



## THE ONGOING MYTH OF THE STATE

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**Abstract-** The modern nation-state has long supplanted the church as the manifestation of central authority and ultimate coercion in the political realm. As a social institution, the state must provide a continuing and consistent rationalization for its existence, but as a political institution, the state is above metaphysical reproach due to its assumed preeminence and historical inertia. The strength of the latter position is thus used to bolster the weakness of the former through the construction of a new set of myths. This paper examines the structure and narrative of the myths that lend cantor to the existence of central and coercive authority throughout the world. The template of religion is still strong enough in human consciousness that politics can borrow much of this older model and find as much utility in it.

**Keywords-** State, myth, religion, subjectivity, alienation, rationalization.

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### Introduction

How do they overcome this alienated character, this irreducible otherness of the State as the substantial presupposition of the subjects' 'activity'-positing? [ ] subjects can recognize the State as their own work [14].

The godhead of the State is far from dead. Its 'glad' tidings are still upon us. So much so that through our participation in the society it attempts to create, we give it our voice, whence it proceeds to justify its actions against us by reminding us of everything it accomplishes on our behalf. It is sometimes difficult to tell which is one and which the other. Its welfare is our sociality, and our conformity an insurance policy taken out by the state with our welfare as its munificence. More and more states are moving in this direction; to provide the basic necessities of modern life in return to an obedience that denies the wider existence of a global humanity. To each his or her own, we might retort, for we do not wish to live like the others. This is reasonable until the rather shallow point is reached that it is we, after all, who makes the rules for the world to follow, and in so doing, we are recreating both the positive and negative standards, the worldly thresholds of supply and demand, of citizenship and sacrifice, that animate our European consciousness. Though history itself is far from over, one cannot but wonder if the tensions between the anthill humanitarianism of the welfare state and the dog-kennel beg on demand humane society of competitive capital are still entirely relevant. The combination of these caricatures in the world as it is does not defy their intensity. Indeed, it makes them all the more alienating. It is just that this alienation is of the subjective kind, the anomic variety that Durkheim so skillfully exposed and rendered. So much so, that to think at all might place oneself outside the ambit of what we take the state to be about, to give one an

air of the *fuhreprinzip* in that one might well imagine that it is I who must be followed, who must see through this polar night and thus it is also I who *could* lead my people to freedom. But our self-doubt forces a change of course in the sense that if I do desire to lead I must lead myself back through the apparatus of the political entity that appears to be so shaped, to be reconstructed anew by the 'greatness' of silent grace that seems to animate those who serve within it: "Noble-minded consciousness occupies the position of extreme alienation: it posits all its contents in the common Good embodied in the State - noble-minded consciousness serve the State with total and sincere devotion, attested by its acts. It does not speak: its language is limited to 'counsels' concerning the common Good." [14]. We might well feel that this is the epitome of the contemporary political experience - to serve the state, but in Soviet manner. To voice our concerns rather than to be the one who speaks, as does the chief of the transient village. Here, no mere subsistence broaches its daily concerns. We are to be high-minded in principal if not in agency. We feel a belonging which apes community because we cannot now imagine life without the central and focused authority of the state. Like a paternal elder, it reserves the right to discipline us, but always and only for our own good, which then can be translated into the common good. Without the state, we are ourselves only partial selves. Our entire political essence is bound up in the mechanism of a center which we cannot directly access, but into which we place both our trust and devote our energies. Civil religion is an apt enough term for the rationalization of this kind of anomie, but its religious character is truncated by the sensibility that we actually share our god with everyone else. Nor do we imagine that the state is really the State, after all, for it is not considered to be omniscient in the same way as was a god. In fact, its omnipresence is more a herald of its lack of ability to either fully

control situations that countries find themselves in or create for the distraction of their own citizens and perhaps others, and it may also be an ongoing testament to its failure to reconcile the internecine differences that lay out a mottled landscape of would-be communities and interests. Our own sociality, our ability to interact with others of similar socialization, hailing from similar social backgrounds, is likened by us to a complete society only because it is capped off by a distant but yet predominant organization. It is this grouping of groups that allows us to feel the comfort and security of not having to be concerned about our own subjective partiality, about our own gaps. We then are also able to disdain those other cultures around the globe that appear to be struggling towards what we already think we possess: "...those societies are *incomplete*; they are not quite true societies - they are not *civilized* - their existence continues to suffer from a painful experience of a *lack* - the lack of a State - which, try as they may, they will never make up. [ ] the State is the destiny of every society." [7]. All the more salient is this evolutionary position given that we actually feel an incompleteness that in fact the presence of the State cannot itself 'make up'. This kind of traditional political analysis underscores both a resentment we feel towards those cultures who are without what we have - indeed, it turns to *ressentiment* when we realize that they have a freedom we do not, and cannot seem to return to even in our historical imaginations - and a fervor that runs onto the stage to fill the void of our own 'lack'. What we have found, what we maintain in the nation-state is the near end of a political evolution whose furthest points, receding into the mists of mythical temporality, begins with the introduction of perennially specialized religious role players. The State is thus an annually renewed - however many actual years of office does not matter, even dictators are, at length, replaced - organ of god on earth, a vehicle for the divine powers without which humanity could not live. This ongoing faith in central authority, in leadership, "...implies the unhesitating belief, here especially concerning us that evils of all kinds should be dealt with by the State." [13]. For evil 'itself' is mediated by the secularism of the modern state. It takes evil into its own hands, as it were, and the committing of crimes such as those of the 1930s and 1940s in Europe can thus never be truly 'evil' in the metaphysical sense of the term, a sense which is now fraught with *disbelief* and hesitancy, the very opposite of our feelings concerning the godhead and ultimate navigation of the state as the State.

