Cover Page

Universiteit Leiden

Author: Suurland, David-Arthur John
Title: Secular totalitarian and islamist legal-political philosophy
Date: 2012-09-27

CHAPTER III: THE CHALLENGES OF MODERNITY

*Fiery the Angels rose, and as they rose deep thunder roll'd
Around their shores: indignant burning with the fires of Orc.*

-William Blake: America, A Prophecy

Having made a highly summarized overview of the pre-modern forms of authoritarianism, I know turn to the advent of modernity the role it played in the formation of fascist and totalitarian forms of political organization. Central to this theme is the discovery of the people themselves as the foundation of legitimate rule. If we are to understand the fascist, and in its wake, totalitarian phenomenon, we must first try to understand the intellectual reasons that gave birth to their arrival in the first place. Why should we conceive of fascism and totalitarianism as being a radical break with classic authoritarian forms of government? What caused its intellectual formation? What are the political and legal philosophical consequences of this new representation of the people as the source of power? In order to answer these questions I will divert from a strictly empirical summation of events and structuralist criteria and instead adopt a bird's eye view of some of the essential shifts in intellectual thinking about the legitimacy of power in order to return to the taxonomy of fascism in chapter four. In addition, many of the events that caused a radical shift in legal-political theory in western societies apply to Islamic societies as well. Their confrontation with modernity will be described, in short, in chapter three of the second part of this research. Suffice to say for now that the emergence of both secular-democracy and totalitarianism as alternative to the pre-modern legal-political theory of western societies is mirrored in the Islamic world in the forms of secular pan-Arabism, *baathism*, on the one hand, and Islamism on the other. A truly democratic response to modernity, however, has for the most part been absent in Islamic societies. The

popular revolts in the Arab world against secular dictatorial rule in 2011 indicate that the processes which took shape in western societies in the 20th century are still unfolding in the Islamic-Arab world.

The reactions sparked by the advent of modernity in the Islamic and non-Islamic world alike can be described by stepping away from its particularities and, instead, focussing our attention on the larger dynamics in the domain of legal and political theory. One of the most dramatic shifts that occurred during the transition from classic forms of authoritarianism to modern phenomena such as democracy, fascism and totalitarianism, is the shift in the symbolic place of power, from the divine or transcendent to the immanent. I will first explore this theme through the normative theories of Claude Lefort and Eric Voegelin. Following the description of this theoretical framework in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2, I will explain in paragraph 3.3 how in many parts of the western world, the confrontation with modernity created social, intellectual and political counter reactions that led to the rise of totalitarian legal-political theory.

3.1 Claude Lefort and the symbolic place of power in authoritarianism, democracy and fascism

Lefort places the origin of fascist and totalitarian thought in its relation to the experience of democracy.[157] Building on the work of Ernst Kantorowicz, Lefort argues that power in the *ancient regime*, was symbolically represented in the double body of the King. The King's body represented both the body of the community and was underpinned by the body of Christ.[158] The king thus functioned as the

---

[157] Lefort and Thompson, eds., *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, p. 301.

[158] Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies; a Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, N.J.,: Princeton University Press, 1957). See also Afshin Ellian reception of Kantorowicz's theory in: H van der Wilt, "In Search of Motive: Conceptual Hazards in the Quest for a Proper Definition of

representative of the people, and as the representative of divinity, combining in his person legitimate power, a legitimate law making capability and knowledge.

> The society of the *ancient regime* represented its unity and its identity tot itself as that of a body – a body which found its figuration in the body of the king, or rather which identified itself with the king's body, while at the same time it attached itself to it as its head. [..] The image of the king's body as a double body, both mortal and immortal, individual and collective, was initially underpinned by the body of Christ. The important point for my purpose [..] is that, long after the features of liturgical royalty had died away, the king still possessed the power to incarnate in his body the community of the kingdom, now invested with the sacred, a political community, a national community, a mystical body. [..] The *ancient regime* was made up of an infinite number of small bodies which gave individuals their distinctive marks. And these small bodies fitted together within a great imaginary body for which the body of the king provided the model and the guarantee of its integrity.[159]

Lefort argues that politics should always direct to a point located outside of it, a symbolic point such as a concept of 'justice' of 'divinity'. The double body of the king provided the people with a tangible symbol of its own unity and a metaphysical symbol of its constituting legitimacy, namely the divine law to which the king himself was subordinate. The king in that sense was not just a mere mortal who represented nothing more than his own individual figure and his own individual interests, but he was the conduit between the earthly realm, the people, and the divine realm, for he was appointed

---

Terrorism " in *Terrorism: Ideology, Law, Policy*, ed. Gelijn Molier, Afshin Ellian, and David Suurland (Dordrecht: Republic of Letters, 2011).
[159] Lefort and Thompson, eds., *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, pp. 302-303.

and sanctioned by God himself through the doctrine of divine right of kings.[160] Furthermore, the king could occupy the place of power but he could not appropriate it, for it was essentially divine. Even if the king died, his successor would guarantee that the function of the conduit would remain intact. Democracy however forms a break with this tradition of the double body of the king and is exemplified in the French revolution and the decapitation of Louis XVI in 1793:

> The democratic revolution, for so long subterranean, burst out when the body of the king was destroyed, when the body politic was decapitated and when, at the same time, the corporeality of the social was dissolved[161]

The murder of the king by the people and 'for the people', entails two consequences. Firstly; it killed the symbolic body of the king in that the king represented divine rule which symbolically occupied the seat of power. Now a substitute for such a metaphysical point of reference which could legitimize political power, the laws and which entailed the knowledge of good and evil had to be found in either a new metaphysical symbol or in some immanent actualized concept. I will return to this in the paragraph on Gnostic speculation in chapter six. Secondly; the murder of the king as a representative of the social body left the collection of individuals without a symbol of representation, the social body was as it were disintegrated. In other words, in freeing themselves of the king, the French Jacobins created a new burden: what was to represent legitimate rule? Is any form of rule now legitimate? From where do we derive knowledge of good and evil? Which laws are truly lawful and on what authority? And what institution represented the body of individuals?

---

[160]   See for an overview of divine right theories Cliteur, *The Secular Outlook: In Defense of Moral and Political Secularism*, pp. 188-194.

[161] Lefort and Thompson, eds., *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, p. 303.

