LANDMARKS OF THE VIRAL-METAMORPHIC THEORY. A NEW INTERPRETATION OF RIGHT-WING TOTALITARIANISM (II)*

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Abstract. The idea of the viral-metamorphic theory was 'inspired' by Hanna Arendt's assertion that totalitarianism is the pathology of modernity. Therefore, totalitarianism is not the opposite of democracy, but a mutant entity derived from it. The totalitarian phenomenon emerges when change occurs and modifies certain essential aspects of democratic thought and action, such as freedom, equality, individualism, social contractualism, rationalism, social justice, the rule of law, etc. Right-wing totalitarianism has syncretically combined several trans-ideologies becoming an ideology in itself, with a unique and utopian view of the world, built of myths, archetypes, symbols, magical thought, and taboos.

Keywords: Fascism, Hierarchy, Ideology, Neo-paganism, Political religion, social Darwinism, Totalitarianism, Viral-metamorphic theory.

Rezumat: Repere ale teoriei viral-metamorfice. O nouă interpretare a totalitarismului de dreapta (II). Ideea teoriei viral-metamorfice a fost „inspirată" de afirmația Hannei Arendt că totalitarismul este o patologie a modernității. Prin urmare, totalitarismul nu este opusul democrației, ci o entitate mutantă derivată din aceasta. Fenomenul totalitar apare atunci când are loc schimbarea și modifică anumite aspecte esențiale ale gândirii și acțiunii democratice, cum ar fi libertatea, egalitatea, individualismul, contractualismul social, raționalismul, justiția socială, statul de drept etc. Totalitarismul de dreapta a combinat în mod sincretic mai multe trans -ideologii, devenind o ideologie în sine, cu o viziune unică și utopică asupra lumii, construită din mituri, arhetipuri, simboluri, gândire magică și tabuuri.

THE TOTALITARIAN IDEOLOGY AS SEEN THROUGH
THE METAMORPHIC VIRAL THEORY

Behaviour

Referring to the fundamental characteristics of right-wing totalitarianism, Robert O. Paxton said that fascists are more intelligible by their *actions and behaviour* than by their ideology. Fascist behaviour involves a series of *visceral feelings* and *mobilizing passions*. R. Paxton offered a synthetic definition of fascism, based on its political behavioural characteristic:

"Fascism may be defined as a form of political behaviour marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion."[1]

This approach is in line with the holistic and national regeneration view of Roger Griffin[2], as well as the more nuanced position of sociologist

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[1]Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, London, Allen Lane Publishing House, 2004, p. 218, apud Constantin Iordachi, *Fascism, totalitarism și religii politice* [Fascism, totalitarianism and Political religions], p. 36, in Idem (Ed.), *Fascismul european 1918-1945. Ideologie, experimente totalitare și religii politice* [European fascism 1918-1945. Ideology, totalitarian experiments and political religions], translated by Andreea Lazăr, Alex Moldovan, Alexandru Polgar, Introduction to the Romanian edition by Constantin Iordachi, Cluj-Napoca, Romanian Institute for Research on Minorities Issues, 2014.

[2]Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, New York, Saint Martin's Press, 1991; Idem (ed.), *Fascism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995; Idem (ed.), *International Fascism. Theories, Cases, and the New Consensus*, London, Sydney, Auckland, Arnold, Oxford University Press, 1998; Idem, *The Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimization of Totalitarian Regimes in Inter-War Europe*, in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 3/3, 2002, pp. 24-43; Roger Eatwell, *On defining the „Fascist Minimum": The centrality of ideology*, in „Journal of Political Ideologies", Vol. 1, 1996, Issue 3, pp. 303-319; Idem, *Reflections on Fascism and Religion*, in "Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions"*,* Vol. 4, 2003, Issue 3, pp. 145-166.

Michael Mann[3], who links fascist ideology to the specific characteristics of the nation-state. One of the behavioural constants in totalitarian systems and regimes is *violence.* It is found both in individual and collective behaviour, as well as in the relations between the State, the individual, and the social group. Violence is pervasive in multiple forms - physical, mental, direct, indirect, rationalized, institutionalized, irrational, etc., is one of the factors that maintain totalitarianism's integrity and cohesion, alongside propaganda and terror.

