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APOCALYPTIC WEATHER

In Utopia, of course, the weather is fine. Also about Atlantis it is reported that there was - in its beginnings at least - an ideal and even climate (Plato, *Kritias* 115). But Atlantis ends, after floods and earthquakes, in "the catastrophe of one day and one night of dreadful terrors" (Plato, *Timaios* 25). The destruction of Atlantis gets an apocalyptic quality by the decline of the Atlantic people who lose their "divine nature" more and more by abandoning themselves to "greed and love of power" (Plato, *Kritias* 121), until Zeus himself intervenes to make the Aion of injustice founder on divine justice. While the terrible apocalyptic weather - which corresponds in its extent of terror to the fall of unjust Atlantis - is drawing near, the revelation of the justice of Zeus begins. The imagery included in the myth of this very catastrophe has manifested itself in many forms, most impressively of all perhaps in Tolkien's Akallabêth, where the story is told of how the Atlantic weather which had always been in accordance with the wishes of man, was rapidly changing during the last days of Atlantis/Númenor:

> " [...] for the sky itself was darkened, and there were storms of rain and hail in those days, and violent winds; [...] And out of the west there would come at times a great cloud in the evening shaped as it were an eagle, with pinions spread to the north and the south; and slowly it would loom up, blotting out the sunset [...] " (Tolkien 276)

Similar elements - perhaps the topic is universal - may be found in the imageries of the Ragnarök and the Muspilli and in those of the

Apocalyptic Day of which the prophets of the Last Judgement are speaking.[10] All of them have in common the idea of a new beginning.

In contrast Utopia is situated "thither" (Morus 56), beyond the facts, in the realm of spirit, or better, of theory, beyond "great and wide deserts and wildernesses, [...] inhabited with wild beasts and serpents, or at leastwhile with people that be no less savage, wild, and noisome than the beasts themselves be" (Morus, 19). It is situated in a mild climate, "the air soft temperate and gentle; the ground covered with green grass" (19), sheltered from storms, in a quiet sea (65), the capital Amaurotum is provided with the water of a carefully canalised river and surrounded by a wall giving shelter from the wind (70), it rests in unaltered peace for 1760 years (71).

For - as topographical isolation defines the spatial character of Utopia, the absence of crises and catastrophes defines its temporal character as a "U-chronia". The "weather-less-ness" or the evenly positive normality of weather represent that aspect of a standstill of time symbolically as well as the structures of landscape and architecture represent the "placelessness" of the good society.

These structures and this stability of weather are revealing with regard to the concept of the ideal norm, which forms the background of the utopian outline in question, that is, the interpretation of reason. Morus's *Utopia* is still close to the traditional meaning of reason as a perception of reality (Morus 96). But since Bacon's *Nova Atlantis*, the interpretation of reason as a means of safeguarding is becoming more and more the basis of utopian ideas, which, therefore, tend to the imagery of conquering the cosmos and nature and of establishing control and power over them.

With that, dystopia, that is the description of the total access of an impersonal force to the living world, is already realised; its last, most radical form consists in extending the central thought of controlling nature even into the realm of the human soul; the soul, too, is seen in terms of being scientifically understandable, technically feasible.

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Joel, 2,2 ("a day of cloud and dense fog"). Amos, 8,9 ("I shall make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight").

Though dystopian in character, both the manipulation and the conditioning of the soul's activities are still positively evaluated as utopian, i.e. as a measurable progress towards a happy universal state, in Skinner's *Walden Two* (1948). The final dystopian stage is the idea of a "megamachine" which works by a "Gleichschaltung von Körpern, Geistern und Dingen" (de Rougemont 102, 104). There does not remain any contradiction to the world of bad facts, against which utopia sets itself off *per definitionem*, but the utopian/uchronian isolation has not been abandoned: the dystopian society increases the island state, so that it becomes a confining, and, at the same time, excluding prison, from which flight is as impossible as the entering of a deliverer; inside its realm the human soul is held in a perpetual state of siege by ideology.