> The modern democratic revolution is best recognized in this mutation: there is no power linked to a body. Power appears as an empty place and those who exercise it as mere mortals who occupy it only temporarily or who could install themselves in it only by force or cunning. There is no law that cannot be fixed, whose articles cannot be contested, whose foundations are not susceptible of being called into question. Lastly there is no representation of a centre and of the contours of society: unity cannot now efface social division. Democracy inaugurates the experience of an ungraspable, uncontrollable society in which the people will be said to be sovereign, of course, but whose identity will constantly be open to question, whose identity will remain latent.[162]

Democracy in that sense seems like a wasteland with no points of reference on which to orientate oneself let alone society as a whole:

> Modern democratic society seems to me, in fact, like a society in which power, law and knowledge are exposed to a radical indetermination, a society that has become the theatre of an uncontrollable adventure, so that what is instituted never becomes established, the known remains undermined by the unknown, the present proves to be undefinable.[163]

This indetermination notwithstanding, a democracy *can* cope with having 'no representation of a centre or contours of society' by having a symbolic seat of power, law and knowledge. These seats may refer to something outside of itself, a metaphysical concept of justice, ethics or virtue. It is essential to the functioning of the state that these symbolical seats are temporarily *occupied* by the elected representatives and the institutions of the democratic state; their authority and legitimacy depends on it. However, at the same time the democratic principle also dictates that these seats are in the true

---

[162] Ibid., pp. 303-304.
[163] Ibid., p. 305.

sense of the world symbolic and empty. They are forever symbols to which the realm of politics may refer, but which it cannot *appropriate*. Ellian explains:

> Power seemed, in the modern world, to have become groundless, without foundation. The democratic revolution brought forth a new society --- one which, according to Lefort, unanchored by absolute truth, could function without a fixed, eternal ground. Thereby the seat of power becomes symbolically empty, and is to remain so indefinitely.[164]

The democratic model of legal and political theory therefore can deal with this radical indetermination as long as these seats of power, law and knowledge remain empty and are not appropriated. This means that power can only be justified by pointing to something else, a metaphysical or transcendent principle such as 'justice' or a law to which it itself is subservient. These concepts however, cannot be permanently defined, and are forever susceptible to change. The realm of politics may refer to them, but they can never define and appropriate them. From this follow two distinct problems related to this constellation of democracy. The first is when these symbolical seats are occupied by a ruler who does not refer to their transcendent or metaphysical origin. In that case the place of power has lost its reference to the symbolic place of power and democracy runs the risk of being held in contempt; for those who yield power for power's sake, and without reference to the symbols that could legitimize their rule. This would in essence amount to tyranny. It disregards the transcendent or metaphysical references to concepts of justice, virtue or ethics which legitimize authority and sovereignty. Instead, the tyrant, utterly lacking in legitimacy and thus authority, would be forced to rely on violence to compensate for its lack in popular legitimacy.

---

[164] van der Wilt, "In Search of Motive: Conceptual Hazards in the Quest for a Proper Definition of Terrorism ".

> The legitimacy of power is based on the people; but the image
> of popular sovereignty is linked to the image of an empty
> place, impossible to occupy, such that those who exercise
> public authority can never claim to appropriate it. Democracy
> combines these two apparently contradictory principles: on
> the one hand, power emanates from the people; on the other,
> it is the power of nobody. And democracy thrives on this
> contradiction. Whenever the latter risks being resolved or is
> resolved , democracy is either close to destruction or already
> destroyed. If the place of power appears, no longer as
> symbolically, bur as *really* empty, then those who exercise it
> are perceived as mere ordinary individuals, as forming a
> faction at the service of private interests and, by the same
> token, legitimacy collapses throughout society.[165]

The second problem occurs when the symbolical place of power, law
and knowledge is not only *symbolically* occupied but is also
appropriated, meaning, that those who wield power refer to
themselves as the source of power, law and knowledge. This is the
essence of non-religious totalitarianism.

> But if the image of the people is actualized, if a party claims to
> identify with it and to appropriate power under the cover of
> this identification, then it is the very principle of the
> distinction between the state and society, the principle of the
> difference between the norms that govern the various types
> of relations between individuals, ways of life, beliefs and
> opinions, which is denied; and, at a deeper level, it is the very
> principle of a distinction between what belongs to the order of
> power, to the order of law and to the order of knowledge
> which is negated. The economic, legal and cultural dimensions

---

[165] Lefort and Thompson, eds., *The Political Forms of Modern Society:
Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, pp. 279-280.

are as it were, interwoven into the political. This phenomenon is characteristic of totalitarianism.[166]

The importance of this analysis is that it explains the arrival of fascist and totalitarian thought as an answer to democracy's radical indetermination. Both fascism and totalitarianism do not refer to some outer-political principle such as justice or the divine right to rule, but have their own particular immanent symbolism by which they appropriate the right to occupy both the symbolic and the actual place of power. In doing so, the whole concept of the political no longer refers to something outside out if itself, but instead refers to itself and to the movement which is the active carrier of that principle. The movement thus firstly, appropriates the dual body of the king, in that it is the carrier of the legitimation of power *and* the social body which represent the unity of the people, and secondly, begets the monopoly on power, law and knowledge. fascism and totalitarianism both strives to resolve the indetermination and social disintegration caused by the perceived rootlessness of democracy by occupying *and* appropriating the place of power. The way in which they achieve this is by the sacralisation of the institute of power[167] and the sacralisation of the social body. In the case of fascism this takes place in the state and in the nation; in totalitarianism it takes place in the party and the notion of Volk or class. This is a difference on which I will return to in the chapters four and five. Islamism, however, offers a third possibility in that it claims to *represent* the symbolical seats of power, law and knowledge through their implementation of the codification of the transcendent principles; the Shari'ah. I will explain this in chapter one and tow of part two.

As I have stated before, the death of Louis XIV not only symbolized the disintegration of the social body and the link between divinity and

---

[166] Ibid.

[167] "The attempt to sacralize institution through discourse is directly related to the loss of substance of society, to the disintegration of the body." Ibid., p. 303.

the people but it also symbolizes the departure of certainty in a transcendent truth as an ontological and organizing principle. What started in the Enlightenment reached its maturity in the beginning of the twentieth century; the search for order, unity, a new authority and a new symbolism for the legitimation of power: the rise of Gnosticism. This phenomenon not only paved the way for the rise of fascism and totalitarianism, it is also a phenomenon which appeared in Islamic societies as we will see in Part Two.

