is better or worse, and act in love”.\(^11\)

Therefore Lonergan’s axiom: authentic objectivity is predicated on authentic

\(^8\) Arcamone, Religion and Violence, 2.
\(^9\) Lonergan, Method in Theology, xi, xii.
\(^11\) Arcamone, Religion and Violence, 2.
subjectivity. “Mathematics, science, philosophy, ethics, theology differ in many manners; but they have the common feature that their objectivity is the fruit of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility.”¹² And, just as human subjects can move toward authenticity, so too they can withdraw from authenticity into inauthenticity.

It can be reasonably argued that the restorative ritual outlined in the case study is an attempt at objective meaning making by subjects who are struggling in their authenticity, as they face the reality of their human limitation in violence, shame and guilt. The realisation of authenticity is through the transformative process of conversion leading to ongoing self-transcendence. Lonergan identified three types of conversion: intellectual, moral and religious. Doran has added psychic conversion to these three and contends that the mimetic theory of Girard most clearly elucidates the nuances of that form of conversion. In essence psychic conversion draws the person towards authenticity by transforming distorted *interindividuality*;¹³ which is experienced in the world of the body and in human affectivity. Doran points out that this conversion is aided by drawing on the intentional operations entailed in being intelligent, reasonable and responsible.¹⁴ The creative tension (or dialectical relationship) between the psychic-affective and intentional dimensions of human consciousness is essential for authenticity: this is akin to what Alison describes as the

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¹³ This neologism refers to the Girardian insight that each person’s individuality, from conception, is socially formed. According to Alison, *interindividuality* is Girard’s only neologism; Alison, “Girard and the Analogy of Desire”. See Chapters 3 and 4.
¹⁴ Doran, “Two Ways of Being Conscious,” 17.
discovery of the “non-divided self”. Whilst this is a deeply personal process and achievement, nonetheless it requires a community of discourse, in this case, the community of teachers and students that formed around the restorative ritual in the case study. Doran, building on Lonergan, argues that this creative tension (or dialectic) between the poles of the psychic-affective and intentional are operational at the personal, social and cultural levels of human existence and it assists in identifying the manner in which normative change occurs between the personal, social and cultural levels of human existence. Similarly, Alison argues that from a Girardian perspective it is possible to associate personal and social change:

> If the formation of human social order and economic reality are seen from the point of view of the same paradigm as the constitution of the self through mimetic desire, then economic, political, psychological and erotic reality can be seen to be part of exactly the same mechanism. This means that transformation of the ‘out there’ passes through the recognition of the complicity its structures of the person seeking transformation.

When speaking of healing Christian division, Merton makes an even stronger claim:

> If we want to bring together what is divided, we can not do so by imposing one division upon the other or by absorbing one division into the other...we must contain all divided worlds in ourselves and transcend them in Christ.

In the light of mimetic desire, reality and the potential transformation of that reality through conversion is interpersonal, social and cultural.

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15 Alison, Broken Hearts, 170.
16 “Though conversion is intensely personal, utterly intimate, still it is not so private as to be solitary. It can happen to many and they can form a community to sustain one another in their self-transformation, and to help one another in working out the implications, and in fulfilling the promise of their new life.” B. J. F. Lonergan, “Theology in its New Context,” in A Third Collection, ed. Robert Doran and John D. Dadosky (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 2017) 66.
6.3 Human Consciousness: two dimensions

In *The Triune God: Systematics* Lonergan identifies that human beings are conscious in two ways:

...in one way, through our sensibility, we undergo rather passively what we sense and imagine, our desires and fears, our delights and sorrows, our joys and sadness; in another way, through our intellectuality, we are more active when we consciously inquire in order to understand, understand in order to utter a word, weigh evidence in order to judge, deliberate in order to choose and exercise our will in order to act.\(^\text{20}\)

Therefore, Lonerganians such as Doran, can speak of psychic-affective consciousness and intentional consciousness.\(^\text{21}\) Psychic-affective consciousness, the first form of consciousness, operates at the level of emotions, symbols and images. It is the underlying flow of “sensible representations and imaginative representations, of affective and aggressive feelings, of conscious bodily movements”.\(^\text{22}\) Intentional consciousness, the second form of consciousness, operates at the level of human intentionality: understanding, judging and acting. Doran argues that these two dimensions “are distinct and inseparable dimensions of the self-presence that Lonergan calls consciousness”.\(^\text{23}\) Doran refers to psychic-affective consciousness as the ‘sensitive-psychic’ consciousness and intentional consciousness as ‘spiritual’ consciousness. This thesis will preference the use of the terms *psychic-affective consciousness* and *intentional consciousness*.


It is reasonable to extend Doran’s insight to its logical conclusion and argue that, within intentional consciousness, three ways of being conscious can be identified and named in human experience. These include: intellectual consciousness, moral consciousness and religious consciousness. These three ways of being conscious align with the operations of intentional consciousness and conversions enunciated in Method in Theology and outlined below. Furthermore, the case study in Chapter 5 exemplifies the three ways of being conscious and could only be conducted because the students and teachers experienced themselves as oriented toward value and truth. For the purpose of this thesis, these experiences of consciousness which are indicative of the more active manner of self-presence are grouped within ‘intentional consciousness’. This approach accepts Doran’s development of Lonergan’s description of the two ways of being conscious and, more importantly, opens an understanding of a ‘dialectic of desire’ that both accommodates and creatively relates and connects the original insights of Lonergan and Girard regarding desire.

6.3.1 Intentional consciousness and the ‘dialectic of desire’

Lonergan maintains that human intentional consciousness is structured in a particular way and that there is an intentional striving or dynamism in human consciousness toward attentiveness, understanding, truth, and value. Driving this intentionality is the unrestricted desire for complete intelligibility, for the strictly unconditioned, and the complete good of value. Human questioning, the desire to know, drives human beings to apprehensions of intelligibility, truth and value. The on-going process of

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intentional consciousness has the potential for liberation, since the human desires for intelligibility, truth and value are unrestricted. That is, human persons in their conscious intending can strive for what is beyond themselves, for what is transcendent. Lonergan articulated the transcendental precepts which relate to each of the levels of conscious intentionality: be attentive; be intelligent; be reasonable; be responsible.

Man [sic] achieves authenticity in self-transcendence...the transcendental notions, that is, our questions for intelligence, for reflection, for deliberation, constitute our capacity for self-transcendence. That capacity becomes actuality when one falls in love.25

Notably, love is the beginning and the end: the prior gift finds its source and origin in love and self-transcendence finds its fulfillment in love. Lonergan also signals that self-transcendence is a precarious achievement. It is not once and for all, but rather a lifelong project. Therefore, the concepts of ‘self-transcendence’ and ‘conversion’ are critical in Lonergan’s thought.

Before proceeding further, it is important to distinguish how Lonergan and Girard understand and use the term ‘desire’. As noted in Chapter 3, ‘desire’ in the sense used here by Lonergan, the unrestricted desire to know, is different from that most often used by Girard. For Girard desire is the energy of human wanting. Desire drives human beings and is mimetic. Ormerod claims that Lonergan defines desire as:

...‘an appetite for, or an act of striving after an object that is absent or not possessed’. Within the range of desires he distinguishes between ‘natural appetite, on the one hand, and appetitive acts, whether sensitive or intellectual, on the other.’ These latter appetitive acts are ‘elicited,’ that is, it ‘is an act of desiring some object; it is caused and specified by that object as apprehended...and so is found only in sensitive and intellectual beings.’ In this

25 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 104-105.
sense the word natural, when speaking of a ‘natural desire,’ has a double meaning, i.e. natural as distinct from elicited, and natural as distinct from supernatural. And so, to speak of a natural desire to see God is to say the desire is neither elicited nor supernatural. In what then does the natural desire consist? Lonergan argues that natural desires are revealed by their acts and the acts which he identifies as revealing this natural desire are acts of questioning. And so for Lonergan, ‘the question, quid sit Deus, expresses a desire that naturally arises as soon as one knows the existence of God.’ In summary then, ‘the intellect’s desire to know is at root a desire to know God.’

Furthermore, this natural, spiritual appetite highlighted by Ormerod, is concerned with knowing and discovering the good: initially as what is satisfying and then, through questioning, to a higher level of the good, the intelligible good, choosing and implementing the truly good. “We can inquire into the possibility of fruitful inquiry. We can reflect on the nature of reflection. We can deliberate whether our deliberation is worthwhile. In each case there arises the question of God.”

Lonergan’s use of the word desire within intentional consciousness means a natural, non-elicited desire which reveals human longings for God.

Drawing on Lonergan’s definition, Girard’s understanding and explorations of desire as mimetic might be described as the elicited ‘sensitive and intellectual’ appetitive acts. However, in his later conversations Girard himself admitted that mimesis is not the only explanation for the dynamism of desire:

But I am not saying that they exclude all other types of explanation. For example, I believe in the love that parents have for their children, and I don’t see how you could interpret that love in a mimetic fashion.

28 Ormerod identifies Lonergan’s use of ‘desire’ as a very significant development of Augustine’s account of the longings of the human heart for God in his _Confessions_, “Desire and the Origins of Culture,” 784.
29 Girard, _When These Things Begin_, 12.
Kaplan has suggested that this response by Girard, coupled with Girard’s response to a subsequent question, ‘Is all desire religious?’, namely, ‘All desire is a desire for being’, unlocks the possibility of a love that is not subject to the caprices of mimesis: an unrestricted desire in the sense asserted by Lonergan. Therefore, Doran proposes that these two modalities exist within the two ways of being conscious: ‘Mimetic desire’ as described by Girard pertains to the first or psychic-affective way of being conscious and ‘natural desire’ pertains to the second or intentional way of being conscious. These modalities of desire are not opposed but are dialectically related in the person. ‘Dialectic’ is a key term in the Lonerganian corpus. Doran argues that Lonergan uses the term in two different ways: dialectic as contraries and dialectic as contradictions. “Contraries are reconcilable at a higher synthesis, while contradictories exclude one another.” Dadosky adds that “[d]ialectic brings to light complementary, genetic, and irreducible differences; it highlights the need for conversion where necessary.” Lonergan’s dialectic assists in understanding the drivers of change and development within the human subject, between subjects and across cultures and communities. Dialectic insists that there is no single driving factor behind human development and that these driving factors modify each other and at the same time modify the developing thing. In this case, dialectic assists in

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31 Doran, The Trinity in History, 204.
33 Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 10.
35 Arcamone, Religion and Violence, 64.
36 Dunne, “Generalised Empirical Method in Ethics”. 

the understanding of how desire at the levels of psychic-affective and intentional consciousness can be a driver for change within and between human subjects.

6.4 The ‘dialectic of the subject’: psychic-affective consciousness and its connection to intentional consciousness

Intentional consciousness and its operations of understanding, judging and acting are not opposed to the psychic-affective consciousness and its world of emotions, symbols and images. Indeed, they are dialectically related in the subject. Again, a ‘dialectical relationship’ does not imply that the two ways of being conscious, and their attendant desires, are opposed or that one is necessarily superior or preferable to the other. But rather, that they are held in creative tension in the person.

The dialectic of the subject is the dialectic between the neural undertow that emerges into consciousness in the form of images and affects [psychic-affective consciousness], on the one hand, and the orientation of the intelligent, rational, existential subject constituting one’s world and oneself through one’s insights, judgements and decisions on the other. The point of the dialectic is not to choose one over the other but to ensure that they are working harmoniously with one another.

Both poles of the dialectic, psychic-affective consciousness and intentional consciousness, are necessary for the health, wellbeing and continuous growth of the human subject. Put simply:

1) distorted mimetic desire can deform intentional operations;

2) positive mimetic desire (or non-naïve pacific mimetic desire) can strengthen and enhance intentional operations;

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37 Lonergan, Insight, 214-227. Similar dialectics operate at the level of community; Lonergan, Method in Theology, 358. Doran has developed the notions of dialectic of the subject and community and added the dialectic of culture in Theology and the Dialectics of History.

3) healthy intentional operations can assist in the process of undistorting mimetic desire;
4) deformed intentional operations can distort or further distort mimetic desire.

*Psychic conversion* is the recovery of the dialectical relationship between the two types of consciousness within the human subject. Doran adds *psychic conversion* to Lonergan’s religious, moral and intellectual conversions. *Psychic conversion* describes key aspects of the transformation that occurred within and between the students in the case study described in Chapter 5.

### 6.5 ‘Authenticity’, ‘self-transcendence’ and ‘conversion’

Clarity with regard to these terms is important in order to understand Lonergan’s philosophical project and therefore the nature of psychic conversion. For Lonergan the achievement of authenticity, authentic human being, is the goal of all human activity. Authenticity suggests the realisation of human potential as a free, intelligent, acting and loving being. As Doran asserts: “authenticity is achieved in self-transcendence and consistent self-transcendence is reached only by conversion”.³⁹ Authenticity is a precarious achievement and a life-long pursuit. It requires a continuous withdrawal from unauthenticity.⁴⁰ Self-transcendence is the experience of going beyond what is already given. As Doran proposes:

...what makes a person an authentic human being is that he or she is consistently self-transcending and consistent self-transcendence requires that one undergo a multiple and ongoing process of conversion. The process moves

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³⁹ Doran, “‘Conversion’?” 2.
causally...from conversion to self-transcendence and from self-transcendence to authenticity.  

Conversion is fundamental for the self-transcendence that empowers and facilitates the withdrawal from unauthenticity and the movement into authenticity. Lonergan describes conversion as an experience that transforms the human subject and their milieu:

Normally it is a prolonged process though its explicit acknowledgement may be concentrated in a few momentous judgements and decisions...it is not just a development or even a series of developments. Rather it is a resultant change of course and direction. It is as if one’s eyes were opened and one’s former world faded and fell away. There emerges something new that fructifies in inter-locking, cumulative sequences of developments at all levels of human living.

Furthermore, for Lonergan conversion is a change in ‘horizons’. Lonergan uses the term ‘horizons’ metaphorically to mean the delimited range of a person’s knowledge and interests. Conversion therefore is also a vertical exercise in freedom by which a person moves from one horizon to another by a set of judgements and decisions. Conversion is not learning although it is development and it may lead to learning within the subject. Doran suggests that:

conversion is the kind of movement into a new horizon that entails an about face. It comes out of the old by repudiating characteristics of the old. It begins a new sequence of events in one’s life that sets one’s life on a radically different course.