The atmospheric expression of the perpetual state of siege or state of safeguarding is the weatherless closed system.

Bacon's manipulation of the wind in Bensalem is an "achievement" (Bacon 206), which is already different in quality from the wind-protecting wall of the Utopians; the extreme case is the artificially produced climate in a wholly roofed-over city, situated in a region where man would not be able to live by natural means: Brjussow's arctic City of Stars in "The Republic of the Southern Cross" (Brjussow), or the Megalopolis, air-conditioned like a department store, in the film *Flight into the 23rd Century*. These and similar sketches belong to dystopian literature of course, but how is it to be explained that fictional concepts of a positive and moral purpose take place in an even and artificially generated atmosphere, in eternally regular daylight? The American television serials *Star Trek*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (!), and *Deep Space Nine* only sometimes allow their protagonists a holiday from the sterile work into the Holo-Suites of the artificial, threedimensional reality of the holograms. A possible encounter with a real living world, a planet for example, does not form an alternative, for its atmosphere is reduced to normal parameters by control stations. As the programmatic subtitle *The Next Generation* suggests, the elimination of the perhaps last uncontrolled natural phenomena belongs to this kind of technical-imperialistic forward-looking optimism.

But perhaps some of us do really wish such a world? "If it must rain, then, please, only at night!" Not to forget the weather forecast (a sort of fine-weather-brainwashing), according to which rainy weather is of some importance for farmers only, as if mankind was being fed by replicator systems (Sternbach 90) already. There may be only one step from the popular demand for fine weather to the actual use of weather-controlling stations which destroy extreme forms of weather. Roland Emmerich's film *Das Arche Noah Prinzip* shows how easily such technologies may be abused by politicians.

At the end of the 18th century the German poet Matthias Claudius anticipates the "artificial environment" (cf. Roszak 3-22) in his parable "Vom Wachstum": After Osiris has taught men the art of farming, some think that the growth of grain is due only to the control of that art:

> '[...] die Einflüsse des Himmels werden so nötig nicht sein [...]auch kann man den Himmel an das Gewölbe malen.' Sie faßten darauf den Acker regelrecht und nach der Kunst ein, machten ein Gewölbe darüber und malten den Himmel daran. - Und die Saat wollte nicht wachsen! und sie bauten, pflügten und düngten und ackerten hin und her. - Und die Saat wollte nicht wachsen! Und sie ackerten hin und her. (Claudius 24 f.)

Under the surface of such solidifying and excluding processes, fears are hidden which are the very formative experiences of modern and postmodern societies: modern age is an "Epoche der Angst" (14). Introduced by the 14th century as the century of horrors (that is, the plague, the invention of firearms - and the social and economic consequences coming from them), the modern age develops strategies of protection against fear. The scientific revolution of the 17th, the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th, and the imperialism of the late 19th century, are all based on the "rockbottom"[11] of objectifying reason as a safeguard against fear. But it is its very procedure, acting aggressively against reality, which, in the form of a "fear-aggression-

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As Descartes expounds in the sixth part of the *Discours*. Further cf Löwith.

helix" (Zinn 16), produces new, as it were, ideological horrors, the shadows of things and living beings, which have been pushed back into objectivity: "Antichrist, Satan, Hexen, böse Geister und dergleichen" (Zinn 15).

> Die Häufung von Aggressionen, die auf die abendländischen Völker von 1348 bis zu Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts einstürmten, bewirkten in allen Gesellschaftsschichten eine tiefgreifende seelische Erschütterung, von der sämtliche Ausdrucksformen jener Zeit, Texte und Bilder, Zeugnis ablegen. Ein Land der Angst enstand, in dessen Innerem eine Kultur sich unbehaglich fühlte und das sie mit krankhaften Phantasiegebilden bevölkerte. (Delumeau vol. 1: 39)

