



SDDH - AAC

ASSOCIAÇÃO ACADÉMICA DE COIMBRA

Secção de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos



The Trumpocalypse of Human Rights

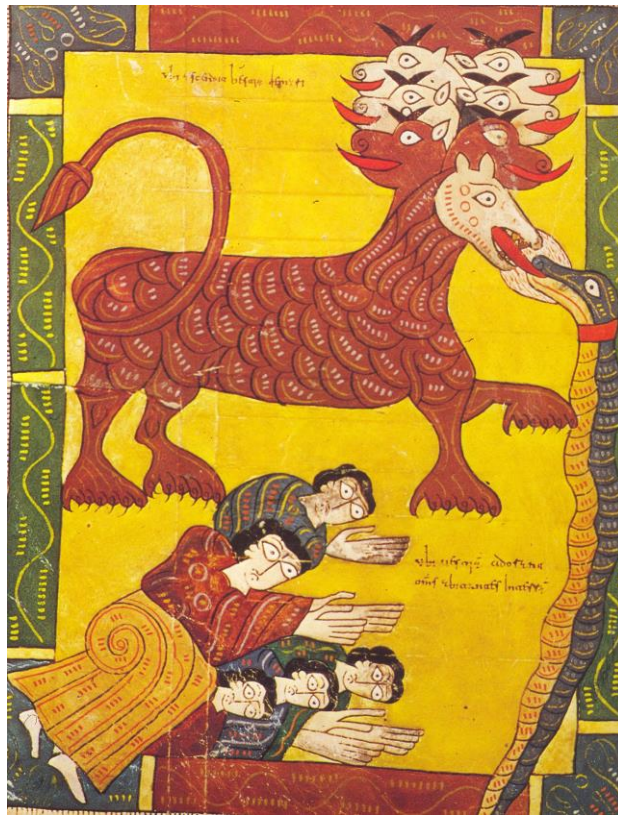
Senses, feelings and meanings of the End

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(Detail from the *Escorial Beatus*¹)

¹ The *Escorial Beatus* is a 10th century illuminated manuscript of the *Commentary of the Apocalypse* by Beatus of Liébana, a monk, theologian and geographer from the former Duchy of Cantabria and Kingdom of Asturias, who worked and lived during the 8th century in the mountain region of present-day Calabria from which he derives his demonym. He owes his lasting and worldwide fame mostly to the abovementioned comments on the *Book of Revelations*, written in 776 and later revised, both in 784 and in 786. Despite its indisputable display of erudition, the work is essentially nothing but a compilation of extracts from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church (Saint Augustine, Saint Ambrose, Saint Irenaeus, Saint Isidore, etc.), therefore lacking in originality. On the other hand, notwithstanding its specific *context of emergence* (related to the controversy surrounding the *adoptionist* heresy, which, by that time was gaining perilous momentum thanks to Felix of Urgem and Elipandus of Toledo), the arrival of the Muslims to the Iberian Peninsula and their quick progression through the Hispanic territory most surely also had a relevant say in the book's popularity within the monasteries across Europe, since it turned/turning it up into a symbol simultaneously of milenarism and christian resistance/resilience. From the 34 surviving manuscripts of the Book - produced within a six century-wide period, under the the same name of *beatus* - some are incomplete, existing only in fragmentary form; on the other hand, 26 still bear original lavish decorations in a Mozarabic, Romanesque, or Gothic style of illumination. In particular, the manuscript still kept in the monastic library of Saint Lawrence of the Escorial, consists of 151 extant folios, illustrated with 52 miniatures and measuring measure 395mm by 225mm. Its origins are not completely determined but it is believed to be a product of San Millán de la Cogolla Monastery's *scriptorium*. Beatus and his commentary received renewed attention after Umberto Eco's best-seller *The Name of the Rose* and the homonymous film directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, starring Sean Connery as William of Baskerville (a mixture of detective Sherlock Holmes and franciscan theologian William of Ockham) made an explicit reference to it.