It is movement from false to true, from evil to good, it is a volte-face. Hence, conversion, as Lonergan understands it, is also ‘dialectical’ in nature because it involves such contradictory relations.

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41 Doran, “‘Conversion’?” 2.
42 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 130.
43 Lonergan, 236.
44 Doran, “‘Conversion’?” 3-4.
It is notable that whilst Lonergan designates conversion as an existential, intimate and very personal experience, it “is not so private as to be solitary”. Conversion can happen to many and it can transform whole communities, histories and cultures. Conversion is usually experienced as a gradual and prolonged process; however, it can also be condensed into a particular and significant experience. The restorative ritual described in the case study in Chapter 5 provided the right conditions for a more condensed moment; an intense and focused experience of conversion. At the same time the transformation wrought by the restorative ritual was continuing within the participants and in their community as the case study narrative suggests.

6.5.1 Religious, moral and intellectual conversion

Within intentional consciousness Lonergan identifies three forms of conversion. Religious conversion is “other-worldly falling in love”. Doran suggests that religious conversion is an “…ever deepening withdrawal from ignoring the realm of the transcendence in which God is known and loved and of ever deepening entrance into that realm”. It may or may not lead to deep mystical prayer experiences. Moral conversion is the ongoing commitment to decision-making that locates its criterion in values rather than satisfaction, even when satisfaction and values are in conflict. Doran makes the point that “…moral conversion is not moral perfection, but it is a process of withdrawal over time from self-enclosure to self-transcendence in one’s

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45 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 130.
46 Lonergan, 130-131.
47 Lonergan, 240.
48 Doran, “Conversion?" 5.
decisions” .

Intellectual conversion is the “effort to reach cognitive integrity in one’s intellectual positions”: by refusing to accept the myth that knowing is as simple as ‘taking a look at the data’ and to be open to yet more questions in one’s search for the fullness of truth. According to Lonergan, knowing is experiencing, understanding, judging and believing.

Whilst religious, moral and intellectual conversions are each modalities of self-transcendence, it is religious conversion that is the source and interpretative key for each of the other types of conversion:

Intellectual conversion is to truth attained by cognitional self-transcendence. Moral conversion is to values apprehended, affirmed and realised by a real self-transcendence. Religious conversion is to a total being-in-love as the efficacious ground of all self-transcendence, whether in the pursuit of truth, or in the realisation of human values, or in the orientation man [sic] adopts to the universe, its ground, and its goal.

The point Lonergan makes here is that experiencing being-in-love, receiving and giving love, transforms human beings so that self-transcendence becomes possible both morally and intellectually. Doran describes the conversion of being loved and loving in return as a movement away from self-absorption, radical lovelessness or self-enclosure toward self-transcendence in the moral and intellectual life of the person:

But what propels one beyond taking satisfaction as the criterion of one’s decisions to accepting value as the criterion, if not that one is being freed from self-absorption, radical lovelessness or self-enclosure into self-transcendence?

... But what moves one beyond a utilitarian and purely pragmatic intellectual life, which after all is self-absorbed, self-enclosed, self-referential, except the

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Doran, “‘Conversion’?” 5.
Doran, 5.
Lonergan, Method in Theology, 238.
freedom from self-absorption that comes from a radical and unconditional falling in love, genuine religious conversion? Religious conversion creates the possibility of moral and intellectual conversion: true values can be detected and lived and knowing can become truly a detached, disinterested desire to know. Religious conversion also creates the possibility of psychic conversion.

6.5.2 ‘Psychic’ conversion

Just as self-absorption and self-enclosure lead to distortion in intentional consciousness (in cognitional performance and in moral discernment), the same can be said for the psychic-affective consciousness (feelings, symbols and imagination). And so, knowing that one is loved also opens the possibility for self-transcendence in the psychic-affective domain of consciousness: unqualified love unlocks radical lovelessness. Psychic-affective self-transcendence is reliant upon the moral and intellectual operations of intentional consciousness being brought to bear on

...the twists and turns of our psychic, affective life, so that we may become ever more familiar with the inclinations of our affectivity that lead to self-transcendence and those that, however genuine they appear, propel us back into self-absorption one way or another.

Furthermore, feelings that emerge in the psychic-affective consciousness permeate the operations of intentional consciousness and reach “...beyond these operations and states in the interpersonal relations and commitments that constitute families,

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53 Doran, “‘Conversion’?” 8.
54 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 10.
55 Doran, “‘Conversion’?” 9.
communities, and religions”. Feelings do not just impact on the individual alone; as has been noted, human beings are socially formed.

For Doran, ‘psychic conversion’ is the discovery of the link between the psychic-affective and intentional dimensions of consciousness and the “establishment of the interior communication between them”. This ‘link’ is mutual, it is a two-way street, a reciprocal relationship. As has been described, the two forms of consciousness are dialectically related and impact one on the other; distortion of desire in one contributes to distortion of desire in the other; healthy function of desire in one contributes to healthy function of desire in the other. The key is for intentional and psychic-affective consciousness to work in harmony, hence the role and significance of psychic conversion for the achievement of authenticity in Doran’s development of Lonergan’s schema.

6.5.2.1 The ‘censor’

The link between the two dimensions of consciousness is called the ‘censor’. The censor is what is transformed in psychic conversion. In psychoanalytic theory, the censor is a mental agency in human pre-consciousness that is responsible for preventing certain thoughts and ideas from entering consciousness. Within Lonergan’s treatment of dramatic bias in common sense understanding in Insight he argues that the censor can have a repressive or constructive role in human

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57 Doran, 6.
58 Doran, 8.
consciou\ns.\n60 The censor can operate in a repressive manner and thereby prevent data from the psychic-affective consciousness from being presented to intentional consciousness. The censor can also operate in a constructive manner and thereby allow data to be presented to the intentional consciousness and thus become intelligible. *Psychic conversion transforms the censor from a repressive to a constructive role in a person’s development.*\n61 Thus, in Lonergan’s articulation of the transcendental precepts for intentional consciousness: be attentive; be intelligent; be reasonable; be responsible; be in love; psychic conversion allows a person to truly *be attentive to the data of experience* as it is given in a person’s sensitive, symbolic and imaginal consciousness.

6.6 The appropriation of feelings

A foundational example of the connection between the two dimensions of consciousness in Lonergan’s project is brought out by Doran when he points out that feelings are the link between values and symbols in *Method in Theology*. Symbols evoke or are evoked by feelings, and values are apprehended by feelings:

> the appropriation of one’s life of feeling, particularly as that becomes manifest in the elemental symbols of one’s dreams and similar psychological deliverances, might be expected to be relevant to one’s existential stance as a moral subject, as one having to do with values and disvalues…to play a role in what is known as moral and religious discernment.\n62

The role and significance of feelings and feeling states, which emanate from the realm of the sensitive psyche, for authentic moral and religious discernment – a process of

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\n60 Lonergan, *Insight*, 214-231.
intentional consciousness – cannot be underestimated in Lonergan’s schema. Feelings and feeling states, their significance for apprehensions of value contributing to a healthy and helpful dialectic of the subject, will be discussed in the following sections.

6.6.1 Feelings and values

In Lonergan’s thought values are not simply an ethereal and abstract intellectual notion, they are also apprehended by feelings: “feelings reveal values to us”. 63 First, Lonergan distinguishes feelings as non-intentional states and as intentional responses to objects. 64 In the former case, a person feels irritable and diagnoses a lack of sleep. Here, the feeling relates the person to a cause or end. In the latter, feelings respond to what is intended, apprehended, represented. In this case feelings orient persons “...massively and dynamically in a world mediated by meaning”. 65 Feelings give intentional consciousness its density, drive and strength, what is often referred to in common speech as ‘passion’. 66 Persons feel for, about and with other persons. Persons have feelings about “…respective situations, about the past, about the future. About evils to be lamented or remedied, about the good that can, might, must be accomplished”. 67 Second, feelings that are intentional responses relate to two types of objects: objects that are agreeable or disagreeable, satisfying or dissatisfying; and values.

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64 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 30.
65 Lonergan, 31.
Intentional feelings may simply reveal an object to be agreeable or disagreeable, satisfying or dissatisfying. Alternatively, intentional feelings may reveal an object to be both valuable and satisfying. Finally, intentional feelings may reveal values to be worthwhile but dissatisfying.\textsuperscript{68}

Initial apprehensions of value are followed by questions for deliberation, these questions respond to what is agreeable to us and to what is truly good, the value or values at stake, in the given situation. The spiritual process of moral discernment is not therefore a dispassionate nor aridly rational method. As Arcamone has noted, feelings of love and mutual generosity bring a person toward moral self-transcendence and even moral conversion:\textsuperscript{69} a consistent choice of value(s) over satisfaction.

For example, in the case study (Chapter 5), both Imogen and Hannah had strong and conflicting feelings about the violent incident that had occurred between them. Furthermore, when the teachers asked the students to participate in the restorative conference they held out to them a value that was both worthwhile and disagreeable. The students’ decision to choose value – hope, a “counselling session with Hannah” as Imogen described it – which also felt deeply dissatisfying and disagreeable, could be described as a moment of moral self-transcendence for both of them. Here we have an example of the healthy dialectic of the subject, the beginnings of a restoration of a creative tension between the psychic-affective and intentional consciousness within Hannah and Imogen following the breakdown of this tension.

\textsuperscript{68}Arcamone, \textit{Religion and Violence}, 54.
\textsuperscript{69}Arcamone, 54.
6.6.2 The Scale of Value

Lonergan explicates a scale of value which provides a critical and explanatory understanding of values and human valuing.

Not only do feelings respond to values. They do so in accord with some scale of preference. So we may distinguish vital, social, cultural, personal and religious values in an ascending order. Vital values such as health and strength, grace and vigour, normally are preferred to avoiding the work, privations, pains involved in acquiring, maintaining, restoring them. Social values such as the good of order which conditions the vital values of the whole community have to be preferred to the vital values of individual members of the community. Cultural values do not exist without the underpinning of vital and social values but nonetheless they rank higher. Not on bread alone doth man live. Over and above more living and operating, men have to find a meaning and value in their operating. It is the function of culture to discover, express, validate, criticise, correct, develop, and improve such meaning and value. Personal value is the person in his self transcendence as loving and being loved as originator of values in himself and in his milieu, as an inspiration and invitation to others to do likewise. Religious values finally are at the heart of the meaning and value of man’s living and man’s world.⁷⁰

Lonergan’s scale of value is important because it demonstrates the interplay of the personal, social and cultural values contributing to growth and development in persons, communities and cultures.⁷¹ For example, difficulties at the level of vital values require questions seeking answers at the level of social values. Problems at the level of social values require responses at the level of cultural values and issues at the level of cultural values necessitate answers in personal values. Doran suggests that the human spirit in its most creative moments seeks a solution to these problems.⁷² However, the scale of value also demonstrates how human creativity can be derailed

⁷⁰ Lonergan, Method in Theology, 32.
⁷¹ Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 88. This section owes much to the explanation of Doran’s insights by Arcamone in “Organisational Self-Understanding and the Scale of Values in Faith-based Agencies: A Lonerganian Perspective”.
⁷² Doran, Theology and the Dialectics of History, 88.
by the cascading and cyclical impact of personal, social and cultural bias and sin. As Arcamone contends:

Personal sin and bias exposes the inroads of selfishness, self-interest and injustice. Social sin can take hold. We become efficient but lose the ability to be effective. Cultural sin and bias is exposed in the short-term expediency that influences our thinking, judging and commitments. People dominated by the actions of self-preservation live in greater fear.73

This breakdown calls for healing and restoration. Lonergan also notes the corrosive power of reventiment on personal value and the entire scale of value. As noted in the case study, reventiment was a feature of Hannah and Imogen’s relationship. Both Lonergan and Girardians use the term reventiment in the same sense as Scheler: the re-feeling of a particular clash with another person’s value qualities.

The re-feeling is not active or aggressive but extends over time, even a lifetime. It is a feeling of hostility, anger, indignation that is neither repudiated nor directly expressed. What it attacks is the value-quality that the superior persons possessed and inferior not only lacked but also feels unequal to acquiring. The attack amounts to a continuous belittling of the value in question, and it can extend to hatred and even violence against those that possess that value-quality.74

Curiously, the person attacked is often someone liked and admired, a ‘role-model’:

[t]he people whom we most admire can suddenly turn out to be the people whom we most hate and that our models that are so admired and loved can be transformed into our worst rivals, into the source of our reventiment. Or that in the worst of our rivals may hide a secretly admired and envied model.75

Lonergan notes the corrosive power of reventiment: it is the rejection of one value but “involves a distortion of the whole scale of values and that this distortion can spread through a whole social class, a whole people, a whole epoch”.76 The restorative ritual described in this thesis is one example of the kind of healing and restoration that

73 Arcamone, “Organisational Self-Understanding.”
74 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 33.
75 Tomelleri, Ressentiment, 76.
76 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 33.
can transform persons and communities, leading them beyond *ressentiment*, a source of God’s healing and creative grace for Hannah and Imogen through the experience of being forgiven and believed-in by the two teachers, Deborah and Miriam, and eventually believing in each other. The scale of value also indicates the relationship of mutual conditioning between the values. For example, the values held by a person are shaped by the community and culture to which they belong. Values are carried by community and cultural processes and these values are enacted by persons both implicitly and knowingly. Persons can stand back and ask questions for reflection about the values that inform the social and community situation, calling for cultural integrity, often at great personal cost. Cultural, social and personal integrity are mutually reliant.

The dimensions of and relationship between personal and religious value is of particular relevance to the Case Study in Chapter 5. Personal value, the experience of the person as an ‘originator of values’, is deeply influenced by religious value. Personal value is a result of the dialectic, the creative tension, between psychic consciousness and intentional consciousness:

> the integral dialectic between psyche and intentionality leads the person to growth and development in feeling, understanding, judgements and commitments. When the creative tension between these two principles is broken and either principle dominates, then the person easily slides into unauthenticity.  

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77 As Alison suggests: “To detect victims from the position of intellectual clarity is one thing, to start to sing the song as we lose credibility, support, belonging, livelihood and reputation is quite another”, *Faith Beyond Resentment*, 165.