The state of siege by real fears, increased by the very consciousness of being besieged which is a reaction to them, is increased again by the techniques both of individual and social growth of power to overcome these gathering fears. It is based upon Hobbes' theory of the human wolf, a theory which leads to a sort of "Dis-soziierung" (de Rougemont 25,27) within modern societies, concerning the mutual relationships of the individual towards society as a whole and *vice versa*. As a constant state of war it expresses itself in the excesses of punishment by both, church and state, and culminates in the mass exterminations of our age. It takes place in the context of the belief in progress, science, and high tech fetishism as expressions and consequences of the modern understanding of work. As the very centre of modern societies, the concept of reason, which both gives and postulates security, endows these societies with dystopian traits. Thus, they do not remain in the realm of the purely fictional, that is, in a safe distance.

The feeling that another Aion is drawing near has apparently run parallel to the developing mentality of being besieged, as the frequent occurrence of the topic shows significantly since the 14th century (Delumeau, vol. 2, 313). Again and again it has manifested itself at moments of crisis. Thus, the late 19th century is marked by a broad spectrum of apocalyptic reactions, from Kierkegaard calling himself the "Vigilius Haufniensis", who watches the petrels of a new time coming into sight; from Nietzsche prophesying the age of nihilism, to

Solowjew's strange presentiment of an invasion coming from the far East:

> Panmongolismus! Wort der Schrecken!
> Doch mir gefällt der wilde Klang,
> Als wollte Gott uns nun entdecken
> Des letzten Schicksals schweren Gang.
> (Müller 241 f.)

Similar feelings may be seen at the end of the 20th century since the findings of the Club of Rome were published in the '70s (de Rougemont, 50), since the Nostradamus wave in the '80s and Tschernobyl in the '90s.

These are secularized apocalypses as it were, whereas the feelings that the end of the world is approaching, which overpowered men from the 15th century onward, were framed by the imagery of the Old and New Testament (Delumeau, vol. 2, 314). But all these concepts have in common that the apocalypse moves into the structures of the present Aion like the "trough" of a new age, the expression of an altering principle.

This change is - compared to the pace and the direction of normal time - always drawing near like Böhme's Dawn. A special vantage point is necessary to look at the grandeur of that apparition, a vantage point beyond normality, beyond time, and if the course of time were horizontal, a vantage point on a line "vertical" to time.

"Angst vor dem Umsturz" (Delumeau, vol. 1: 267) may restrict the possibilities of such an outlook for the ruling system, but, from the point of view of the outsider, the catastrophe is welcome in spite of its terrors. Both reactions show themselves in the earlier modern ages, side by side, as the terror of the Last Judgement on the one hand, and as chiliastic expectation on the other. Seen from the viewpoint of the ruling system, the expectation is heterodox, of course. A Word from Martin Luther's table-talks shows the complexity of the interrelations:

> O lieber Gott / kom schier einmal / Ich warte stets des tages / frühe umb den Lentzen / wenn Tag und Nacht gleich ist / und wird ein ser klare helle Morgenröt werden. Aber das sind meine gedancken / und ich will davon predigen / Bald aus der Morgenröt wird komen ein schwartze

> dicke Wolcke / und werden drey Plixen geschehen / Darnach wird ein Schlag komen / und alles in einem nu auff einen hauffen schlagen / Himmel und Erden. Gott sey aber lob / der uns geleret hat / das wir nach dem Tage seuffezen / und in begeren sollen. Im Bapstthum furchte sich alle Welt dafur / wie sie auch im Gesang sungen / Dies illa, dies irae...
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> Ich hoffe ja / der Tag sey nicht weit / und wir wollen in noch erleben. (Delumeau, vol. 2: 324)

The chiliastic outlook beyond the frontiers of time, beyond its normal, seemingly one-sided direction to the great trans-temporal constellations, manifests itself in the conceptual frame of space and time by the imagery of the storm. The threatening, gathering storm symbolises the change of systems; the dynamism of the storm-motif makes it one of the most impressive elements of art and literature, especially of fantasy. Fantastic literature, fantastic art in general, are always seen from the point of view of the outsider, from a vantage point beyond time. Thus defined, it is a form of chiliasm and, in relation to the ruling system, it is heterodox.

