

Günther Anders Apocalypse without Kingdom

01/09

Günther Anders (1902–92) is undoubtedly one of the most interesting, ignored, oppositional, radical, and nearly forgotten philosophers of the twentieth century. Having grown up in Germany, Anders (whose real name was Stern) and his wife Hannah Arendt had to flee the country in 1933. Via Paris, now divorced, Anders came to the United States, where he never really found his place; red-baiting and propaganda against the left made it difficult for him to find a job. In 1950 he decided to return to Europe, where he lived for the rest of his life in Vienna.

Anders's work confronts the relationship between technology and the human under the conditions of atomic modernity. He very quickly forged a connection between the military use of nuclear weapons and the civilian use of nuclear energy; in them he saw the possibility of restructuring – or even extinguishing – society.

His essay “Apocalypse without Kingdom” draws attention to the way in which communist visions of history and the attempts made to realize them (represented by the Russian Revolution in Anders's text) failed to extricate themselves from a Christian eschatology. In Anders's reading, communism has historically been a continuation of, rather than a break with, the Western understanding of time. The most important question of our time is thus: How can emancipatory thinking that refuses to believe in Enlightenment ideas of progress orient itself towards the future without lapsing into nihilism?

Today, with widespread ecological devastation and new threats of technocratic dictatorship looming on the horizon, nothing is more urgent than imagining, as Anders puts it, the possibility of an “apocalypse without a kingdom.” The translation that follows is from the original German. – Trans.

The task we are confronted with today is thinking [*Zu denken uns aufgegeben*] the concept of the *naked apocalypse*, that is: the apocalypse that consists of mere downfall, which doesn't represent the opening of a new, positive state of affairs (of the “kingdom”). This *apocalypse without kingdom* has hardly been thought before, except by those natural philosophers who speculated about heat death.¹ Thinking through this concept presents us with major difficulties, since we are used to its counter-concept, the *kingdom without apocalypse*, and because we have come to take the validity of this counter-concept for granted over the course of centuries. Here I am not thinking of utopian images of a more just and Ezekielian state of the world in which the root of all evil has dried up, so much as of the metaphysics of history that has ruled under the title of *faith in progress*. This belief, or rather this theory, which has become second

e-flux journal #97 — Günther Anders
Apocalypse without Kingdom

nature to us all, taught that it was part of our historical world's essence to improve inevitably. Since the state of affairs we have reached allegedly already contains the seeds of the inevitably better, we live in a present in which the "better future" has always already begun; no, we're virtually already in the "best of all worlds," since something better than that which inevitably improves is not even conceivable. In other words: for those that believed in progress, the apocalypse became superfluous, since it was only ever necessary as a precondition for the "kingdom." The most ingenious thing was that the present and the future were always intertwined. The kingdom always arrived, because it was always already there. And it was always there because it arrived continually. A credo more distant from the apocalypse – that is not to say, a more keenly anti-apocalyptic affect (and thereby a mentality distant from Apostolic Christian mentality) – is hardly imaginable. The fact that America, the country which so classically represents the vulgarization of faith in progress, so gladly took up the name "God's own country" is anything but a coincidence. The phrase bluntly suggests the already-there-ness [*Schon-da-Sein*] of God's kingdom; it is impossible not to hear the echo of the phrase "Civitas Dei" [City of God]. Of course, the words "apocalyptic" and "anti-apocalyptic" played no role in the discussions of the category of "progress." Nonetheless, despite being watered down, the pair of opposites "apocalyptic" and "anti-apocalyptic" is still recognizable in the beloved differentiation between "evolutionary" and "revolutionary." Who knows if the disgust with which the Americans reacted to Bolshevism and "Soviet Russia" wasn't caused so much by Communism itself as much as by the fact that the Russian Revolution, which obviously had something apocalyptic about it, served as an extreme rebuff to the American belief that apocalyptic events were unnecessary. Nothing presents us with a more serious hindrance to thinking a timely concept than that optimistic thesis of "kingdom without apocalypse." And it is indisputable that our thinking will require a real imposition, since it will be an actual leap *in contrarium*.