If this situation persists it leads to a pathology of the psyche trapping the person in a negative flow of feeling states. A pathology of the psyche can lead to a pathology of the spirit (intentionality): a flight from understanding and responsible love. A recurring pathology of the spirit (intentional consciousness) can lead to a pathology of the psyche, resulting in ego-inflation and over-seeking of adulation. In the Case Study narrated in Chapter 5 these pathologies were demonstrated in Imogen’s experience of *ressentiment*, Hannah’s mimetic doubling of Imogen and the resultant victimisations, both of the other and the self. It is the encounter with religious value that restores the person as an originator of value.

It must be understood that for Lonergan and Doran religious value is not a commitment to Church doctrine or a religious way of life. For Hannah and Imogen it was the encounter with their teachers and ultimately with each other, with those who embodied the Ultimate authority: the one with whom there is no rivalry, the Spirit of Christ, our forgiving victim.

Religious value is that dimension of human experience, understanding and valuing which relates us dynamically to the Ultimate source of love, goodness and truth. We experience this love in the gifts of forgiveness, peace, joy and justice. These gifts enable the person who encounters them to be healed of self-victimisation and victimisation of others.79

Again, religious value can be understood outside an explicitly religious belief system because the gift is prior to the word about the gift. That is, a person can be in love with God without knowing he or she is in love with God.80 Being in love with God is

79 Arcamone, “Organisational Self-Understanding.”
the fulfillment of the human capacity for love. However, this fulfillment is not the
product of human knowing and choosing:

...it dismantles and abolishes the horizon in which our knowing and choosing went on and it sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing.\(^\text{81}\)

Therefore, as a conscious dynamic state without being known it is an experience of holy mystery. Religious love and therefore religious value is operative at Lonergan’s fourth level of intentional consciousness:

[the] type of consciousness that makes judgements of value, decides, acts responsibly...it is this consciousness brought to a fulfillment as having undergone a conversion...as ready to deliberate and judge and decide and act with the easy freedom of those that do all good because they are in love.\(^\text{82}\)

As such, religious value is apprehended by the person through feelings. Thus, the teachers’ description of the experience in the immediate aftermath of the restorative ritual makes sense:

Deborah: So, if I explained that my immediate response was to burst into tears, but they were really happy tears, it was like, it was [palpable] the love, the newness, the joy, that they had created themselves in this new relationship, this new possibility of, this new way of moving forward in a relationship.

Miriam: I remember saying that to Deborah: ‘Powerful!’ I think we walked around for a couple of days going [saying] ‘Wow! Wow!’

The teachers had some difficulty in finding language to adequately describe what had happened in the restorative conference. As for the students, their response to the encounter with mystery could be noted in: their willingness to accept responsibility for their actions; their choice to act in accord with their values; their renunciation of self-victimisation and the victimisation of others; and, their gesture of embracing each other and celebrating with a lemonade at the cafeteria. In a later reflection, Miriam


\(^{82}\) Lonergan, 107.
suggested that if Hannah and Imogen had read about this experience in a book “they would not have believed it”. It seemed that the affective dimension of this experience was outside the students’ capacity to cognitively comprehend it, at least initially. The restorative ritual was an *experience of the gift of religious love, an encounter with mystery*. In Chapters 4 and 5 it was suggested that the authentic (religious) experience of God is always *de-stabilising, unfamiliar or strange.* In terms of the scale of value, the restorative ritual is an encounter with religious value that restores the person as an originator of value. So, as Hannah and Imogen re-discovered themselves as originators of value they began to actively shape their own relationship as well as cultural, social and vital values within their milieu: they became strong role models for other students, demonstrating that what they experienced was not only good for them, but for the entire school community and its culture.

6.7 Mimetic theory and ‘psychic’ conversion

Lonergan’s original work underplayed the complexity of the first form of consciousness: Girard’s mimetic theory with its emphasis on interindividuality and the distortions of acquisitive mimesis reveals the elaborate and three-dimensional world of affectivity, symbolism and imagination. The human person is so absorbent of the ‘other’ that the underlying psychic flow is shot through with the desires of others, as Alison argues: “...there is no ‘real me’ at the bottom of it all, when I’ve scraped away

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83 Christian mystics, such as St John of the Cross invoke the ‘strangeness’ of authentic religious experience: “God...is not only all that is strange in undiscovered islands, but His ways, judgments, and works are also strange, new, and marvelous.” A *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and The Bridegroom of Christ*, XIV-XV.9.
all the things I've learned, all the influences I've undergone”. Doran argues that Girard's mimetic theory also provides clarity with regard to the relationship between the psychic-affective and intentional ways of consciousness and reveals its complexity:

...what Lonergan calls the first ‘way of being conscious’ is precisely interindividual, that psychic development entails the negotiation of this interindividual field, that this negotiation calls upon the operations of the second ‘way of being conscious’, that inadequate negotiations of the interindividual field can and will distort this second way, and that authentic negotiation of the same field will allow the second way to flourish in the development of the person. Overcoming or transcending conflictual mimesis in the psychic realm will facilitate the unfolding of genuine attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility in the spiritual [intentional] realm, and so the unfolding of the natural imago Dei in its two forms of rational self-consciousness and being in love. But it will also liberate the community from the social sin of conflictual mimesis and institute within the community the social grace of participation in the divine relations grounding imitations of the triune God...[The goal of psychic conversion] lies precisely in purified relationality of the interindividuality that transcends conflictual mimesis.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Hannah and Imogen were experiencing conflictual mimesis: double binds of ressentiment and inner conflict, an inexplicable mixture of approval and loathing, and of love and fear. The distortion of the interindividual field between Hannah and Imogen further distorted their ability to understand what was going on between them and to make sound judgements and act in accord with their values: such "...intense and preconscious rivalry adversely affects the ability of the subject to understand and make proper judgements". The restorative ritual created the condition of the possibility for psychic conversion in these two students: through the teachers' believing in the students (a concrete experience of love) Hannah and Imogen were drawn out of their self-absorption (their love-lessness) and began to become

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86 Arcamone, Religion and Violence, 15.
attentive to the data of experience given in their psychic-affective consciousness, and access to the resources of intentional consciousness opened up for them the possibility of transcending their conflictual mimesis. In other words, both Imogen and Hannah were experiencing a step on the journey towards a non-divided self – the restoration of the dialectic of the person – the lifelong and arduous process of self-discovery which, due to the relational and mimetic nature as humans, can only be undertaken projectively, that is, through a relationship with another person.87

Below is a four-point summary of Doran’s earlier statement concerning the relationship between the psychic-affective and intentional levels of consciousness with regard to mimetic theory and psychic conversion, with each point made concrete with relevant examples from the case study in Chapter 5:

1) **Psychic conversion is critical for authentic operation of human conscious intentionality.** Case study example: “...[following conversion] you just see things so much more clearly. You know things so much more clearly.” (Deborah);

2) **Psychic conversion calls upon the resources of rational self-consciousness.**

Case study examples: “It made me re-evaluate the types of things that should be said to someone like Hannah” (Imogen), and; the researcher’s observations that:

...through the restorative ritual Imogen was given eyes to see a part of herself to which she had been previously blind. That is, as Imogen began to see herself projectively, through Hannah’s eyes, she began to have access to the truth of how her behaviour was harming her friend. Imogen also began to see Hannah more truthfully. Imogen began to see

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87 Alison, *Broken Hearts*, 170.
the humanity of another young woman who, like herself, was fragile and struggling, rather than Imogen’s projections: as the ‘perfect princess’ or as the “arrogant little bitch”. Imogen was beginning to receive the forgiveness that Hannah was offering her. Hannah was experiencing something similar: through forgiving and confronting Imogen’s bullying behaviour, *in the presence of and with Imogen, Hannah began to see that her self-denial was harmful to herself and her relationships with others;*

3) **Psychic conversion assists in the unfolding of ‘being in love’ and ‘purifies relationality’:** Case study examples: at the conclusion of the ritual Hannah and Imogen spontaneously embraced then went to the café and shared a lemonade, and the restorative ritual led to a restored and transformed relationship, as Hannah articulated it: “Let’s be friends but let’s base it on something solid so that we can be honest with each other and be more authentic”;

4) **Psychic conversion liberates the community from social sin.** Case study example: Deborah’s observation that the restorative ritual was not only good for Hannah and Imogen but was good for the whole school community:

If the relationship had not had an opportunity to be healed, then it could have led to factions being built in the group and factions that worked against each other rather than towards each other. My observations are because the relationship was healed and was made new that in actual fact, they’ve actually behaved in such a way where they’ve shown that they love each other because they’ve encouraged each other to be free to be who they really are and encouraged each other in their own potential in different ways. And it’s almost like in doing that they’ve been really good role models for other students. Not just in terms of encouraging other people to go with their potential, but that things can be worked out. You know, that rifts can be healed.

The Case Study validates and gives evidence of Doran’s thesis with regard to the role and significance of mimetic theory for an adequate understanding of the sensitive

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88 These were Hannah’s own words: “I just assumed that she was angry at me and she just assumed that I was just this arrogant little bitch,” Chapter 5.
psyche, the distortions which impact on the dialectic with intentional consciousness and the possibility of transcending the distortions of desire. In this context, the role of the teachers in providing a non-rivalrous mimesis requires further comment.

6.7.1 Psychic conversion: brought about by a positive, non-rivalrous mimesis

A further Girardian insight might add that, due to the projective and relational nature of human beings, psychic conversion is a social activity; it is only through relationship or exchange with others ‘beyond us’, that any of us have access to what comprises our own selves ‘within us’. The case study in Chapter 5 provides evidence of this reality: that it is only relationally that human beings can detect and modify their lives; the restorative ritual is one way to achieve the un-distortion of desire that is psychic conversion. It was through the powerfully mimetic process of listening to each other’s affective statements that Hannah and Imogen began to have access to the data of their psychic-affective consciousness, data of experience that could be presented to intentional consciousness for interpretation.

1) Imogen:
   a. began to see herself projectively, through Hannah’s eyes and therefore began to have access to the truth of how her behaviour was harming her friend;

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89 These ‘exchanges’ are not restricted to face-to-face encounters, as Alison suggests: “…as I have prayed for and learned to look upon certain people in my experience with whom I have been locked into what seemed at first glance like righteous hatred, I have found that the veriest glimpse of the tiniest iota of affection toward them produced a huge harvest of self acceptance and peace within me”. Alison, Broken Hearts, 170.
b. began to see the humanity of another young woman who – like herself – was fragile and struggling, rather than Imogen’s projections; Imogen was beginning to receive the forgiveness that Hannah was offering her;

2) Hannah: through forgiving and confronting Imogen’s bullying behaviour, in the presence of and with Imogen, began to see that her self-denial was harmful to herself and her relationships with others and discovered that it was within her power to take action on this problem.

This experience was mimetic but not an experience of acquisitive mimesis. Their positive and peaceful mimesis drew each other towards psychic conversion.

The presence of the teachers was critical in ensuring that the restorative ritual did not become yet another playing out of the rivalry and ressentiment between the students. The teachers achieved this by exercising their authority in an authoritative manner: by believing-in and forgiving Hannah and Imogen and holding out the possibility of a positive mimesis by refusing to submit to, or allow the students to submit to, the ‘accusatory tendency’.\(^\text{90}\) The teachers renounced a reciprocity based on violence and modeled the belief and forgiveness that alone can transcend contaminated relationships. Deborah and Miriam sought to attract or draw the students toward a creative, surprising, life-giving, and peaceful alternative to the predictable, banal, deathly and destructive: ‘our relationship must die, be sacrificed, because this has always been the way, and so it always has to be’.

\(^{90}\) The accusatory tendency is the human tendency to blame that perpetuates cycles of reciprocal violence creating more victims. See Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.
If it is the case that mimetic desire arises from the human experience of radical ontological desire, a desire for being, which is not mimetic of itself, and that acquisitive or rivalrous mimetic desire is the failure of that desire to achieve the fullness of being it longs for, then it is quite possible for human beings to discover, through a positive and non-rivalrous mimesis, a forgiving, gentle and peaceful alternative. Through the restorative ritual, Hannah and Imogen began to experience the freedom to attend to the data of their psychic experience, to bring the tools of intentional consciousness to bear on the first or psychic level of consciousness. This positive mimesis can also be described as an experience of the ‘gift of love’.

6.7.2 Psychic conversion and the ‘gift of love’

From a Lonerganian perspective the teachers offered the students the ‘gift of love’ that enabled the students to renounce mimetic rivalry and so open the possibility to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and friendly. Doran argues that it is the mediation of the gift of love that “can enable human relations to be something other than the violent mimesis that Girard depicts”. It was proposed in Chapter 5 that love in the Christian context can often be distorted to mean: “My love for you means that I will like you if you become someone else”. The love that Deborah and Miriam communicated to Imogen and Hannah both prior to and during the restorative ritual was not of this kind, but much more: ‘my love for you means that I like you as you are and I look forward to discovering with you who it is that you are becoming’. Miriam and Deborah made present to the students the sense of pure delight that God

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91 Doran, “Imitating the Divine Relations,” 38.
92 Doran, 38.
93 Alison, On Being Liked, 107.
has in each one of us: the same pleasure, favour, friendly feeling for us and the belief in us that we can transcend mimetic violence. In the midst of the students’ shame and brokenness the teachers made present this reality:

[O]ur faith is that the eyes of God that are in Christ, and thus the divine regard through which we can receive new being, are eyes that like us, from alongside, at the same level as us. Which means, they do not control us, so not try to know better than us who we are, but want to participate in the discovery with us of who we are to become. 94

The teachers revealed a Christ-like presence which moved the students from within, without threatening the students’ fragile sense of being.95 This Christ-like presence, an imitation of the Ultimate Authority, the one with whom there is no rivalry, was communicated to the students in the midst of their experience of shame.96 In this sense then the teachers mediated God’s love: communicating to the students that their love for them included liking them. Therefore, it is arguable that the teachers revealed a ‘grounded imitation of God’ through their interactions with the students.97

The teachers exercised a “willingness to transcend the mystery of iniquity”98 by adopting a dialectical attitude to sin: by refusing to blame one or both of the students (or anyone else) and offering the hope of a restored relationship, the teachers returned good for evil. Not only did the teachers model a genuine imago Dei, they also modeled a genuine imitatio Dei: by their refusal to submit to the accusatory tendency

95 “Real knowledge of oneself is something that people can only dare to accept when love has broken through.” Haughton, The Transformation of Man, 38.
96 Shame, understood as a negative emotion that combines feelings of dishonour, unworthiness and embarrassment, is a “…powerful feeling of self-annihilation comparable to the psychic death of Girardian undifferentiation”, Osborne, “The Role,” 103. As noted in Chapter 4, shame is a highly mimetic sentiment: experiencing shame requires a person to see themselves through the eyes of whoever makes them ashamed. Shame can be stigmatising and therefore connected with scapegoating. However, shame can also be re-integrative: when a person is experiencing shame and is also surrounded by a sense of being believed-in and liked.
97 Doran, “Imitating the Divine Relations,” 44.
98 Doran, 44.
and through their fidelity to the transcendental precepts, although they (may) have never heard of these.