### Hypocrisies of Humanitarianism

Of course the problem of humanity and humaneness is not at all solved by our mere beliefs, for others have also the civility of their secularized religions, in science and technology, for example, which appears to them to be more liberating than mere politics, but more immediately relevant, other forms of statehood and citizenship. We know that it is more governments who continue the 'old game' of not getting along far more than it is people, no matter the cultural distances. Person to person, we mend fences and live and let live, to a far greater extent than states seem to be able to do. What is it that elevates the interests in living on to the larger than life frames of making history? What planes are inclined in that upward swing and swale that allows us collectively to proceed to this 'higher' elevation? For "...if inclination opposes inclination then in the end the stronger inclination wins, which means, today, and in the West: the bigger banks, the fatter books, the more determined educators, the bigger guns. Right now, and again in the West, bigness seems to favour a scientifically distorted and belligerent (nuclear weapons!)

humanitarianism..." [9]. Insofar as we are expected to adhere to the decision made once we have attained through the state this higher level of collective consciousness, we must take into ourselves as our own decision the outcomes of such actions. The results of visions made real are certainly diverse, from the depths of the Holocaust to the aspirations of a truly universal health care system or a world court. Whatever their actual content, we must make them our own in order to feel that we are still a part of the machinations of government, that we are still 'self-governed' in the sense that central political authorities are, if not actually us in the flesh, must still answer to us simply because we are the 'rest' of society, the brimming masses who do not so much fill public positions as seek to remain distant arbiters of those who do. The idea that we belong to the state as part of the essence of being a political animal entails a tacit acceptance that the only way to escape anomie is to become the slave of the self-professed godhead of political authority: "...this doctrine, proper to a state of constant warfare, is a doctrine which socialism unawares reintroduces into a state intended to be purely industrial. [But can we make a distinction here? Only the politics of a people's capital thinks that industry is ultimately peaceful, and indeed, the capitalist does not necessarily want war, as it disrupts both production and trade, let alone curtails consumption to the necessities of subsistence; ironically, Spencer makes his point by making an error, that the socialist 'man' thinks of the political use of industry, yes, but that industry is geared for conflict and that conflict itself can also become a commodity, so that there cannot be distinction made in this manner, even though it is also true that it is the capitalist who is relatively *apolitical* in this architecture] The services of each will belong to the aggregate of all; and for these services, such returns will be given as the authorities think proper." [13]. Even so, this newly minted community of forced likenesses and likes - my new neighbor is like me, I like him as a 'person', and we share and share alike, etc. - cannot entirely 'be itself'. One, it has no real selfhood, and is an agglomeration of selves and others who, in their self-interest and their suspicion of otherness to self, do not willingly form a community even in the abstract, and two, it is not as independent as the modern theory of political agency seems to suggest: "The desired end is attained; the state has won its full autonomy. Yet this result has had to be bought dearly. The state is entirely independent; but at the same time it is completely isolated. [ ] The political world has lost its connection not only with religion or metaphysics, but also with all the other forms of man's ethical and cultural life. It stands alone - in an empty space." [6]. Perhaps a less stark description would have to include the ability of the state, no doubt not something sudden but rather acquired, to have filled in the rapidly emptying spaces of religion and other social institutions such as the family. Kindred to modern science or economics, modern politics territorializes in an imperial manner, conquering as well as inheriting landscapes and hinterlands from formerly predominant institutions. If science does this to the older metaphysical chain of command regarding cosmic explanations, and economics with regard to contractual relations and subsistence, then surely politics takes over the roles of authority and legality, as well as the more symbolic suasion of order and paternalism. The church and the family are the largest losers on all fronts here. Even so, both of these forms have managed to maintain a living, so to speak, in the privacy and the margins of the social tapestry where modern structures have not yet extended their reach, partly through lack of experience but mainly because these modern forms bank on the bottom line of interest, profit and amoral power. The highest regard we can

have for the denizens of rational-legal authority is that they pronounce a new evaluation and analysis of justice that is unencumbered by the misogynist and network traditions of older institutions based on kin affiliations. This could well be seen as a maturation while still "...asserting that the radical distinction between family-ethics and State-ethics must be maintained; and that while generosity must be the essential principle of the one, justice must be the essential principle of the other...". [13]. At the same time, nineteenth century correspondents noted with chagrin the same kinds of things we rail against today regarding the problematic enforcement of the legal code and the differential standards or justice within the state. It is a truism to say that some people are ever more guilty than others in the eyes of justice, and that her blindness is more to do with this fact than any kind of actual equality before the law and equity therein. Spencer continues: "...did we find no terrible incongruity as the imprisonment of a hungry vagrant for stealing a turnip, while for the gigantic embezzlement of a railway director it inflicts no punishment; had we, in short, proved its efficiency as judge and defender, instead of having found it treacherous, cruel, and anxiously to be shunned, there would be some encouragement to hope other benefits at its hands." [13]. There has been a slight improvement in the administration of justice, in its aspiration to become identical with the law, given the outcomes of the Nuremberg trials and others more recent effected at The Hague. Yet we are painfully aware of its lingering inability to judge according to the object of the crime itself and not regarding the subject of the criminal. At the same time, we also require that it minister jurisprudence concerning the subject, those 'mitigating factors' which are sometimes called to account for acts trivial or heinous alike. In so doing, we have, rather unconsciously, extended the sphere of publicity well into the very intimacies of our biographies. One of the punishments of a legal system that in fact 'says nothing of punishment', to remind us of Durkheim's famously Aristotelian distinction between systems of retribution and those of redistribution, is surely the airing out in full public view of all of the minutiae of the perpetrator's and often equally the victim's lives. The need for this is as self-evident as the necessity for eschewing such a process, and thus part of the judicial conflict that occurs within the legal system has no direct bearing on the case at hand. Ironically, or even hypocritically given media and prurient interests, inserting the private sphere radically into that public only diminishes the former even while such a process claims to be humanizing the events, to be making a rational process a more humanitarian one.