3.2 Eric Voegelin and the rise of Gnosticism

Voegelin argues that modernity and its indeterminacy had in its most radical expression led to the 'decapitation and death of God'.[168] Apart from its legal-political implications this also had a profound effect on the fabric of society and hence on the psyche of men themselves. What ensued what a quest for a renewed sense of order, a new order of being founded not upon religion or metaphysical transcendence, but on an inner worldly *realissimum*.

> [..]when god is invisible behind the world, the contents of the world will become new gods, when the symbols of transcendent religiosity are banned, new symbols develop from the inner-worldly language of science to take their place.[169]

This new order of being, as we shall see, is rife with religious connotations, is written in the language of religion, but is wholly immanent and devoid of actual references to a metaphysical

---

[168] Voegelin and Henningsen, *Modernity without Restraint*, pp. 8-9.
[169] Eric Voegelin, "Political Religions," in *Modernity without Restraint*, ed. Manfred Henningsen (Columbia; London: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p. 60. Voegelin uses the terms "inner-worldly religion", "ersatz-religionen" and "political-religions" to indicate this process. Interestingly enough when one reads the works of early fascists and especially totalitarian ideologues, the similarity between their language and religious language is striking. See for instance Bärsch's analyses of Goebbels' use of religious vocabulary and imagery in: Bärsch, *Der Junge Goebbels: Erlosung Und Vernichtung*.

transcendence or the divine. When mankind's existence itself becomes the 'measure of all things' the first question we must ask is whether it is the individual or the collective that takes centre stage; whether it is the individual or the collective, the new *ecclesia,* that is to determine what is just and what is to be the new order of being.

The new order of being: Individual freedom or the greater good?

Whereas the authoritarian rule of the ancient regime was governed by the presumption that the king functioned as the intermediary between God and men, where his rule was divinely ordained, and where the church functioned as arguably the largest interest group permeating the political outlook of most of the citizenry, this was all to change with the advent of the Enlightenment. The 17th and 18th century breakdown of the legal and political dominance of divine revelation in Western societies stems to a degree from divine revelation's inability to deal with the problems abundant in society at that time and the rise of the scientific method as a means of explaining phenomena formally explained by religion. The rise of rational models as the basis for legal and political theories was consequential to this process. The development of scientific methods that enabled rational explanations for natural phenomena also spawned the advance of the scientific approach to the organization of mankind. Social contract theories shifted sovereignty from divinely sanctioned absolutist rule, which functioned as the intermediate between the transcendent and the immanent, to rule by and for 'the people', not on the basis of revelation but on the basis of reason. This shift opened the possibility of exploring radically new methods of social organization. It raised a profound question: if nature could be manipulated to conform to the needs of men, could not man themselves be manipulated to conform to the needs of mankind? This is the question which is central to the study of totalitarianism and to the study of Islamist movements as well.

The very thought of manipulating or even fabricating mankind to move towards a presupposed goal, a secular thought rife with religious connotations, implies a certain conception of freedom radically different from Hobbes' natural state of man. According to Jacob Talmon[170], the various philosophical currents that developed out of the Enlightenment can be broadly divided into two categories: the first category emphasizes the liberty of the individual and develops into modern liberalism while the other, which emphasizes the central role and liberty of the collective, develops into totalitarianism. In Rousseau's theory of the social contract we can see the first and perhaps most ominous step towards this attempt of fabricating the perfect society based on reasoning that emphasizes collective, rather than individual liberty. When the competition between particular interests of all individuals threatens their very survival and therefore their freedom, the need for a knowable 'general will' that could function as a principle of action for securing the interests of all is born. Only when the particular interest of the individual is made to conform to the general will can he and society at large truly be free.[171] This conception of liberty stands in high contrast to the one on society in which man's freedom to act is limited only by those laws truly necessary for that society to function. Isaiah Berlin came to call these varying theories the positive and negative concept of liberty.[172] Whilst negative liberty refers to freedom from undue coercion, positive liberty aims to secure those conditions in society that generate the possibility for every man to reach his potential. Consequentially, if positive liberty is to be realized for all, some sort of

---

[170] J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Sphere Books, 1970).

[171] Although Rousseau mentions the creation of a representative body of this free will, the exact mechanism by which this representative can force the individual to comply with the general will remains unclear. The concept of liberty in the works of Hobbes and Rousseau are of course far more complex than represented here, but due to the limited space available I have constrained myself to this brief general distinction.

[172] Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (London, New York: Oxford U.P., 1969).

collective body is needed through which society could, willingly or through coercion, produce the necessary conditions for the individual to reach his presupposed full potential. In its most benign form one could think of the establishment of educational facilities, sanitation, health care and a police force ensuring the most basic of conditions necessary for the development of the individual. Like Berlin, Karl Popper also saw a more malignant possibility; positive liberty could lead to the engineering of society not with the intent of overcoming obstacles or its greatest threats but to fabricate some ultimate glorious final state in which all men would be truly free. [173] The problem is that man's ultimate potential or ultimate freedom is and forever will be an unknown that not even the individual, let alone a collective, can define. Philosophers have debated it at great lengths but the simple fact that all men are different defies the possibility of a simple answer that is valid for all. The problem thus, is the plurality of mankind and the inability of proscribing an order of being which can do justice to all of mankind. Popper argues that unlike piecemeal social engineering, which is concerned with the problems of everyday life, Utopian engineering is solely concerned with fabricating that state of society in which all man have reached their ultimate potential or freedom. The postulation of this end state of man is thus a religious notion, based on some sort of faith, not rational argumentation. The latter option would have to acknowledge that mankind's infinite plurality simply resists the notion of there ever being an end state of mankind. In order to circumvent the problem of plurality the totalitarian movement aims to reforming men from the inside. If their innermost thoughts can be made submissive to the overarching formula for self and world salvation, then their plurality would be dissolved. From this it can be deduced that all those who would oppose such a grand undertaking, because of their selfish private interests or lack of insight, should be deemed an enemy of their fellow man; they deny them the freedom that is rightfully theirs. As

---

[173] Karl Raimund Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 2 vols., *Routledge Classics* (London: Routledge, 2003).