Of interest at this point is the fact that, apart from four notable exceptions (all in Deborah’s research interview), the teachers did not use explicitly religious or theological language during the restorative ritual or during the research interviews. The interview questions outlined in Chapter 5 did not seek to elicit explicitly religious or theological responses, although the subjects were not precluded from responding in such a manner. The reasons for this are explained in Chapter 5: the general and secular questions reflect a reality of Catholic schools in Australia, where staff and students do not generally have access to sophisticated religious or theological language to describe their experiences.99 This thesis proposes a way in which restorative practices may be understood and practiced theologically. Again, to impose explicitly religious or theological language and meaning onto people’s experiences will not achieve theological understanding. Inducting staff and students over time into a new way of naming and understanding their experience as religious and theologically grounded may be more likely to bear fruit. The following chapter will explain how the potential within the experience of the restorative ritual can be tapped as a formation experience for teachers and leaders. The purpose of the formation experience is both educative and evangelising, recommending ways in which the word about the gift might be received meaningfully.

6.7.2.1 Distinguishing ‘being in love with God’ from ‘knowing one is in love with God’

Lonergan insists that a person can be in love with God without knowing that he or she is in love with God: being in love is a conscious dynamic state that governs everything in a person’s life, but that state can be conscious without being known.¹⁰⁰ From the evidence presented in the Case Study narrative Deborah and Miriam are religiously converted in the sense intended by Lonergan: they are in love with God. The psychic conversion experienced by Imogen and Hannah through the restorative ritual was dependent on the gift of love given by Deborah and Miriam. Furthermore, the gift of divine love is prior to the word about the gift, namely cognitive knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

For Christians it is understood as the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the gift of the Holy Spirit is offered to all men and women at every time and place and is responded to positively by many of the same people, independently of whether the word of revelation has ever been available to them. Moreover, the faith that is the knowledge born of religious love has flowed from the gift and has become stronger as the gift has been accepted. That faith is not the same thing as explicit belief in the doctrines of the Christian community.¹⁰¹

The case study exemplifies and makes concrete this affirmation. The gift of love embodied and expressed by Deborah and Miriam in the midst of the crisis of ‘radical lovelessness’ the students were undergoing in their relating. This radical lovelessness was most palpable in the experience of shame and death. Shame: Hannah and Imogen were two high performing students who were involved in a public display of physical violence and aggression in front of teachers and their peers; Imogen’s long-term

¹⁰⁰ Lonergan, Method, 106; Doran, “‘Conversion’?” 9.
¹⁰¹ Doran, “‘Conversion’?” 10. “There is a difference in one’s self-presence that results from being on the receiving end of unqualified love, whether that experience be explicitly religious or not”, Doran, “Two Ways of Being Conscious,” 11.
bullying behavior toward her ‘best friend’ was called out by Deborah; Hannah’s inability to be appropriately assertive and protect herself from being bullied by her ‘best friend’ was identified by Miriam. Death: shame is an experience of psychic death, Hannah and Imogen were prepared to let their friendship die, to sacrifice a relationship so that they might live without being required to confront their shame. Deborah and Miriam invited Hannah and Imogen into an alternative world charged with love and meaning. A world in which Hannah and Imogen experienced both the cross, by confronting their shame, and the resurrection: through the gift of love expressed as forgiveness and belief in the students – stigmatising shame was transformed into re-integrative shame and a dead friendship into a new creation.

6.7.3 Psychic conversion and the ‘gift of grace’

Deborah described the transformation of shame as turning “a heart of stone into a heart of flesh”. It is remarkable that the same turn of phrase is used by Lonergan to describe ‘operative grace’, the Christian experience of religious conversion: “[o]perative grace is the replacement of a heart of stone with a heart of flesh”. Lonergan goes on to clarify that “cooperative grace is the effectiveness of conversion, the gradual movement toward full and complete transformation of the whole of one’s living and feeling, one’s thoughts, words, deeds and omissions”. Deborah followed a similar line of thinking in her reflection on the transformation of the students:

It’s a conversion. It’s that, you know, turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. Because that’s how they were! They were protective, they were stone, they were: ‘I’m going to be very guarded here, I’m only to share what I’m comfortable in sharing’. But they got beyond that. They didn’t continue to have

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102 Osborne, “The Role,” 103.
103 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 241.
104 Lonergan, 241.
the heart of stone. They didn’t intentionally mean to come in with the heart of stone, that was just a protective thing. And then from that flesh, the heart of flesh, then it goes back up into the brain and you just see things so much more clearly. You know things so much more clearly.105

The phrase “you know things so much more clearly” indicates a clarity of thinking that was not available to Hannah and Imogen when their ‘hearts were stone’. In other words, the gift of love which enabled the experience of psychic-affective transcendence and psychic conversion for these students opened the possibility for their self-transcendence in the intellectual dimension (and in the moral and religious dimensions).106 As Hannah and Imogen came to understand that no one was ‘out to get them’, as they learned to let go of fear and to stop throwing stones, as their ‘hearts of stone were replaced by hearts of flesh’, they opened themselves to the possibility of knowing things as they are, rather than as projections of their own fears and anxieties. This is an authentic human experience of transcendence rather than the false transcendence of scapegoating and the victimimage mechanism.

To return to Lonergan, it can be proposed that this was an experience of operative and co-operative grace.

1) Operative: Hannah and Imogen experienced the desire to change and the transformation of their shame, they began to know and understand the truth. In theological language, they experienced God operating within them, although they did not name it as such.

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105 Emphases added.
106 “[A]ffective self-transcendence is frequently required if we are going to be self-transcendent in the intellectual, moral and religious dimensions of our living.” Doran, “Conversion?” 6.
2) Cooperative: Hannah and Imogen began to take steps towards living and acting in accord with their values, to receive and respond to the gift of love that was offered to them by their teachers. Hannah and Imogen began to believe that these teachers believed in them; that they could cooperate in restoring their relationship and thereby make ‘something out of nothing’. In theological language, they experienced God cooperating with them through their teachers, to bring their good desires to good effect, although they did not name it as such.

Later in the Case Study narrative Deborah describes her experience of the restorative conference as of the “Holy Spirit” and as “grace-filled”. Doran contends that grace is interindividual and that it is the task of theologians in the twenty-first century to develop understandings of how it is so. It is hoped that A Pastoral Theological Approach to Restorative Practices makes a modest contribution to this field of inquiry.

6.7.3.1 The ‘gift of grace’ and life, death and resurrection of Jesus

God’s grace as a gift of the Holy Spirit flows from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is participation in the very life of God. As noted in Chapter 4, Girard describes Jesus’ sacrificial act as one of “creative renunciation...if you want to put an end to mimetic rivalry, you must surrender everything to your rival”. This is most clearly seen in the crucified Jesus, who surrenders all and occupies the space of vulnerability, the one place no person wants to be. The interpretation of Jesus’ death (and

109 As St Paul expressed it “...we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor. 1:23).
resurrection) as ‘liturgical atonement’, proposed in Chapter 4, is also a creative act: Jesus turns the annihilation of victimhood into something creative; love communicated and experienced as forgiveness. Receiving forgiveness is a human experience of operative grace, what Alison has described as contrition, the breaking of the human heart. Or, in biblical language ‘the heart of stone turned into a heart of flesh’. Hand-in-hand with the offer of love as forgiveness is the offer of love as being believed-in: “being given to be someone else who I didn’t know myself to be and who is much bigger and more splendid than I took myself to be”. When a person receives the gift of being believed-in this creates the conditions in which they can discover themselves co-operating with grace, the particular form of grace that is forgiveness. The person comes to know that love can take effect in their life: by shifting the limiting boundaries of self-expectation; by destabilising the accepted order; by co-creating a new relationship; by opening the borders to an undiscovered country; by living “in the creator’s vision, which knows not death, so we can live as though death were not”. Or, in biblical language, they discover that they can “do even greater things” (Jn 14:12) than Jesus.

Since these reflections on grace center on the cross and resurrection it is important that a consideration of points of contact between Lonergan’s “Law of the Cross” and the Girardian description of the restorative ritual as “participation in redemption of victimhood”, of “God creating something from nothing” concludes the chapter.

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110 Alison, On Being Liked, 36.  
111 Alison, 36.  
112 Alison, Undergoing God, 65.
6.8 Restorative Practices and the ‘Transformative Symbol of the Cross’

It has been argued in this thesis that the experience of restorative practices can be interpreted as a cross and resurrection experience. Arcamone cautions that transformative symbols, such as the cross, can communicate distorted meanings and values, perpetuating cycles of demonising, such as the ‘accusatory tendency’ and a convenient separation of people into victims and perpetrators. Arcamone quotes Miroslav Volf:

...the world may appear to be neatly divided into guilty perpetrators and innocent victims. The closer we get, however, the more the line between guilty and innocent blurs and we see the intractable maze of small and large hatreds, dishonesties, manipulations and brutalities, each reinforcing the other.

Religious symbols like the cross need to be retrieved to assist people and communities to heal affective disorders and “...deal with moral outrage and prevent demonising processes from emerging and surviving”. An understanding of Jesus’ death and resurrection (symbolised by the cross) as ‘liturgical atonement’, proposed in Chapter 4, is one way to retrieve an understanding of the transformative power of the cross. The key features of Jesus’ death and resurrection understood as ‘liturgical atonement’. First, liturgy is a performance, it is an experience that human beings undergo. This disrupts the notion of atonement as a theory. Second, ‘liturgical atonement’ draws on the ancient Hebrew ‘day of atonement ritual’. This understanding re-connects God’s creative and redemptive activity, offering human beings God’s forgiveness and grace: forgiveness toward human beings for their

113 Arcamone, Religion and Violence, 211-213.
114 Chapters 4 and 5.
complicity in acts of mimetic violence in order to create group unity and, belief in human beings that, by receiving and following Jesus, they can imitate him peacefully and find new ways of building and renewing community rather than by creating victims. Third, in the ‘liturgical atonement’ understanding of Jesus’ death and resurrection, Jesus subverts a ritual act of murderous expulsion by becoming the communities’ ‘forgiving victim’. Fourth, Jesus transforms the cross, a symbol of terror, shame and death by performing the atonement liturgy (or ritual) as our high priest. This fourfold understanding informs the pastoral theological approach to restorative practices as a ritual of inclusion. Rituals are repetitive habits of the heart and a powerful source of unity: from a Girardian perspective rituals mimetically reinforce and regenerate social norms and originate in the scapegoating mechanism. Restorative conferences are transformative rituals, experiences that people undergo, that communicate the transformative symbol of the cross. In this case, rituals that seek to transform victimhood and include rather than scapegoat and exclude. In this ritual, the teachers imitate the forgiving victimhood of Jesus, and through the power of positive mimesis invite the other participants to discover how to be forgiving victims for each other; in this way, the restorative ritual as an example of effective love, operationalising the transformative (religious) symbol of the cross, revealing a profound connection between ritual and symbol and leading participants toward a transcendence of the categories of victim and perpetrator, an experience of the ‘new creation’.

118 “Jesus’ occupation of the place of shame, of loss, of death and annihilation…was the ‘Creator of all things’ way of opening up for us the possibility of entering into the full meaning, weight and flow of creation”, Alison, Undergoing God, 117.

119 Chapter 4.
6.8.1 Lonergan’s “Law of the Cross”

There is a significant point of contact here with Lonergan’s “Law of the Cross”. As Doran has observed, Girard’s vision fills out and enriches “Lonergan’s theology of the ‘law of the Cross’ which provides as it were, a heuristic structure that to a large extent is given specific determination by the dynamics that Girard discloses”.\(^{120}\) According to Doran, Lonergan’s ‘Law of the Cross’ heuristically outlines three stages which are revealed in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus and relates to the essential components of the Girardian approach:

Lonergan specifies the Law of the Cross in three steps, all revealed in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus: 1) from basic to moral evil; 2) loving absorption of the evil due to sin and the elevation of a human response in grace to a level that transcends the cycle of violence even when that response takes the form of resistance; and 3) transformation of the evil into a greater, indeed, supreme good. Girard’s filling of that heuristic structure, again drawing from scriptural revelation, can also be stated in three steps: 1) from human failure to reject mimetic rivalry to the subsequent deterioration of relations and the ensuing violence leading to the focusing of the violence on one individual or group; 2) rejection of this mimetic cycle through loving absorption of the violence and refusal to return it; and, 3) the resulting exposure and neutralisation of the victim mechanism, making some approximation to the reign of God in human affairs.\(^{121}\)

Doran suggests that while the data provided by Girard’s specification does not completely fill Lonergan’s heuristic structure, it does correspond with it.\(^{122}\) According to Doran, this is due to the tension between texts and events, with the Girardian contribution to theology being towards a theology of the Christian word; nevertheless, Doran admits the word can and does contribute to an understanding of what is.\(^{123}\)

\(^{120}\) Doran, *The Trinity in History*, 205. See also Doran, “The Non-Violent Cross,” 50.

\(^{121}\) Doran, “The Non-Violent Cross,” 51.

\(^{122}\) See Doran, *The Trinity in History*, 239; and Doran, “The Non-Violent Cross,” 60.

\(^{123}\) Doran, *The Trinity in History*, 239.
Alison’s Girardian recovery of a Christian understanding of redemption as atonement is pertinent here. Alison’s rendering of atonement as *liturgy to be experienced and undergone* rather than a *theory to be grasped* is an example of the word contributing to an understanding of what is.  

Alison’s Girardian articulation of Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection as a phenomenon that one undergoes as an encounter with Jesus our forgiving victim. This encounter is mediated through the human experience of positive non-rivalistic mimesis, a mimesis that transforms the patterns of human relating by being *forgiven* and being *believed-in*. Being forgiven has the potential to transform the psychic death of stigmatising shame into the renewing of re-integrative shame. Being believed-in can transform victimhood and the tendency to want to create more victims. This is human participation in the new creation: God’s work in initiating something far beyond human expectations for community. It is a contention of this thesis that the case study discloses a dynamic of human relating that is consonant with Girard’s description and is therefore a filling out of Lonergan’s heuristic structure, the “Law of the Cross”. This is outlined in Figure 11.

