

(171) WHO OR WHAT IS DRIVEN OUT IN THE SCAPEGOATING PROCESS

1. The problem

The origin of this paper are passages in Robert G. Hamerton Kelly: *The Gospel & the Sacred. Poetics of Violence in Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), p. 6: "The GSM [the generative mimetic scapegoating mechanism] works as follows: While, on the one hand, mimetic enthrallment with the model/obstacle diverts attention from the object, the GSM, on the other, rediscovers the object, but now as something to be destroyed rather than possessed." Further, on the same page: "It remains the same energy of mimetic desire but its goal has changed twice: from the original object that it fixed on by imitating the model to the model-become-rival, and then to the victim substituted for the original object, which makes the model no longer a rival but an accomplice." The question is: What is exactly happening in the GSM?

2. What do we desire when we desire?

Humans don't have, don't possess "being" as something like a natural asset. Exactly that they lost when they became human. Nevertheless we, and probably all living creatures, cannot live without a knowing to be. Because we don't have it, we have to acquire it, in some and finally in any manner. If we can acquire it at all, then the obvious possibility to do so is to get it from another human, to take it away from her/him. In fact only in other humans we can perceive being. It simply cannot be found in another manner.

How can we have the impression, or the conviction, that somebody is, that she/he has being? There are probably two possibilities: Because she/he is well seen, is honoured because of her/his position in the group or because she/he possesses qualities or things which make her/him well seen. Or, the other way round: She/he is very badly seen, is extremely despised, feared or/and hated. In the first case the person whose being is desired is near to the god(-devil), in the second one this person is near to the devil(-god). It is obvious that in both cases everything is happening in vicious circles: people are well seen, are considered to have being, because they are well seen, because they are considered to have being. The fighting for being, consequently, always is about nothing and because of that always, in some manner, violent.

One of the consequences of our lack of being is, that we are irretrievably dependent on each other. We live in relationships or we simply are not. The relationships we are living in is our reality. Another is, that when we desire something which is desired by others, by another, we desire that object because its belonging to the other gives this other "being" and we

desire the more deeply or ferociously, the more the object involved gives more securely the being we desire so much. Thus we really never desire an object as such, simply as an object. We desire the object just because of the importance of this object for the other. This is the reason because of which, when we have acquired something and the other gives up, it becomes clear to us that it is worthless. It becomes worthless in the very moment the other gives up. It might even be that the acquired object lost already its worth in the very moment that it lost its near relationship with the former owner because only this relationship made it desirable. In the very moment that the object is acquired the "surplus value" of the object, the quality of giving being, is lost. It becomes just an object, even if it is a human being, and thus worthless. Having obtained it, we despise it because of all the senseless effort we gave, just to get it.

Thus we never desire an object just as an object. We desire the object because it is important for the owner, because it enhances the worth, the being of the owner, in our eyes and in the eyes of the people around. We wish to have just that, this enhancement, this quality of being. Our desiring, consequently, finally always has to do, not with the object involved, but with a quality of the other, which is given to the other by the desired object. When the other resists, she/he shows that the object is really important for her/him, that is really is extremely desirable, worthwhile for the possibility to be somebody, to be a person, and thus to have the sense to be. The battle for the possessing of the object, from the very beginning a battle to acquire being from the other, becomes, when the other resists, straightaway a battle for the very being of the other, The other cannot handle it over, give it up, because it is nothing. Even if she/he gives the object which incarnates or symbolises the being, it must be, it is considered to be a trick, because the object becomes in the very moment that it is given and accepted worthless. Thus it becomes a fight of life and death, in a model-rival-relationship, or it becomes madness, in a model-obstacle-relationship, and both about nothing.

Thus, if the fight deepens, there is no real diversion, from the object to the model. It always was about the model, about qualities of his/her which were desirable. The resistance of the model makes that clear. This resistance, which changes the people involved very soon into each other's enemies and doubles, makes it inevitable that it no longer is about an aspect of the being, represented in an object, but about the desired being as a whole.