But this is not to imply that the revolutionaries would encounter substantially fewer difficulties in thinking through the idea of an impending "apocalypse without kingdom," since they had already taken up the apocalyptic legacy (albeit in a secularized manner) or pursued it further. No matter how lively the concept "apocalypse" (transformed into the concept "revolution") had become for them, the concept of the "kingdom" was no less lively. The schemas of Judeo-Christian eschatology

"demise and justice" or "end and kingdom" shone very clearly through the Communist doctrine, with the revolution playing the role of the apocalypse, and the classless society playing the role of "the kingdom of god." Furthermore, the idea of the revolution, which represented the apocalypse, didn't mean an event that just fell from the sky, but rather an action that would have been downright senseless if it didn't usher in the goal of the "kingdom." So there can be no talk of an affinity with the concepts we are required to think through today: the "naked apocalypse without kingdom." Conversely, in light of the possibility of a total catastrophe we face today, Marx and Paul seem to become contemporaries. Those differences which had previously marked out the fronts – even the fundamental distinction – between theism and atheism seem to be condemned to collapse as well.

Nonetheless, our claim is still that the thought of an apocalypse disembarking into pure nothingness would be egregious, and it is disconcerting that we are the first who must rehearse this thought. And that is because we have been beleaguered by nihilism for nearly a century. That is to say, we are surrounded by a movement that has pushed the *nihil* so far into the foreground that it has inured us to thoughts of annihilation. Can it be that these nihilists did not prepare us for what we must anticipate (in order to prevent) and learn?

No, not at all. And compared to the position that we, obeying necessity rather than our own instincts, must take up today, doesn't their position make them seem like "good old nihilists," even optimists? Not only because they viewed whatever they pushed towards annihilation as "*delendum*," as worthy of annihilation, whose annihilation they would in fact affirm; but above all because the actions or processes of destruction took place inside of a framework whose indestructibility they didn't doubt for a single second. In other words: they considered "only" God and "only" the so-called "values" as "*delenda*" [destroyed]. And we may say "only" because they didn't classify the world as "*delenda*" [destroyed]; since the thought of the annihilation of the world, which for us today has become *the* thought, could not have emerged within the horizon that they were capable of fearing or hoping for.

On the contrary: when these nihilists pleaded for destruction, their passion was nourished by an affirmation of the world. That they derived this largely from the naturalism, the natural sciences, and the techniques of their time is without ambiguity. Even if some of them found the optimism of the natural scientists to be dubious or even blasphemous – indirectly,

they were hardly less optimistic than the advocates of progress they ridiculed and despised, and certainly not less secular. What gave them the courage for their great negation was the fact that they consciously shared the great affirmations of their time: the natural sciences' trust in the world and complete world domination – in short: they more or less consciously shared the belief in “progress.” And here I am thinking above all of the Russian nihilists.

03/09



Ed Wescott, *Graphite Reactor, East Loading Face Oak Ridge National Lab, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1952*. Image: Public Domain/Government works.

The Ambiguity of the Christian Period

Even though history only became “history” in its modern sense, that is to say a history that has developed a sense of direction, because of the fact that the Christian expectation was oriented towards salvation, and even though their years count as “holy years,” factual history did not unfold as a process of salvation [*Heilsgeschehen*]. In reality it proceeded, as long as people didn’t get used to the continuation of history and forget the expectation, as a chain of holy disappointments, as a never-ending failure of the “kingdom” to come, as a continual practice of self-humbling in the face of the continued existence τουτου τοῦ κόσμου [of this world]. Actually, seen from a non-Christian standpoint,

the fact that two thousand years have passed is a scandal; actually, this should not have been allowed to happen – unless that time was understood in the same way Jesus understood the time between the disciples’ missions and their death, or similarly to Paul’s apostolic time; as a *period* [Frist];² as the interlude which inserts itself between the Annunciation (or rather, the Crucifixion) and the Parousia [Second Coming], or rather the interlude that must be inserted: as the final time of convulsions or as the time of Satan’s triumph before the final judgment. Seen from a Christian point of view, in other words eschatologically, Christianity lives after the birth of Christ, but in the era of the “before.”

An ambiguous situation. To simply give up the expectation (which was the expectation of tomorrow’s kingdom for Jesus) due to the continual disappointment and to repudiate the Expected *expressis verbis* had probably only been possible for those who considered giving up the faith as a whole. For whoever renounced “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in Earth,” gave up Christianity as a whole. But perhaps that was not so rare, at least in the epoch before Christianity became the state religion. And even Paul and Peter will not have pronounced their warnings without reason. For those who persisted in their faith despite the disappointment of the Parousia and who demonstrated their faith through patience, thereby developing the Christian virtue of the disappointed Christian – for them the situation contained an ambiguity that had hardly been outdone or undergone before. Not only in Christian theology, but also in the Christian soul there were at times contradictory convictions existing alongside one another.