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124 Chapter 4.
126 Doran, *The Trinity in History*, 239.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girardian elements corresponding to Lonergan’s three stages of the “Law of the Cross”</th>
<th>Case Study examples</th>
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| 1) from human failure to reject mimetic rivalry to the subsequent deterioration of relations and the ensuing violence leading to the focusing of the violence on one individual or group; | • Hannah is model and rival for Imogen “first in class”,  
• *Ressentiment* and “double binds” of love/admiration and hate/fear between Imogen and Hannah  
• Physical fight in class and suspension of Imogen by the school Principal  
• The friendship is dead, Hannah and Imogen ‘sacrifice’ their friendship |
| 2) rejection of this mimetic cycle through loving absorption of the violence and refusal to return it; | • Restorative ritual:  
  o positive mimesis  
  o a safe place created for the voice of the victim to be heard  
  o experience of being believed-in and forgiven  
  o a refusal to submit to the ‘accusatory tendency’ |
| 3) the resulting exposure and neutralisation of the victim mechanism, making some approximation to the reign of God in human affairs. | • Hannah and Imogen co-created a new relationship  
  o a ‘strange’, ‘unfamiliar’ and puzzling encounter  
  o no return to the *status quo ante*  
  ▪ however, a new friendship based on something solid, not ‘fairy dust’  
• Hannah and Imogen no longer defined themselves by their victim status’  
• Restorative ritual was not only unbelievably good for the those directly involved but for the whole school, the *sanctorum communio* |

Figure 11: Girardian elements, Lonergan’s Law of the Cross and case study examples
6.8.1.1 Pneumopathology

However, in the Lonerganian schema not only are there psychic distortions or psychopathology but there is also pneumopathology, named by Doran as “a sickness not of the psyche but of the spirit”.\textsuperscript{127} In these cases the center of bias’s gravity shifts from psychic-affective consciousness to intentional consciousness. Girard’s mimetic theory, although it does not exhaust all possibilities, contributes a nuanced insight into the complexity of what Lonergan has described as dramatic and group bias.\textsuperscript{128} These biases distort the psychic flow and as a consequence negatively affect intentional consciousness. There are other biases identified by Lonergan: the bias of the egoist and the bias of common sense.\textsuperscript{129} These biases distort the second way of being conscious, militating against the disputed theoretical question, the long view, the higher integration, indicating a failure of effective human freedom. As Doran contends:

> In and through the Law of the Cross we are redeemed from the evils that flow from human failures to be intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, including failures freely to reject mimetic violence, as well as those evils that follow from the primal psychic distortions of affect and imagination, the primal [scapegoating] mechanism, that Girard has so brilliantly illuminated. That mechanism, for Christian theology, is a dimension of the moral evil that is a consequence of basic sin. The basic sin itself, precisely as sin, is a failure of human freedom, and so of the human spirit, not of the human sensitive psyche [psychic-affective consciousness].\textsuperscript{130}

This is a significant challenge to the claim of Alison, who posits that basic sin, named in Scholastic theology as originating original sin, \textit{peccatum originale originans}, can be understood mimetically. Or, at least that the failure of free will, which leads to basic

\textsuperscript{127} Doran, “Lonergan and Girard on Redemption,” 60.
\textsuperscript{128} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 214-217, 247-250.
\textsuperscript{129} Lonergan, 244-247, 250-259.
\textsuperscript{130} Doran, “Lonergan and Girard on Redemption,” 60-61.
sin, can be understood mimetically. Alison argues that this claim can be verified in Patristic sources, such as Augustine:

When Augustine came to confront the Pelagians on the subject of the sinful will, he found himself with the difficulty that both he and they had a very strong belief in the free will of original sin. He had to find a way in which the free will in all of us is always automatically distorted from our conception. He found it in the doctrine of Adam’s sin passed on through propagation. I have suggested that we can describe our free will being automatically distorted from our conception in terms of the fact that humans are constitutionally mimetically interindividual and the moment a human culture of distorted desire is formed, this will automatically mean that every human brought into being is formed from within, from the moment of conception, by mimetic desire...Augustine had no difficulty with [being moved by another] when it comes to being moved by God. But the experience of recognising himself being moved by another had become too associated in his mind with an abandonment of moral responsibility brought about by a complacent belief in the force of evil powers which moved one.\(^\text{131}\)

Augustine was so mindful of not falling back into the Manichaeism he had rejected, that he could not extend his own mimetic insights into his anthropology when confronting Pelagius. If psychic-affective and intentional distortions are redeemed by the “Law of the Cross”, perhaps Girard’s mimetic theory, in the hands of a subtle theologian such as Alison, does shed light on both the psychic-affective and intentional ways of being conscious as identified by Lonergan and developed by Doran.\(^\text{132}\)

Furthermore, it is evident that a sophisticated pneumatology is present in the thinking of Girard and Girardians such as Alison. Girard himself observed: “The Spirit is working in history to reveal what Jesus has already revealed”.\(^\text{133}\) As discussed in Chapter 4,

\(^{131}\) Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 296-297.

\(^{132}\) Strictly speaking Girard is not a theologian, but a theoretician of desire and a reader of texts. Girard borrows theological terms when it suits his purpose and perhaps it is fair that professional theologians call him out of bounds from time to time. However, it is the task of theologians to take on the insights of Girard and Girardians in order to work out the consequences of a nascent theology of grace and redemption that may inhere. See Alison, “Girard’s breakthrough”.

Girard is convinced that the Johannine term Paraclete (a transliteration of the Greek parakléitos, meaning ‘lawyer for the defense’) sometimes translated as “Advocate”, is a significant term for the Holy Spirit and one that ought to be promoted more confidently. If “Accuser” is the primary Hebrew meaning of Satan, then the followers of Jesus have the promise of the Paraclete to defend them and lead them into the truth (Jn 14:26, 16:12-14). Thus, the Paraclete is the source of the increasing power to demystify scapegoating. Demystifying scapegoating involves refusing to return evil for evil (Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27); putting a stop to the human tendency to blame that perpetuates cycles of reciprocal violence. This power in action has been referred to in this thesis as “refusing to submit to the accusatory tendency”. Therefore, using Doran’s categories, to refuse to submit to the ‘accusatory tendency’ must be properly understood as a deeply intentional act, an act of human freedom. If Doran is correct that: “sin consists radically not in the psychic mechanism itself but in the failure of free human beings to resist the temptation to yield to the mechanism”, then Girard’s contribution to understanding the nature of the transformation and conversion that has occurred in the restorative ritual is not limited to the psychic-affective consciousness; it extends into at least some dimensions of the intentional acts which pertain to the second dimension of consciousness.

134 Girard, I See Satan Fall, 32, 190.
135 Girard, 2-3.
136 Doran, “Lonergan and Girard on Redemption,” 60.
6.8.1.2 Undergoing the “Law of the Cross”: an articulation of the mission of the theologian and the Catholic school educator

Doran’s assertion that there are limits to the Girardian contribution to theology because of the narrow focus on the Hebrew-Christian texts at the expense of the events that they narrate, can be further challenged. Kaplan has already pointed out deficiencies in the argument that Girardians, like all theologians who occupy themselves with texts, fall into a Barthian “Functional Binitarianism”. Kaplan argues that a robust Girardian pneumatology, as detailed above, militates against such a charge. There are two further points to be made.

First, this thesis argues for a much broader understanding and application of the term “texts”. As has been noted, for Girardians, such as Kirwan, a text is “any cultural product that presents itself for interpretation”. Under this dispensation the Girardian theologian is not restricted to interpretation of biblical texts, although cultural products are interpreted in the light of biblical revelation. The text(s) under consideration in this thesis are restorative practices and the narration of a particular restorative conference, renamed as a ‘restorative ritual’. Additionally, while sacred scripture is a privileged locus of God’s revelation, Dei Verbum affirms that revelation is not restricted to sacred scripture.

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138 Kirwan, Discovering Girard, 120.
Second, Girard and Girardians do ‘read’ and interpret texts, detecting victims and their unheard voices, searching for and uncovering the fundamental sacrificial motifs and patterns. Nevertheless, this activity can quickly become banal and, quite possibly a form of professional theological participation in the victimimage or scapegoating mechanism if there is not some form of commitment to redemption, to what Alison calls “learning to tell a different story”, including authentic solidarity with those who are and have been victims. As Girard himself noted:

\[
\text{[t]he shimmer and play of mimesis are uninteresting. The only interesting task is to integrate all this into a rational framework and transform it into real knowledge.}^{141}
\]

Hence the value of a joint reading of Girard and Lonerganian. A fortiori, real knowledge has impact and effect: it changes the Church, Catholic schools and the world for the better.\(^{142}\) However, there is no safe short-cut into this reality for the theologian. The theologian is implicated in and is a product of the world: indeed, if Girard is correct, the theologian is subject to the same alterity of desire and the same distortions of desire as the human subjects who composed the texts he or she is interpreting. Thus, learning to tell a different story has serious implications in the life of the theologian:

...belief in God and the ability to tell the story, which comes from the victim, despite our own involvement, automatically implies learning how not to receive glory from one another. And this means losing one’s reputation, being considered mad, obsessed, not professional and so on. Yet unless the story we are learning to tell is not simply a clever method for the detection of victims, but rather the bringing to life of the new story of truth in the midst of real circumstances of victimage, then we are not really being theologians at all. To detect victims from the position of intellectual clarity is one thing, to start to

\(^{140}\) Alison, *Faith Beyond Resentment*, 162.


\(^{142}\) What is being spoken of here is a kind of theological praxis, in the same sense of the word praxis intended by Freire: “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it”. Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th anniv. ed., trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005), 51.
To resist the glamour of superiority and to experience dishonour as a professional theologian for the sake of learning to speak the truth could be a profound personal and community experience of the “Law of the Cross”: purifying the resources of intentional consciousness and drawing on them to lead into ongoing moral conversion. Human relationships are so often infected with mimetic rivalry and our communities, institutions and rituals echo the contagion of exclusion, scapegoating and violence. But Christian revelation, in particular the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, unMASKs acquisitive mimesis and the victimage mechanism, and by God’s grace, human persons are set free from this power to discover that mimesis can work as a positive dynamic in the world. Once again Doran interweaves Lonergan and Girard:

at one point in his trinitarian systematics, Lonergan explicitly refers to divine self-communication as effecting an imitation of the divine relations, which in dialogue with Girard we could see as a mimesis that is counter to the infected mimesis that constitutes or at least affects the evils of the human race from which we are set free by, and only by, the Law of the Cross.144

It has been maintained in this thesis, that from a Girardian perspective the key gift of Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection is forgiveness and being believed-in. Jesus the forgiving victim: forgives us for our complicity in acts of violence and unhooking us from our need to create victims or be a victim, believes-in us that we too can offer

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143 Alison, *Faith Beyond Resentment*, 165.
that forgiveness towards others, be transformed in our shame and disgrace and so enter into the discovery of a new story, a new creation, a new relationality, a purified love. In Doran’s words:

perhaps it is precisely here, in the realm of these contaminated relationships and the forgiveness that alone transcends them, that we have the clearest indication that we are going to find as to whether our love is God’s love and so truly without conditions, reservations, restrictions, or qualifications.145

For Hannah and Imogen the grace of being forgiven and believed-in was mediated by the positive mimesis of the teachers through their participation in the restorative ritual.

Alison reminds theologians that the task of interpreting texts and telling a new story is risky and perilous.146 Interpreting texts and learning to tell a new the story from the underside of human history is an exercise of ministry in the Church, and therefore in Catholic education, that requires taking up the cross. To proclaim and to actively seek kinship with those on the margins of the Church, of those at risk of being excluded from Catholic schools, is not often a popular policy within an aspirational, success-oriented culture. It is an act of missionary discipleship and of Christian leadership that is profoundly counter-cultural. As Nouwen advises:

...the leaders of the future will be those who dare to claim their irrelevance in the contemporary world as a divine vocation that allows them to enter into a deep solidarity with the anguish underlying all the glitter of success, and to bring the light of Jesus there.147

146 This insight leads the researcher to ask: what is at stake here for Catholic educators? This question will be taken up in Chapter 7.
Perhaps this is the mission of the theologian and Catholic school educator today: undergo the “Law of the Cross” for the sake of being able to speak the truth pastorally and practically, thereby offering theological reflection and leadership in the name of Jesus.

6.9 Conclusion

An engagement with the research of Lonergan and Lonerganians as it pertains to desire, conversion and the two types of consciousness has opened a rich and nuanced description of the nature of the conversion experienced by the students in the educational context of the Case Study. The significance of the dialectical relationship between psychic consciousness and intentional consciousness is important for this thesis: it gives anthropological precision and theological depth to the life-long spiritual task of becoming a “non-divided” self. Psychic conversion, the re-establishment of the link between the first and second levels of consciousness, born through the positive mimesis of the restorative ritual, led both Hannah and Imogen to important insights about themselves and their relating with each other. Hannah and Imogen experienced the movement away from self-absorption, victimhood, ressentiment, radical lovelessness and self-enclosure toward self-transcendence in their moral and intellectual lives. Their encounter with religious value, through their teachers, Miriam and Deborah, helped Hannah and Imogen discover themselves as originators of value. This led Hannah and Imogen to actively re-shape their relationship as well as the cultural, social and vital values within their milieu. All of this was made possible by the positive, non-rivalrous mimesis of Miriam and Deborah, mediated as the gift of love.
As argued in this Chapter, Hannah and Imogen’s conversion accords with Lonergan’s description of a vertical exercise in freedom. Further enquiry indicates that Girardians and mimetic theory has insight to offer pastoral theologians and Catholic educators in terms of development of the notions of freedom in the second or intentional way of being conscious, transcending the careful distinctions erected by Doran. Finally, it must be acknowledged that this chapter could never have emerged without the cooperation of Hannah, Imogen, Miriam and Deborah. Their profound insights and generous giving genuinely challenged the researcher to render a more adequate (or less inadequate) description of their human experience of transformation. What these discoveries might imply for Catholic schools regarding the formation and professional development of Catholic educators will be presented in Chapter 7.