The Romanian historian Ion Ciupercă has made an interesting comparative analysis between the police state and the totalitarian state, stating: "On the one hand the police state is, obviously, older than the totalitarian state; on the other hand, the totalitarian state also has the status of a police state and more than that, not to be mistaken with it (...). Since we are discussing the violence that characterizes the police states and, particularly the totalitarian states, it is appropriate to mention a feature that, though potentially detectable in previous regimes, is undeniably present and prevalent in totalitarian regimes: the violence/ terror from below (Zinoviev), 'through the tacit complicity of the population' (Bukovski); the 'spread of despotic behaviour across the entire society... such that one individual becomes the dictator of the other" [4]. Starting from the premise that totalitarian systems turn society into a *large prison* (a physical, moral, spiritual prison), the behaviour of individuals also changes in this regard. The perception of behavioural normality is frequently based on existing traditions, attitudes, or societal values. Healthy personalities who are emotionally stable are seen as inward-looking, rational, genuine, spontaneous, creative, integrated, productive, and transparent. They adapt to certain characteristics of contemporary society, such as libertinism, openness, permissiveness, pragmatism, etc. Societal spaces have always been marked by mobility and dynamism as they have evolved. The totalitarian world follows a completely different paradigm, which bears striking similarities to the prison

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[3]Michael Mann, *Fascists*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

[4]I. Ciupercă, *Totalitarismul – fenomen al secolului XX. Repere* [Totalitarianism - a phenomenon of the 20th century. Highlights], Iași, Demiurg Publishing House, 2008, p. 211-212; Philippe Braud, François Burdeau, *Histoire des idées politiques depuis la révolution*, Paris, Editions Montchrestien, 1983, p. 441-443.

system, such as the imposition of a limited framework for human development; both prisoners and people living under a totalitarian regime exhibit the same tendency to revolt, adopting aggressiveness, hostility, impulsiveness, addiction, frustration, anxiety[5]. The authoritarian/totalitarian personality (according to T. Adorno / D. I. Dascălu) of *the new* ideologized, massified, bureaucratized *man* includes direct, metamorphosed, or twisted forms of violence. Due to the anguish induced by the suffocating intensity of modernity, the human being tends to flee freedom. The individuals show a predisposition to giving up their autonomy or independence of the individual self in favour of someone outside of themselves who is believed to be stronger, and from whom they may get the attribute of force. These mechanisms have also been called *masochistic and sadistic tendencies*[6]. Masochistic tendencies are subject to a process of rationalization. Masochistic addiction is considered love or fidelity; feelings of inferiority are seen as the expression of real flaws, suffering as being due to circumstances that cannot be changed. Sadistic tendencies encountered usually in the same individuals appear in three forms more or less related to each other: the sadist's tendency to make others depend on him and to have absolute power over them, the tendency to exploit others, to use them, and the tendency to make others suffer or to see them suffer"[7]. Therefore, totalitarian behaviour falls within the *paradigm of domination/submission*, sustainable through widespread, rationalized, and institutionalized violence.

Politics

One of the defining features of right-wing totalitarianism is its *antinomy* with older political currents and ideologies, whether democratic-pluralist (liberalism, conservatism, social democracy, socialism) or anti-democratic and anti-pluralist (communism).

Generic fascism is anti-liberal. Its call for the regeneration of the

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[5]G. Barry Morris, *Human Behavior in an Emerging Totalitarian Society*, in „Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy", vol. 11, no. 1(1976), p. 15-17.

[6]Dan-Ioan Dascălu, *Personalitatea totalitară [Totalitarian personality]*, Bucureşti, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 2002, p. 89.

[7]*Ibidem*, p.90.

national community through a heroic struggle against its supposed enemies and the forces that undermine it implies the radical rejection of liberalism in all its aspects: pluralism, tolerance, individualism, gradualism, pacifism, parliamentary democracy, separation of powers, *natural rights* doctrine, egalitarianism, the theory of rectilinear progress, open society, cosmopolitanism, belief in world governance, etc."[8] In my opinion, for reasons of political expediency, fascist movements manifested and sometimes functioned as democratic or elective parties. In general, right-wing totalitarianism tends to destroy liberalism on all levels (ideological, political, and economic), with fascist ideology infecting and perverting its Enlightenment origins.

Generic fascism is anti-conservative. Despite its conservative roots, fascist ideology aspires to a new type of *rebirth*, with the sense of a *new order* (It may be influenced by the past but it does not attempt to go back in time). Fascism showed a strong revolutionary inclination, but to come to power, it temporarily allied with conservative forces (army, church, state administration), based on shared adversaries (such as communism and cosmopolitanism) and some common priorities such as the law, order, family[9]. Therefore, I believe that confronted with the ideology of the extreme right, conservatism is not destroyed but rather revolutionized - a paradoxical transformation that gave rise to the term *conservative revolution* for fascism.

Fascism tends to function as a charismatic form of politics. It rejects both the traditional policy of the *Old Regime* and the legal-rational policy of liberalism and socialism, tending to function as *a charismatic form of politics.* The quintessence of this policy is linked to the cult of the leader, but certain forms of fascism (such as The Faisceau of Valois in France) have adopted a technocratic model of a planned society, while others (such as the New French Right) focus on the struggle for cultural dominance of the ideas that support the new order. In fact, all political ideologies, especially when manifested as revolutionary forces, tend to sometimes include a charismatic aspect.