Preliminary Remark

Having had the opportunity (and excuse) to reflect, from a constitutional point of view, on the latest developments of the USA political affairs and regime - for which I am most grateful to the students who kindly invited me in this occasion -, and driven by the firm belief that such an intervention could only draw its legitimacy from the professional positions held and currently (with)hold within the university, as well as by the *Wissenschaftsinteresse(n)* therein cultivated in the past few years (nothing else qualified me to the job), I took it as a main responsibility to instill my brief communication with a somewhat didactic imprint, permeating it with several remissions to films², music, books and paintings³. Far from any conspicuous name-dropping *apparatus* or some exhibicionist *performance*, I really wanted to pay homage the academic context where it took place, by fulfilling some of my incumbent duties as teacher. In spite of the unmodest and paternalistic tone herein distilled, as a strong apologist of *cultural media[tion(s)]'s* crucial humanizing role⁴ - in a world obsessed with *spectacularity (s.s.)*, seduced by *directness, instantaneity, immediacy*, and likewise prone to volatile, unreflective, disrespectful and unjust *interactions, structuractions, and creations* - it seemed just the right option, even at the cost of some post-modern suspicion and pertinent criticism.

As for the subtitle, it echoes some proto-*philosophical* excogitations, digressions and investigations, undertaken during my phd research (still ongoing) around (what I dare to name) the temporal, spatial and intersubjective *physio-nomical* dialectic and chasm (*chiasma* and almost *mochlos*) propitiated and provided by (our intermedial as flesh) incarnate or corporeal

² Allusions were made, not only to Denys Arcand's tryptic, formed by *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* (1986), *Les Invasions barbares* (2003) and *L'Âge des ténèbres* (2007), but also to some documentaries on the life of Trump. It would also worth mention the latest movie issued by Chuck Norris's son, *Amerigeddon*; not certainly because of its aesthetic merits (even those who might have embraced the film, left it abandoned in the few screens where it debuted), but instead due to the perfect portrait of the alt-right it conveys: an anti-globalist, anti-immigrant, tech-savy movement *that hitherto lurked on the fringes of the Republican Party* (to borrow the words from John Feffer). The film elaborates on a typical conspiracy theory between traitors, global terrorists and the UN, helped by big government martial law compensating endemic problem-solving inertia, but luckily overcome by a coalition of XXI century cowboys. As the trailer bluntly proclaims "*The greatest threat to our freedom lies within our own government,*"

³ Natasha O'Hear/Anthony O'Hear, *Picturing the Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation in the Arts over Two Millennia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015, to give a simple exemple, features consistente reflections, properly illustrated with the most proeminente masterpieces, of concepts like the *Angel of the Apocalypse*, the *Lamb*, the *Four Horsemen*, the *Seven Seals*, the *Woman Clothed with the Sun*, the *Satanic Trinity*, the *Whore of Babylon*, as well as *Armageddon*, *Millennium*, the *Last Judgement*, and *New Jerusalem*.

⁴ Including diferent sorts of realities, v.g, language(s), discourses, texts, agencies and representantions, pauses, flexions, intervals and interstices, reflective practices, norms, institutions (warranting and capabilitating through promotion and provision, for instance), *infra-structures*, services (equalizing and universal), etc.

condition (*Leiblichkeit*) and its neurobiological, psico-sociological and cultural-antropological implications with regards to axiology, teleology, deontology and the (rep)public(an) *nomos* of the social and the political (law).

The indebtedness to different traditions of thought, stemming from bodily rooted ontology of the human *in-der-weltlich Mit-Dasein* and the latest *phenomenology of sociality* to some *philosophies of culture* and the *theories of fragility and vulnerability as sources of substantial equality*, not forgetting the *romantic lineage of marxism* as well as *progressive teologies of imagination, hope and transcendence* as grounds or foundations for social justice projections into normative politics and law (fulfilled by universal institutions) comes out as evident and must be properly extrinsecated and registered. No need to say the more of these *topical pre-assumptions* (albeit present and sporadically extrinsecated) were obviously suppressed during the talk.

[Developed] Script

(zur Vorlesung...)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. *Atunement, atonement*

1.1. *Setting the tune* (two references)

- a). The Doors, *The End*
- b). R.E.M. *It's the End of the World as we know it (and I feel fine)*?

1.2. *Atonal variations*

- a). *Triumphed* by Brahms: The eternal glory of the II Reich's end of history?
- b). Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*: litany from the III Reich's camps?

2. *Musical alignment*

II. *WHAT'S IN A TITLE? A MUCH NEEDED PURGATORY*

1. *The Trumpocalypse of Human Rights: purging mind and speech*

1.1. A few precedents

- a). Slate's *Trumpocalypse Watch*
- b). The National's *self-fulfilling prophecy* of Trump's apocalypse⁵
- c). *European Journal of International Law*

1.2. *Precipitous requiems?* From Mark Twain to Lazarus itself...