All of this pushes us further down the path where the state can assert itself as the State, a very much now overfull space where the idea of the private has recede from view: "In the totalitarian state, there is no private sphere, independent of political life, the whole life of man is suddenly inundated by a high tide of new rituals. They are as regular, as rigorous and inexorable as those rituals we find in primitive societies." [6]. It is highly ironic that the humanity of being able to share a collective memory of the history of oneself as part of a people should also be hijacked in this manner. What must be recalled, it seems, needs be administrated by a superior agency, not unlike the ledgers we used to imagine being kept by God, or as children we thought by Santa Claus or the like. This credit and debit accounting of selfhood and its agency is now the province of banks and governments, tax collectors and lending bureaus, so that its import is purely nominal with regard to the moral sphere. But the more important implication of the taking over of human experience by the state is that it recreates the very kinds of social structures

and dynamics whereby the trauma as constructed in the first place: "The 'Holocaust' after all has a pseudo-religious aura within contemporary Israel. It is a central plank in what Liebman and Don-Yehiya have terms Israeli 'civil religion', and thus a vital element of 'the ceremonials, myths, and creeds which legitimate the social order, unite the population and mobilise the society's members in pursuit of its dominant political goals.'" [8].

Such an order that is legitimated is one that *can* be perilously close to the that of the perpetrators, and Israel is far from the only nation-state that treads these murky waters. Every modern political organization attempts to reify actual historical events and bend them in its favor. The Nazis were exceptional to the degree that they included non-historical or even anti-historical events in their rewritten mythologies. It is at least one step beyond the recasting of history as mythology to simply make it all up, which the Israelis have not done. Given the lies from 'teachers and historical monuments alike' in many countries, the civil religion that recalls trauma to mind hesitates at the threshold of dishonesty and ultimate manipulation. Even so, it verges on both of these things, and as such it replaces human experience with the politics of power.

### Ironies of Iconography

This movement leads directly to the problem of the adoration of the state. The nation too has its graven imagery, its official gravesites where the greatest of citizens are buried - Westminster Abbey in Britain is the classic example of this, or Arlington in the United States of America - and like the hypostasized history these sites proclaim, the excesses of all the ministrations or the self-representations of the state provide us only with the means to avoid the direct application of its apparatus, since the state generally advertises itself in such an unashamed and transparent fashion. It is, after all, the only game in town when it comes to relevant public life. Everything that 'the State' takes into its self-consciousness, however unreflective this may be, becomes larger than ordinary life. It is as if the state now possesses the extramundane qualities that the church gave to itself. So much so that like the churches before it, those who are identified with such an institution also not only become larger than life - even if by far the majority of them fly under the public and media radar as unelected officials and bureaucrats - they also magnify, for good or evil, the wider but more diffuse power relations and purposes of the larger community: "It is true that trade has its dishonesties, speculation its follies. These are evils inevitably entailed by the existing imperfections of humanity. It is equally true, however, that these imperfections of humanity are shared by State-functionaries; and that being unchecked in them by the same stern discipline, they grow to far worse results." [13]. Part of the ongoingness of contemporary state myths is that each incarnation of government authority is an improvement upon those that appeared previously. Here, the messianic impulse of focused power is once again in evidence. This idea that one is always 'new and improved' allows the next regime to plan and carry out its overhaul of various others of its system, justice and correction, social welfare, health and education, to name a few, with an impunity born of the arrogance of auto-iconography. We put ourselves on a pedestal before having taken any heroic action, but we now know such actions will come from us and to us simply by gazing out from our newly superior vantage point. This process of a priori aggrandizement is not entirely without precedent. It is commonplace in the sphere of memorialization and subjectivity in its projection of the self into contexts which are actually new but within which we refuse

