

Paraphrasing Clausewitz: Peace is a mere continuation of war by other means
About Otto Bauer's "Barbarism" and the "Apocalypse of Prodigal Sons"

1. The Path into the Unknown

Before we discuss the central topic of this essay, we have to begin with a short historical and biographical introduction on Otto Bauer. It may be unusual, but I don't want to begin this introduction with his birth in 1897 in Vienna. I'm also not interested in a narration of his childhood and adolescence, or in a report of his activities as leader of the 1926 founded *Union of Religious Socialists* in Vienna. My approach on Otto Bauer is in a way more radical. I'll start with his personal and intimate catastrophe. Like Otto Bauer in one of his autobiographical texts I'll also begin with April 7th 1938 at Vienna South Station, only a few weeks after Hitler's invasion of Austria. This day changed the life of Otto Bauer and his family. It was the beginning of the exile, the beginning of the *Path into the Unknown* (Der Weg ins Unbekannte). The path into the unknown is not only the title of a text of Otto Bauer. The *Path into the Unknown* describes and tells us more: it is an existential metaphor for a breakup. It means a breakup in a still uncertain path, leaving behind his own history and his own efforts, but always, like the Abraham, a breakup in confidence and hope in God.¹

Otto Bauer has been forced to leave Austria because of his political activities. The escape from the Nazi-regime was arranged by friends, namely Joseph Buttinger and his wife Muriel Morris-Gardiner, while the Czechoslovak consulate in Vienna provided the false passports. The Bauer-family spent their first two years of the exile in Switzerland. They temporarily housed at their friends Leonhard Ragaz and Clara Ragaz-Nadig in Zurich. Leonhard Ragaz was pastor, professor for systematic theology at the University of Zurich and the major exponent of religious socialism in Switzerland. His wife Clara was a well known peace-activist and feminist. Otto Bauer and Leonhard Ragaz met in the early twenties of the 19th century during a conference of the international movement of religious socialism in Germany. The correspondence between them testifies their intensive friendship and their common passion. In order to solve the social question, both were convinced that true liberation comes from God's grace and the messianic message of the Kingdom of God. They believed that the socialist movement is a concrete place in history in which the power of the Kingdom of God operates.²

Briefly after Bauer's arrival in Zurich in 1938, the two friends Bauer and Ragaz wrote an important programmatic appeal entitled *A New Heaven and a New Earth* (Ein neuer Himmel und eine neue Erde). This text was the last official writing of the international movement of the religious socialists before the breakout of World War II. In 1940 the Bauer-family emigrated to the USA. They

¹ cf. Otto Bauer, *Der Weg ins Unbekannte*, manuscript.

² cf. Otto Bauer, *Das Wiener Gespräch*, manuscript.

were guests at the “Scattergood”, a hostel for European refugees in West Branch, Iowa, managed by the local Quaker community. Finally the family settled down in New Jersey, where Otto Bauer’s progenies still live. Otto Bauer worked until his retirement as librarian at the “Buttinger Library” in New York City. He died in 1987 during a holiday in Austria. Otto Bauer’s writings are currently part of a research-project at the Universities of Innsbruck and Vienna.

As mentioned above, I decided to start this presentation on Bauer’s personal catastrophe. This experienced catastrophe was on the one hand the result of the political overthrow in Austria, Europe and finally in the world. But on the other hand, this experience was for Bauer a new beginning. This event was the beginning of an ideological change. Going along this *Path into the Unknown*, Bauer fulfilled a turn in his own worldview. We might say it was the beginning of an existential and intellectual turn, away from the ideas and ideals of religious socialism into a deeply apocalyptic interpretation of Christianity and an apocalyptical understanding of history.