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[8]Roger Griffin, *Fascismul. Introducere generală*, p. 134.
[9]*Ibidem*, p. 134-135.

Some researchers, such as Hannah Arendt or Eric Voegelin, use religious terminology in the analysis of fascism, calling it the religion of the immanent (according to H. Arendt), *the secular, civil, lay, political religion,* or *gnosis* of modernity (according to E. Voegelin). The far right, in reality, lacks a true transcendental and metaphysical dimension, and is opposed to any genuine religious belief. The use of a religious or pseudo-religious language by the far-right in its attacks on materialism or communism is a sign of the crisis of modern political ideologies that attempted to provide a *panacea* for the widespread evil of contemporary society (of the twentieth century). The right-wing totalitarian ideology manifested as a new form of devotion passed down to the masses by the leader, who was attributed quasi-divine qualities (omnipotence, omniscience, infallibility, etc.). The aforementioned ideology has the appearance of religion that, however, lacks the moral side (religion of the numinous – according to Rudolf Otto) and aims to materialize the totalitarian utopia through an "anthropological revolution" - leading to the emergence of *the New Man / Übermensch* and the establishment of the new *World-view (Weltanschauung).*

Fascism is anti-rational. It rejects rationalism, focuses on myths, and opposes reason, which was promoted by humanism, Enlightenment, and positivist tradition. The following are celebrated and deified: self-sacrifice, blind faith, heroic action, mythology, nationalist symbolism, the Leader, the regeneration of history, etc. In my view, rationalism is replaced by the irrational, the unconscious, the atavistic, the instinctual, infecting with the totalitarian-utopian ideology.

Fascism is anti-socialist. Even though the central myth of national re-birth is used to define fascism, it turns out that its various negations (anti-socialism, anti-communism, anti-liberalism, etc.) are only formal, allowing some far-right ideologues to claim that *the new order is not* antisocialist. Although it rejects internationalism and dialectical materialism, fascism claims to be "the rejuvenation of the national community as a way of over-coming class conflict, destruction of the traditional hierarchy, eradication of parasitism, rewarding all the productive members of the new nation, and greater use of capitalism's and technology's energies in a new order where these cease to be exploiting and oppressing. In response to communism,

the fascists claimed that their model was *genuine socialism*, based on cor-porate economy, national syndicalism, and state planning."[10] The socialist origins of the far right cannot be denied, but its interaction with national-ism (anti-universalist and particularistic) halted the creation of an *interna-tional fascist* movement from the start. Starting from these premises, I think that fascism inherited the revolutionary vision from the leftist groups, absorbing, altering, and merging anarcho-syndicalism into the new corporate doctrine.

Fortunately, the fascist, fascist-like and authoritarian movements did not succeed in carrying out the implementation of the utopian-totalitarian project, because the societies in which they manifested retained many characteristics of pluralism, despite propaganda, violence, terror, repression, and manipulation. Under the pressure of the Second World War, the multiple forms of resistance, and the spectre of the Axis forces being defeated by the UN, the mythical core of the far right disintegrated into reality as fast as it appeared. The heterogeneity of fascism's social base also led to the demise of this viral-metamorphic ideology, as well as racism, which was put into practice through genocide. The ideological eclecticism of the far right, dominated by the quantitative side and characterized by incoherence, failed to change society sufficiently to grant totalitarian regimes longevity and remains in the collective memory as some kind of *pathology endemic of interwar Europe* – in both time and space.[11] Totalitarianism is an expression of the crisis of politics, turning the latter into a simple instrument of terror and violence. However, its excessive and prolonged use destroys even the democratic form of politics.

Anti-pluralist regimes show a series of paradoxes, which usually appear against the imperfect background of democracy: they give the impression of effectiveness, but it is a forced, artificial one, due to the possibility of absolute control; they foster a certain social cohesion by presenting a veneered legitimacy through propaganda and the repetition of lies disguised as truth; they corrupt the good, in general, and the *public good*, in particular, by transforming morality and over-ideologizing all

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[10]*Ibidem*, p. 136.
[11]*Ibidem*, p. 137-139.

levels of society.[12]

Totalitarianism forces the disappearance of the multiparty system, as well as the quasi-total overlap between the state and the single party; it 'preaches' the absolute ideologization of political truth; establishes full control of the media, which can only transmit the so-called *official truth*; disintegrates civil society, incorporating it into the total state; combines ideological terror with police terror, etc.[13]

TOTALITARIAN POWER AS A POLITICAL MANIFESTATION OF THE NEGATIONIST, VIRAL-METAMORPHIC IDEOLOGY

This type of political power appears to be the polar opposite of *the open society* model (K. Popper). It opposes humanitarianism, by encouraging the lack of compassion or empathy for others as a "virtue". *The New Man (Übermensch)* must abandon the *old morality* (rooted in monotheistic religions), whose core is *Love thy neighbour*, and replace it with *Nietzsche's ethic* based on the *Will to Power*, vitalism, strength, and contempt for the many ('the slaves').