The connection of both these aspects and their representation by the symbolism of the apocalyptic weather is made visible in a most exemplifying degree by the painting of the Lord's Supper in the Herrenberger Hochaltar, painted by Jörg Rathgeb, 1519. It shows an outlook on the landscape of the Gethsemaneh Garden. Described in the words of Wilhelm Fraenger, the scene shows the following:

> Während von links, der bösen Seite, Judas und die Häscher zu dem Garten eilen, sieht man, wie rechts sich das Gebirge von der Erde löst und bis zur Mond- und Wolkenhöhe in einem rätselhaften Zwischenzustand schwebt, angesichts dessen kaum zu unterscheiden ist, ob sich [...] die Erde ihres Schwergewichts entkleidet und zum Himmelreich erhöht, oder ob sich vom Himmel her ein neuer Tabor auf die Erde senkt. (Fraenger 68)

Fraenger assigns the motif to the enthusiastic expectations of the Taborites who believed to be transported to the five holy mountains and to be spared, while the world, corrupted by mammonism and abuse of power, went to pieces.

This is how the metereological situation in Rathgeb´s painting is described by Fraenger:

> [...] die Landschaft der Ölbergszene mit schwer und trüb bewölktem Nachthimmel in grauem Blau, der sich nach unten in ein mildes Königsblau und dann in ein trübes Rot durchzogenes Teegelb der heraufziehenden Morgenröte lichtet. Die Sichel des abnehmenden Mondes, umgeben von ein paar Sternen, schwebt über den graublauen Türmen der fernen Stadt [...] Das Feld ist fahlgrau [...] Vor dem Bergkegel erhebt sich eine kühn gezackte Klippe in hellgelb-rötlicher Farbe [...] Es ist kein natürliches, sondern ein supra-naturales "himmliches" Licht, das in strahlender Helle quer hereinfällt. (Fraenger 110)[3]

Chesterton´s description of the sky in *Manalive* is strikingly similar:

> The sky above them was full of mythology. Heaven seemed deep enough to hold all the Gods. The round of the ether turned from green to yellow gradually like a great unripe fruit. All around the sunken sun it was like a lemon; round all the east it was a sort of golden green [...]; but the whole had still the emptiness of daylight and none of the secrecy of dusk. Tumbled here and there across this gold and pale green were shards and shattered masses of inky purple cloud which seemed falling towards the earth in every kind of colossal perspective. (*Manalive* 34 f.)

In Chesterton's fantastic stories characters always have their entrance when the weather is apocalyptic. "It looked like the end of the world", the narrator of *The Man Who Was Thursday* remarks (11), speaking of the sunset, whose enormous glow of colours is the background for the appearance of Gregory and Syme. The narrator of *Manalive* describes the stormy weather which opens and concludes the story as an "apocalypse" (12): "It seemed like a strange sunrise at the end of the

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Also cf. the motif of the rainbow which was Thomas Müntzer's flag-sign indicating the apocalyptic catastrophe in symbolical colours: red for the burning of the world, blue for the flood and green for the new earth of the pentecostal-communities (Pfingstgemeinden).

day" (ibid. 11). Consider also the atmosphere of a thunderstorm depicted in "The Fantastic Friends":

> [...] night was already deepening the darkness of the storm. [...] she could only faintly see the long water - rushes streaming with the stream, as if they were indeed the shades of the underworld hovering without hope beside the Styx. (*The Poet and the Lunatics* 33 f.);

or of a seemingly idyllic, but secretly heavy and brooding weather, described in "The House of the Peacock":

> [...] down a sunny and empty street of suburban gardens and villas, [...] where the laburnum made lines into the green, or patches of white or red thorn glowed in the growing shadows (*The Poet and the Lunatics* 169, 171);

or of an enigmatic, chiffre-like weather, described in "The Shadow of the Shark":

> Twilight was spreading over the garden [...] but the last light of sunset still lay on a part of the lawn, painting it yellow rather than green, and glowing almost like gold against the last line of the sea, which was a sombre indigo and violet, changing nearer land to a lurid pale green. *The Poet and the Lunatics* 77).