In the following parts of this essay I’ll present some aspects of Bauer’s apocalyptical thinking. I’ll begin referring to a text written in 1942 concerning Bauer’s critic of socialism and capitalism. Bauer is convinced, that in view of the Second World War, socialism is a failed project. From this time on, Bauer was engaged for a revision and a new foundation of socialism. In my remarks I concentrate on the aspect of “Barbarism” in this text. In the second point of my enquiry I expose Bauer’s paraphrase on Clausewitz, connected with Bauer’s critic of the eschatology of Leonhard Ragaz. In the third part I’ll describe Bauer’s apocalyptical thinking, leaned on the metaphor of the “Apocalypse of the Prodigal Son”. Then I’ll conclude my presentation with a short statement on apocalyptical thinking.

2. Barbarism

In his book *The Rebel*, the French philosopher Albert Camus describes socialism as a degenerate version of Christianity, because both sustain the finality of history. While in Christianity the fulfilment of history consist in the realization of the Kingdom of God, in a classical understanding of socialism and on Karl Marx orientated philosophies (cf. Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Trotzki etc) we find two options. Either history is fulfilled through the revolution leading to a new world order, where real humanity and real culture are accessible, or the victory of capitalism leads to the fall of the world into disorder. A current phrase and concept in these discussions is the popular-nostalgic parole: *Socialism or Barbarism!*

The interwar period, but especially the Second World War is in Bauer’s view a period of radical changes. He is convinced that with the World War I begun the decline of the bourgeoisie capitalistic society of the 19th century. This decline culminates in World War 2 and therefore with the beginning of the 20th century. During the interwar period, the circle in which the labour movement and

their parties in Europe moved was a time of political and social changes. Parties and established regimes fought for new politics, new theories and new ideologies. In this period, socialism wasn't able to percept the changes and to interpreting the signs of time. Instead of establishing a new world order by the leap from the realm of necessity into realm of freedom, socialism understood and defined itself only as the opposite of capitalism. With other words: socialism interpreted capitalism as the rival to antagonize.

Bauer's consideration of socialism is instead dynamic and dialectic. In his view, the concrete and primary task of socialism is not the fight between them, but the creation of a new humanity and a fair order, transforming the capitalistic society in a new society. To realize this aim, socialism has to be – I quote Otto Bauer – the “obstetrician” for capitalism. But in fact, capitalism gave birth to its children alone and the abortions of capitalism were fascism and national-socialism. These totalitarian systems are in Bauer's view the products of the decline of the western civilization and at the same time the roots of the new world order after the Second World War.

If we take now account on René Girards description of the “escalation to the extremes”, I think we can find also parallels in the late works of Otto Bauer. Let us talk with the vocabulary of mimetic theory: in Otto Bauer's view, the “escalation to the extremes” is inherent in capitalism and inherent in the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, because these regimes are the logic consequence of this tendency. In this text of 1942, Bauer describes the problem for the upcoming new world order after war: it will be in some way the continuation of this trend. The totalitarian systems operate with political disempowerment and depoliticization. They split the society and put them into institutions. Subsequently the upcoming society after World War 2 is in Bauer's view a new society, but at the same time, the continuation of this trend. With other words: political disempowerment and depoliticization will be also continued in this new society. Therefore, fascism and national-socialism are for Otto Bauer temporary phenomena and the new society after the war arise from the clash between these totalitarian systems, liberalism and the Sowjet Union included.

Let us shortly recapitulate. The common interpretation of the parole *Socialism or Barbarism* is a call for a fight of socialism against capitalism. Bauer is convinced, that even Marx' doesn't interpret this parole as a call for a fight, but in fact, as two options for development of the industrial society, respective capitalism in history. In this parole *Socialism or Barbarism*, the aspect of socialism means the possibility of a transformation of the capitalistic world order in a fair order. On the contrary, the option *Barbarism* means a failure in this process of transformation and consequently the decline of the capitalistic society into barbaric conditions. For Otto Bauer is clear, that the Second World War repulse society into barbaric conditions. Therefore: The birth of the 20th century society is barbaric.