Human autonomy as an individual entity (endowed with reason, conscience, and freedom) is obscured by *totalitarian collectivism*[14] (valid in the case of both far-left and far-right regimes). *The New Man* is a simple component of the *collective entity*, called the *mass society*, which operates as a machine controlled through a program (software) called ideology or political religion. The atomized and ideologized individual is nothing apart from the crowd, because, according to the totalitarian vision, he has "value" only if he fits into the system and obediently serves the State / Single Party / Leader. *Egalitarianism* is seen as one of the fundamental flaws of democracy in anti-pluralist (non-democratic) regimes. Although left-wing totalitarianism claims the idea of equality in a populist and demagogic way, it in

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[12]See Vasile Boari, *Criza politicii. Totalitarismul ca expresie a crizei politicii în secolul XX* [The Crisis of Politics. Totalitarianism as an Expression of the Political crisis in the Twentieth century], in „Sfera Politicii", vol. XIX, 2011, no. 6/160, pp. 33-41.

[13]Raymond Aron, *Démocratie et totalitarism*, Paris, Galimard Publishing House, 1965.

[14]Dan Ioan Dascălu, *The Principle of Collectivism in the Totalitarian Educational Systems*, in „Romanian Journal for Multidimensional Education", vol. 9, 2017, Issue 1, pp. 9-16.

facts annuls it through class struggle or confines it to the oligarchy of a single party (according to the principle of G. Orwell, stated in *Animal Farm* "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others").[15] Drawing inspiration from radical conservatism (through traits such as reactionary conservatism, elitism, paternalism, etc.), fascism, Nazism, and right-wing authoritarian regimes openly declared and supported social, racial, and ethnic *inequality*. The protectionist function of the state is distorted and metamorphosed into economic and ideological *autarky*, as *politics* (in its pluralistic form) and *open society* are destroyed or transformed into 'mutant entities' (*the third way* between liberalism and socialism, monolithic and massed society). Communism does not protect the individual, but utopian ideas such as class struggle or permanent revolution. *Contractualism*, a fundamental component of the state and power theory since the Enlightenment, has been transformed or abolished by both types of totalitarian regimes. The only depository of truth in "people's democracy" (a paradoxical term, full of nonsense), was the Single Party and not the people. The ethnic identity of the latter became, through internationalism, a form of socioeconomic identity. The "true" people could only be the proletariat, with the other social groups falling into categories such as *tolerated social classes, enemies, potential enemies, future enemies, traitors, reactionary elements, anti-revolutionary elements,* etc. The far right cancels democratic contractualism through exacerbated statism, the (conceptual and functional) overlap between nation, people, race, single party, State, Leader. The National Community (*Volksgemeinschaft* type) acts and behaves according to the principles and rules of Organicism and Integralism, which exclude the idea of a social contract (between free and equal individuals before the law, who defend and guarantee each other's rights).

A very important element is the **relationship between political power and religion**. "The secularization and rationalization of political power determined a relative weakening of its relations with the religious foundation but did not eliminate the sacred component. Power is still veiled in mystery, and myths have sprung around it alluding to an unseen

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[15]According to George Orwell, *Ferma animalelor [Animal Farm]*, Iaşi, Editura Polirom, 2012.

reality and mechanisms unknown to ordinary mortals. Even the media's transparency has not been able to dispel the magical atmosphere that surrounds the decision-making mechanisms of politics."[16] Modernization enforced laicization and secularization on society, depriving political authority of the religious attributes of the sacred and the transcendent. At the dawn of modernity, man's covenant with God (the foundation of religion) has been replaced by man's partnership with himself (through *the Social Contract*). The democratic ideology of the Enlightenment, then liberal, tends to replace the religious dogma, which had set the balance of power in the social and political space until the 18th century. Through rationality, Cartesianism, libertarianism, and the embrace of natural rights, the sacred and transcendent become immanent. As a result, democracy appears as a *civil religion*[17], containing "genetic faults" that, in the twentieth century, would result in the birth of the "mutation" known as totalitarianism. Its left-wing form (communism) deifies the proletariat, but, as in Greek mythology, the pantheon of the gods is ever-changing in composition and appearance. The single Party replaces the *pseudo-divine* entity of the working class with pseudo-religion (far-left ideology). At the top of the communist *pantheon's* hierarchy is, of course, the "Great Leader", who mediates and connects the Party with the "mass of believers" (the

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[16]Petre Mareş, *Politica şi political* [Policy and Politics], in Adrian Gorun (coord.), *Politicul şi Puterea* [Politics and Power], Bucureşti, Editura Expert, f. a., p. 155.