such, Utopian social engineering unavoidably implies a great deal of coercion. The economist and philosopher Friedrich von Hayek probably addressed this problem of freedom versus coercion most unequivocally in his well know anti-totalitarian work 'The road to Serfdom'.[174]

> The point which is so important is the basic fact that it is impossible for any man to survey more than a limited field, to be aware of the urgency of more than a limited number of needs. Whether his interests centre round his own physical needs, or whether he takes a warm interest in the welfare of every human being he knows, the ends about which he can be concerned will always be only an infinitesimal fraction of the needs of all men.[..] To direct all our activities according to a single plan presupposes that every one of our needs is given its rank in an order of values which must be complete enough to make it possible to decide between all the different courses between which the planner has to choose, it presupposes, in short, the existence of a complete ethical code in which all the different human values are allotted their due place.[175]

For the remainder of this chapter I shall refer to this formula as *Hayek's uncertainty principle* since it forms the anti-thesis of totalitarian thinking. According to Hayek the only form of planning that would exclude coercion is the type that is concerned with a specific well defined subject and on which the people who would be bound by that plan, are in agreement. By definition this group will always be limited both in numbers and in their lifespan. An ethical code that would impose a value on all of a societies needs would in theory need for everyone's consent if it were to be free of coercion and it would need an infinite amount of knowledge to substantiate its claim to truth. In practice however this is clearly impossible. This

---

[174] Friedrich A. von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2001).
[175] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

however has not stopped people from adopting just such an ethical code. It follows from these basic assumptions that for such an ethical code to be implemented, the personal objections of individuals within such a society should be subjugated to the 'greater good' the ethical code is trying to achieve. The greater the disparity between the Utopia the ethical code is trying to create and what society is in reality willing to agree to, the greater the need for coercion or political violence will be, if this Utopia is to be achieved.

Unlike the tyrants and despots of the Ancient Regime, coercion in Utopian engineering is not used to benefit the particular interests of one man or a small clique of people, but to force all man under its rule to be 'free'. In that respect the ethical codes that can be associated with Utopian engineering leave no room for individual dissent. Coercion, or political violence, is in that respect not merely used functionally as it might have been in the Ancient regime or as it is in dictatorships, namely to oppress opposition, but it becomes an instrument through which justice can be allowed to roam freely throughout society. When one reads the works that were written by Maximilien Robespierre and other Jacobins during the Reign of Terror (1793-1794), one can see that this is not mere backroom philosophy but a legal and political worldview that does not hesitate to put its theory into practice.

> If the mainspring of popular government in peacetime is virtue, the mainspring of popular government in revolution is virtue and terror both: virtue, without which terror is disastrous; terror, without which virtue is powerless. Terror is nothing but prompt, severe, inflexible justice; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a specific principle as a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to the homeland's most pressing needs.[176]

---

[176] Robespierre and Zizek, *Virtue and Terror*, p. 115.

What we see here is Robespierre linking the concept of the greater good, namely justice, to that of state terror. What connects Robespierre to what would eventually become known as totalitarian terror, is the notion that state terror can be justified through an appeal to some sort of universal law that ought to govern all of society. Whereas state terror had been previously justified by religious laws, the innovation of Robespierre is that he justifies it through secular principles adorned with universal aspirations.[177] Although this legal and political philosophical conception of justice is founded on secular and rational thinking, it is highly reminiscent of religious concepts. It presupposes that mankind is presently in a state of disharmony, sin, and that there is an ultimate harmonious final state of redemption. In order to reach this prophetic final state, mankind has to be purged of those influences that corrupt it. Whereas Robespierre's revolution lacked the ambition to formulate a totalist ethical code which should be applied to all mankind and was rather lacking in its definition of a mechanism which could enforce adherence, the coming centuries would see the emergence of just such a system, in totalitarianism. Before the need, if not *perceived* need, for such a secular universal ethical code could arise however, society had to undergo some drastic transformations.

The loss of order and the rise of Gnosticism

Suppose we see the Enlightenment as the Kantian "Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit", as a revolt against the dogmas of religion and as a shift from divinely sanctioned absolutist rule to rule based on secular contract theory.[178] Whereas religion was 'given' by God and is essentially unalterable, secular

---

[177] As stated earlier, Arthur Versluis makes the point that state sanctioned terror in the name of (pseudo) religious laws can be traced back to the inquisition. See Versluis, *The New Inquisitions: Heretic-Hunting and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Totalitarianism*. chapter two: "The archetypal Inquisition".

[178] Quoted from: H. F. Klemme, *Kant Und Die Zukunft Der Europäischen Aufklärung* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2009), p. 33.

contract theory is wholly independent of a God given order of being. Whereas men's unlimited plurality and unlimited potential for action, was once restrained by the shared belief that they were all created by a single God, a God who gave them morality, laws and provided some sort of teleological sense of destiny, the declaration that "God is dead" not only ended the earthly reign of the religious institutions, but created an existential vacuum that, according to some intellectuals, needed to be filled. I underline 'some intellectuals', because as we can see in for instance Nietzsche or eventually Hayek, not everyone was bothered by the ethical and existential vacuum that was created by the death of God. When Nietzsche proclaimed God to be dead this did not necessarily lead to utter despair or insanity. Thrown back to the reality of his solitary existence, in which redemption, salvation or even destiny were figments of the imagination, Nietzsche construed a philosophy in which man was to become his own salvation.

> grateful even for distress and the vicissitudes of illness, because they always free us from some rule, and its "prejudice," grateful to the God, devil, sheep, and worm in us, inquisitive to a fault, investigators to the point of cruelty, with unhesitating fingers for the intangible, with teeth and stomachs for the most indigestible, ready for any business that requires sagacity and acute senses, such kind of men are we, we free spirits![179]

His 'transvaluation of all values' and men's unending quest to overcome himself, was however a stern and bleak philosophy that, unsurprisingly failed to offer comfort to most of those who felt themselves lost in a world devoid of God, destiny and the soothing thought of redemption in the afterlife. Nietzsche's philosophy offered

---

[179] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Paragraph 44

only questions, posed unrelenting challenges and promised no rewards. The 'new philosopher' and 'free man' that Nietzsche aimed to create, was a man of an extraordinary 'will to power', a will that only few could hope to muster. However, as Eric Hoffer rightly stated:

> Unless a man has the talents to make something of himself, freedom is an irksome burden.[180]

The counterpart of Nietzsche's individualist's road to salvation was the intellectual attempt to construe a system for self and world salvation based on ratio, on human ingenuity; a system that could mimic and eventually replace the role once played by God and revelation. This quest for a just order, to a new *order of being,* founded not on revelation but on manmade ratio, not on individual 'will to power' but on a teleological interpretation of the *collective* experience of human existence, was described by Eric Voegelin as 'Gnostic speculation'. Voegelin describes the Gnostic attitude as follows:

---

[180] Hoffer, *The True Believer; Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, p. xxi. That this is not mere theory is shown by Mussolini's argument for abolishing political freedom when he stated that "men grow tired of freedom".