“The historical events get out of control and it will be almost difficult to comprehend and evolve on this level a political awareness. Depoliticization is not only caused by the fact, that humans are the suffering object of an unmanageable politic. Depoliticization is caused also by an increasing lack of transparency in politic. For this, politic becomes a matter of the elite, while for the many and the mass, politic remain propaganda, indoctrination and the plebiscite. But as I explained before, depoliticization is emerging from a deeper layer: the qualitative dimension of the world events is going to be not only intellectually unmanageable; politic is going to be more and more emotional incomprehensible and unexperienceable. This is the irrationality, the anonymity, the demonic change in the realm of necessity: history “slips” in the truest sense of the word from the hand of humankind [german idiom: “aus der Hand gekommen”]. This is the catastrophe, the negative pole of the historical alternative of the bourgeoisie society: socialism or relapse in barbarism. The birth of the 20th century society is barbaric [Otto Bauer, Jahreswende 1942/43, p. 9].”

Die geschichtlichen Ereignisse entgleiten auch in diesem Sinne dem intellektuellen Fassungsvermögen der Vielen, die Entwicklung eines politischen Bewusstseins wird auf dieser Stufe beinahe unmöglich. Nicht allein die Müdigkeit und Unlust am Umstand, leidendes Objekt einer unüberschaubaren Politik zu sein, schafft Entpolitisierung, sondern auch die wachsende Unüberschaubarkeit selbst. Im steigenden Maße wird die Politik Sache einer besonderen Schicht – für die Vielen, für die Masse, bleibt die Propaganda, das aufgepfropfte „Bewusstsein“ und das Plebiszit. Aber wie schon erwähnt geht die Entpolitisierung von einer noch viel tieferen Schichte aus: die qualitative Größe des Weltgeschehens wird nicht allein verstandesmäßig unüberschaubar, sie ist auch seelisch beinahe unfassbar, unerlebbar. Das ist die Irrationalität, die Anonymität, die Dämonie der Umwälzung „im Reiche der Notwendigkeit“: die Geschichte ist dann in einem umfassenden Sinne „dem Menschen aus der Hand gekommen“. Das ist die Katastrophe, der negative Teil der geschichtlichen Alternative der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft: Sozialismus oder Rückfall in die Barbarei. Die Geburt der Gesellschaft des 20. Jahrhunderts ist barbarisch (Otto Bauer, Jahreswende 1942/43, 9).

“The society of the 20th century is gradually taking shape. The first major stage of this process is the clash, the “confrontation” [german “Auseinandersetzung” means also “to divide something”] between the non-bourgeoisie society of Russia, the fascist axe and the anglo-saxon world. At the end of this process the new society will be none of this, but the result of the clash and confrontation. But this society will be even more: this society is taking for the first time in history a worldwide dimension. From now on, the term *worldwide* ceases to be a superlative or a description for a certain tendency: *worldwide* is now a fact [Otto Bauer, Jahreswende 1942/43, p. 6].”

Die Gesellschaft des 20. Jahrhunderts ist erst im Werden. Die erste große Etappe ist der Zusammenprall, ist die „Auseinandersetzung“ zwischen die nicht-bürgerliche Gesellschaft Russlands mit der Faschistischen Achse und der auf Kriegswirtschaftlichen Planismus beruhenden Gesellschaft der angelsächsischen Welt. Die Gesellschaft des 20. Jahrhunderts wird am Ende keines von Dreien sein, sondern das Ergebnis dieses Zusammenpralls, dieser Auseinandersetzung. Aber sie wird noch mehr sein. Denn der in Gang befindliche Umbruch ist zum ersten Mal in der Geschichte wirklich weltweit. Nun mehr hört dieses Wort auf ein Superlativ zu sein oder bloß eine Tendenz anzuzeigen, nun wird es Tatsache (Otto Bauer, Jahreswende 1942/43, 6).

“This perspective is more radically as Marx view and exaggerates the alternative which is called „barbarism“. The historical possibility of “barbarism” is for Marx not the decline of western civilization in barbarism, but the relapse of the entire culture in barbaric conditions of society. Marx was the first one who realized the barbaric constitution of the industrial society. The ‘relapse into barbarism’ means for him the continuation of an essential barbaric and un-human process on a higher level of civilization. The opposite of “barbarism” is the mental acquisition and human control of a necessary social process [Otto Bauer, Jahreswende 1942/43 p. 14].”