[17]*"Civil religion* is a form of sacralisation of politics that generally involves a secular entity, but at times is connected to a supernatural being conceived of as a god; it is not linked to the ideology of any particular political movement, but acknowledges the full autonomy of the individual from the collective; making use of pacific forms of propaganda, it appeals to spontaneous consensus in the observance of ethical commandments and the collective liturgy, and exists side by side with traditional religions and with the various political ideologies. It seeks to present itself as a 'civic creed' which makes the distinction between state and church clear, and which does not associate with any specific denomination."– Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics: Definitions, interpretations and reflections on the question of secular religion and totalitarianism,* in Constantin Iordachi (Ed.), *Fascismul european: 1918-1945. Ideologie, experimente totalitare şi religii politice* [European fascism 1918-1945. Ideology, totalitarian experiments and political religions], Translated by Andrea Lazăr, Alex Moldovan, Alexandru Polgár, Introduction to the Romanian edition by Constantin Iordache, Cluj-Napoca, Romanian Institute for Research on Minorities Issues, 2014, p. 281.

proletariat). The *Will to Power*, racial or statist elitism and radical and militaristic ultra-nationalism replace class struggle in right-wing totalitarianism. It deifies the *National Community, the State, the Race, and the Leader,* conferring onto them quasi / pseudo-divine and supernatural attributes. Both totalitarian forms owe their origins and ties to democracy, even if they deny or modify it. The propaganda of these types of regimes claims that they represent *higher stages* in the development of modern society, using terms such as *people's democracy* or *the third way*. In reality, the so-called "evolution" of democratic forms towards totalitarian forms of power is, in fact, the destruction of political pluralism, of *the open society,* and the liberal economy (by corporatism, statism, and autarky).

The Italian specialist in totalitarianism, Emilio Gentile, stated, "The sacralization of politics is a modern phenomenon. It takes place when politics, after securing its autonomy from traditional religion through the secularization of both culture and the state, acquires a truly religious dimension. For this reason, the sacralization of politics should not be confused with the politicization of traditional religions. In other words, the sacralization of politics is a term that can be applied neither to theocracy nor to the regimes regulated by traditional religions. Consequently, the sacralization of politics differs substantially from the *sacralization of political power* in traditional society, where the holder of political power either identifies with divinity, as in the case of the pharaohs or obtains sacredness from institutionalized religion, as in Christian monarchies."[18]

I also consider that the sacred dimension of political power[19], in all its forms (democratic, authoritarian, totalitarian), stems, of course, from the

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[18]*Ibidem*, p. 279.

[19]*Ibidem*. "The term 'the sacralization of politics' means the formation of a *religious dimension in politics that is distinct from, and autonomous of, traditional religious institutions.* The sacralization of politics takes place when politics is conceived, lived and represented through myths, rituals and symbols that demand faith in the sacralized secular entity, dedication among the community of believers, enthusiasm for action, a warlike spirit and sacrifice to secure its defense and its triumph. In such cases, it is possible to speak of religions of politics in that politics itself assumes religious characteristics. The sacralization of politics takes place when a political movement:

original (religious) model. The relationships between *the Creator* and *the apogee of Creation* (man/community/peoples/World) are reflected at both the societal and power levels. The interaction between politics and religion has evolved in a *circular-cyclical pattern* over time. At the beginning of humanity, there was a connection between power and the magical-religious sphere. There followed a dependence, then an interdependence, between political power and religion. The signs of human emancipation from the religious image of the world enforced by ecclesiastical organizations appeared in the period between the Middle Ages and the era of modernity (via Renaissance and Humanism). Human autonomy from the divine/religious intensified, reaching its peak in the Age of Enlightenment, when the brilliant "deity" of Reason found a correspondent in the political field (through *revolutionary democracy*). The rapid changes in society, the economy, the revolutionary waves of the 17th to 19th centuries have induced, in many intellectual, cultural, and political circles in Europe, a mixed feeling of alienation and anxiety (*spleen*), considered specific to humans only, as well as a large "dose" of reactionary conservatism. The violent encounter between the nationalism of the oppressed peoples and the imperialism of the great powers (which was about to implode) reshaped the world on a geopolitical level, through the Great War. After the first global conflagration, the democratic model of power seemed outdated, under multiple pressures (revolutionary socialism, the threat of communism). The fascination with totalitarian ideologies spread rapidly, infecting pluralistic power relations like a *virus*. The masses stubbornly

a) Consecrates the primacy of a *collective secular entity*, placing it at the center of a system of beliefs and myths that define the meaning and ultimate goals of social existence, and proscribe the principles that define good and evil.
b) Incorporates this conception into a code of ethical and social commandments, which bind the individual to the sacralized entity, compelling the same individual to loyalty and dedication to it.
c) Considers its members an elect community and interprets political action as a messianic function aiming toward the fulfillment of a mission.
d) Develops a *political liturgy* to worship the sacralized collective entity by way of an institutionalized cult and figures representing it, and through the mystical and symbolic portrayal of a *sacred history*, periodically relieved through the ritual evocations performed by the community of the elect."