1	The Gnostic is dissatisfied with his situation;
2	The belief that the drawbacks of the situation can be attributed to the fact that the world is intrinsically poorly organized
3	The belief that salvation from the evil of the world is possible
4	The belief that the order of being will have to be changed in a historical process
5	The belief that this salvational act is possible through man's own effort
6	It is the task of the Gnostic to seek out the prescription for such a change in the order of being and discover the formula for self and world salvation.[181]

What in other words was once the dominion of God now had to become the dominion of mankind.

Gnosis desires dominion over being; in order to seize control of being the Gnostic constructs his system. As long as the origin of being lies beyond the being of this world; as long as eternal being cannot be completely penetrated with the instrument of world-immanent, finite cognition; as long as divine being can be conceived of only in the form of the *analogia entis*, the construction of a system will be impossible. If this venture is to be seriously launched at all, the thinker must first eliminate these inconveniences: He must so

---

[181] Voegelin, "Ersatz Religion," p. 298.

interpret being that on principle it lies within the grasp of his construct.[182]

The Gnostic himself, in constructing a system that is to replace the transcendent order with an immanent order, exercises his own 'will to power' but not merely for himself, but for all of mankind. It thus has a public and political function, which is why Voegelin described the system developed by Gnostic speculation as a 'political religion' or '*ersatz religion'*. In order to substantiate his claims to truth, the Gnostic speculator cannot, for obvious reasons, refer to God. He can perhaps refer to himself and the validity of his own reasoning as long as it survives critical debate, but this is dangerous for the speculator and not very convincing in the public arena. What arose from the impulse for Gnostic speculation were a host of movements whose Gnostic speculations were legitimized with an appeal to their understanding of the deterministic historical reality of the *collective* human experience of existence. Not the individual man but the collective human species was to be the source of immanent truth, and to construe a system for a just order involved a collective approach to the order of humanity as such. Thus, he who was able to discover this truth became a prophet and founded a new wholly immanent religion with which to guide mankind to an inner worldly Utopia, an immanent Garden of Eden.

> Now the link to God in the perfect inner-worldly symbolism is severed and replaced by the community itself as the source of legitimation of the collective person.[183]

Claus-Ekkehart Bärsch, a PhD student of Voegelin, analyzes and describes in his "*Die Politische Religion Des Nationalsozialismus*" how core elements of the truly metaphysical transcendence of theology and in particular Christian theology, were secularized and how the

---

[182] Eric Voegelin, "Science, Politics and Gnosticism," in *Modernity without Restraint*, ed. Manfred Henningsen (Columbia; London: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p. 273.

[183] Voegelin and Henningsen, *Modernity without Restraint*, p. 64.

non-metaphysical transcendence of the National –Socialist was transposed into their place.[184] Thus, Bärsch proved that Voegelin's theory of the *ersatz religion* correlated to the practice of the National-Socialist phenomenon. I intend to do the same with the Islamist phenomenon in Part Two of this study, albeit it that Islamism does not refer to a non-metaphysical transcendence but to a truly metaphysical transcendence.

The arrival of Gnostic speculation as an ideological source for political organization and legal doctrine carried within it a grave element of danger. As we have seen in Hayek's uncertainty principle, the basic inability to know and understand all the factors that influence our existence leads us to conclude that any totalist ethical system carries in it, by definition, a certain element of analytical *hubris* and coercion. If we accept that we cannot know and understand all the intricacies of human life and the different values the individuals attach to certain actions, then it follows that a totalist plan for all mankind necessarily depends on coercion and violence. Since voluntary acceptance of the totalist ethical code will be missing, the lack of authority must be supplanted by violence in order to establish power in the hands of the Gnostic movement. If such a totalist ethical code truly adopts the characteristics of religion, in that it raises itself beyond all questioning, then the ability to dissent, contradict, question or oppose without consequences disappears. The Gnostic formula for self and world salvation creates a radical dichotomy between believers and unbelievers, between those who strive for salvation and those who oppose it between the champions of mankind and its existential enemies. This type of thinking thus defines people as friends or enemies based on their adherence to the Gnostic speculative ideology, and animosity can necessarily only be answered by violence since the process of fabricating salvation is a

---

[184] Bärsch, *Die Politische Religion Des Nationalsozialismus: Die Religiöse Dimension Der Ns-Ideologie in Den Schriften Von Dieter Eckart, Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg Und Adolf Hitler*.

collective undertaking. Where voluntary agreement is lacking, coercion and violence must 'force men to be free'. Terror in that case truly becomes 'prompt, severe, inflexible justice' used to fabricate a unity amongst men which is wholly artificial and steer that community in a direction for which it may never have chosen.

Whilst Nietzsche's individualist philosophy or Hayek's libertarian attitude to the organization of mankind identifies the individual as the main actor in public life, the Gnostic speculation derives its authority from, and directs its political power towards the collective. If the Gnostic movement is able to mobilize enough forces, thereby multiplying its strength, it is by definition obliged to dictate its worldview on society regardless of the wishes of individuals or minorities. Not all Gnostic movements however, were successful in rallying support to their cause, as Voeglin states:

> None of the movements cited began as a mass movement; all derived from intellectuals and small groups. Some of them, according to the intentions of their founders, should have grown into political mass movements but did not.[185]

The following paragraph illustrates which events and changes in the fabric of society led to the increasing appeal, growing strength and eventual success of some of these Gnostic movements. Although Islamism cannot be defined as a Gnostic movement, for it is a thoroughly religious movement which in addition seeks to abolish man's interference with divine will, it is does share an overwhelming number of characteristics of the Gnostic movement. It is therefore imperative that we understand how certain changes in society can lead to the possibility of mass mobilization. What conditions are favourable to organizations looking to mobilize the masses? Historically speaking, which conditions prompted the emergence of fascist and totalitarian movements? The question that is relevant to this research is if we can discern some of the same patterns that led

---

[185] Voegelin, "Ersatz Religion," p. 295.

to the advent of fascist and totalitarian movements in Islamic societies as well.