The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices proposes a theological, cultural and anthropological foundation for revised practices in Catholic schools in their contemporary mission context. The foundation for revised practices in Catholic schools in their contemporary mission context draws from the same theological, cultural and anthropological sources as the pastoral theological approach to restorative practices: Girardian mimetic theory and the theological anthropology of Lonergan and Lonerganians. As demonstrated in this thesis, the restorative approach to social control, in particular the formal restorative conference, is a powerful, transformative process for participants. The revised practices are spiritual formation activities that are designed specifically to engage teachers and leaders with the depth of what they have undergone in the restorative conference, through intentional reflection that seeks to integrate the experience into their subjectivity through understanding, by knowing and naming the experience as transformative. The intentional reflective processes provoke personal and communal inquiry: excavating the meaning of the experience and inviting participants into an understanding of how violence and shame can be transformed, to consider their experience as a personal participation in the mystery of the resurrection. Participants are drawn towards personal insight into forgiveness, grace, the symbol of the cross and the meaning of the resurrection. The revised practices are intended for ongoing formation of staff through on-site professional development and integral to the work of teachers and
leaders who lead, implement and use the restorative approach to social control with students and colleagues.

The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices raises possibilities for further research in theology, missiology and Catholic education. Moreover, the pastoral theological interpretation of restorative practices offers a practical, authentic and transcendent path to unity and is a sign of hope for a divided world.

7.1 The formation challenge

The need for effective spiritual formation of Catholic educators in Australia so that they can actively support the Catholic educational mission of the school is one that is widely documented. Formation, in the context of Catholic education, is the increasingly intentional activity undertaken by school leadership and diocesan education leadership to nourish, develop and grow the spirituality of all staff in the Catholic faith for mission in the Church and world. Christian spirituality is understood here as a way of being and living in the world, in the light of the Trinitarian God. The spiritual formation strategy proposed in this Chapter is founded on the theological anthropology that takes seriously the dialectic of human desire, as outlined in Chapter

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6. A key assumption is that theological reflection also promotes spiritual formation.

7.1.1 The socio-cultural reality

As noted in the NSW-ACT Bishops’ document, *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, Australian Catholic school communities today are comprised of people from many diverse social, religious and cultural backgrounds. Catholic schools also enroll children and young people who have or come from families with nominal religious affiliation. One of the fastest growing groups of students in Catholic schools is those with no-religious background. Religious disaffiliation is a growing trend in Western nations such as Australia. Between 1991 and 2016 the Australian population identifying as ‘No Religion’ increased from 12.9 percent to 31.1 percent. In the same period those identifying as ‘Christian’ or as ‘Other Religions’ decreased from 76.6 percent of the population to 60.3 percent of the population. Mass attendance in Catholic parishes has also declined in the last twenty years, and young Australian

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2 *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, 8, 10.
3 *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, 3.
4 A report by the Independent Schools Council of Australia shows that in 2016, 14 percent of enrolments in all Australian Catholic schools come from families who have no religion or do not state their religion. This is up from 8 percent of enrolments in all Catholic schools in 2006. Notably, the growth of students in this category (“no religion or not stated”) is 8 percent across the three Australian school sectors: Public, Independent and Catholic. Catholic school enrolments from families who identify as Catholic have also fallen 8 percent between 2006 and 2016. Independent Schools Council of Australia, *The Changing Face of Australian Schooling: An ISCA Analysis of the ABS 2016 Census of Population & Housing*, (Deakin, ACT, June 2018), 11.
Catholics under the age of twenty-five are ceasing to identify as Catholic. This sociocultural reality impacts on the readiness of staff who teach and exercise leadership in Catholic schools to intentionally and actively support the ethos and mission of the Catholic school and to teach Religious Education. The effect has been referred to as the “decline in spiritual capital” available in schools. The spiritual and professional formation of staff who teach and lead in Catholic schools must adapt and innovate in the face of this reality. The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices, with its focus on attending to the transformation of the human experience of conflict, presents an important alternative to the standard form of spiritual formation offered in schools and by school system authorities.

7 100,000 Catholics under the age of twenty-five ceased to identify as Catholic between 2001 and 2011, according to social scientist Robert Dixon, “The Science of Listening: Context and Challenges Facing the Catholic Community in Australia,” The Australasian Catholic Record 91, no. 3 (July 2014): 271; “Religious nones [those who do not identify with a religious tradition in census data] are the fastest growing religious group in much of the modern Western world” (a 2007 Australian study is cited in this article), Joel Thiessen and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, “Becoming a Religious None: Irreligious Socialisation and Disaffiliation,” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 56, no. 1 (2017): 64. A 2017 US study Going, Going Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation Among Young Catholics claims that “weak” attachment to the Church is increasing in young US Catholics and estimate that “approximately 12.8 percent of US young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 are former Catholics, and approximately 6.8 percent of US teens between the ages of 15 and 17 are former Catholics”, Robert J. McCarty, John M. Vitek, Saint Mary’s Press and Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (U.S.), Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics (Winona, Minnesota: Saint Mary’s Press, 2017), 5.

8 Gerald Arbuckle, Intentional Faith Communities in Catholic Education: Challenge and Response (Strathfield NSW: St Pauls, 2016), 131; Madden, “Spirituality and Religious Education,” 271-274, 276, 278-279, 282-283; Gowdie, Stirring the Soul of Catholic Education, 76-79.


10 Typically, school or diocesan mandated one-off on-site spirituality days, off-site reflection or retreat days and programs. See Gowdie, Stirring the Soul of Catholic Education, 145-168.
7.1.2 The Bishops’ challenge

In part this chapter is directed to the NSW and ACT Catholic Bishops’ challenge to Catholic educators in their Pastoral Letter of 2007, *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*. In this document, the Bishops’ challenge Catholic educators to ensure that Catholic schools:

1. are truly Catholic in their identity and life;
2. are centers of ‘the new evangelisation’;
3. enable our students to achieve high levels of ‘Catholic religious literacy’ and practice;
4. are led and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals.\(^{11}\)

Points 2 and 4 are particularly relevant to this thesis.

### 7.1.2.1 Point 2 of the Bishops’ challenge

The restorative conference is a participation in the redemption of victimhood and an experience that transforms shame and lovelessness through an inclusive ritual that is given its authority and power by a gentle and strong non-rivalrous, positive mimesis. The restorative conference is a grace-filled experience of human cooperation with God’s power to create ‘something from nothing’. Therefore, it has the potential to disclose for participants an experience of the resurrection and is a powerful kind of ‘new evangelisation’.

\(^{11}\) *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, 5.
7.1.2.2 Point 4 of the Bishops’ challenge

School leadership and staff are the people who promote and use restorative practices and imitate the forgiving victimhood of Jesus and, through the power of positive mimesis, invite the other participants to discover how to be forgiving victims for each other. The staff who lead and participate in the restorative conference are invited into the theological reflection which opens a space for an evangelising moment. The experience of the restorative conference itself provides data used in the process of theological reflection. The restorative meeting is a transformative and spiritually formative (and transformative) experience for staff; a vector for psychic, moral, intellectual and religious conversion and the integration of faith and life, through an educational process of integrating tradition and experience. Not only is the restorative conference a transformative experience, it is also an educative (or formative) opportunity. It is the theological underpinning of this educational claim that will be considered next in this chapter.

7.2 Formation of educators: integrating tradition and experience through reflection on the restorative meeting

Adult education or formation, as with all education or formation, must attend to the person; the human subject. Starting from the interiority of the human subject, Crowe describes education as a two-way movement: an upwards movement, achievement (or experience), and a downwards movement, tradition (or gift). These ‘movements’

12 F. E. Crowe, Old Things and New: A Strategy for Education (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985). Crowe’s thesis applies to school education and to adult education. The key difference between school students and adults is that in adult consciousness, experience is more likely to be mature and receptive.
and the process of integration, are described briefly below.

7.2.1 The ‘upward’ movement: experience

Human consciousness is structured such that there is an intentional striving or dynamism in human consciousness toward attentiveness to data, understanding, truth, and value. The unrestricted desire for complete intelligibility, for what is real, and the complete good of value drives this intentionality. Questioning, wanting to know, moves the subject to achieve apprehensions of intelligibility, truth and value. The on-going process of achievement has the potential for liberation, since our desires for intelligibility, truth and value are unrestricted. That is, human persons in their conscious intending can strive for what is beyond themselves at any given point in time: they strive for understanding, knowledge and value that exceeds their current achievement. Self-transcendence is only ever a conditional and precarious achievement: it is not once and for all, but rather a life-long project.

Man [sic] achieves authenticity in self transcendence...the transcendental notions, that is, our questions for intelligence, for reflection, for deliberation, constitute our capacity for self-transcendence. That capacity becomes actuality when one falls in love.

Love is the goal of the ‘upward’ movement of experience.

7.2.2 The ‘downward’ movement: tradition

The downward movement describes the process of educators handing on their cultural, intellectual and social values and judgements to those being educated. This

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13 See Chapter 6.  
14 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 104-105.
can be named tradition. Tradition is a gift. Tradition, in particular the Catholic faith tradition being handed over to adults, teachers and leaders, who share the mission of Catholic schools, is sourced in the gift of love. The values and judgements of the Catholic faith tradition have their origin in love; knowledge born from religious love, God’s love flooding human hearts.\(^{15}\) It is notable that love is the beginning and the end: the prior gift of tradition finds its source and origin in love and achievement finds its fulfillment in love.\(^{16}\)

In the case of the restorative conference the ‘downward movement’, the traditions being communicated, are the processes used in restorative practices, the philosophy that informs restorative practices and the pastoral theological approach to restorative practices.\(^{17}\) Restorative practices are an intervention deployed to support and enhance the pastoral care of students in Catholic schools. Restorative practices contribute to the maintenance and growth of student social discipline and the maintenance and growth of social capital, contributing to the development of a cohesive community focused on learning and the presence of Christ through the experience of forgiveness, grace, the symbol of the cross and the meaning of the resurrection.

### 7.2.3 The role and significance of ‘wonder’

Miriam and Deborah, the teachers who participated in the restorative conference,

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\(^{16}\) Chapter 6.

\(^{17}\) The processes used in restorative practices and the philosophy that informs restorative practices are described in Chapter 2. The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices is described in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.
were struck by what had happened during and as a result of the restorative conference. Miriam noted that after the experience, the two teachers: “walked around for a couple of days going [saying] ‘Wow! Wow!’”.\(^{18}\) The two teachers were quite speechless. Initially, they could not adequately articulate their experience. Their experience transcended their cognitive-linguistic capabilities. In other words, the restorative conference was an experience of wonder for the two teachers. These two highly intelligent educators with much professional experience found themselves in a place of wonder. Wonder presents a critical moment for the possibility of integrating faith and life experience. The human sense of wonder is indicative of the human drive to understand. Significantly, understanding is the meeting point between gift (tradition) and the reality of being human (experience).

7.2.4 Understanding: the meeting place between achievement and gift, between experience and tradition.

Understanding is a personal experience, a built-in dynamism of human consciousness, an achievement. Understanding is personal and unique. The drive to understand experience is integral to human conscious intentionality. Lonergan, following Aristotle and Aquinas, maintains that understanding is a distinct activity of generalising from experience.\(^{19}\) Generalisations are reached by forming an image to study the problem: “[t]he image moves the understanding to understand.”\(^{20}\) Moreover, Crowe points out

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\(^{18}\) Chapter 5. Miriam’s use of the verb “going” in place of the more grammatically correct “saying” could simply be a colloquial expression. However, the use of “going” could also be indicative of the strength of the experience. The experience impacted the “going-on” of the teachers’ lives, not just their speech.

\(^{19}\) Lonergan, Insight, [ix].

\(^{20}\) Lonergan, Insight, quotation on the title page; Aristotle, De Anima, III, 7.
that “intelligibility is immanent in the image”.\textsuperscript{21} The image is not just an aid to understanding, but is central to the act of understanding. The act of understanding is unique to each human subject and her or his concrete situation; each person finds their own images and ‘plays’ with them until intelligibility emerges and a generalisation of the experience can be articulated. In other words, imagination needs to be let free to play with the data of experience. In this case, the ‘data of experience’ refers to the transformation of desire through the experience of the restorative conference: the dialectic of desire that is restored in subjects through the structured dialogue of the restorative conference.

7.2.4.1 Theological understanding

Theological understanding is understanding in the area of mystery.\textsuperscript{22} Mystery, by definition, can never be fully understood. As Lonergan maintains:

\begin{quote}
[f]or the divine mysteries by their very nature so exceed created intellect that, even given in revelation and accepted by faith, they remain as it were wrapped in the veil of faith.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

Understanding in the realm of mystery can only be imperfect and analogous. Therefore, those doctrines from ‘above’, the doctrines of tradition must be explained and understood by means of analogy. Analogy offers the only (and even so, imperfect) understanding of divine truth. The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices as established, tested and developed in this thesis provides a rich vein for the imagination to mine analogical understandings of the doctrines of forgiveness and grace, the symbol of the cross and the meaning of the resurrection.

\textsuperscript{21} Crowe, Old Things and New, 44.
\textsuperscript{22} Crowe, Old Things and New, 139.
\textsuperscript{23} Lonergan, Method, 321.
7.2.5 Theological reflection to facilitate understanding

Whilst understanding is personal and unique, it is often developed within a community of discourse and validated in a community of discourse. Teachers who experience a restorative meeting and begin to wonder about its meaning(s) present a critical moment for the possibility of the integration of tradition and experience through small group learning or spiritual formation experiences. Theologically educated teachers and leaders will facilitate these group formation experiences on-site and develop resources to support the learning. Whilst academic rigour and attention to the grammar of theological reflection will characterise these formation experiences, the primary experience of the participants will be the encounter with teachers and leaders who facilitate the formation experiences through a positive, non-rivalrous mimesis, mediated as the gift of love. These formation experiences will be designed to be transformative for teachers and, as a consequence, teachers may discover for themselves the word about the gift; that is, to accept and know the gift that they are loved by God, to respond with love in return and the possibility of coming to know the “word of religion, of accepting the judgments of fact and the judgments of value that [the Christian] religion proposes”. This is a form of the ‘new evangelisation’: it takes seriously the challenge of the contemporary split between the gospel and culture, and may lead “the individual into a new and deeper relationship with Christ that

26 Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, 20.
transforms both personal and private life”. A method of inquiry beginning from the lived experience of teachers and leaders will have resonance for them as educators, and is promoted, endorsed and recommended by the Church teaching magisterium, Catholic educational authorities, theologians and teacher educators. In short, the transformation of conflict, understood by teachers and leaders as an experience of the resurrection through a process of spiritual formation that takes seriously the interiority of the human subject, may lead to spiritual transformation.