demanded "new gods", a *new religion,* or a *new morality* - to satisfy their instinctive and vitalist tendencies. With the emergence of totalitarianism, the link between power and religion appeared to be re-established, but the *New Covenant* (with its false *idols*) unfortunately led humankind into an era of Evil and Conflict rather than an *Era of Peace*. The "religions of the immanent", as Hannah Arendt called the totalitarian systems, turned out to be *desecrated forms of the sacred*, or expressions of the *numinous*[20], as well as *re-sacralized,* coerced, and artificial forms of power.

Totalitarianisms, according to E. Gentile, are *experiments* rather than political regimes and are defined by a combination of elements, such as a new *anthropological revolution* (*New Man/ Übermensch*), *political religion* (ideology), *the single party, the system of governance.* Totalitarian experiments work with the help of the following tools: *coercion, demagoguery, totalitarian pedagogy, discrimination* against the outsiders.

- Violence, repression, and terror (synthesized in *coercion*) become legitimate means of enforcing totalitarian power and ideology.

- *Demagoguery* and propaganda take the form of ritualistic forms of celebration of the leader's and the single party cults.

- *Totalitarian pedagogy* is completely submissive to ideology, advocating a behavioural model specific to the collective entity. Obedience, a spirit of sacrifice, militarism, a lack of critical thinking, force, vitalism, the instinctual and the irrational are the foundations of the latter.

- *Discrimination against the outsiders* mixes the exercise of power with various forms of exclusion of the adversary, a prospective enemy, or someone who is not you, through social affiliation, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. Discriminatory forms cover a wide range of manifestations ranging from exclusion from public space to physical elimination.[21]

Civil (democratic) and political (totalitarian) religions are mimetic, syncretic, and ephemeral in comparison to traditional religion. Civil

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[20]The German historian of religions Rudolf Otto defined the numinous - as a sacred form of the divine, from which the moral side is removed – according to R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational,* German into English translation by Ioan Milea and Silvia Irimia, Floreşti, Cluj, LIMES Publishing House, 2015.

[21]E. Gentile, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

religions and totalitarianism unconsciously adopt the model and operating system of traditional religions. They also include some of the myths, traditions, and rituals of ancient religions, adapting or metamorphosing them according to their own symbolic and mythological universe. The duration of political religions is relatively short; they usually disappear with the movements that created them. Fascism was the first movement of the twentieth century that called itself political religion. It "affirmed *the primacy of faith and the primacy of myth* in the political militancy of the individual and the masses and explicitly appealed to the irrational as a mobilizing force from a political point of view; it brought mythical thinking to the level of power, officially declaring that this was the only form of collective political consciousness, suitable for the masses, who were incapable, by their very nature, of any form of self-government; it established the figure of *the charismatic leader* as an interpreter of the national consciousness and as a fundamental pivot of the totalitarian state; prescribed a mandatory code of *ethical commandments* for citizens and instituted a collective *political liturgy* to glorify the *deification of the state* and *the cult of the leader*"[22]. In contact with the sacred totalitarian power, people experience *bipolar emotions such* as fascination/fear, love/hate, respect/contempt, etc.

As early as the 1920s, scholars such as Bertrand Russell or John Maynard Keynes[23], respectively, revealed the political religion of communism, and its Leninist version. B. Russell compares the far left to ancient religions[24], finding most similarities with Islam: "Compared to other religions, Bolshevism is more like Mohammedanism than Christianity and Buddhism. The latter two are first of all personal religions, with mystical doctrines, which show the love of contemplation. Islam and Bolshevism have a practical, social, non-spiritual character, both concerned with the conquest and domination of this world". The militant, revolutionary character and the immanence of the political religion of Communism were, in

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[22]*Ibidem*, p. 292.
[23]J. M. Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion*, London, Macmillan Publishing House, 1929.
[24]Bertrand Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, London, George Allen & Unwinn Ltd., 1921, p. 114.

