

Jennifer Wasmuth

„...to Fulfill the Mission of the ‘Restainer’” - The Katechon Motif in the War Theology of the Moscow Patriarchate

The idea of Russia as a “restrainer” plays a prominent role in the justification of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Moscow Patriarchate, as one of the driving ideological forces in Russia, also regularly refers to this apocalyptic motif borrowed from the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. The lecture will take a closer look at the significance of this motif for the Moscow Patriarchate: when and for what reasons it has been referring to it, what exactly it means, and how its approach differs from other theological and philosophical approaches in which the motif also plays an important role. Finally, critical considerations on the use of the motif will be presented, taking into account current research contributions.

Sebastian Pittl

Secularized or Perverted Apocalypticism(s)?

Apocalyptic narratives and imaginaries play a key role in the discourse of the Global Far Right. However, a close look reveals that as well in the Far Right's use of apocalyptic narratives and imaginaries as in the scholarly debates around them multiple, and sometimes even contradictory concepts of "apocalypticism" are at play. Building on case examples that have an affinity to Catholicism it will be argued that far Right apocalypticism is most successful where it manages to channel a broad variety of different apocalypticism(s). Theological critique of Far Right apocalypticism must address this complexity. Beyond the critique of forms of Far Right apocalypticism than can be read as "secularization" or "perversion" of Biblical apocalypticism it must address especially those forms that can be understood as "actualization" of problematic potentials inherent in the tradition of Christian apocalypticism itself. This shall be illustrated through a decolonial reading of the Book of Revelation.

Alexander-Kenneth Nagel

"Like Soap Under a Lukewarm Stream of Water" - On the Apocalyptic Temporality of Far Right Rhetoric

This talk examines the elective affinity between right-wing populist rhetoric and apocalyptic diagnoses of society. Using Björn Höcke's "Ballhaus speech" (2017) as a case study, it illustrates the construction of an "inverse apocalypticism": the present is framed as a moment of total dissolution and existential threat. However, the moment of redemption is located in the restoration of an idealized, homogeneous past. This rhetorical strategy generates extreme urgency and stages the speaker and audience as a "Katechon" – a restraining force preventing final downfall. The talk aims to provide a sociology-of-knowledge perspective on the relationship between Far Right agitation and end-time thinking.

Felix Schilk

"Apocalypticism and Far Right Narratives of Crisis and Decline"

Right-wing and conservative thinking perceives modern societies as being in a state of perpetual crisis. These descriptions build upon three major crisis narratives (diremption – decadence – apocalypse), each of which fulfils an ontological, a moral, and a temporal function. All three crisis narratives are intertwined, forming a narrative cycle. They draw on widespread cultural knowledge, especially on religious motifs and semantics that are interpreted politically, and provide interpretative frameworks that can be applied to (almost) all socio-political conflicts. In right-wing religious and esoteric contexts – e.g., Peter Thiel and Aleksandr Dugin – they function as frames for cultural struggles and geopolitical conflicts. New Right metapolitics instrumentalises these narratives as a mnemonic device to gain cultural hegemony. Apocalyptic narratives, in particular, have a mobilising effect, as they forge a sense of urgency, identify enemies, open space for imaginaries, and demand decisions. In my paper, I present a typology of right-wing crisis narratives. Drawing on textual and visual material, I show how these narratives are interwoven and argue that they each manifest in two complementary modes. Whilst accelerationist modes of apocalypse

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affirm the collapse of existing orders and invoke right-wing imaginaries of a new order, katechontic modes of apocalypse legitimate political action (and violence) in the present.