3.3 The confrontation with modernity: the rise of the masses, anomie and the search for order

Whilst the advent of the scientific age and the ensuing rationalism was hoped to bring about a change in the human condition, things did not turn out the way many would have liked. Quite to the contrary: science gave rise to industrialism which saw the birth of a completely new form of society. To some, faith in science had not brought man salvation; instead it came with the tyranny of cold calculating reason in which people were all mere cogs in a giant unfamiliar machine. This sense of alienation, of being alone in a strange inhuman and harsh environment created a renewed longing for spiritual salvation and for a unity of men, something practical science could not provide for. Some resented the advent of the scientific age which demystified human existence, robbed it of its hopes for divine salvation, abolished the guardianship of God over man and left man without a clear answer as to what the organization of a good society should look like. It created a longing for a time in which man was still valued for his human, spiritual quality instead of being reduced to a mere superfluous, utterly interchangeable production variable. This is exemplified in William Blake's (1757-1827) poem *And did those feet in ancient times*:

> And was Jerusalem builded here among those dark Satanic
> Mills? [..]Bring me my Bow of burning gold; Bring me my
> Arrows of desire: Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
> Bring me my Chariot of fire! I will not cease from Mental Fight,
> Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand, Till we have built
> Jerusalem In England's green and pleasant Land.[186]

---

[186] William Blake, "Preface to Milton," in *The Complete Poems [of] William Blake*, ed. Alicia Ostriker (Harmondsworth; New York: Penguin, 1977).

This poem is rich in its use of Romantic symbolism. The phrase 'Dark satanic mills' is often used to refer to the tyranny of reason, a common feature in Blake's poetry, and the conditions in which men found themselves in England's developing industrial environment. The building of Jerusalem symbolizes the longing for a return to an age in which man's spiritual rather than his economic or industrial value was defining. Blake was not alone in his abhorrence of the darker fruits of the Enlightenment. Throughout the strata of philosophy, literature, arts and so on, a movement evolved which can be described as a Counter-Enlightenment movement, which ultimately led to the evolvement of the Romantic Movement. Although these terms and the term 'Enlightenment' defy any easy definition, the Counter-Enlightenment's criticism on Enlightenment lay mainly in its devaluation of men, its demystification of nature and the Enlightenment's *perceived* assault on religion and thus on the public order, social cohesion and morality.[187] By appealing to intuition, irrationality, faith, the power of one's will and emotion, rather than cold calculated reason, these philosophers and artists attempted to offer a counterweight to the Enlightenment's influence on public and private life. In this respect it may be worthwhile to quote Nietzsche who described the Romantic Movement not as a disease:" but as 'a therapy, a cure for a disease'.[188] Whilst a thorough analysis of the competing ideas of the Enlightenment and the Counter-Enlightenment Movements is beyond the scope of this chapter, the importance of *both* these ideas for the formation of fascist and totalitarian thought is, as I will try to show, paramount. Both the romantic and the Enlightenment ideal contributed heavily to certain elements of these forms of political organization. I will explain these

---

[187] Isaiah Berlin notes this problem of defining the Romantic Movement in the following words: "There is such a variety among the examples I have accumulated that the difficulty of the subject which I was unwise enough to choose seems even more extreme". Berlin and Hardy, *The Roots of Romanticism: The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1965: The National Gallery of Art, Washington, Dc*, p. 16.

[188] Nietzsche quoted in: Ibid., p. 15.

specific elements in chapter four and five in summary. A full analysis of all these ideas is beyond the scope of this study which is mainly focussed on the applicability of the totalitarianism paradigm to Islamism.[189]

3.3.1 Liberalism or the Gnostic's *ersatz religion* as the new order of being?

Following the breakdown of the pre-eminence of divine revelation in both the political as well the social structure of society, we can see the emergence of a rather odd application of the extremes of the Enlightenment's rationalism and the Counter-Enlightenment's irrationality. Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory (published in 1859) almost prophetically subtitled "or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life", sent shockwaves through society.[190] The idea that underlying all the pluralism in nature, with all its seemingly mysterious randomness, was a simple and clear natural law or mechanism, namely survival of the fittest, sparked the idea that this law might extend to humans as well. Much like Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' that ruled the balance within the market economy, the question whether underlying all human affairs, a similar mechanism might be at work began to take shape. The credence given to the explanatory power of the scientific method, gave rise to the idea that man, if only he were well-informed enough, could discover those secretive laws that govern and underlie every facet of human existence, something we saw earlier in Eric Voegelin's Gnostic speculation. The intricacies of the past, the problems of the present and the solutions for the future were all ready to be explained by those with proper understanding of these laws. This newfound faith in science may have undermined or replaced faith in an all-governing God, but it could not give man the sense of belonging, of community

---

[189] See for a work that specifically seeks to trace the roots of these elements Llobera, *The Making of Totalitarian Thought*.

[190] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or, the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, 2009 Modern Library pbk. ed. (New York: Modern Library, 2009).

and of meaning that religion could. Whilst religion was being forced out of public life, or at least out of the legal fabric of the state, its Messianic message of eternal salvation never lost its appeal to those dreaming of a better world.

The starting point of the Gnostic attitude is, as we have seen, the negative conception of human existence and the conviction that the human condition *needs* to be transformed. Whereas formerly religion would be the source of inspiration and legitimacy for a socio-political model that could ensure a positive human condition, this was now sought in reason.[191] Generally speaking, two mutually exclusive modes of thought can be identified that tried to give an answer to this problem of the human condition.