Diese Perspektive geht gewiss weiter, als sich vom Marx'schen Standpunkt mit Flug und Recht vertreten lässt, sie überspitzt jene Seite der Alternative, der der Name „Barbarei“ gegeben wird. Was Marx unter der historischen Möglichkeit der Barbarei versteht ist sicherlich nicht der Untergang des Abendlandes in der Barbarei, sondern der Rückfall des Kulturkreises, dem die sozialistische Bewegung angehört, in barbarische Zustände der Gesellschaft. Marx hat wie kein anderer die Barbarei der Konstituierung der industriellen Gesellschaft erkannt und erlebt und versteht unter Rückfall in die Barbarei die Wiederholung eines im Wesen gleichen barbarischen, un-menschlichen Prozesses auf einer höheren Stufe der zivilisatorischen Entwicklung. Das Gegenteil von Barbarei ist die geistige Erfassung und menschliche Lenkung eines gesellschaftlich-notwendigen Prozesses (Otto Bauer, Jahreswende 1942/43, 14).

3. Paraphrasing Clausewitz

For a better understanding of this statment, written in a text about socialism and new world order in 1948, we have to refer to the discussion between Otto Bauer and Leonhard Ragaz. First of all, we can begin from a common viewpoint: the engagement of Bauer and Ragaz as religious socialists and their common persuasion, that every faith and hope at the advent of the Kingdom of God takes place in the encounter with the proletariat. In a letter of Bauer written to friends in Austria after Leonhard Ragaz' death in 1945, Bauer criticized the eschatological concept within the theology of Ragaz. In this letter we find also an interesting passage: Otto Bauer writes, that his new viewpoint is not pessimistic, but, in some way, humanistic and apocalyptical. But let us turn back to Bauer's critic on Ragaz. Bauer speaks about a “doubled-featured eschatology” in the thinking of Leonhard Ragaz. Ragaz' eschatological concept has “two hopes”: an “absolute” one and a “relative” one. The “relative” hope has its source in the “absolute hope”. Therefore, the “relative hope” expects the possibility of ends and new beginnings during the concrete process of the history of the world. The “absolute hope” is the creation of the new heaven and the new world and is the expectation of the absolute end of history and the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. In summary: the “relative hope” is understood as an expecting of a turnaround in history, the “absolute hope”, however, as an expecting of a turnaround and new beginning in eternity. We can say the “relative hope” and the turnarounds in history let the Kingdom coming closer.³

³ cf. Otto Bauer, Ich gehe zu dem der im Kommen ist, p. 10-12. manuscript.

According to Luke 17.21 (Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you), the Kingdom of God is for Ragaz not only a transcendent event at the end of time, but already a possibility for the present of humanity. Bauer's critic on Leonhard Ragaz concerned a reduced view of the parousia. In the theology of Leonhard Ragaz the parousia is on the one hand open for the "absolute hope" and the coming of the Messiah at the end of time, but on the other hand, in some way, a closed and inner-worldly event, conditioned by the "relative hope". Due to the presence of the Holy Spirit we already have moments of salvation in history. Ragaz deduced from this conception of hope also two different concepts of what the "end" as phenomenon is. Bauer says, that Ragaz' eschatology has also two concepts of what "end" could be: there are respectively a "penultimate" and an "ultimate" end. A further consequence of this doubled-featured eschatological concept by Ragaz', is the positive interpretation of the end of World War II and the atomic bomb. In his view the established peace after War is a moment of the "relative" hope. Although the dropping of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a catastrophe, but at the same time a clear indication of the limits of humanity. The world order after War has recognized through the atomic bomb the limit destruction and will be engaged to prevent similar events in the future. Ragaz' position regarding the atomic bomb is similar to Teilhard de Chardins view. The catastrophe is the condition of possibility of a reorganization of the world and the realistic possibility for the breakup into the promised new heaven and new earth.⁴

In contrast to the positions of Leonhard Ragaz, the atomic bomb and the end of the war are for Otto Bauer not a new-beginning in direction of the new heaven and the new earth, but the beginning of a permanent crisis. Bauer is convinced that the established peace after World War is not a permanent condition, but only the end of a conflict. The peace after war is established on a violent act and violence can never be the base for peace.