1.2.1. Too many deaths, too many ends (some examples)

- a). *The Subject*
- b). *Art*
 - i. Literature
 - ii. The Novel
- c). *History*
- d). *Ideology*
 - i. Socialism
 - ii. Capitalism
- e). *Work*

1.2.2. The *post-ism* tone and posture

1.2.3. Ressuscitating properties

2. *The Apocalypse: prophecies and milenarism*

2.1. *John's Seminal Text: brief reference*

2.2. Theology

2.2.1. Pre-Christian

⁵ Previously as John Feffer, "Trump the Arsonist: Evangelicals, Survivalists, the Alt-Right, and Hurricane Donald", in *TomDispatch*.

- a). Pre-semitic
- b). The peculiar messianism of judaism

2.2.2. Christians

- a). Orthodox
- b). Catholic
- c). Dispensionalism
- d). Geova's witnesses
- e). Seventh day Adventists
- f). Christadelphians

2.2.3. Muslim: the Ahmadi Community (*Ahmadiyya*)

2.2.4. Persian: the *Bahá'í* faith

2.3. *Philosophy: meaning(s) of the end*

2.3.1. *Coming to terms*

- a). End
- b). Final/*term(inus)*
- c). Finality
- d). Scope
- e). Objective
- f). Goal
- g). Target

2.3.2. *Archeo-teleologies: nature, unconscious, subject, action and culture*

- a). The progressive *line* and the repetitive *circle*
- b). *We have no more beginnings*: the problem of origins
- c). Escathology: a *neverending story*?
- d). Principles, means and ends.

2.3.3. The eternal problem of the future

- a). Future Tense
- b). Future Tensions
 - i. *Futurus* and *adventurus*
 - ii. Pre-fixes: *Pro-* and *re-*
 - iii. Verbs: *Imagining, regulating, doing, calling, waiting*
- c). Elements for a debate
 - i. *What is the Future?* (John Hurry)
 - ii. *Archeologies of the Future* (Fredric Jameson)
 - iii. *The Future and its enemies* (Daniel Innerarity)

2.4. Historio-graphy (*sophy*)

2.4.1. Physical time

2.4.2. Existential temporality

2.4.3. Human History

2.4.4. Narratives and *graphics* of life, subjects and identities

2.4.5. *Millenium* and *Death*

2.5. Literature: *the sense of an ending*

2.5.1. Frank Kermode (and its recent portuguese translation)

2.5.2. Julian Barnes *different ending*

3. Human Rights: *Armageddon and the Last Judgment*

- 3.1. The *Invention* of Human Rights (L. Hunt)
- 3.2. The *Struggle for recognition* (A. Honneth)
- 3.3. *The Last Utopia* (S. Moyn)
- 3.4. *Rights of our discontent* (S. Žizek)
- 3.4. *The End* of Human Rights (C. Douzinas).
- 3.5. *Attending the Messiah or Waiting for the barbarians?*

4. The name of the *Beast*: Trump

- 4.1. The man of (our) *Time*
 - 4.1.1. The man of the year *cover*
 - 4.1.2. The *unwanted/unwanting President?*
 - a). *Hatred around the world*
 - b). How to evict a marriage engagement, by George Costanza (Seinfeld)
- 4.2. A *character*, not a *player*
- 4.3. The political stage
 - 4.3.1. The actor
 - 4.3.2. Previous appearances
- 4.4. The campaign's (*circus*) *numbers*
- 4.6. *Trump family, inc*: the Dominalization of *Imperium*.
- 4.7. The *Devil in Disguise or Saint John, the Bapstist?*
- 4.8. A *Devil* or just a *Disguise?*

5. From *neologisms* to *newspeak*

III. STATE SPEECHES AND FINAL JUDGMENT

1. Point of order

- 1.1. State speeches
 - a). On the World and Europe
 - b). On the USA
 - c). On the elections
- 1.2. Final Judgments
 - a). About the end of time
 - b). About political ends
 - c). About the current situation

2. *Signs and Revelations*

- 2.1. *The state of the world speech: revealing signs*
 - 2.1.1. Social and Economical inequality