to enter into the authenticity of the new experience. Serial relationships often have this timbre, as we imagine that we can improve our behavior for the next partner because he or she is simply the same person that we already had a trial run at in the past. What we do in our imaginations we also do in life, to paraphrase Nietzsche, and thus we may well find ourselves repeating not merely mistakes of the past - something that we are only less liable to do if we recall our own histories as lived, and not something that will necessarily be avoided in this regard - but categorizing persons as large and amorphous structural variables; the idea that 'women are Woman', or 'men are Man', the 'Mars and Venus' anti-history and anti-culture, for instance. The source of such mystifications lies in there not being an historical source: "In all mythical cosmogonies the origin means a primeval state that belongs to the remote immemorial mythical past. It has faded away and vanished; it has been superseded and replaced by other things." [6]. Even if the origin of the world or of humanity retains its sacred aura precisely through its mystery - Noah's Ark as the tropic space of Ararat and vice-versa, or the sacred image of Fujiyama or Kilimanjaro - there is a double convenience in having it so recessive and reclusive as to be unapproachable. Perhaps this is indeed why giant mountains, especially volcanoes, which arise seemingly out of nowhere and sometimes spew the very dust from which they appear to have been created, are so often seen as cosmogonical sites. Our ancestors were more than content to give over the powers of divinity to these spaces, for after all this is where God or the gods once made their formal covenant with humanity, warranting us to not only live as commanded, but to assume that if we did so all would fall in front of our desires: "But for the modern belief such a warrant does not exist. Making no pretention to divine descent or divine appointment, a legislative body can show no supernatural justification for its claim to unlimited authority; and no natural justification has ever been attempted." [13]. The uncanny and disturbing prescience of such commentaries must now be read in the light that just such a natural legitimation has indeed been attempted, the eugenics based race theories of the Third Reich and further, many other countries during the same period. Only through Nuremberg did we get a sense that we were headed down a disastrous path, and it took several decades after that to outlaw certain aspects of this experiment, such as the mandatory and legal sterilization of those with disabilities. The self-appointed character of all divine assignation is of course no hindrance to the ever-expanding ministrations of the state. The idea that the world is here for our benefit is at best, only barely hinted at in pre-agrarian lifeways. Our more distant ancestors wrested their survival on a day to day basis from the environment around them, and had no ability to transform it in any long-term fashion, or with any deleterious implications. But it requires more than a Malthusian understanding to apprehend the processes involved in such a change of consciousness even if mythology is seen as a rationalization for the more recent exploitation of the earth; its own version of fascism, in fact, as we work without the consent of the environment and the creatures who live around us, and grant them 'rights' and territories as it suits us. The animals too are 'life unworthy of life' in this sense. If we are well beyond the idea that governments descend from godhead, which surely presents an improvement in our potential ability to critically reflect on their character and agency, then we are still mired in the idea that central authority possesses, notwithstanding, the blank check of power, the unchecked edge that slices through any knot presented to it, while at the same time tying still others that no other body can decipher: "...State-authority as

thus derived, is a means to an end, and has no validity save as subserving that end: if the end is not subserved, the authority, by the hypothesis, does not exist. The other is that end for which the authority exists, as thus specified, is the enforcement of justice - the maintenance of equitable relations." (ibid:177). This new order of things sets a dangerous precedent. If power is to be used as a means to attain this or that outcome, where is the body that sets the course, defines the end to be attained, and directs the power. All of these functions and deliberations take place in the same political space, thereby not only marginalizing all other interests that may well be involved - and in our current global setting, all of us are involved in one way or another, and none of us 'innocent' to the effects of our actions and inactions - but it gives those inside of such a space the sense that they are the inheritors of divine assignation, simply because it appears that they can accomplish anything they desire.

So while we no longer associate politics with the sacred per se, we do give unto it the same tasks that religion used to fulfill, the structuring of community, the definition of obedience, the identity of membership, and so on. In doing so, we aid and abet the blank check mentality. If government needs to do all these things and more, we might imagine that it should have not only the power to accomplish such ends, to 'subserve' them, in Spencer's language, but also the right to do so unchecked. Furthermore, we might also imagine that any institution that can accomplish even some of the broad suite of finite ends and perhaps even a few of our absolute values which we are taught to share mostly through the formal education systems run by the state, that such an organization has a moral and an aesthetic quality that can be admired for its own sake. This unfortunate conceptualization also goes back to the Greek thinkers, who aggrandized their own marginal egos by identifying their theoretical work with what they claimed were the best forms of social organization, though of course these, characteristically and inevitably, did not exist in the sorry world in which their ideas were not taken seriously enough: "...the state was not only one beautiful thing among other; it was, in a sense, beauty itself. What the multitude knows of beauty is only a deception. Even the artists and poets have only a faint image of it. It is for the philosopher to discover the real archetype, that paragon of beauty represented by the ideal state." [6]. At the same time, and paving the way for the new revealed religions in the West, this world was a necessary harbinger of the other world to come. Though it was in a fallen state - and this sensibility may also be seen as coming from the Greek view of the downward slope of history from the golden age to their own - its presence as the landscape of living on in the present was nothing if not proof that the masses could not be trusted to manage their own affairs. The 'affairs of men' then could only be mediated by a greater force whose kinship was with the ideals, and not the realities. Forms of truth, beauty and the good in itself were to be aspired to, but there had to be a role model to be somehow closer to these forms than the common person, who knew little or nothing of them. Plato's 'philosopher-king', who bears an eerie resemblance to Wagner's 'artist-prince', was just this sort of figure, but after the revolutionary revelations of the new religions, such a figure had to receive his appointment from God. This act, the representation of which was a testimony to the leader's relative intimacy with the ideal forms, now manifest and 'embodied' by God's rule on earth, created an odd melange of political orbits, bearing in its decentered ellipse both the Egyptian sense of real gods on earth and the Greek sense of a ruler who had the vision of the forms. Either way, or in this new

combination, the full force of the state lay beneath the ruler's feet, for he could not rule with the aura of godhead if there was not some wholesale attachment of the population to the ideals he represented or embodied: "Ordinarily, the royal splendor does not radiate in solitude. The multitude's *recognition*, without which the king is nothing, implies a *recognition* of the greatest men, of those who might aspire on their own account to the recognition of others. But the king, who would not have absolute magnificence if he was not *recognized* by the greatest men, must [also] *recognize* them as such." [2]. Given that any ruler of an organic social organization is in the end a metaphor for the ruling ideas, the mouthpiece of the forms, and the voice of normative behavior - even though he or she behaves as a mobile *object* in the scenery, the tableaux of hypostatized norms - one simply uses the leader, or the god, for that matter, as a mirror for one's own social presence and movement. It is the personalization of such an object that provides one half of the social bond, while the other half is provided by each of us participating in the mimicry of loyal *subjects* in all sense of the word.