Russell's conception, the result of the moral, spiritual and material crisis, established on our continent after the first world conflagration: "The war has left Europe in a state of disillusionment and despair, which seems to be the birth of a new religion, capable of giving people the energy to live fully. Bolshevism offered the new religion. It promised glorious things: the end of injustice for both the poor and the rich, the end of economic slavery and war, the cohesion of social classes, the end of savage capitalism, which made people judge everything in terms of money, and a new world in which people can truly enjoy the results of their work."[25]

Nazism was a mixture of racial theology, social Darwinism, neo-paganism, anti-Judaism, anti-Christianity. Researchers such as Richard Steigmann-Gall have dismissed National Socialism as a political religion, instead, describing Hitler's regime as religious policy based on the blasphemy of Judeo-Christianity. For political considerations or propaganda purposes, the Nazis avoided publicly denouncing the Christian religion in public. The Third Reich's elites desired to project an image of crusading knights to the German people and the rest of the world.[26]

Social class/social group individual

A very important element for the stability of a pluralistic society is *social cohesion*. It is "a characteristic of a society based on connections and relationships between social units such as individuals, groups, associations, as well as between territorial units. Sociologist Emile Durkheim used the concept of social cohesion, considering it the future order of society, and defined it as an interdependence characterized by loyalty and solidarity among members of society.[27] The aspects often mentioned in the description of social cohesion are the strengthening of social relations, the

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[25]*Ibidem*, p.17.

[26]Richard Steigmann-Gall, *Nazism and the Rebirth of Political Religion Theory*, in Constantin Iordachi (Ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 310-327. The conception and attitude of the Nazi regime towards Christianity is treated at length by the same author in his work *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[27]Alina Magdalena Manole, *Coeziunea socială – o analiză post-criză* [Social cohesion - a post-crisis analysis], in „Theoretical and applied Economics", vol. XIX, no. 11 (576), 2012, p. 112.

sharing of values and the existence of a common mode of interpretation, living a common identity and a sense of community, as well as trust between community members". Among the core aspects of social cohesion, there are also affiliation, participation, legitimacy, recognition, inclusion, identity, and axiological coherence.[28]

The weakening of social cohesion, against the background of the multiple crises of democracy (political, economic, social, moral, spiritual) from the beginning of the twentieth century determined the emergence of totalitarianism. The society, seen as a contractual community, seemed to no longer function. Totalitarian movements used the *cohesive power* of the political myth, which replaced the open society, based on rationalism, with a *mutant, distorted* form, which used, above all, ideological mystification and manipulation. Non-pluralist political systems were based on the *society-community dichotomy*, specific to modernity. The societal space had emerged and developed through a social contract and the community (as a collective entity) was founded on socio-cultural factors (tradition, origin, identity) and, last but not least, on political myths. Left-wing totalitarianism has tended towards a particular type of cohesion, characterized by: the destruction or assimilation of social classes other than the proletariat, the class struggle, the almost total domination of a single layer of society (the "dictatorship of the proletariat"), the cessation or restriction of the mobility of human groups and communities, etc. Right-wing totalitarianism starts from a high level of cohesion, which is achieved through the collective entity known as the *national community*. It functioned on the model of castes (closed groups) and was a synthesis of the State, a single party, a leader, and the people.

Position

Ideology has often been seen as the representative model of a group occupying a strategic position in society. No definite result has been reached on the ideological status of an *inside group* (whose ideology legitimizes its dominance) or an *external group* (whose system of beliefs,

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[28]*Ibidem*, p. 113.

attitudes, and values is a protest against an exclusive or discriminatory hierarchy).

1. Dominant

The approach to ideology as a form of domination belongs to Marx and Engels. The ideas of the ruling class have become the dominant ideas of each era. Over time, ideological theorists have introduced a more general concept called *the structure of domination*.[29]. Usually, social groups (including classes) develop their own ideologies within structures, characterized by conflict, competition, or domination. Thus, under specific conditions, elitist or dominant ideologies can be adopted by the entire population or by specific dominated groups using a variety of ideological control strategies:

- If they are capable of dividing non-dominant groups, to weaken their cohesion so that they can never manifest opposition, resistance, and dissent (for example totalitarian ideologies, racism, and sexism).

- Prevent and destroy the internal solidarity of non-dominant groups, as well as split the community through individual addressability to members.

- There should be no strong popular alternatives to elite ideologies; otherwise, they are almost unknown or marginalized. The media poorly promotes the anti-racist ideology or discourse. Elites with influence over the media limit or prevent access to public discourse to leaders of non-dominant groups (feminists, anti-racists, radicals) or prefer to discredit and marginalize them.

- Sometimes, elites adopt popular ideologies, but in their own way and according to the interests of the community to which they belong.

- Compared to the great ideologies of the dominant groups, the belief systems of the elites possess means of persuasion such as strategies for manipulating knowledge and opinions, access and control of the media, greater power of persuasion over dangers posed by competing ideologies,[30] etc.

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[29]John Gerring, *Ideology: a definitional analysis*, in „Political Research Quarterly", Vol. 50, 1997, No. 4, pp. 970-971.

[30]Teun A. Van Dijk, *Ideology*..., pp. 179-184.