7.3 Formation of educators: a school priority

Christ is the foundation and dynamic authority of the whole educational enterprise of the Catholic school. The Christ centered, incarnational goal of the Catholic school is the ‘holistic’ or ‘integral’ human formation of students. As the Congregation for Catholic Education proposes:

The integral formation of the human person, which is the purpose of education, includes the development of all the human faculties of the students, together with preparation for professional life, formation of ethical and social awareness, becoming aware of the transcendent, and religious

28 See Chapter 2.
31 *The Catholic School*, 34; Miller, *The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools*, 26.
The goal of integral or holistic formation of students places demands on teachers and other staff in Catholic schools. Teachers, support staff and administrators in Catholic schools require a holistic or integral ‘professional formation’ for themselves which includes a vast range of cultural, psychological and learning and teaching opportunities, growth in humanity and an encounter with Christ. This demands an integrated, sequential, developmental and personalised and Christ-centered approach to professional learning within a culture of continuous improvement and growth. Staff formation of this kind is essential for responding to the socio-cultural reality described earlier “in which it is increasingly difficult to educate”. Therefore, Catholic school leaders and administrators claim the time and space to assist teachers to come to know Jesus by attending to spiritual formation and practicing theological reflection together. Allocating time and resources in the professional development program for intentional spiritual formation, including theological reflection, must be a priority.

7.3.1 ‘Integral’ staff formation through restorative practices

As has been demonstrated in this thesis, human experiences of conflict based in rivalry and resentment are transformed through the restorative meetings or ‘rituals’ carried out in the educating community and have the potential to open participants to be

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32 Lay Catholics in Schools, 17.
33 Educating Together in Catholic Schools, 21-25.
34 Educating Together in Catholic Schools, 20.
attentive to the seemingly hidden and yet always active presence of the Trinitarian God. As expressed in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

God’s presence accompanies the sincere efforts of individuals and groups to find encouragement and meaning in their lives. He dwells among them, fostering solidarity, fraternity, and the desire for goodness, truth and justice. This presence must not be contrived but found, uncovered.  

The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices makes manifest, in the everyday work of the community, the God who “brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity”. Consequently, Catholic schools and school systems must prioritise spiritual formation activities that connect explicitly with the daily life of the school. Spiritual formation activities that invite teachers and leaders to see and interpret reality, conflict and suffering through the eyes of faith and open staff to have their lives and experiences interpreted through the gospel. Spiritual formation activities of this kind also encourage staff to put on Jesus’ ‘lenses’ and Jesus’ mind and help staff to inhabit what it means to be co-creators in the ongoing and unfolding story of creation and grasp the truth of Jesus’ saying “you will do even greater things” (Jn 14:12).  

Staff spiritual formation of this kind will support the development of “theologians at

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36 *Evangelii Gaudium*, 71. “[A] central breakthrough in the biblical revelation is that God is manifest in the ordinary, in the actual, in the daily, in the now, and can even be revealed through the sinful and the evil. This is quite different than you might assume, that God is only offering us the pure, the spiritual, the right idea, or the ideal anything. This is why Jesus stands religion on its head! We Catholics used to speak of ‘actual grace’ in this light. That is why I say it is our experiences that transform us – if we are willing to experience our experiences all the way through, even and most especially the hard and wounding ones.” Richard Rohr, *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* (Cincinnati: St Anthony Messenger, 2007), 16.

37 *Evangelii Gaudium*, 278.

38 “[Discipleship] involves willingness to learn from one’s own contemporary experience, and to grow into progressively deeper understanding of the meaning and demands of the Gospel”, Monica Hellwig, *What are Theologians Saying Now?* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1993), 38.
the grass roots”;

39 teachers who are capable of reflecting theologially on their experience and with students in their classes.  

40 Formation should also be individualised and tailored to each staff member’s particular needs and stage of development. Senior staff should be designated to accompany each educator.  

41 Formation of Catholic educators must also include expectation and support, and find the appropriate balance between these elements in policies and procedures.  

42 It must also be a ‘formation of the heart’:

‘[teachers] need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others’, so that their educational commitment becomes ‘a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love’ (cf. Gal 5:6). In fact, even ‘care for instruction means loving’ (Wis 6:17). It is only in this way that they can make their teaching a school of faith, that is to say, a transmission of the Gospel, as required by the educational project of the Catholic school.  

43 The spiritual formation process outlined above (7.2) is a formation of the heart which is attentive to the interiority of the human person and is open to explore affective understanding and knowledge, as highlighted in the pastoral theological approach to restorative practices.

Finally, formation is for mission.  

44 Catholic schools share in promoting and living an
authentic humanity that is the joy of the Gospel to the world: “bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing”, particularly with those on the margins of our communities. To proclaim and to actively seek kinship with those on the margins of the Church, of those at risk of being excluded from Catholic schools, is not often a popular policy within an aspirational, success-oriented culture. It is an act of missionary discipleship and of Christian leadership that is profoundly counter-cultural. Pope Francis through the draft constitution Praedicate Evangelium (‘Preach the Gospel’) is planning to restructure the entire Vatican curia so that the evangelising mission is the central dicastery and organising principle of the Catholic church’s bureaucracy, as noted in Crux on 22 April 2019. Taking the lead from Pope Francis, Catholic school leadership and school system leadership could make their central organising principle the possibility of human transformation in communities of learning: ‘bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing’ to all.

7.4 Recommendations for further research

7.4.1 Student-led teacher spiritual formation and school reform

Restorative practices are an example of ‘participatory learning’; of working with those most directly affected by conflict through a learning and decision-making process that is directed to resolve and transform conflict. It is one of the few pastoral care practices in schools that actively involves ‘student voice’: a way in which “students might have the opportunity to participate in school decisions that will shape their lives and the

45 Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 273.
46 See Chapter 6.
lives of their peers”. Since the greatest in-school influence on students are teachers, research on the influence of students and ‘student voice’ on the spiritual formation of teachers and leaders would be a fruitful and original zone of inquiry. Teachers would encounter religious value through a dialogue with students, leading to a movement away from self-absorption, victimhood, ressentiment, radical lovelessness and self-enclosure toward self-transcendence in their moral and intellectual lives. The mimetic draw toward the ‘non-divided self’ would be a mutual experience, despite the power imbalance between teacher and students. A mission theology for schools would be centered on a student-led dialogue. This practice of intergenerational formation is directed toward energising the prophetic, self-critical reform of schools and contributing to the transformation of school culture recommended by Pope Francis in the recent document Christus vivit.

7.4.2 Schools as a ‘mimetic structure of blessing’

Schools and social service organisations that adopt and commit to the ongoing implementation of restorative practices are an example of what Redekop describes as “a mimetic structure of blessing”. A mimetic structure of blessing is characterised by

49 The power imbalance would need to be appropriately managed and supported through the standard professional policies and requirements. For example, Diocese of Wagga Wagga, Guidelines for Professional Conduct, 2017.
openness, creativity, generative of options, generous and life oriented. Mimetic structures of blessing reverse mimetic structures of violence, which are characterised by being closed and confining, acquisitive, reducing of options and death oriented. Redekop identifies reconciliation, which can be understood as an ongoing relational transformation that is the result of being forgiven and believed-in, as key in the movement from violence towards blessing. “Reconciliation has the effect of reducing the grip of mimetic structures of violence and setting people on a trajectory that takes them into mimetic structures of blessing.” Catholic schools and social service organisations that have adopted and remained committed to the ongoing implementation of restorative practices would make valuable subjects for socio-ethnographic studies, examining administrative, leadership and pastoral structures for patterns of openness, creativity, generativity, generosity and life-giving orientations. These categories could inform the development of a reflective tool for school and system leadership teams to enact self-critical reform as described above.

7.4.3 Revisiting the ethos of Catholic schools

Articulating the distinctive ethos of the Catholic school is a difficult task for Catholic educators. Deehan argues that this is because it means articulating the presence of the risen Lord at the heart of the school community. Signs and symbols, prayer and liturgy, word and witness point to the resurrection, but they are ambivalent vehicles because each member of the school community is on their own unique, complex and personal journey of faith. The mysterious dark light of the resurrection is present in

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52 Redekop, From Violence to Blessing, 256.
the school community through the Holy Spirit but transcends human understanding. The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices establishes that a restorative meeting is a powerful ritual of inclusion that reverses the human tendency to exclude, accuse and scapegoat and discloses the mystery of the resurrection through the human experience of being believed in and forgiven. Restorative practices transform shame and invite participants to share in discovering a new way of being community together. Here is a starting point for a longitudinal research project to name the distinctive ethos of Catholic schools through site-based spiritual formation activities grounded in the experience of the restorative meeting.

7.4.4 A theology of grace for today

This thesis has demonstrated that the human experience of self-absorption, victimhood, resentiment and radical lovelessness requires more than a set of propositions or a good and intelligent philosophy to be transformed: grace, or what Arcamone describes as “effective love” is what is required. 54 Further research is recommended on the contribution of mimetic theory to a theology of grace that takes seriously the profoundly social or interindividual reality of human becoming.

7.4.5 A more adequate description of the link between the psychic-affective and intentional dimensions of consciousness

Lonergan uses the Freudian term “censor” to describe the link between the psychic-affective consciousness and intentional consciousness. The censor is what is

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54 Effective love facilitates “psychic healing and affective self-transcendence”, Arcamone, Religion and Violence, 203.
transformed in psychic conversion, allowing a person to truly be attentive to the data of experience as it is given in a person’s sensitive, symbolic and imaginal consciousness. However, contemporary research points out Freud’s limited appreciation for and understanding of the unconscious and the link to sensitive, symbolic and imaginal consciousness.\(^{55}\) The link may in fact be a function of the highly sophisticated ‘adaptive unconscious’ of the mind, which has evolved in humans to allow them to survive living in social worlds.\(^{56}\) An exploration of the nature and function of the adaptive unconscious and its operation as the link between psychic-affective consciousness and intentional consciousness would be an important development of Lonergan’s work. Furthermore, proponents of the existence of an adaptive unconscious recognise the formative power of the social reality of human living and responding, thereby inviting dialogue with mimetic theory. For example, Girardians argue that the ‘self within’ can only be accessed through relationships with others ‘beyond ourselves’ and proponents of the adaptive unconscious theory argue that there is no direct access to the adaptive unconscious. However, Hoffman and Wilson propose that one way for persons to gain access to the adaptive unconscious is by inference, that is by learning to see the self through the eyes of others.\(^{57}\) Research in this space may assist in bringing more precision to the intuitions and observations of Girardians regarding interpersonal psycho-dynamics.


\(^{56}\) Wilson, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 6.

7.5 Conclusion

The Catholic school is an ecclesial community. As an ecclesial community, it is God’s community and therefore it is everyone’s community. The Catholic school is also a community of learning where Christ is the teacher behind the teaching. Christ is the teacher of the Catholic school who calls those in Catholic schools to imitate him in his victimhood: to be free from the domination of victimhood; to be an ecclesial community which stretches its heart toward those whose mimetic and natural desires are distorted; to love those who are grasping at being because they are mired in radical lovelessness.

In 2013 Pope Francis called on theologians to develop a theology for mission:

A theology – and not simply a pastoral theology – which is in dialogue with other sciences and human experiences is most important for our discernment on how best to bring the Gospel message to different cultural contexts and groups.58

The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices is an interpretation of a social disciplinary intervention through the eyes of the resurrected Christ. As such the restorative conference is an inclusive ritual in which participants undergo the transformation of shame and victimhood through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate. As participants experience being believed-in and forgiven, they receive themselves as a new creation; actively sharing in and contributing to God’s ongoing project of creation as co-creators. This is an experience of the resurrection; it

58 Pope Francis, Evangeli Gaudium, 133.
transforms individuals, relationships and communities. It is hope for the world.
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Salovey, Peter and John D. Mayer. ”Emotional Intelligence.” In Imagination, Cognition and Personality 9, no. 3 (1990):185-211.


Appendices


Our Catholic school communities encounter and engage with Jesus and His message.

We achieve this as communities of:

**Faith**
Teaching, celebrating and living our Catholic faith

**Learning**
Inspiring, informing and engaging our communities in learning

**CARE**
Building caring and supportive environments that promote wellbeing and learning

**Service**
Embracing leadership which fosters collaborative practices for mutual benefit and partnership

**Stewardship**
Caring for people, creation and resources
II. Bishop Gerard Hanna, Continuing the Adventure: Bishop Hanna’s Mandate to all Involved in Catholic Schools.
III. The Ideal Classroom Statement.

Adapted from ‘Don’t Just Stand There, Yell Something!’ (P. Miles, p.17, 2003)

- How does this exercise affirm your current teaching practice?
- How could this exercise assist you (and your students) in creating the ideal classroom in 2008?

The Next Step: Discuss the findings with your students and what behaviours could support the Ideal Classroom becoming the everyday classroom. Share your methods of engaging the students in this process with each other.
V. Marist Youth Care, *Restorative Practices Resources.*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Restorative Practices - The Principles</th>
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1. **Foster awareness in the student** of how others have been affected.

2. **Avoid scolding or lecturing.** This often results in the student reacting defensively. It distracts them from noticing other people's feelings.

3. **Involve the student actively.** Instead of simply doling out punishment, which the student is expected to accept passively, in a Restorative intervention the student is asked to speak. They face and listen to those who have been affected by their inappropriate behaviour. They help decide how to repair the harm and make a commitment to this. The student is held accountable.

4. **Accept ambiguity.** Often fault is unclear and people can agree to accept the ambiguous situation.

5. **Separate the deed from the doer.** We can recognise a student's worth, their virtues and accomplishments while disapproving of their wrongdoing.

6. **See every serious instance of wrongdoing and conflict as an opportunity for learning.** Negative incidents can be used constructively to build empathy and a sense of community in the hope that there is a reduction of negative incidents in the future.