3. What or who do we drive out?

In the moment that all are united against one, the mob against the scapegoat, then he is the big opponent, the absolute model-obstacle for all the members of the group, who necessarily has to be destroyed. Before he is recognised as the opponent, everybody fought with everybody for being and in the end they are still fighting and empty handed. Now the attention of all is directed at this one member. Because of this attention he becomes extremely important. Obviously he, and he alone, has being! The (future) scapegoaters have, after all the havoc they organised, the fighting they had with each other, at last recognised where real being truly is. Thus they are altogether after the being of the scapegoat.¹

¹ Consequently I doubt if it is wholly true that the members of the Sanhedrin "(...) do not desire something Jesus has (...)" (Hamerton-Kelly, idid., 54). For them he was extremely important, thus he must be somebody, somebody very big even, representative of the sacred. They wish to get hold of the being, which they ascribe to him, and in order to reach their goal, to get it, they kill him. The irony of course is that Jesus really WAS, "I am", but his real being they did not recognize.

This scapegoat was of course not the (assumed owner of being from the very beginning. The fight might have begun about something, belonging to somebody else. From the very beginning however the fight really was about being. That made, and makes, the fight, finally being about nothing, so ferocious. In the displacements, belonging to this fight, the scapegoat finally became the centre of all the attention and thus, necessarily, the presumed owner of the totality of the being, present in the group. In that manner he became the absolute rival, the person who had all the being and who obviously was not prepared (because not able to) to give anything of it to the other members of the group. He became the total model-obstacle because, in the experience of the mob, he refused absolutely to share anything of his being with them.

Consequently the scapegoaters don't substitute, when they drive the victim out, objects for people or the other way round. The scapegoat is of their own making. They ascribe real being to him, because he gets all the attention, as we still ascribe being to people who get the attention of everybody. They however don't know this. They see in him/her the great opponent who denies being to everyone, a god-devil already, who has to be overcome at any price and as a consequence is driven out, is killed.

The result is more than ever could be expected. It becomes very clear that the supposition that the victim possessed being is perfectly right, because in the very moment that she/he is overcome they actually get what he obviously had, viz. Being, the knowledge to be. This scapegoat obviously in fact possessed this being, even the deciding being, because by winning over him, destroying him, had as an obvious consequence that all the scapegoaters got what they hankered after: Being, the wonderful being they experience, being together in sacrificial peace, in which nothing to desire is left. They took the fullness of being from the scapegoat by killing him.

4. The double transference

Thus there is in fact a double transference: Because of the, not real but as such experienced, importance of the scapegoat, being, absolute being is ascribed to him, and, after driving him out, because they overcame the scapegoat, this being has become the being of the scapegoaters. Nevertheless, in a deep sense the being remains the property of the scapegoat. Already before his death he was already more important than anybody of the group or tribe ever could be. He did and had these horrendous things: Violence and Being. However killed, he obviously still IS. His working is still present in the group. Consequently he obviously really has the power, both for the bad and for the good. Good and bad violence, which culture always has to take care to distinguish, both are with him, the god-devil, almighty and never to be trusted. The relationship which began in the moment that all the eyes were on the future scapegoat never could be dissolved again.

When all this is correct, even true, then the scapegoat mechanism becomes more understandable. The victim is not only a random somebody, who only afterwards is made into a devil-god because of the consequences of the successful scapegoating. He is already something like that, actually awe provoking, before she/he is driven out and thus overcome. The group, who ascribes being to him/her, something the members of the group lack and desire vehemently, makes him already a devil god before he is driven out.

It becomes equally better understandable that kings and all people who had and have the power are his successors, partaking in the sacred, violence, as he did. It remains true that they are scapegoats of whom the driving out was delayed, but as

designated scapegoats, being as the original one before he was driven out, they have already the properties both of the god and of the devil.