Now if we remove the divinity of the ruler and the personality of ourselves we have the solution to the question of the apparent diffuseness of power in contemporary society. The focus of power percolates through the state apparatus, and the subjectivity of persons does the same through the concept of citizenship. This pronounced a novel architecture upon social relations, as the ideas were brought down to earth and the ideal was that such forms could be made real, and were no longer only attainable in some metaphysical manner, through vision or afterlife or by exiting the cave of shadows. It was the founder of the analysis which understood the implications of this kind of institution who exposed what had really been going on within the spaces of power for some millenia, but disguised by both sincere and insincere reverence for the vertical connection with the other world: "Machiavelli was the first thinker who completely realized what this new political structure really meant. He had seen its origin and he foresaw its effects. He anticipated in his thought the whole course of the future political life of Europe." [6]. The actuality of power relations in the modern state allows us to gaze at the old royalty with affection rather than fear. The remaining royal families of Europe and elsewhere are the still living fetishes of nostalgia. They represent what is no longer to be awed and hence can be truly loved. No doubt those who wield real power have become the objects of revulsion, and it would be a pretty thought if we could imagine that this was a lingering and obscure resonance of the period when all human beings lived in egalitarian relations and within a collective conscience. However unlikely this may be, in certain countries today there is an important cleavage between the splendor of powers past and the almost eldritch sense that history lives on in spite of it being put to death centuries ago, and the hard edge of rationalized powers that live in the present and commit others of us to a premature death. Between splendor and utility it is the mere flirtation of coy powers that be that give us the utterly misguided sense that there remains a relationship between them. They are alike to casual lovers who dwell in a joking relationship, but the joke is on us, as we believe there to at least have been something to it, 'all those years ago', and that adds to our nostalgic adoration for the time of imagined trysts, not unlike what we may do in our own personal lives with the old flames of loves gone by, or just as likely, the fantasies of those would-be loves that never quite occurred.

It would be treason to such a romance to attempt to deny that love

was never on either participant's mind. But the penalty for such treason is merely the sense amongst one's fellows that one is not laying the game correctly, or that one has taken Machiavelli, or Hitler for that matter, to heart. It is a different thing to cause umbrage to the state 'itself', however, especially if one's revolutionary talk becomes action. Even so, in general there is also no great penalty for disdain central authority in lands where there are relative 'free speech' clauses in constitutions, which is, ironically, very much unlike the ideas manifest in certain mechanical societies: "In days when Governmental authority was enforced by strong measures, there was a kindred danger in saying anything disrespectful of the political fetish. Nowadays, however, the worst punishment to be looked for by one who questions its omnipotence, is that he will be reviled as a reactionary..." [13]. This kind of critique which, under the guise of theory, masks an old style politics of both criticism and conservatism, also plays its part in the relativising of events that are experienced as wholly extramundane. Of course, such questioning whether authentic or no occurred so rarely, if at all, within small scale pre-agrarian societies, and occurred almost solely through the voice of religious revelation in agrarian ones, that such politics hardly played a role until the modern period in terms of its revolutionary character. Indeed, the structural shifts of immense evolutionary import that occurred in the distant past were accompanied by changes in the ideal realm after the fact of the changes in subsistence, technology, and material living arrangements. This is not necessarily the case as we move closer to our own time, where all of the relevant variables were taking shape and playing off and with one another simultaneously. To whitewash the extremities of either structural change or shifts primarily in the realm of ideas such as aesthetics, biology and history, is to willingly participate in not only the adumbration of such shifts, but, if they are judged to be evil, to abet the resistance that these evils have against their own empirical histories.

The most sure way to avoid these pitfalls is to allay the setting up of any genealogy of iconography in the first place. The use of power must be solely administered as tool against itself. Rather than the revivification rituals of certain kinds of historians, or the subjective anxieties of those who may become victims, just as they watch their peers already succumbing to the authority of the new evil, those who are chosen to lead both society at large and social organizations on a smaller scale, must exhibit the fragility of the social ideals of a reciprocity that always over-reaches itself: "...the advent of power, such as it is, presents itself to these societies as the very means for nullifying that power. The same operation that institutes the political sphere forbids it the exercise of its jurisdiction: it is in this manner that culture uses against power the very ruse of nature." [7]. This 'ruse' is hardly a natural one in the hands of humankind, but the metaphor is clear: the symbiosis to be observed in the powers of nature, not always red in tooth and claw but also not always as convivial as a live-action Jungle Book, disallows any species a monopoly of force or too high a density of itself anywhere in the world. The politics of focused power in societies that have broken free from reciprocity manifest their divisions in the new reality of the role of the leader. That is, for the first time, the leader can lead, the ruler can rule. This is the ruse of culture, as it were, over against the once nature of impossible long term or general superiority: "The chief crazy enough to dream not so much of the abuse of power he does not possess, as of the use of power, *the chief who tries to act like a chief*, is abandoned. Primitive society is the place where separate power is refused, because the society itself, and