The first one is based on the premise that our knowledge of past and present events is inherently limited, that the actors in a society interact in complex and unpredictable ways and that thus any model for society should be based on the principle of uncertainty. I previously referred to this as Hayek's uncertainty principle. Since this uncertainty principle inherently prohibits any exclusive claims to knowledge about truth and reality, it *a priori* excludes any possibility for a secular teleology, let alone eschatology. The main emphasis of these models therefore lies on what society *can* agree on and as such they are usually limited to dealing with present day problems, not answers that are valid for an eternity, and they are inclined to compromise and instead of the relentless pursuit of realizing an

---

[191] This does however not mean that religion as a whole became redundant. From the starting point of reason as a basis for the 'new man', any number of theories can be developed which incorporate religious ideas, values and concepts in varying degrees in the lives of the individuals or society as a whole. The mere fact that reason becomes the basis or emphasis of a new socio-political order does not automatically prohibit or exclude religion .The modern democratic liberal state being an obvious example of neither an exclusively religious nor an anti-religious form of social and political order. See also: Cliteur, *The Secular Outlook: In Defense of Moral and Political Secularism*. Chapter four.

ideological agenda. Instead of some ultimate truth, its principle of action is agreement. From this basis, one can safely claim that the greater the number of participants in a society is, the greater the need for a compromise becomes. The resulting model is a framework of laws that reflect these compromises and because of this the laws are by definition incapable of reflecting some ultimate teleological truth. Human plurality simply won't allow it. By shifting sovereignty from the divine to the worldly and by supplanting 'truth' by uncertainty, the freedom of the individual can only be limited by what the majority of a society can agree upon. In its ultimate form, no one can be forced to obey rules he or she did not agree upon, i.e. the anarchic-libertarian society.

Quite the opposite of the 'uncertainty principle' based liberal line of thinking is the ideological model of socio-political organization. Whereas the former line of thinking is increasingly emptied of religious concepts, the ideological model adopts much of the principles and concepts of religion but replaces God with itself as the "original sacral substance".[192] In sharp contrast to the uncertainty of liberalism, ideological thinking starts from the premise that past and present are completely knowable, that the advancement of human history proceeds according to understandable and predictable deterministic events. If knowledge would rise to such an extent that the historic processes could be understood, which is precisely what Voegelin identified as the Gnostic speculation, then by applying logical deduction, the ultimate end state of mankind would reveal itself. In this line of thinking, knowledge of the world, and the subsequent application of reason to this knowledge becomes the new God and the new (secularized) religion. Voegelin states:

---

[192] Eric Voegelin, *Political Religions*, Toronto Studies in Theology (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1986), p. 59. See also: Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, University of Chicago Press ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).: "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts."

> [..]when god is invisible behind the world, the contents of the
> world will become new gods, when the symbols of
> transcendent religiosity are banned, new symbols develop
> from the inner-worldly language of science to take their
> place.[193]

This secularized religion gains a political dimension when it actively
engages in transforming society towards the presupposed Utopian
end of history. The negative state of the human condition is therefore
first of all a result of a lack of this knowledge. The second reason for
the negative state of mankind is the *plurality* of man, who because of
their free will can act in opposition to their, and societies best
interest. Inevitably, the laws that govern such a society would not be
based on agreement, *which is trivial to the 'truth'*, but on the
envisaged path to Utopia. In other words the principal of action is not
agreement amongst individuals but the forceful fabrication of Utopia.
As a consequence the freedom to act on one's own accord can only
stall the inevitable arrival of Utopia. It therefore becomes necessary
to 'force man to be free'. Whether or not the individual agrees that
this is actually in his best interest is inconsequential. The deterministic
forces of history have decided this for him, the individual needs only
to comply with the edicts of the ideological movement which
functions as the accelerator of this process. As such these secular
movements adopt much of the concepts and vocabulary of religion
effectively making them political religions. In their most extreme form
these political-religions would become known as totalitarian
movements.

These two modes of thinking, the liberal and the ideological,
both have their roots in the replacement of religion with reason as a
model for 'the good society'. The liberal model, which applies reason
to the premise that our knowledge is always limited, arrives at the
conclusion that only individuals themselves, not God and not any
collective body such as the 'general will', can discover what is good for

---

[193] Voegelin, "Political Religions," p. 60.

them at any given time. The greater good is therefore a product of the competing individual conceptions of the good; always in a state of flux, always susceptible to change and in reality incapable of ever reaching a state of Utopia since Utopia is symbolizes something different to every man. While this model has been prevalent in European societies in the last few centuries, it is the ideological model which would put its bloodstained signature on much of the twentieth century. What was needed for ideological movements to gather momentum was the appearance on the political scene of a new sociological phenomenon: the mass man.

3.3.2 The rise of the masses and anomie

Exacerbating the political and existential search for order that could be witnessed at the end of the 19th century, the first quarter of the twentieth century saw the rise of problems of an almost apocalyptic scale. The transformation from the traditional agricultural and rural society, with all its social institutions and certainties, into an industrial society was accompanied by a transformation of the individual in community into the mass man. Removed from the safe and familiar surroundings of his former rural existence where he could be known, where he had some sort of 'worldliness,' he was now one of many, anonymously living in poor conditions and subjected to deplorable circumstances in the industries' 'dark satanic mills'. Hannah Arendt, like Eric Hoffer and Jose Ortega y Gasset, to name but a few, sees in the rise of the mass man a phenomenon that is both the precondition for and the essence of totalitarian rule, namely the feeling of *loneliness* and *being superfluous*.

Without the bonds that typified the rural community and gave each a sense of identity, belonging and destiny, each man became in principle interchangeable with the other; they were all equally shapeless. There were of course always individuals who had no specific qualities, no specific talents or anything that differentiated them from others, but these individuals existed as a 'multitude', an undefined majority, scattered throughout society and absorbed in

their respective communities. It is exactly this capacity for being absorbed into a social order which created a sense of 'worldliness'. Unaware of their numerical superiority the multitude was a mere quantitative concept. What was new however was that the industrial age removed these individuals from their respective communities and brought them to the cities which led to the self-realization of their numerical superiority and the realisation that they were no longer an integrated part of society but a vast anonymous mass of interchangeable, undifferentiated individuals. What was first merely an undefined integrated multitude became a social phenomenon with formidable political potential: the qualitative concept of the mass man. The masses in this sense do not bestow a sense of identity upon the individual; they are the masses precisely because they lack the unique features that distinguish men from each other.[194] As such, the shapeless mass does not in any way have a link to pre-existing class distinction. Arendt writes:

> The term masses applies only where we deal with people who either because of sheer numbers or indifference, or a combination of both, cannot be integrated into any organization based on common interest [..] The truth is that the masses grew out of the fragments of a highly atomized society whose competitive structure and concomitant loneliness of the individual had been held in check only through membership in a class.[195]

---

[194] See for a more detailed description of this discovery of the masses as a social and political phenomenon two works that explicitly deal with the phenomenon of the masses as the precursor what was to become fascist and totalitarian politics: Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* , Hoffer, *The True Believer; Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, Arendt, *On Violence*.