First, the conviction that the apocalypse (or rather, the kingdom of God) is still to be expected today.

And second, that the Parousia wouldn’t proceed in the form of a world catastrophe, but rather as an event *in* people. (When Paul and his followers experienced death and resurrection *with* Christ in baptism, believing themselves to already be a part of the kingdom of God, then the decisive moment was already obviated within worldly time.)

Or third that the kingdom, even without the apocalypse, was already there in the form of the existing church. However paradoxical it may sound, in this instance the apocalypse is relegated to the past, even though it never happened at all.

Aside from individuals who couldn’t refrain from figuring out in which time they were actually living, and thus insisted on a specific interpretation, the history of Christianity was largely a history of blurring these exclusive and

04/09



Ed Westcott, *Billboard posted in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1943*. Photo: Public Domain/U.S. Government

contradictory possibilities.

Now there exists the great danger that a similar eschatological ambiguity will return and rule over our time; that our position would become as *claire-obscur* as the Christian's eschatological situation had been. Nothing would be more disastrous than if an uncertainty arose as to whether we consider the catastrophe to still be in front of us (and behave accordingly); whether we can afford to orient ourselves in the world as if we were already over the mountain (for example by overcoming the atomic monopolies); or whether we consider the end as something "continually happening" (and thereby not so frightening). Perhaps the bluntness of a disbeliever, one as disbelieving as the author of these lines, is needed to make it abundantly clear that this ambiguity [*Zwielichtigkeit*], if it happened today, would have an even more fateful effect than the ambiguity [*Zwielichtigkeit*]³ then. As the two thousand bygone years have proved, the threat back then was merely imaginary. This time we are confronted with an unambiguous threat in the everyday-technical sense that will come true unless we preempt it with a real and equally unambiguous answer-action.

What lies behind us – in the sense of what is now valid once and for all – is the precondition which makes the catastrophe possible.

What lies in front of us, is the possible catastrophe.

What is always there, is the possibility of a catastrophic instance.

Analogy: just as then, one would have to refer to the finite period [*Frist*] to try to keep the believers believing (in the arrival), today one would try, again with reference to the finite period [*Frist*], to keep those in disbelief in disbelief (of the arrival).

Back then it was said: we cannot expect the kingdom to arrive imminently, since the arrival represents a cosmic drama; the victory over the earth takes time, even when it has already been fought for and won over in the heavens; and can only occur once Satan has already enjoyed his final convulsive triumph. "For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first" (2 Thess. 2:3). In short: the fact that the kingdom has thus far not come was virtually presented as evidence of its arrival.

Today, on the contrary, it is said: "No, we do not have to expect the catastrophe to happen immediately, not at all. The fact that it hasn't happened yet, the period of time we have already undergone proves that we are capable of living with the fear ('with the bomb') and of keeping it at bay. Of this we can be certain, since the apocalyptic danger was more acute in the beginning of the 'period' [*Frist*] than it is today.

Back then, there was a monopoly on atomic weapons and nobody had any experience with them. Today, we have the doctrine of mutually assured destruction. And even back then it would have been possible to overcome the danger-climax [*Gefahrenklimax*]. Ergo: the exam is already behind us."

05/09



Ed Westcott, "The Calutron Girls" Y-12 Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1944. Image: Public Domain/U.S. Government

The End of the End

As long as the course of time was understood cyclically, it was considered to be unavoidable that the starting point would always be reached anew and that the same path would have to be traversed all over again. The concept of the "end" was impossible. When it showed up in the Stoics' ekpyrotic theory of the universe, "end" was synonymous with "beginning." Through the expectation of the final end and through eschatological fear and hope, history has become a "one-way street" that excludes repetition. But not only was it unable to reach any of its old starting points, it also couldn't reach an end. As a result, history, which was only possible by thinking through the concept of the "end," became the principle of "and so on." History has prepared the end of the principle "end." No guarantee was as eternally safeguarded for us as the guarantee of eternally continuing time. This guarantee is now bankrupt.