"Not our faith and hope disappeared, but the world. Our world. The world wasn't able to absorb the word of God which was contained in socialism as justice and promise. But even in socialism the word of God gradually disappeared and radicalism rose up from socialism. Then the disaster came upon. The lineaments of God disappeared from the visage of the world. As the catastrophe culminated peace turned back. At the same time it was clear, that the situation called "peace" was in fact the continuation of war by other means. The chaos didn't disappear, but it undermined and absorbed the peace and the new world order [Otto Bauer, *Das Wiener Gespräch*, 1948, p. 4]."

Also, nicht unser Glauben und Hoffen ging in die Irre, aber die Welt, unsere Welt. Sie nahm jenes Wort Gottes, das im Sozialismus als Gericht und Verheißung zu hören war, nicht auf. Im Sozialismus selbst erstickte es unter zunehmender

⁴ cf. Leonhard Ragaz, *Eingriffe ins Zeitgeschehen*, 240-245.

Verflachung oder äußerlicher Radikalisierung. Dann brach die Katastrophe über uns herein. Aus dem Antlitz der Welt entschwanden die Züge Gottes. Der Krieg entfesselte das Chaos vollends. Als er sich im Zerstören und Morden gleichsam überschlug und sich vorübergehend erschöpfte, zeigte sich, dass der Zustand, den die Menschen gerne Friede genannt hätten, eine Fortsetzung des Krieges mit anderen Mitteln war. Das Chaos hatte sich den Weg zu einem neuen Frieden und zu einer neuen Ordnung der Gesellschaft zersetzt, wenn nicht mitverschlungen (Otto Bauer, Das Wiener Gespräch, Gespräch über den Religiösen Sozialismus, 4).

4. The Apocalypse of the Prodigal Son

I will conclude this essay with a short presentation of the specific elements concerning the apocalyptic thinking in the late works of Otto Bauer. It is clear that the dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945 influenced Bauer's conceptions of politics and world order, but there has been also a change and reinforcement regarding his conception of Christianity. In the following part I'll concentrate on the so-called "Sonship" in the thinking of Otto Bauer. From Bauer's view the "Sonship" is the central element of Christianity. The primary references for the "Sonship" take Otto Bauer from the Bible, especially the Gospels and the theology of Saint Paul. But in the explanation and interpretation of the "Sonship", Bauer refers to the works of the philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche and, nevertheless, on the diverse traditions of millenarism. The departing point of Bauer's reflections is the worsening dimension of the world after Hiroshima. In Bauer's view begun with Hiroshima a global situation of the so-called "Big Either-Or" (große Entweder/Oder) conditioned by the necessity of a decision: *Either* humanity choose the path to self-destruction by a hubristic use of the modern technologies, *Or* humanity choose the path of salvation. The decision is crucial but the right decision can be enforced through the charisma of the "Sonship" which causes a *metanoia*, a turn back to the messianic roots of Christianity and the expectancy of the coming Kingdom of God.