not the chief, is the real source of power." (ibid:154). Insofar as we have lost or forgotten this fact - Marx and Engels attempted to relocate and resuscitate it, Durkheim to restore it through a kind of sociological séance - we are relegated to the adoration of the political magi. Insofar as we have constructed this fate for ourselves, and it has in no way been imposed on us by some external force magical, metaphysical, or even scientific or cosmic, brings us to the shame of having to admit that we have all committed crimes against our common humanity; we are none of us innocent in the face of Nuremberg and The Hague: "This worship of the legislature is, in one respect, indeed less excusable than the fetish-worship to which I have already compared it. The savage has the defence that his fetish is silent - does not confess its inability. Yet the civilized man persists in ascribing to this idol made with his own hands, powers which in one way or other it confesses it has not got." [13]. The most common manner in which such an *eclaircissement* is broached and yet even so remains mostly unacknowledged, is through the 'transference' of such absent powers to a realm that mimics the old realm of the other world, of the ideas and forms, or of the divine. The applied sciences of all stripes as well as those ideologues who mask their teachings under the guise of fashionable discourses may be most obvious agents in this new dynamic which is not so new: "Like their predecessors, the colonial officials, they have no compunction about letting power enforce their ideas. But unlike colonial officials they do not apply the power themselves; on the contrary, they emphasize rationality, objectivity and tolerance, which means that they are not only disrespectful, ignorant, and superficial but also quite dishonest." [9]. Through this, no doubt new truths are created, but the intent and the outcome of such 'truth' renders its humanity hollow. One may also question relevance along the lines of ethics, and not merely application. One may question the conscience of any politics that has only its self-interested vision of the world in mind, and theoretical literature from functionalism to feminism can be held under the same reflective lens to this regard.

The power of the new truths not only has an Orwellian timbre, but in their application, whether through the honest but brutal colonialist version, or the dishonestly indirect but just as cruel neo-colonialism within which we are now ensconced, we are able to observe there full-blooded fascism of intent. For these kinds of truth operate with the view of making the world true by their own means and to their own desires. The world as it is follows along, as it were, behind the truths of ideology and the pretense of an instrumental rationality. The 'truth which lies in power', as Hegel notoriously put it, is a cynical one: "These words, written in 1801, about [200] years ago, contain the clearest and most ruthless program of fascism that has ever been propounded by any political or philosophical writer." [6]. They not only have a Maoist tinge, their gun-barrel retains the authority of a superior manufacturer, and no mere political demi-urge. In this lies their real danger.

### Unsteady States

Even the most authoritarian regime, with a strong populist following, rallies of hundreds of thousands, and those out of the picture very much marginalized, cannot afford to rest as if it were only an object. Though it cannot object to its self on philosophical grounds or by an hermeneutics, it must remain unsatisfied. No stretch of its limits is ultimately enough, no 'horizon' the thin thread of human finitude written in the crimson blood of a setting sun. Hitler's State soon burnt itself out by reaching for the sun far too soon after its incarna-

tion. Its eagle flew on Icarus-wings of enormous proportions, but their wax had not hardened into the warrior's bronze, or, if it had, other states in the end exhibited an at first hidden iron will of resistance, and defeated the technologically superior, but numerically inferior, German forces. Therefore fascisms of all kinds must attain some form of alliance or network if they are going to survive over the longer term. This occurs both at the moist politically general level, such as global geo-politics, as well as between individual persons, especially in workplaces and perhaps even in households of more than a few members: "The widening of the political horizon to include more than a single community does not depend solely on the contingent existence of friendly groups living nearby: it refers to each group's pressing need to provide for its security by forming alliances." [7]. Originally, we imagine, such small scale groups of like social formations were not truly at each others' mercies, for no such organization could ever gain an ultimate upper hand on the other. It is a different situation, of course, when there are structurally unlike social organizations vying for resources or networks. There, the situation is one of desperation on the part of the smaller and more marginal groups, although elements such as mobility and attendant nomadic skills might turn the tables on a larger population group, such as was the case for millennia in Central Asia. With the pastoral and agrarian shifts in subsistence structure, warfare became just as convenient a means of societal security as did the formation of alliances beyond the level of kin-networked tribes and lineages, as one saw in East Africa for instance. Indeed, alliances for the purposes of making war rather than for intermarriage were in the ascendant: "...that is the perennial improvement in means of violence at the disposal of the mode of security. Improved means of surveillance and control of domestic populations and improved means of warfare have created wider scope for dictatorial regimes and arms races between different states." [4]. One of the major instigators for mass warfare was, with agrarian economies, the sudden surplus of males. Their services were not entirely required for the purposes of production, and hardly that for reproduction. They did serve a rather bestial role in the security of the group, not unlike the animals that humans had been observing for millions of years, such as are closest relatives in the larger primates, and other relatively 'social' creatures such as lions. This raw relationship has been muted today through technology and professional militaries, but the hypocrisy of engaging the still surplus men and women of the social margins in either an always potential or sometimes actual defence of a society that has already rejected them remains palpable and even shameful: "Practically, while the conflict between societies is actively going on, and fighting is regarded as the only manly occupation, the society is the quiescent army and the army the mobilized society: the part which does not take part in battle, composed of slaves, serfs, women, etc., constituting the commissariat" [13]. Within the recent metaphysics of godless finitude, rationalizations for this kind of social organization were at first hard to come by. One could no longer claim that it was the other world that engaged and exhorted this one to arms. In the old worlds of gods and gods on earth, no call to patriotism and loyalty, no anxiety regarding the possession of women as one's own unshared sexual object, was relevant, though both might have been given some nascent form in the subjective sphere. The edicts of the gods were to be feared given the worldview which had them lodging and consorting with human beings. Even so, tribal loyalties and extended kin networks doubtless also played a role, as the resonances from the metaphysics yet further receded from our own must have still