Excursus about the Christian and Atomic Apocalypse

My use of the phrases "eschatological" and "apocalyptic" has been repeatedly met with objections. The accusations claim that it does not behoove us to play around with theological expressions and use them metaphorically to represent a situation that has nothing to do with

e-flux journal #97 — Günther Anders
Apocalypse without Kingdom

religion, to lend them a false seriousness [*falschen Ernst*] and a false sense of terror.

The only truthful riposte to this criticism will sound shocking. However, in the name of our supposed injured seriousness [*verletzten Ernstes*], every ambiguity is forbidden. Here is the answer:

No matter how awe-inspiring this venerable history of eschatological hopes and fears may be – from Daniel's dream interpretations to socialism's hopes for the kingdom-of-god – an actual threat of the world ending never existed, despite the subjective seriousness with which these prophets spoke of danger. Only today's threat of the end is objectively serious. So serious that it couldn't be more serious. Since that is the case, the question of which usage of the term "end of the world" or "apocalypse" is metaphorical and which usage is not, must be answered so: it wasn't *until today*, or rather, until year zero (1945) that these terms earned their serious and un-metaphoric sense, since only today do they name a real possible downfall [*Untergang*]. On the other hand, the concept "apocalypse," which is still used in theology today, turns out to be merely a metaphor in hindsight. We could even say that what was meant by this metaphor was until now – to put it bluntly – a *fiction*. As I said, that sounds like a provocation. But to reject this claim for this reason would be misguided. For we are by no means the first to degrade eschatology to a "fiction." In a sense, this degradation is as old as eschatology itself. This process of degradation has a long history as well. Actually, it dates back to that moment when Jesus sent out his disciples with the words "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come," without the son of man having ever come. For the old world was still in place and it continued functioning. The disappointment over the failure of either the Parousia or the end to take place, or rather, the disappointment over the continuation of the world, was the model of disappointment that would last for centuries, until the Parousia was finally reinterpreted into something that had already happened. (Like in the representations of the resurrection and end of the world in the third and fourth centuries, which regarded the Expected as something that had already happened: the future was already part of the past. See Martin Werner, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas*, Bern 1941.)

But didn't the apocalypse seem to degrade itself to the status of a fiction during that centuries-long continuum of disappointed hopes? The (at times deceitful) means that were used to maintain hope despite the never-ending Parousia-delay cannot be treated here. The apocalypse wasn't degraded to a fiction because

a *real* threat of apocalypse of an entirely different kind suddenly emerged, as is the case today, but rather because insofar as the prediction couldn't be understood and given meaning in a theological context, it seemed to be mere false prophecy. The churchwarden in Pontus already weakened his own prophecy with the words "If it doesn't happen as I have said, then don't continue believing in the scripture, rather each one of you should do as they wish."

That means that not only "when?" the apocalypse would take place was disputed from early on; there was also doubt as to whether the divined downfall [*Untergang*] would take place at all. However, these doubts were not caused by the emergence of an actual threat like the one we face today, but rather by the continued existence of the world, which refuted the apocalyptic expectations on a daily basis, if not proving them to be downright lies.

In regards to today's Christians, if they still believe in a collapse [*Untergang*] at all, they believe in that end which they learned about in church school. In other words, it doesn't occur to them to see an omen⁴ in the situation we have created for ourselves today. But I say restrictedly: "if at all." Actually, the non-Parousia of Christ has made the apocalyptic component of faith unbelievable for the last fifteen hundred years. Bultmann's replacement of eschatological Christianity with an "existential" one is but the latest iteration of an apocalypse-neutralization which has actually existed since Augustine. For Augustine, the church was the "Civitas Dei." The kingdom come, by virtue of its arrival, made the hope for the Second Coming superfluous. No, already in Paul's time the concept and image of the apocalypse were ambiguous. And Paul's image of the apocalypse was not the only thing that was ambiguous. The "apocalypse-sentiments" (if we can use this term), or the *mindset* towards the apocalypse,⁵ was also ambiguous. Here I am referring to the ambivalence of hope and fear which occurs so quickly in the face of the expected apocalypse, and which disambiguates to fear in the end; as well as the confusion that comes with not knowing whether the promised kingdom was to be conceived as something that was forthcoming or if it was already there.