Such sketches, loaded with meaning, belong to the most impressive elements in Chesterton's fantasy. They should not, however, be regarded as mere contrasting forms of setting or framework for patterns of action, which represent a rationally organised world in the sense of Thomas Aquinas or Aristotle; the same goes for the characters which should not be seen as broadly smiling people, combining Thomistic rationality with shrewdness - a view of Father Brown, which since Rühmann's unspeakable portrayal of this character seems to be ineradicably connected with Chesterton, at least in Germany. By such interpretations the author still appears to be captivated within the frame of a Christian-bourgeois security, embellished by some droll ornaments, since the "Return to Thomism in the French speaking

countries", as it was expressed in an issue of *Hochland* in 1928 (de Reynold 34-47)[13].

Chesterton's fantasy, however, is the expression of his controversy with the forms of a "besieged society". Even if the "Servile State" has not been realised in the form Chesterton and Belloc believed it to become true in 1910 (Canovan 74 ff.), it may nevertheless be understood as the symbolic representation of a tendency which is not a mere phantom but shows itself "at the end of the century" as the "totalitarian aspects of modern times" (Prinz 1-21). Denis de Rougemont characterises the dystopian tendencies already mentioned above as a "Gleichschaltung der Intelligenzen, Gleichschaltung der Körper, der Verhaltensweisen und Reflexe durch die Technik, die Tochter der Wissenschaft, die wahre Religion" (de Rougemont 104). Chesterton's criticism of these tendencies, theoretically formulated as the criticism of genetic engineering in *Eugenics*, 1922, "is still entirely relevant" (Canovan 75).

Elements of this criticism are to be found, too, more or less explicitly, in his fantastic fiction. Thus, in "The Shadow of the Shark", the intention of objectifying the world of life is revealed in its murderous consequences:

> He saw every creature and even every object naked [...]. God is inside everything. But this man wanted to be outside everything; to see everything hung in a vacuum, simply its own dead self. (*The Poet and the Lunatics* 95 f.)

Impermeability, denseness of the world are consequences of this mentality, as well as the isolation and loneliness of man. It is in that very aura that the world in Chesterton's stories is experienced, both by the characters and by the reader. The first passage of *The Flying Inn* opens up as follows:

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13 Cf. also the critical remarks on this tendency by the German philosopher Johannes Hessen (65-75).

> The sea was pale elfin green and the afternoon already felt the fairy touch of evening, as a young woman with dark hair [...] was walking along the parade [...] and looking out upon the sea's horizon [...] But there was no sail in sight." (*The Flying Inn* 9)

It is as if the situation of Tennyson's "Mariana" who is not reached by any message from the outer world, therefore is a most unforgettable image of the isolation of the soul in a dead world, was repeated. The same denseness is experienced by Syme during the pursuit of Sunday in the zoo, in a scene of great symbolic intensity:

> Syme felt a glaring panorama of the strange animals in the cages which they passed. Afterwards he thought it queer that he should have seen them so clearly. He remembered especially seeing pelicans with their preposterous, pendant throats. He wondered why the pelican was the symbol of charity [...] He remembered a hornbill, which was simply a huge yellow beak with a small bird behind him. The whole gave him a sensation, the vividness of which he could not explain, that nature was always making quite mysterious jokes. (*The Man Who Was Thursday* 160)

The exotic, and, in the given situation, strange animal in the double imprisonment of "artificial environment" of the zoo *and* the cage, the alienation of the traditional Christ-symbol in the description of the pelican, and the distortion of the proportions in the vexingly composed corporeality of the hornbill suggest the interpretation of a reality which Chesterton himself has emphasised through his subtitle to"*The Man Who Was Thursday*: "A Nightmare". In fact the strange dance of the nature phenomena in the last chapter reminds the reader of a Gnostic world, created by a weird demiurge:

> Syme even saw, with a queer thrill, one dancer dressed like an enormous hornbill, with a beak twice as big as himself - the queer bird which had fixed itself on his fancy like a living question [...] there was a dancing lamp-post, a dancing ship. One would have thought that the untameable tune of some mad musician had set all common objects of field and street dancing an eternal jig." (*The Man Who Was Thursday* 177)

In a note to this story, published in 1936 the author speaks about "the world of wild doubt and despair [...] with just a gleam of hope in some double meaning of the doubt, which even the pessimists feel in some fitful fashion" (ibid 186)[5]. The same experience of absurdity is felt by Major Brown when he sees a bed of pansies threatening him with death; by the vicar when he is confronted with the church-ladies who reveal themselves as a criminal gang; the reader, when Innocent Smith is going to be imprisoned; and by the six detectives when universal anarchy is breaking out. The only possible reaction is to believe oneself in a padded cell (like Dr. Bull).

> [...] and the next moment her voice was lost in the thronging echoes of the thunder, which seemed to shake everything, shouting the same word again and again - crazy, crazy crazy. ("The Fantastic Friends", *The Poet and the Lunatics* 31)[6]

And Gabriel Gale comments upon this:

> 'the world is upside down. We're all upside down. We're all flies crawling on a ceiling, and it's an everlasting mercy that we don't drop off.'" (ibid. 30).

A mad world in which men play a marginal rôle, in the quoted comparison even a disgusting rôle, does give little reason for "mercy", a word that is rather strange in the given context. Only because Gale was standing on his head, this "gleam of hope" could fall into his eye "in some fitful fashion". An apocalyptic sign of weather accompanies the meaningful moment:"At that instant twilight turned to a white blaze of lightning" (ibid. 31). Gale's name surely is no accident.

Seen from a point of view outside normality, i.e. from a chiliastic point of view, for a short moment, like a flash of lightning, *the* Aion

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5 Cf. also: "We have been broken upon the wheel" (ibid. 183).

6 "'I am in a padded cell', said Bull stolidly" (*The Man Who Was Thursday* 31).

becomes visible, to which the so-called real world is related, like a fragment, like something unreliable. Thus after Major Brown knows that he has taken part in a romance, he may consider his mad adventures as yet meaningful. Seen, as it were, through the author's eyes, his adventures look different from the moment when he reads the horrible words "DEATH TO MAJOR BROWN" in a front garden (*The Club of Queer Trades* 15). The whole thing is like an emblem of the existence of man, who is doomed to death; even the pansies suggest the atmosphere of a graveyard, but the story on the whole ends happily.

Thus, too, the outlook from "The Elms, Buxton Common", "with the roaring wind far below" (ibid. 102), does not conform with the world of suspicions, policemen, rows and inns which is usually associated with Lt. Keath; but it does conform with the element of truth which connects the Lietenant with another dimension of reality. Seen from the roof of Beacon House, where"the clouds of an almost impossible purple turned slowly topsy-turvy in the silent anarchy of Heaven [...]" (*Manalive* 39), from the flying buttress of Brakespeare College in "the grey and white of early day-break" (ibid., 126), so very high that it appears as if one looked "over the edge from the North Pole and seeing the South Pole below"; or high above on the neck of "The Angry Street", under which "are lying the moon and the stars" ("The Angry Street", *Tremendous Trifles*, 246) the dubious nature and fragility of the reality which is our everyday life is evident. The barriers of the world of facts, created by Dr. Warner's scepticism and Professor Eames' pessimism, are becoming visible in their marginality as well as the chains by which profane time is locking people up.

Gathering storms, rain, fantastic clouds, dawning daylight, dramatic evening glows are the meteorological phenomena which accompany the getting *through* the horizontal course of time, of the Aion of the fixed and fettering structures which are inimical to the nature of being.