been at large somewhere in the back's of people's minds. Similarly in our own time, the idea that 'god must be on our side' is still used, though doubted unless or until the crisis reaches a head with most of the population somehow directly effected through loss of life or limb, or indirectly through the knowledge that someone related to oneself is in the midst of the bullets. Generally, however, a new rationalization was necessitated by the loss of the old world in political and economic terms. Religion sui generis does not have that kind of sway over any population today, not even those in the would-be theocracies where perhaps it could be argued that the transparency of its use as indeed a political rationalization is all the more self-evident. This crucial new life of the ideal realm's call to arms is systematically outlined in Hegelian thinking, suggests Cassirer: "It was, however, a new event in the history of political thought, an event pregnant with far-reaching and fearful consequences, when a system of *Ethics* and a philosophy of *Right* defended such a ruthless imperialistic nationalism, when Hegel declared the spirits of other nations to be 'absolutely without right' against the nation which, at a given historical moment, is to be regarded as the only 'agent of the world-spirit'." [6]. No doubt this imagined world historical destiny animated the Nazis dreams of world domination,. They were not only in the right, but the right was in them.

The icons adored within such a teleological worldview which at once can be harnessed to subjective purposes - the sense that one's fate and the fate of the world are merged is the product of any vision, the risk is always to those who not only did not share the vision as an experiential event but who cannot comprehend its subsequent interpretations; 'comprehension' of course can be here understood as a means to avoid stigmata - are aspects of the self aggrandized beyond rational limits. Yes, one can rationalize the messiah status of an individual human being, but this is generally only a mere convenience, the ethics of which, if they can be called such, are discussed as early as the Mosaic narrative where Moses at first refuses the assignation as leader. Once taking it up however - and Yahweh's wisdom is clear in this regard, because all leaders who *seek* power are not to be trusted with leadership of any kind - he not only proves himself worthy of the call, he disproves his own original understanding that others, including his brother, would have been better for the job. The Mosaic relationship with a taciturn and begrudging group of semi-nomadic herders and gatherers is hardly ideal, but it does set the course, literarily at least, for things to come. For better or worse, "Inevitably the established code of conduct in the dealings of Governments with citizens, must be allied to their code of conduct in their dealings with one another." [13]. Ironically, the growing power of the new pantheon of once tribal idols written into the more omnipresent language of the State, allows the latter to gain an equally new kind of subtlety regarding its relationship with the citizenry. For to be a citizen is at once to accept the rule of law, and the rule of law is an arm of central authority, empowered to act even to the point of physical violence and perhaps death to enforce its ideals of what can now constitute the 'good society'. Yet "...the strength of the state's new awareness that it could afford to relax its control... [suggests that] Today the state knows that it owes its executive power to religious tolerance and the civil right to freedom." [11]. Of course the state can also feel free to define and redefine these concepts and their agencies at will, which is certainly always the case with authoritarian regimes. This dynamic, writ small in the households with parents who also desire to exert control over children in a manner code-named 'strictness', is something that calls to mind at home and abroad a sense that diversity in

itself cannot be the path to either a true home or a true nation. It might be tolerated and disciplined alike, pending its unsuitability or its triviality, but it can never be rationalized in any ultimate sense: "What we call a nation is never a homogenous whole. It is a product of blood mixture, the most dangerous thing in the world. To speak with awe and reverence of such a hybrid would violate the first principles of a sound theory of human history,. Patriotism may be a virtue for democrats or demagogues, but it is no aristocratic virtue..." [6]. Here, Cassirer is of course rendering Gobineau's proto-Nazi racialist politics, which, in a clear romantic and oddly anthropological manner, sounds itself as the clearest device for the discipline of an unruly history. Akin to the child whose intents are never transparent and cannot be wholly rational, the diversity and mystery of history also requires the strictest discipline. If history is itself to be a discipline, the analyst must not respond to its recalcitrance with a mere talking cure. There is no time for the 'time-out' in historical time, or in the unkempt biography of un socialized youth. Yet this reactionary vision of order appears also in many unexpected places. Especially in the effort to cleanse our collective bad conscience of traumatic events like the second world war and its attendant horrors, the more recent the more suppressed, "...one single, 'truthful' interpretation of the war is proclaimed in academic or political discourse, though another sometimes remains in the hearts of the people. [For instance] As the Kurt Waldheim affair indicated, neither Austrian historiography nor the Austrian political Establishment are yet willing to admit Austria's special path to 'Auschwitz' [5]. As with high school history textbooks in many key nations, the facts of the cases at hand, but also out of hand in that they are not experientially recalled by the vast majority of any current population, and thus have an ironically free hand to dispense with memory and with history as their editors and educators see fit: "The enthusiasm with which the Nazis were welcomed in March 1938 and the active commitment to Nazism by large sections of both the Austrian ruling elite and the Austrian populace are obscured or ignored." (ibid). This enthusiasm, bordering on a religious fanaticism in both this example and others, represents not so much a liberation of ideas but a desire for order and for a future that can be predicted. Social order is never truly about the present. This is why in part it is always children who suffer them most under the sway of authoritarian regime either private or public. It is the future we are trying to guarantee by disciplining the present. The *Anschluss* was merely an example of a desired for disciplinary routine that could unite peoples in a future-looking history, as well as maintain a useable order emanating from a stormy and half-forgotten past. This desire is partly mythological, and stems from the metaphysics which separated this world and the other world in the light of the latter being ordered, as a cosmos, and the former disordered because both history, being a human contraction, was as finite as was human flesh mortal. The state gradually became defined as the ordering principle which was closest to divine ordination, to the principle of cosmic order. With this, its evils could then be seen as something as mortal and passing as its own existence. Gadamer himself declares that this is how many managed to muddle through their days under the Third Reich's suasion, by reminding themselves that 'this too shall pass': "The evil of the state, lodged as it is in the original sin of man, is deep and incurable; but it is only a relative evil. When it is compared with the highest, absolute, religious truth the state proves to be at a very low level; but it is still good in comparison to our common human standards which, without the state, would lead us to chaos." [6]. This comparison cuts both ways in that one can think of state-sponsored