2.1.2. Islamic Terrorism

2.1.3. Popular Fascism (glimpses)

- a). The world is *out of joint*
- b). The situation in Europe
 - i. Greece: no one wanted to see the Dawn
 - ii. Hungary and Poland: at the edge of fanaticism
 - iii. England: elitist self-deception and tragic *little britain*
 - iv. Scandinavia: invaders, never invaded by poverty
 - v. Holand: the sophisticated camouflage of pluralismo
 - vi. Austria: trauma and relief
 - vi. Germany: merkelian contention
 - vii. France: saving the republic
 - viii. Italy: *il regno dei buffoni?*
 - xix. Portugal: welfare illusions vs *sado-maso* populism?

2.2. *The state of the Union speech*

2.2.1. Religion

2.2.2. Culture & Society

2.2.3. *Economy*

2.2.4. The *Media*

2.2.5. Demographics

2.2.6. Constitutional and Political Regime

- a). Principles and norms
- b). Rights, separation of powers and rule of law
- c). Federalism
- d). Ideology
- e). Political system
- f). Political parties
- g). Electoral system, in special

2.3. *The state of the(se) election(s)*

2.3.1. The success of an electoral strategy

2.3.2. The nomination process as an *elimination contest*

2.3.3. The general election

- a). *Beyond truth and ethics* (references)
- b). *Short-circuit to the public* (means)
- c). Material vs pós-material issues (objects)
- d). Minorities vs *middle class* (subjects)

2.3.4. A problem named Hillary

3. **Visions; *The world according to Trump or the republican dream?***

3.1. *Welcome to Dystopia?*

- a). An asian turn?
- b). Irresponsible isolationism
- c). Embarassing allies
- d). *Unenvironmentalism: Gray is the new green*

3.2. A *stress test* for the US living constitution

3.2.1. Overview

- a). A constitutional monarch
 - i. *Le roi reigns, mais ne gouverne pas* (A. Thiers)
 - ii. 'Diverting' the masses
- b). The best *Trojan Horse* for the republican agenda
 - i. Governing *by the Congress, for the States* (against the people)?
 - ii. Negative Legislation: right-wing *deconstruction*
 - iii. Reactionary Jurisprudence: overruling half a century
 - iv. The encroachment of *Law & Order: securitarianism instead of solidarity*

3.2.2. Quick analysis

- a). Organic and functional aspects
 - i. The Executive: a preview⁶
 - ii. The Legislative: supreme power?
 - iii. The Judicial Power: what next?
- b). Material dimensions
 - i. Civil rights
 - ii. Political rights
 - iii. Social/welfare rights

4. *Yohm Ha Din, Yawm al-Qiyāmah: The narrow door*

4.1. *The Aftermath* (*New Yorker*, 21st November, 2016)

- a) George Packer on the Democratic opposition
- b) Atul Gawande on Obamacare's future
- c) Hilary Mantel on the unseen
- d) Peter Hessler on the rural vote
- e) Toni Morrison on whiteness
- f) Jane Mayer on climate-change denial
- g) Evan Osnos on the Schwarzenegger precedent
- h) Jeffrey Toobin on the Supreme Court
- i) Mary Karr on the language of bullying
- j) Jill Lepore on a fractured nation
- k) Gary Shteyngart on life in dystopia
- l) Nicholas Lemann on the Wall Street factor
- m) Larry Wilmore on the birtherism of a nation
- n) Jia Tolentino on the protests
- o) Mark Singer on Trump the actor
- p) Junot Díaz on Radical Resilience

4.2. Surviving Trump: *The Narrow Door*

Mathew (7: 13-23), Luke (13: 23-28)

⁶ Not all members of the future cabinet were revealed so far. Nevertheless, during the transition period a few names already became public: as putative *Defense Secretary*, the Retired Gen. James Mattis; as future *Commerce Secretary*, Wilbur Ross; for the *Treasury*, the longtime Goldman Sachs executive Steven Mnuchin; as *Transportation Secretary*, Elaine Chao (recovered from the Bush administration); Tom Price will probably be the man in charge of *Health and Human Services*, while Betsy DeVos will be taking care of *Education*. Finally, the next *Attorney General* will be Jeff Sessions, while Mike Pompeo and Michael Flynn will be the next CIA Director and National Security Adviser, respectively.

IV. EXIT/OUT