Apocalyptic weather finally corresponds to the verticality of man himself, as - according to tradition - man's vertical position points to his role as the axis mundi which connects heaven and earth and therefore grants an outlook beyond the surface of appearances upon the very structures of being, i.e. upon truth. During a most fierce

storm, Innocent Smith calls from the height of a tree his true name: "Roland Oliver Isaiah Charlemagne Arthur Hildebrand Homer Danton Michelangelo Shakespeare, Brakespeare" (*Manalive* 99). The story of Innocent Smith, the Green Knight bursting into King Arthur's round, begins with a Whitsuntide storm. Syme-d'Artagnan's adventures begin while the sky is on fire with the fire of Elijah and the Last Day. Basil Grant, the judge with the sword, is surrounded by a broad spectrum of weather phenomena. It is he who is at variance with a society without humanity. For the "sagacious people" it is a bad omen that "the judge" closes a trial with the words: "Get a new soul. That thing is not fit for a dog. Get a new soul" (*The Club of Queer Trades* 10). It is a "melancholy and farcical day" (ibid.) when the judge closes the case of the "eminent and powerful financiers" with the remark:

> O Rowty-owty tiddly-owty
> Tiddly-owty tiddly-owty
> Highty-ighty tiddly-ighty
> Tiddly-ighty ow
> (Ibid. 11)

As everybody will know, the judge wanted to say: "Das Zentrum der Gesellschaft muß im Zentrum des Menschen liegen." (de Rougemont 230).

In *The Victorian Age in Literature* Chesterton compares Emily Brontë with a "storm at midnight" (114) and therewith locates her in the context of apocalyptic weather. Emily Brontë herself makes Heathcliff appear while a snowstorm is raging; Charlotte Brontë's Mr. Rochester enters the story while the sun and the moon are in the sky in the same time. There may be different opinions on Heathcliff and Rochester - but the Minister in Mrs. Gaskell's *Cousin Phillis* surely is a character beyond suspicion. He, too, is shown against the background of a storm front. So is the Freiherr von Risach in Stifter's *Nachsommer*, who is, like the Minister, a farmer in peaceful accordance with nature. And does not Merlin in C. S. Lewis' *That Hideous Strength* knock at Ransom's door in storm and rain? The angel of relevation speaks with a voice like the sounds of many waters (Revelation 19,6).

Therefore the phenomena of apocalyptic weather in Chesterton's oeuvre show the author in a much more complex spiritual field than it seems to be the case when he is seen in the usual way as a courageous optimist. In a world which is, in a growing degree, dominated by dystopian forms of social life and consciousness, a profound view of things or a traditional humanity appear heterodox. For only from the point of view where the normal perception and the usual understanding of time cease to exist does the world reveal itself as seeemingly menacing, but in reality as marginal. The good and everlasting dimension however does not appear as an approaching catastrophe, but as a triumphant liberation. But - as these relations do not easily come into sight and are therefore often merely suggested or hinted at - they appear to the reader in a strange state of a nearly nightmarish ambiguity.

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Zusammenfassung

APOKALYPTISCHES WETTER

Aus dem Blickwinkel der Mentalitätengeschichte gesehen, zeigt sich die Neuzeit als eine Epoche der Angst. Belagert von realen Bedrohungen und ideologischen Schrecken, entwickelte die europäische Zivilisation Techniken der Angstbewältigung, die - offiziell als Fortschritt gedeutet - eine Angst-Aggressions-Spirale bilden und sich im postneuzeitlichen "Krisensystem " (de Rougemont) einer " belagerten Gesellschaft " (Delumeau) verfestigen.

In Korrespondenz zu den Systemen der Angst, die auf der theoretischen Grundlage des Menschenwolfs beruhen, steht die Vorstellung der Apokalypse. Durch die Wände des sichernden "Zivilisationsgehäuses" (Zinn) dringen die Strukturen einer anderen Dimension. Chestertons Protagonisten der humanen Gesellschaft treten in der Wetterlage der Apokalyptik auf. Eine lange motivische Tradition solcher Bilder legt diese Betrachtung nahe.