Through the diverse processes of institutionalization Christianity lost this primary charisma of the "Sonship". The Christianity of our days is a sort of "deprived" Christianity: the Christians are attenuated and immature, because of the power of the institutions. This form of Christianity describes Bauer as a childlike Christianity who's not emancipated. A real Christian has to be emancipated because only an emancipated and responsible Christian could be a beneficiary of the Kingdom of God. The condition of possibility for being beneficiaries of the Kingdom of God is Jesus Christ himself. The indication for a right fellowship is giving us Saint Paul's letter to the Romans: "From whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8.29)." Finally Bauer's understanding of the right fellowship through the "Sonship" is simple: Jesus Christ is the Son of God: by his death and resurrection he becomes the beneficiary of the Father, it means the beneficiary of the Kingdom of God. But Jesus Christ is the *firstborn* among many: he our brother but at the same time he is the example for our possibility to live in brotherhood among each other. This life in community among each other and through Jesus Christ allows us to be also beneficiaries of the Kingdom of God. The "Sonship" is in Bauer's view the opposite of the "Logic of Cain" in which Christianity fell. A Christian has to be a

sister or a brother, but in fact, in face of the Second World War also Christians felt into the spiral of violence following Cain's question: "Am I my brother's keeper?"⁵

I think we are able now to understand the metaphor of the "Apocalypse of the Prodigal Son". This metaphor is described in a short passage of a text inspired by the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. This text begins with the sentence: "Nietzsche's critic of Christianity is a critic of a Son". In Bauer's view Nietzsche understood the alienation of Christianity fulfilled through the institutionalization of the word of the Kingdom of God and tried to break the borders of a false moral. This impulse of Nietzsche is in Bauer's view comparable with the Prodigal Son. Both, Nietzsche and the biblical Son, wants to emancipate themselves: they demands the heritage of their fathers and spends it in the distance of the house. While the biblical Son was able to turn back to his father's house, Nietzsche wasn't more able to turn back to Christianity and felt into resentment.

Friedrich Nietzsche is for several reasons interesting for the modern time: he gives us an example for the will of emancipation but he speaks also prophetic to us. Nietzsche is for Bauer a prophet because of his emancipation not in direction of the "Sonship", rather in direction of the Death of God. The upcoming of nihilism is for Nietzsche the emancipation of the mankind who killed God. In this sense, Bauer uses the metaphor of the "Apocalypse of the Prodigal Son" as a description of the modern times. The dropping of the atomic bomb is a second fall of mankind and the extremist sudden crisis of modernity. In this sense the mankind is still suffering the "Apocalypse of the Prodigal Son", a live in direction of emancipation without the will to reverse and, like Nietzsche, a live "Beyond Good and Evil":

"This is the meaning of the 'Apocalypse of Prodigal Son': the *Übermensch* is going to be Alpha and Omega of the eternal recurrence. The upcoming of nihilism precedes the parousia of the *Übermensch*. Between the abdication of God and the awareness of the eternal recurrence, there is a worldwide event: the upcoming of nihilism as 'birth pangs' of the *Übermensch*. It means the creation of a new historical situation in which the castigation of the *Übermensch* begins. This situation is characterized by the circle of the eternal recurrence of violence and burden catastrophes. [...]. This is the theme of the 'Apocalypse of Prodigal Son': the Prodigal Son is going to be independent in remoteness, where he will establish his Empire."

Dies ist also die Apokalypse des verlorenen Sohnes: Der Übermensch wird zum A und O der ewigen Wiederkehr aller Dinge. Doch der Parusie des Übermenschen geht die Heraufkunft des Nihilismus vorher. Zwischen dem Abtreten Gottes und dem Bewusstwerden der Ewigen Wiederkunft steht dieses weltweite Ereignis von weltgeschichtlicher Bedeutung. Die Heraufkunft des Nihilismus, das bedeutet die „Geburtswehen“ des Übermenschen, es bedeutet die Hervorbringung jener geistigen und

⁵ cf. Otto Bauer, Sohnschaft, manuscript.

weltgeschichtlichen Situation, in der die „Züchtung“ des Übermenschen einsetzen vermag durch die gewaltigen Schläge und Belastungen der Katastrophen, sich im Kreise der ewigen Wiederkehr bewegend. [...] Das ist also das Thema der Apokalypse des verlorenen Sohnes: Die Verselbständigung des verlorenen Sohnes in der Fremde, die er erwählte und wo er sein Reich aufrichtete (Otto Bauer, Nietzsche-Schriften, 36-37).