This situation of a "delayed Parousia," which rightfully plays a decisive role in contemporary Protestant religious history, is the situation that Paul and his generation faced (first Albert Schweitzer, then Werner Elert, among others). It is the only situation before ours in which people were required to insist on the forecasted catastrophe despite the fact that it hadn't happened yet in order to avoid having to renounce the main credo of their faith. For this

reason, this situation is tremendously insightful for us as a model of our own situation. They at once had to concede that the catastrophe had not happened yet, but that in a certain sense, it was already there. In short: it was a situation which had to be understood as a *period* [Frist], as a period of time [Zeitraum] that was defined by its limitations and inconsistencies, that is to say, by its “*finis*.” This finite period of time wasn’t just slightly illuminated or obscured by the “*finis*,” it was always already completed by the “*finis*.” That means: one could understand the coming (of the end and of the kingdom) as a process that both required and completed time, as a process that one could already find oneself inside of – something like a sleigh racing unstoppably towards the abyss, which has already reached a catastrophic situation before it has actually crashed into the abyss.

And that is exactly how we see the situation that lies before us.



Ed Westcott, A Award Pin 1945 Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1945. Employees who worked 6 months or more between June 19, 1942 and August 6, 1945 received this special A Award from the War Department. Image: Public Domain/U.S. Government.

Synopsis on the Christian and Atomic Apocalypse

A synoptic comparison of apocalypse-expectations in Apostolic Christianity with

today's end-expectations will help clarify things. What they have in common is:

1. Back then, it was necessary to make it clear to all the contemporaries that they didn't just live in any random epoch, but rather in a (and that means *eo ipso*: in the) *period* [Frist]. Today as then.

2. Back then, the expected end was met with general unbelief or even scorn. “And you know that in the last days satirists will come to say ‘where is the great promise?’” Today as then.

3. Back then (for Paul), the existence of the world [*das Dasein der Welt*] in the time between the Crucifixion and the Second Coming was regarded as a mere *still-there* [*Noch-Dasein*]. Today as then. The world between Hiroshima and total nuclear war is indeed still *there*, but only *still* there.

4. Back then it was necessary to prevent the failure of the Second Coming and of God's kingdom to materialize as being misunderstood (or rather: correctly understood) as evidence contrary to the Annunciation's truth. To this end, all intellectual endeavors, and Paul's especially, were aimed at disavowing the fact that the world continued to exist unchanged in order to prove that the eschatological situation was already “there.” At the same time, Paul had to explain to the believers that the great cataclysm had already begun, or rather that everyone who died off with the world had already been redeemed in Christ. Today as then. Today too it is necessary to prevent the fact that the catastrophe hasn't happened yet from being seen as evidence contrary to the real possibility of its happening, to prevent “not yet” from being misunderstood as “never.” We too must focus all our intellectual endeavors on rejecting the idea that the world is only *still* there and can't be changed, making today's facts recognizable as omens, and proving that the eschatological situation has already occurred.

What's different is:

1. Back then, the expected downfall never actualized. Roughly speaking, this expectation was unfounded. On the contrary, expecting a disaster today is entirely justified. Compared to the kind of disaster we must anticipate today, the apostolic talk of apocalypse seems to be a mere delusion. We are not speaking metaphorically when we name what is in front of us “apocalyptic.” In light of our situation, the way people spoke of the “end” back then was metaphoric.

2. Back then, the end was something that was merely caused by humans. This time, on the contrary, it is something that humans have directly created. Back then, we anticipated the end because we were guilty. Today, we are guilty of manufacturing the end.

3. The message back then was a cheerful one. It meant “the future has already begun.” On the contrary, today’s message is simply terrifying. It means “the futurelessness has already begun.”

4. Back then, the eschatological hope constituted the course of “history,” since the ancient cyclical nature of time, which had been forbidden for all of history, was abolished [*aufgehoben*] by the fact that whatever remained would course forwards down a one-way street in the direction of the “kingdom.” On the contrary, when we anticipate the end, we anticipate the end of history. To put it differently: since God’s kingdom was guaranteed only by the sacrificial death of Christ, this death transformed the entire period of time preceding this guarantee into something old. History was made possible because the world’s events could now be articulated in two time periods (or if you count the time till the final judgment as another time period, then even in three). For us on the other hand, the possibility of the end transforms the already completed past into something that was there as if it never happened at all. That means: it was retroactively de-historicized, if not – *sit venia verbo* – “de-ontologized.”

