lively debate. All was calm as Robert DORAN traced the insights of Battling to the End, discussing how we unfortunately need external constraints (e.g. Geneva Conventions), filling the diminishing role of internal constraints (e.g. the sacred, taboo). But room temperature increased when Stephen GARDNER asserted how “GIRARD’s renunciation of the political is absurd” and “he is a utopian romantic”; chairs were thrown, tables toppled, counter-arguments foisted, and, after reconciling through blood sacrifice, all parties eventually left ready for convivial drinks.

In another session, on “Theological Approaches,” Margaret B LUME drew out how ORIGEN’s grappling with myth helps us frame the Christian revelation—and particularly its Eucharistic practice—as both sacrificial and not sacrificial. Thomas RYBA offered his way past both BULTMANN and biblical literalism, rehabilitating demon language (sounding akin to a Ricoeurian second naïveté). And Nikolaus WANDINGER advanced R. SCHWAGER’s dramatic understandings of Jesus life and death—that each “act” of that drama, from his “failure” to inaugurate the kingdom, to Pentecost, all are continually re-done throughout our lives. (I cannot report on the other sessions, though I heard they were all excellent.)

Besides cherishing my visit, loving the new friends I made, and feeling warmly welcomed into this small cadre of capable scholars, I came away considering how theologians like John Howard YODER, Stanley HAUERWAS, and William T. CAVANAUGH may be of some use in Girardian political discourse. Ambivalence toward the katechon requires learning to think and live with or without government and law. The thinkers above, each with weaknesses to be sure, advocate a mode of being “resident aliens” that could offer some ways for Girardians to contemplate being “political”—that is, active and present in this world—but not necessarily governmental, or at least putting much hope in the katechon. Unfortunately, not many words at this colloquium were spent in discussion of praxis. Besides staring down the last bloody century with insightful theory, and analyzing the potential escalation to extremes in our day, we indeed need to consider how to live—as people, communities, churches, and not merely citizens and nations. We need models more communal, gritty, engaged, adventurous, and ecclesiological than HÖLDERLIN and his poetic withdrawal. Dorothy DAY and Peter MAURIN are well known exemplars. But who else?

Chris Haw

Special Attendees’ Reports

Some attendees of the conference in Freising in July might have realized that there was a group of very young students among us. They were, in fact, high school students who had come through “Politische und Christliche Jugendbildung e. V.,” or the Foundation for Political and Christian Youth Education. Two of them, Kyra Gerber (16) and Lorenzo Wienecke (17) wrote little essays of their impressions, which we publish here in excerpts.

The fine white historical conference building was in front of me, I took the first step inside and looked around. Excitement and a thousand questions popped up in my mind which was already exhausted from traveling: What can I expect? Will a pupil even be taken seriously in a meeting like this? The enormous impression mixed up with scepticism and turned into a timid but eager curiosity. I hope that you, my readers, still have some idea of what might go on in the mind of an 11th grade high school student before an international meeting for academic scholars. But the 24th conference of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion gave me much more inspiration and experience than the first impression had me expect. – And I would like to share them with you.

Philosophy is a subject I take at school and I think about studying it. I was very excited about the mimetic theory and looked forward to the philosophy lectures. During the conference I learned a lot about mimetic theory and I experienced it as a comprehensive and especially current approach for many different themes and topics. It was also very nice to listen to the historical part of the conference, especially because I had talked about the First World War some weeks ago in school.

The participants at the meeting, whether they were professors from other countries or students from the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, were communicative and interested and I was able to talk with everybody about so many varied themes from theology to the latest political situations. The way of communication
was an immense contrast to my usual kind of conversation and to the grade of interest for different themes in school and I was happy to get the chance to discuss topics in such a wonderful way. I am still in contact with some people I met at the conference.

The daily schedule and especially the parallel sessions were also something new for me. I went from one presentation to the next and had so much more interesting input than in school – in quantity and also quality. Between the presentations I talked with a lot of nice and also interesting people while we drank coffee or spent lunch breaks together.

In the end I would like to thank for the opportunity to take part at the COV&R conference and for the experiences I made at it. I hope that this article made it possible for you to take a student’s perspective on the conference and I hope that you enjoyed reading it.

Kyra Gerber

At the moment I am for one year as an exchange student in Illinois, USA, and when I look back on the conference in Freising, I remember: A lot of really nice people, interesting lectures, exciting talks, the probably profoundest coffee breaks in a beautiful and impressive environment and much more.

From the first time I heard about COV&R and the conference in Freising I was fascinated by it and I really looked forward to participating. My knowledge about philosophy was small. I’d had the opportunity to attend some philosophy lectures but mimetic theory and the work of GIRARD were completely new to me. Neither had I ever participated in an international meeting and was highly impressed when I saw the list of participants from all over the world. So I started my journey to Freising with many questions, great anticipation and excitement.

The welcome was really friendly and I started directly to talk with people from all over the world. Discussing topics became my favorite activity during the next days. I really liked the lectures, which gave me a lot of information and were a great inspiration. But for me the highlights of the conference were the conversations in small groups. Now we get to the coffee breaks already mentioned at the beginning. These breaks between lectures were always a great opportunity to exchange ideas and learn more in private talks. Everybody I talked to was completely open and friendly. I am still thinking about some of the conversations we had. Every day I got more into the ideas of GIRARD and the mimetic theory and my fascination for philosophy grew strongly. My main reason for attending the conference was my interest in the history topics, and in Battling to the End. The historical lecture of Herfried MÜNKLER was surely one of my highlights, but now I am so fascinated by the philosophy aspects that I seriously think about studying it for a few semesters.

The chamber music concert and the last small group session on Thursday perfectly completed a really good, educational and inspirational time for me, and I was sad that it was already over. I really want to thank COV&R, all participants of the conference, and especially “Politische und Christliche Jugendbildung e. V.” for this great time, and I hope that I will have the opportunity to participate again at a COV&R meeting.

Lorenzo Wienecke

Mimetic Theory and Media Ecology
A Panel in Toronto

In my research and other activities over the years, I have attempted to bridge mimetic theory and the emerging field known as media ecology—the latter frequently defined as the study of the interactions between communications media, technologies, techniques, and processes, and human thought, feeling, value, and behaviour. Among the better-known media ecologists are Jacques Ellul, Lewis Mumford, Neil Postman, Marshall McLuhan, and Walter Ong. In my ongoing effort to introduce the work of René Girard to the media ecology community – which has been a simultaneous effort to introduce the media ecology tradition to those of COV&R for whom it is unfamiliar—I have made the case that though not a student of technology per se, Girard’s work has much to teach us regarding various modes of mediation. As current Vice-President of the international Media Ecology Association (MEA), I hosted our annual convention this past June at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada, where I am happy to report that Girard was this year’s recipient of our Walter J. Ong Award for Career Achievement in Scholarship. As COV&R pres-