The escalation of the violence is better understandable as well. The violence is not about something which animals desire as humans do. The desire is about something historically absolutely new, about being, which in the same time (only) is ascribed and thus nothing. Animals have their place and thus they have being in the dominance patterns. Humans lost that. They don't have a place and thus they don't have being. The original and perpetual drive of humans is just to get that. Of course the humans were and humans are driven by that desire without knowing that, as they are not aware that what they are unknowingly desiring does not exist at all. They think, again and again, that it is about things, about "objects", which make life more beautiful or agreeable when you possess them, but they are fundamentally, mythically, mistaken.

The cultural lie in myth, that the scapegoat is the cause of everything becomes better understandable as well. That she/he is the person to whom being, "absolute being" is ascribed, is in a deep sense random. The attribution however takes place before the eviction, before the killing. He is already a devil and a god, "almighty". Consequently, for the people involved she/he actually is already that person before being driven out, who provokes the madness of the violence by keeping everything for her/himself and only is prepared to give it up when he is killed violently.

The prohibitions finally are not about things and deeds which are forbidden, but about the integrity of people, which is assaulted by desiring and which has to be protected in order to prevent violence. And rituals finally are not executed in order to get peach back, although of course that is the result, but to give "being" back to the members of the group. Having being back, desiring is less necessary for the coming time. This again means that the fact that we don't desire when we feel well, that people who feel at ease are not criminal, is not a practical consequence of their feeling well. It belongs inherently to that experience of feeling well, at ease, which means to have the experience to be. It is two sides of one coin.

5. In culture being is always ascribed

There is a deep irony in the whole: The scapegoat only had her/his overwhelming being, because all the scapegoaters gave it, ascribed it to him/her, experiencing him/her as the proprietor of a, all the others totally fascinating, being, which was all his/hers, and not theirs. Thus they acquired what they first of all themselves give to the scapegoat. In the same time this being only could and can subsist as long as all the scapegoaters together reaffirmed to each other that the scapegoat in fact had this being and that they acquired it. The possession of being, in the sacrificial peace as well as in culture, is only possible in this relationship. The human reality always first of all is between us, not in us. It further is clear that this knowledge of possessing being is finally ineluctably related to the knowledge of the being of the scapegoat, of the devil-god. Secularisation takes the knowledge of being away.

Becoming human means in a deep sense, to lose natural being, the natural experience to be. Having lost it we never again can possess it in any ontological manner. As humans we are forever dependent on each other to be. Either we try to take it, which is the cause of all the cultural havoc, of all the violence, the sacred, or we give it, we ascribe it. When we give it, it is, in culture, always an act of adoration, positively or negatively. We make out of the other either a god or a devil and thus, necessarily, again a virtual scapegoat.

Only outside of culture, outside of the mimesis of desire, we can give being, just because we have it. It is given to us by the reality which, the person who brought us outside of the culture of desire. From there on we can give it again to others.

6. Culture, violence and being

Culture is finally about being. The final damnation for a human being is not to be. This is an aspect of culture, going back to the very origins of culture. The hominids or anthropoids, who stood at the origin of human culture, missing the being animals have and not being able to live without it, could only find being by ascribing it to their most obvious opponent, who stood alone against all and who, for that very reason, in the conviction of all, just because of his importance which was clear to everybody present, must have what all coveted. Because the scapegoat did not give voluntarily what they wished to have (and what she/he actually did not have at all) they resorted to violence, necessarily, as we still do. And because this violence was and is about being, it is the sacred. In the sacred, the numinosum and tremendum, it always really is about the very last realities in human life, about being or not being, to be or not to be. All violence finally is about just that and because of that all violence is sacred.

7. The practical consequences

When all this is (more or less) right, or, because it is about the human reality, even true, then the consequences of this insight probably are enormous for every field where humans act, from politics till psychotherapy and everything in between. All the difficulties between human beings, on the macro and the micro scale, finally are about being. This is true for the relationships of peoples, the relationships of the members of a people, the relationships of the members of a family. When, e.g. parents scapegoat a child, they finally are trying to get hold of the being of the child, whom they ascribe being just by making it important as a scapegoat. This makes the many jealousies of parents towards their children and the other way round and as a consequence again the violence in so many families understandable. Anyway, here is an enormous field to work upon further.