[195] According to Arendt the problems described here caused the breakdown of the old class society and aided in the creation of the masses. Precisely because the existing social-economic, religious and political institutions were failing these masses were no longer interested in or felt represented by the traditional political party structure. Their disinterest and feeling of loneliness

Whilst to some reason was the founding stone of liberal freedom, to others reason did not bring salvation, but the tyranny of cold calculating industrialism in which people were all mere cogs in a giant unfamiliar machine. Freedom does not bestow any sense of purpose on an individual let alone on the masses and for these masses, which were increasingly devoid of any sense of order, freedom quickly became a burden. Their sense of alienation, of being alone in a strange inhuman and harsh environment created a renewed longing for spiritual salvation and for a unity of men, something practical science could not provide for.[196] In that sense, the Gnostic speculation as the basis of a new order of being is as not so much about perceived practical problems as it is about a need for spirituality and identity, a need to be 'at home' in this life.[197] Compounding the sense of anomie

---

thus created a host of opportunities for new radical alternatives. It is interesting to see how in Germany these conditions were created due to the crisis of the Weimar republic and the economic depression whereas in Russia, Cambodia and China, these conditions had to be artificially forced upon the population. The partial or complete extermination of certain classes of people in these countries was not the hallmark of totalitarian terror but merely the destruction of the old society and the forced transformation of the population into the mass man without whom the totalitarian movement could not begin its march towards political power. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 319-326.

[196] This concept is also known as *palingenesis* or rebirth and is a central theme in both fascist and totalitarian thought. Palingenesis often refers to the resurrection (another religious concept) of a glorious past that is now lost.

[197] Bassam Tibi argues: "In a changing world people feel the need to maintain their identity. Their environment no longer seems *determinable;* they need to definite; it if they are to safeguard their identity. In such a context, religion acquires a crucial function. [..] the more rapid the social change, the more indeterminable the environment becomes for individuals as personal systems living in a state of transition, and the more marked the need for religion to maintain identity in the process of change. Change is perceived as an out-and-out threat, and a longing for the past is cultivated as a result. A restoration for what has been repressed by the alien and a yearning for a return of overlaid indigenous elements, underlie a parallel reorientation of thought aimed at political action." Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe: Democratic Peace and Euro-Islam Versus Global Jihad*, p. 125.

that plagued the masses, the political, social and economic establishments were increasingly confronted with problems that they were unable to overcome. The first problem exists on the social plain; the aforementioned sense of superfluousness created by industrialization and urbanization and a perceived loss of purpose or destiny. The second problem was the decline of faith in the political order. When the masses realized that the existing political order did not act on their behalf but on behalf of a privileged elite which was unable to deal with the social disorder, politics as a whole lost its credibility. Although the masses at that time were still too fragmented, too undefined to be able to found a party based on common interest, some radicals would soon find out that these unorganized incoherent masses represented a previously untapped source of political power. Eric Hoffer in that respect rightly states that as long as a person still has a group he can belong to, still has some link to the society around him, his 'revolting point' is still too high to entice him towards a revolution. What is needed is increased alienation and atomization.[198] In Europe this need would be accommodated largely by the advent of the First World War and the collapse of the political order. The failure of politics reached its pinnacle in the first few decades of the twentieth century. One need only think of the First World War, the enormous amount of stateless refugees, mass poverty in Eastern Europe, the economic crisis of 1929, mass unemployment and the failure of the few existing young democracies to cope with these issues. Partly because of these calamities, the masses were becoming increasingly ready to be mobilized by forces who did not appeal to freedom, reason or conventional political systems but by entirely new modes of political organization and ontology. The rallying call of these movements is

---

[198] "It is obvious that a proselytizing mass movement must break down all existing group ties if it is to win a considerable following. The ideal potential convert is the individual who stands alone, who has no collective body he can blend with and lose himself in and so mask the pettiness, meaninglessness and shabbiness of his individual existence." Hoffer, *The True Believer; Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, p. 35.

exemplified by Mussolini who stated: 'Men grow tired of freedom'. Traditional politics and social institutions had failed the masses, what would be the masses' salvation was the total negation of the concept of the political. Instead of reason came immanentized faith, instead of the individual came the sacralisation of the collective, instead of freedom, total submission.

3.4 Summary

In summary, we saw that according to Lefort and Kantorowicz, the place of power in medieval authoritarianism lay in the double body of the king. It was the king who, in himself united the social body, the people, and who formed the conduit between them and the symbolic place of power; divinity. Furthermore, the legitimation of power, or what Lefort calls the symbolic seat of power, lay in the realm of that divinity to which the king himself was subordinated. So although the king wielded power over the social body, he could not be identified with that power, although the king could make laws, he himself was subordinated to a higher law, and although the king may have had the privilege of judging on good and evil, the ultimate knowledge of good and evil came from the realm of divinity, not from himself. In other words, the king was the conduit between the wholly transcendent and the immanent. Although a mortal himself, his role as the intermediary was perceived to be immortal. Immortal that is until the advent of the Enlightenment and its ensuing revolution at the level of the intellectual, the social and the political. The subsequent modernization, atomization and anomie created in society a renewed search for order, for an order of being that could reconstruct the disintegrated social body and provide a symbolic point from which power, law and knowledge could emanate which was expected to return society to a harmonious order of being. We saw how two different strains of thought emerged, one liberal based on uncertainty, individual agreement and devoid of transcendent or Gnostic speculations, and another based on Gnostic speculative certainty, which endeavoured to bring redemption in the form of the fabrication of some Utopia but which was highly collectivistic in

nature. This desire for salvation from an order of being in ruins is also called palingenesis and forms the basis of the Gnostic's search for order as we will see in the next chapter. This need for rebirth, for order, which intrinsically is a collective enterprise, is of importance to us since it gave rise to both fascism and totalitarianism. In addition, as we will see in the second part of this research, many of the events that led to the formation of the Gnostic speculation are also present in the Islamic world's recent history. Although the Islamists version of the Gnostic speculation is based upon religion, it follows the same narrative as described here. In the next chapter I will start with my analysis of fascism and continue with totalitarianism in chapter five.