2. Subordinate

Ideologies are related to forms of alienation or strong protest against the status quo in society when it comes to far-left and far-right movements. By their viral-metamorphic nature, totalitarian ideological systems fit into older ideologies, which they either destroy or *contaminate*, corrupt and transform into *entities*, which lose all resemblance to the original. For example, fascism, in contact with the *liberal democratic* model, destroys it, both economically (replacing it with corporatism and exacerbated statism) and politically ("disturbed" by the principle of freedom, individualism, or rights of man). Far-right ideology sought to replace the *individual human entity*, endowed with the *Kantian quality of the autonomy of reason*, with a *collective entity*, in which the human being loses its defining traits. The extreme right of the interwar period seized a multitude of elements belonging to conservatism (elitism, reactionary conservatism, paternalism, traditionalism), but radicalized them by applying *Nietzsche's principle of revaluation of all values*. For example, fascist paternalism manifests in the form of the deification of the Leader, who gains near-divine divine traits such as omnipotence, omniscience, infallibility, premonition, messianism, thaumaturgical qualities, etc. Far-right elites are often above and outside the law. They are at the apex of a caste-like hierarchy and report directly to the leader. If in Hindu society there are three Aryan castes (Brahma - priests, Kșatria - warriors, Vaiśya - merchants and artisans), the majority of the population being made up of slaves (Sūdra), in fascist society the first two "castes" have cumulative functions (religious - ideological and military), the rest representing the mass of subjects and *believers* of the new political religion. The extreme right adopts reactionary conservatism, but it has no intention of restoring any 'Ancien Régime' (*monarchical absolutism*), preferring instead to use *Caesarism* as the archetype of dictatorship. Returning to tradition is merely a symbolic pretext for returning to an idealized past, *a golden age*. At the same time, totalitarian ideology (political religion) has proclaimed itself the founder of an improved society of the future, in which common morality would turn into the Will to Power, and the human being would undergo a "new anthropogenesis", resulting in the mutation called *Übermensch*. In contact with fascist ideology, socialism loses its internationalist side, replaced by

organicist and xenophobic ultra-nationalism. The far right, however, holds on to the revolutionary concept and collectivist anarchism.

Hierarchy

Classical ideologies such as liberalism, conservatism, socialism, benefit from a well-structured and developed internal hierarchical organization. Usually, the set of values contained in an ideology determines the appearance of concrete elements or positions and not the other way around. Thus, the hierarchical organization manifests from the general to the particular, respecting a certain logic of ideological taxonomy. The totalitarian right-wing ideology does not lack an internal hierarchy, but it is differently composed and structured. If in the traditional political currents and doctrines mentioned above the hierarchical organization firstly respects the axiological dimension, fascism modifies the fundamental values of political pluralism, by imposing an absolute *pseudo-truth* (resulting from the interminable repeating the same lie or promise of a perfect world, which will never appear in reality or will remain the product of the symbolic imagination). The far-right ideology has a fairly low cognitive-rational side; it is characterized, above all, by an organized and hierarchical belief system in the form of a political religion of the immanent. Irrational, subconscious, atavistic aspects of the individual psyche, but primarily of the collective psyche, are highlighted. Reason is suppressed, both conceptually and practically, or replaced by a different "logic" aimed solely at promoting the totalitarian goal. Fundamental concepts of democracy such as *The Public Good* and *the General Will* are transformed, in contact with the *totalitarian ideological virus*, into a "*good*", which only benefits a small elite and which becomes an *absolute evil* for *the others* (suspects, enemies, 'scapegoats'). *The general Will* theorized by the Enlightenment disappears, due to the cancelling of the social contract principle, and is replaced by the *quasi/pseudo-divine* will of the Leader, always above common law, justice, and morality (*Führerprinzip*). That's why I can conclude that the totalitarian right-wing ideology is based on a closed *caste-type* hierarchy, in which

the elements that make up the levels of the hierarchical ladder communicate, interact very little, or interact only at the order of the supreme leader at the head of the power pyramid.

CONCLUSIONS

Totalitarian ideology manifests as a belief system that comprises a specific type of religiosity on a socio-cognitive level (secularized, immanentized). Even if they empty, pervert or *aestheticize* democratic political language - transforming it into a demagogic-populist discourse - fascism, Nazism or fascist variants from other countries have been able to preserve and develop the implementation, expression, and ideological reproduction capacity. Far-right ideology takes on a *hermetic quality* by adopting a specific pattern of thought, whether it is illogical, nihilistic, antagonistic, vitalist, taboo, etc. Many, including its leaders and doctrinaires, have labelled it a *philosophy of action*. Therefore, *right-wing extremism* seems more intelligible through the behaviour of its followers than through their ideas or thinking. Thus, the *fascist behavioural sphere* includes traits such as force, violence, visceral feelings, mobilizing passions, sadistic and masochistic tendencies, paranoia, persecution mania, enemy obsession (real or imaginary), aggression, repressed anxiety, extreme hostility, impulsivity, etc.

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