7. **Restorative practices must be systemic, not situational.** Every attempt on an individual level to use these principles needs to be well supported by the broader system. How can the system be transformed in ways likely to minimise the chance of further harm?
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Facilitator was clear about purpose &amp; process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Facilitator kept a high degree of control over the process.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Student (central to the meeting) was given an opportunity to speak &amp; respond to the key question, “who has been affected &amp; how?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Other people in the meeting had an opportunity to speak about how they were affected.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>The parent(s) were validated and heard.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>The positive peer was given input &amp; affirmed</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>The student’s strengths were named.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>The student made an attempt to make amends.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>The group contributed to a positive outcome plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The student(s) were positively engaged with a re-entry plan</td>
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- How could this process be improved?
- What strengths would you name in this process?
- Other comments & recommendations
Restorative Practices in Post Suspension Interviews

**GOALS:**

The Restorative Interview with Key Stakeholders aims to:

1. Increase learning out of misbehaviour.
2. Increase relational thinking – how people are affected.
3. Devise a positive plan as a way forward.

**SEVEN LINEAR STEPS:**

1. Keep a high degree of structure – Establish purpose and process.
   **Key words** -
   - “This is a highly structured process aimed at this young person learning something out of this incident. There are two parts to this meeting –
   - First we will talk about how people have been affected.
   - Second we will make a plan for a positive way forward.”

2. Introduce each person and explain why they are there.
   - Include the student, parents, peers, Year Coordinator and teacher (if there was a specific incident).

3. Ask student to talk about the behaviour, who was affected and how.
   **Key words** -
   - “This is not about us judging your character. We are here to talk specifically about the behaviour leading to the suspension, who was affected by that behaviour and how they were affected.”

4. Have each person talk about how they were affected. Interject when there is blaming, personal comments or dredging up of the past.
   - See order of questioning on seating arrangement diagram.

5. Talk about the student’s strengths.
   - “While we clearly disapprove of what has happened we need to also acknowledge your strength’s.”

6. Ask the student if there is anything they wish to say to each of the people affected by their behaviour.
“I want you to think about how each person has been affected. Is there anything you would like to say to anyone here that you think would be helpful?”

7. Devise a plan for positive change that is realistic and achievable. Incorporate in the plan, support and management of setbacks. The plan is not a contract that if broken, results in expulsion.
   - “What needs to happen for us to see a positive way forward?”
   - “What needs to happen to make amends/repair to the damaged relationships?”
   - “If the same situation happens again, how could you act differently?”
   - “When you leave this meeting the other students might quiz you about what has happened here. What could you say in reply that might be helpful?”

Restorative Meeting Seating Arrangement

- Parent of Student Offender
- Student Offender
- Supportive Peer
- Year Coordinator
- Offended Person
- AP or Principal Facilitator

*If the “Offended Person” is a student then you would include their parent(s).*
Prompts & Guidelines:

1. The facilitator needs to speak with each participant prior to the Restorative meeting, explaining the purpose & desired outcomes.

2. It is essential that **ALL** key stakeholders attend.

3. The facilitator needs to run the meeting with a high degree of structure. In the first part of the meeting, participants only speak in response to the facilitator's questions.

4. The offended teacher needs to come to the meeting with an understanding of the goals of a restorative meeting.

5. Focus on bringing about learning & repairing relationships, rather than consequences for their own sake.

6. The facilitator needs to focus on the key incident/behaviours & not get sidetracked to other issues or past events.

7. When formulating a plan, each strategy needs to be collaboratively discussed & in agreement with the student. Check if the strategy is achievable, realistic & helpful in the future. The group does not need to accept every consequence that is suggested. Too many consequences are counterproductive to a restorative approach.

8. The support person nominated by the offending student should be someone who will be a positive influence and support to the student in the future. If the student makes a negative choice the facilitator needs to advise the student to make a more suitable one.
VI. Restorative Questions Scaffold, modified for younger students

Affective Questions

2. How did it happen?
3. What did you do?
4. Who do you think was hurt?
5. How did that make them feel?
6. How did you feel?
7. What needs to happen to make things right?
8. What could you do different next time?

Incident
Affect
Solution
Learning

Adapted from Marist Youth Care 2010
# SUSPENSION, EXCLUSION AND EXPULSION PROCEDURES

## DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA

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- Pastoral Care Policy  
- Safe Schools Policy  
- Discipline Policy & Procedures |
SUSPENSION, EXPULSION AND EXCLUSION PROCEDURES

1. Preamble

In accepting the enrolment of a student, the staff of a Catholic school take on the responsibility for the care and guidance of that student.

This care and guidance is carried on in a school climate characterised by Gospel values. Such values emphasise the development of self-discipline based on justice, self-esteem and reconciliation. The dignity of the individual in a school remains of the utmost importance ‘respecting the dignity and uniqueness of each student.’

Given such an environment, the action of excluding or expelling a student occurs only on very rare occasions and only after considerable assistance has been provided to the student and the family in an effort to overcome difficulties which surround that student.

2. General Principles

2.1 Schools make every effort to ensure that education is a rewarding and relevant experience for all students; ‘providing a comprehensive curriculum of quality and challenge for all’ and ‘valuing effort, achievement and excellence in learning.’

2.2 It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that students, parents and staff are fully aware of the school/college’s pastoral care policy and discipline code.

2.3 The principal seeks early and positive support from parents or caregivers in resolving discipline and behaviour problems. Suspension provides a period where all parties can seek a positive resolution to the issue.

2.4 It is essential that suspension is seen as a strategy within the pastoral care policy and discipline code of the school. These suspension strategies are to be used only in serious cases of misbehaviour or non-compliance and in accordance with these guidelines. The strategies must be well advertised to students and parents. Principals should use their available authority immediately if they believe that the safety of staff or students is at risk.

2.5 When considering these strategies the principal ensures that no student is discriminated against in terms of gender, race, religious or cultural background, socio-economic status, physical or intellectual disability (see Point 3)

1. CSO Vision and Mission. 1999
2.6 The motivation, work and safety of other students and staff are not be jeopardised.

2.7 The principal may refuse enrolment of a student on the grounds of previously unacceptable behaviour at another school, if there is evidence that the student has not learned the appropriate skill to manage this behaviour.

2.8 Each school maintains records of suspension, exclusions and expulsions. These records are made available to the Director of Schools upon request.

2.9 Only the principal or designated representative suspends a student.

2.10 Only the Director of Schools or designated representative expels a student.

2.11 Decisions to suspend or expel a student are underpinned by the principles of procedural fairness. These principles require that individuals have the right to respond (the hearing rule) and the right to an unbiased hearing (the bias rule).

2.12 Suspension, expulsion or exclusion are considered as responses to serious offences. A serious offence is defined as an activity or behaviour by a student which:

- seriously undermines the ethos of the Catholic school; or
- consistently and deliberately fails to comply with any lawful order of a principal or teacher; or
- is offensive or dangerous to the physical or emotional health of any staff member, visitor or any student; or
- consistently and deliberately interferes with the educational opportunities of other students.

3. Guidelines for Suspension

Suspension means temporary withdrawal of a student’s right to attendance at the school. It is a disciplinary measure, which may be invoked by the principal or designated representative, where a student’s conduct and behaviour are deemed to be in conflict with the expectations and values of the school community. It is not to be confused with “time away from school” that has been mutually agreed as an intervention outcome. (See DDA or CSO Learning Support Services Handbook for definition of a student with disability)

3.1 In determining whether a student's misbehaviour is serious enough to warrant suspension (i.e. exclusion from attending school), the principal considers factors including the safety and welfare of the student, staff and other students in the class or school. The length of suspension, which varies depending on the nature of the student's behaviour, is at the discretion of the principal.

3.2 Suspension may be short (up to three days) or long (four to ten days). The principal informs the Director of Schools of all suspensions and confirms relevant details in writing within three school days of initiating the suspension.
3.3 Appropriate records are maintained and consultation undertaken with parents or caregivers in accordance with the school’s pastoral care policy and discipline code.

3.4 In some circumstances, the principal determines that a student should be suspended immediately. This will usually be due to a concern for the safety of students or staff because of violence, threats of violence, or the presence of weapons or illegal drugs.

3.5 Principals provide in writing the circumstances for a suspension, provide ongoing learning activities and state the first available time for resolution.

3.6 Principals suspend immediately and consistently with these procedures, any student whose behaviour includes the following:

3.6.1 Possession of a suspected illegal drug
Suspension is to occur immediately if the substance is being represented by the student as an illegal drug or on confirmation that the substance is, in fact, illegal (see Management of Drug Related Issues in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Armidale policy).

3.6.2 Violence or threat of serious physical violence
Any student intentionally causing injury or threatening serious physical violence against another student or teacher will be suspended immediately.

3.6.3 Possession of a prohibited weapon
Any student possessing a prohibited weapon, or using or threatening to use any item or instrument as a weapon, will be suspended immediately. The matter must also be reported to the police.

3.7 Principals also suspend, consistent with these procedures, any student whose behaviour includes:

3.7.1 Persistent disobedience
Students who, in their relationships with staff, are persistently disobedient, insolent or engage in verbal harassment and abuse, may be suspended.

3.7.2 Persistent disruption
Students who persistently disrupt and prevent the learning and teaching of others may be suspended.

3.7.3 Breach of school rules
Students who breach the school’s/college’s published rules and regulations may be suspended.
3.8 In circumstances other than those outlined in 3.4 and 3.5 above, suspension usually occurs after the principal has:

- ensured that all appropriate and available student welfare strategies and discipline options have been applied and documented
- ensured that all appropriate support personnel available, within the school system and externally, have been involved
- taken reasonable steps to ensure that discussion appropriate to the circumstances has occurred with the student and/or parent(s)/caregiver(s) regarding specific misbehaviour which the school considers unacceptable and which may lead to suspension, as close as possible to the time of the event
- provided to the student and/or parent(s)/caregiver(s) a formal written caution detailing these behaviours, as well as clear expectations of what is required in future. All action taken should be recorded in appropriate school files.

3.9 Students who attend school premises without the permission of the principal during periods of suspension, expulsion or exclusion can be asked to leave the premises by the principal or person then in charge of the site. If they refuse to leave, police are to be called.

4. Deciding On, Notifying and Resolving a Suspension

4.1 The principal informs the student of the grounds on which the suspension is being considered. The student is given the opportunity to respond, with the support of a person if needed.

4.2 The student's response is considered before a decision to suspend is made.

4.3 The decision to suspend is made by the principal or authorised delegate.

4.4 A student is not sent out of school before the end of the school day without notification being made to a parent/caregiver and, if necessary, agreement reached about arrangements for the collection of the student from school.

4.5 Notification of suspension is made to parents or caregivers in writing, within 24 hours after the event or series of events.

4.6 In all cases, the notification includes:

- Notice of the suspension and its length
- The reasons for the suspension
- The clear expectation that the student will continue with studies while suspended, and work is provided by the school
4.7 Parents/caregivers are referred to the school's published discipline code.

4.8 The Service Leader (CSO) is advised of the decision to suspend a student by the principal.

4.9 At the earliest opportunity, the principal or authorised delegate, convenes a suspension resolution meeting with the student and the parents/caregivers to discuss the basis on which the suspension will be resolved.

4.10 If, despite the school's/college's requests, parents or caregivers are unable or unwilling to attend a suspension resolution meeting, the principal considers the individual merits of the case and refers the matter to the Service Leader (CSO). Alternative steps are taken to resolve the suspension and facilitate the student's return to school.

5. Guidelines for exclusion or expulsion

Exclusion is the act of preventing a student's admission to a number of schools' 5.7.1. BoS

Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from one particular school' 5.7.1. BoS

Exclusion or expulsion is an extreme disciplinary step reserved for cases of gross misconduct, serious breaches of school rules, or behaviour that is persistently disruptive.

5.1 Exclusion or expulsion is generally preceded by a history of previous suspension.

5.2 Exclusion or expulsion are sanctions applied only as a last resort, and after all other measures have failed.

5.3 Exclusion or expulsion are preceded by ongoing consultation with the parents or caregivers, concerned, appropriate staff and the Director of Schools.

5.4 Careful consideration is given to the overall good of the individual student and the welfare of the school community.

5.5 No student is to excluded and/or expelled from school except by the authority of the Director of Schools.

Procedures for exclusion or expulsion

A decision to exclude/expel a student from a Diocesan school is made by the Director of Schools on recommendation from the Service Leader (CSO) and the school principal.
When recommending exclusion or expulsion the principal:

5.7 Places the student on suspension pending the outcome of the decision-making process.

5.8 Notifies the student and the parents/caregivers that exclusion or expulsion is being recommended, giving reasons for the possible action and allowing seven school days for the student, parents/caregivers to respond.

5.9 Provides the parents/caregivers with a copy of the documentation on which the recommendation to exclude/expel is based (taking into account the need to protect the anonymity and privacy of the complainants and/or witnesses).

5.10 Considers any response from the student and parents/caregivers before proceeding further.

5.11 Gives the student and parents/caregivers reasonable notice of an opportunity to attend a formal interview with the principal.

5.12 Provides the parents/caregivers with information on the implications of this action, their rights to an appeal, and the appropriate procedures for submitting an appeal.

If, having completed the action outlined above, a principal decides to recommend exclusion or expulsion, the principal forwards a submission to the Director of Schools detailing the reasons, the action taken to moderate the student's behaviour (where appropriate), a copy of all required documentation and any response from the student and parents/caregivers. This is forwarded via the Service Leader (CSO) to the Director of Schools.

While consideration is being given to exclusion/expulsion the student remains on suspension. A decision is made as soon as practicable following the submission reaching the Director of Schools.

7. Appeals Processes for exclusion or expulsion

Students and parents who consider that correct procedures have not been followed, or that an unreasonable decision has been made, may appeal.

Appeals are made in writing stating the grounds on which the appeal is being made. Appeals are made to the Director of Schools about a recommendation to exclude/expel a student.

The Director of Schools:

- Deals with the appeal within four school weeks of its lodgement
- Ensures that communication lines are maintained with the person or persons making the appeal and that they are kept aware of the progress of the appeal
- Reviews all relevant material, particularly in light of Procedural Fairness (Appendix A)
- 7 -

- Ensures that appropriate material has been made available to the student and his or her parents/caregivers.

- Advises all parties in writing of the outcome of the appeal and the specific reasons for reaching the decision.

Where an appeal for an exclusion/expulsion is upheld, the Director of Schools will decide what further action is to be taken.

The fact that an appeal has been lodged does not put on hold the principals' decision to suspend with a recommendation to exclude/expel from the school or Diocesan system of schools.