5. A short philosophical consideration of the motive of the apocalypse and a Christian-motivated apocalyptic thinking

The mimetic theory gives us also a key for an interpretation of the extreme dimension of our time. If I take a look on the entire work of Otto Bauer, his early writings during the period of the “Union of Religious Socialists” and the writings of the exile-period, there’s still one coherent theme: the reconciliation. I think we find exactly in this theme a possible connection between the works of Otto Bauer and the apocalyptic understanding of René Girard. In my presentation I spoke about the different interpretation of the atomic bomb between Bauer and Ragaz. I’m convinced that Bauer also realized that the belief that “more violence is needed before reconciliation” after Auschwitz and Hiroshima and Nagasaki is no longer sustainable. Especially the atomic bomb is for Bauer a clear sign of the “escalation to the extremes”. Bauer’s belief that “peace is a mere continuation of war” is in fact even Girard’s conviction that “suspending violence, failing to renounce it straight away, always makes it grow. Violence can never reduce violence”⁶. Peace, but especially the transformation of violence in peace is in my view not only connected with ethic or moral, but with faith. The “messianic consciousness” about I spoke above, is not exactly a term of Otto Bauer: it is my interpretation of what Bauer will say to us. The condition for a possible reconciliation is given us through Jesus Christ: our task is to find the way there, the way back to our roots.

But this is a theological thinking and, as philosopher, I have to investigate in philosophical matters. I think Karl Rahner shows us the different between theology and philosophy of religion: the starting point of theology is the revelation of God, meanwhile the starting point of philosophy of religion is the hypothesized possibility of a revelation of God. Thus I finally don’t want to ask if the apocalypse as phenomenon is plausible, but rather, which conditions must be given to speak about a “Christian-motivated apocalyptic thinking”. I have repeatedly asked this question because in the discourse on the apocalypse I often heard that Girard and Schwager are so called “apocalyptic thinker”. That’s ok for me. I think

⁶ cf. René Girard, *Battling to the End*, p. 45/46: “[...] Yet humans continue to refuse to see the catastrophe that they are preparing by always introducing new differences and new conflicts. This misapprehension is simply part of mimetism, which is denial of our own violence”.

everyone of us at the COV&R accepts this opinion. But how is possible that other thinker like Otto Bauer or Ivan Illich and Josef Piper are also apocalyptic thinker? The criterion to declare someone as an “apocalyptic thinker” is in my view not given by the hermeneutic of the mimetic theory. There must be a “meta level” which keeps the argument for “apocalyptic thinking”, especially for a “Christian motivated thinking”. If we compare the structures of argumentation regarding the theme of the apocalypse in the works of Bauer, Girard, Schwager, Illich and Piper, we can finally find this “meta level”. At the moment I can say that this “meta level” consists in the following points:

1. All this thinker does not only understand the apocalypse as a literary work. They understand the apocalypse in it etymological way. The Greek word “apocalypse” means “revelation” and for Jacques Derrida is the reference of the word “revelation” also the description of an active action. Apokalypse means “lifting a veil” (cf. Deridda, Apocalypse now, German version). In an epistemological formulation we can say: “An unclear or unknown fact (german: Sachverhalt) is going to be clearable and knowable”. For this, apocalypse also means a “process of transformation”. But: what gives the possibility to transform something? In regard of this thinker the Christian message. Now we can compose a second proposition.
2. These thinkers transform the literary work of the Christian apocalypse into a heuristic instrument for decoding the present and the history of mankind. They depart in their argumentation from the same view.
3. They suppose in their argumentation that the biblical revelation dissolves a violent-structured order. (In this supposition I think they lift the veil).
4. The consequence of this supposition is that the dissolution of the violent structures provokes at the same time the possibility of the perversion of this revelation.
5. Subsequently the revelation causes a radicalization of the world followed by the factual possibility of human self-destruction. Violence is out of control.

I think this could be a “meta level” for describing a “Christian motivated apocalyptic thinking”.

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