5. Back then, in the face of the end’s failure to materialize, it was necessary to reassure all the disappointed “Brothers” that whoever dies off with this world already has their end behind them, already lives and is redeemed through Christ. Our task, on the contrary, is to use the information indicating that we are already in an eschatological situation to prevent the “eschaton” from actually emerging.

6. Today, the fact that we have to live under the threat of a self-made apocalypse raises the moral problem in an entirely new way. Our moral task does not arise from the cancellation of the expected kingdom, from God’s judgement, or from Christ (as Daniel and all other apocalypticists had expected). Our moral task arises because we ourselves, through our own doing, are responsible (not as judges, but nonetheless) for deciding whether our world will remain or disappear. We are the first to expect not the kingdom of God after the end, but nothing at all.

As long as the eschatological expectation was considered merely a “delusion,” then the apocalypse, regardless of whether it was a short period or an entire millennium, was understood to be only a prelude to the kingdom of God. Today the apocalypse is technically possible and even probable, and we confront it by itself: nobody expects the “kingdom of God” to follow it. Not even Christ himself.

Or to put it another way: from a moral perspective, the situation is new because if the

catastrophe occurred, it would be man-made. When it happens, it will be man-made. So far, apocalypses have always been considered to be only consequences of human activity (i.e., as punishment for corruption); or even as the final catastrophe (the outbreak of the kingdom in heaven as well as on earth). Today’s apocalypse, on the other hand, would not only be the result of our moral state of affairs, but the direct result of our actions, our product.

We cannot be certain if we have reached the *end of times* yet. What is certain is that we live in the time of the *end*, permanently. Certain is that the world in which we live is uncertain.

“In the time of the end” means: we live in an epoch whose end we can evoke on a daily basis. And “permanently” means, that whatever time remains for us, remains the “time of the end” because it cannot be replaced by another time, but only by the end.

It cannot be replaced by another time because we are incapable of suddenly not-being-able to do what we are capable of today (namely, preparing each other for the end).

It’s possible that we will manage – we no longer have the right to hope for better luck – to delay the end, to win the fight against the end of time again and again, that is to say, to make the *end times endless*. But even if we succeed in doing so, the time will still be the same: namely, end times. For only today would be guaranteed, never tomorrow. And not even today nor yesterday are guaranteed, because they will both collapse alongside the disintegrating tomorrow.

Despite all uncertainty, we can be certain that winning the struggle between the time of the end and the end of time is *the* task allotted to us today and to all who come after us. We can be certain that we and all who follow in our wake will have no more time to delay this task because (as was said in an earlier, yet only now entirely true text) “In the end times time passes faster than in earlier times, and the seasons and years begin to run” (Ezra 4:26).

We can be certain that we must run faster than people did in earlier times, even faster than the course of time itself; so that we overtake the course of time and secure its place in tomorrow before time itself arrives at tomorrow.

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This text is an excerpt from Endzeit und Zeitende (End-Times and the End of Time, 1959) by Günther Anders. Translated from the German by Hunter Bolin.

1

Heat death is a theory, based on the second law of thermodynamics, about how the universe will end. Heat death occurs as the universe moves towards maximum entropy and minimum temperature. – Trans.

2

The German word “*Frist*” could also be translated as “deadline.” The connotation is a period of time that is finite. I have rendered it as “period” but also “finite period” throughout the text, depending on the context. – Trans.

3

A more accurate translation would be “sketchiness” or “dodginess” (UK). Because of the colloquial nature of these phrases, I have chosen “ambiguity” instead. – Trans.

4

To speak of “omens” today is, of course, entirely jejune. For our manufacturing of the end of the world, which threatens with danger in the most direct and exegesis-free way, is of course far more than a mere omen in need of interpretation.

5

Throughout the history of Christianity, the greater the role taken on by the Sacrament, the more powerless and unconvincing eschatological thought had to become. For if the Sacrament already has the power to decide on resurrection or condemnation, then the sentence of the Last Judgment is already anticipated during one’s lifetime, so that the judgment itself is made superfluous. But since the judgment constitutes an essential component of the eschatological drama, or more correctly: since the apocalyptic end is in a certain sense identical with the judgment, only an unbelievable and mutilated apocalyptic thought remains.

09/09

e-flux journal #97 — Günther Anders
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