human evil as an encapsulation of what is held within the character of humanity in any case, fallen or no, but as well one can justifiably critique the state against the higher goods of reason and faith which are also given to or evolved within the consciousness of humanity. There is, in other words, not only perspective here but also the implication of choice that is being made. The usual rationalization of the problem of theodicy involves just this caveat: it is not the failure of the divine that drives mortal being to uncoil upon itself as does the snake. The imperfect world is also a human judgement, after all. What is indeed imperfect about the world as it worlds is humanity itself. Nature and its hosts cannot be judged in this way, for they are not part of the moral sphere. Only we stand within such a divination and we must then explore it with our own peculiar augury, that which combines knowing and believing in the manner that Aquinas and others characterized the latent functions of living within an evolving state architecture, holy or not.

This sensibility comes, as Cassirer relates, from the influx of Greek ideas in the middle ages by way of the Islamic traditions, specifically Aristotle. Yet its germination was already available to the scholastics and their followers due to Plato's own inquiry, of which we have had occasion to mention above. That nature was a non-moral sphere was first argued at this point, not only by separating the human sphere from it in a rational manner, but also by denying that culture was in itself irrational, that mind was something that was beholden to creation that was cut from whole cloth: "This was the last and decisive step necessary leading to the development of Greek thought which had begun with the attempt to conquer nature and continued by asking for rational norms and standards of ethical life. It culminated in a new postulate of a rational theory of the state." [6]. The fragile quality of both the new theory and the actual social organization on the ground needs not be emphasized. Neither would be considered novel today, but we can only witness to the ever-changing and highly charged political landscapes of our own time and know that we have neither a rational state - it is rather, deeply rationalized and instrumental and not reflective and reasoned - nor do we possess an entirely reasonable argument for having this sort of political entity and no other. Mostly, as we have seen, it rests on specific cultural and ideological bigotries which we also, unfortunately, inherit from the Greeks and others of the classical period. We may now truly speak of our polis as all-embracing, but not equal in its embrace. The idea that we have the right to speak of this while at the same time deny its reality through our actions in the social world is astonishing to any reason born of theory alone. It may well be due to the disjunction between how power is wielded, the sense of its purpose, and the authority coveted by those who attempt to use it, between our organic solidarities and those mechanical: "If in societies with a State speech is powers' *right*, in societies without a State speech is power's *duty*." [7]. Having muted the responsible part of the voice of power, we are more willing to engage in the precipitous aspect wherein we feel we possess the power to speak, and thus should be able to do so without cost to ourselves or others. Or, if there is a cost, it is because the character of political power brooks no compassionate influence that tempers its usage. This is likely also why we can now speak of 'abusing' power', whereas in small scale culture any 'use' at all would be considered an abuse. At the same time, mere duty does not impel either compassion or responsibility, because its tendency is, repeated time after time, to become ritualistic. There is, in other words, no real *application* of power to social ills or needs, and thus the idea that power is in fact to be used is entirely alien to such an

organization. In a crisis, as we have seen, mechanical societies enjoin their solidarity through the shared system of values imbedded in the collective conscience and embodied in the temporary leader. For ourselves, the regular manufacture of mock crises, some of which grow into real ones, keeps power dancing on toes that care not where they step.

### Existentiality of Statehood

Is it entirely a delusion then, that politics in our own time is always two steps away from some form of fascism? Certainly the faith of civil religion is in place, ready to be activated. Certainly the business of political manipulation is learned by rote and by heart by those involved in the secular ministries. Certainly the masses desire to be led by someone they find exciting and even gripping. At the same time, we can take at least one step away from this gathering storm and momentarily question the character of the state's existing at all, given the historical circumstances of its massive failures to provide peace, as well as its smaller successes regarding quality of life issues in the general health and welfare of larger populations. It is not fair to simply state that when government acts, it acts both unreasonably and always plays the role of the meddling older sibling: "... the perturbing effects of that 'gross delusion', [ ] 'a belief in the sovereign power of political machinery' [ ] a delusion which is fostered by every new interference." [13], is both neither gross, in that it does not effect everyone *en masse* and equally - there are, in most states, conflicting political parties at the highest levels, as well as internal dissidence within the ruling castes and classes - nor is it a complete delusion, because within all of these alternative perspectives, there is a reality to be had. Piecing this reality together may be another matter, in the glare of media, fashion, ideology, and outright manipulation by those involved. Nevertheless, the idea that the State is either a myth or that it manufactures only myths is incorrect: "...we have to make our choice between an ethical and a mythical conception of the state. In the Legal State, the state of justice, there is no room left for the conceptions of mythology..." [6]. There is a reality of which the state is not only at its head but is also more or less, by its own design both manager and archetype. The dominance of this reality may be challenged by other competing entities, political and economic, such as transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations, and other voluntaristic groups including those quite marginal, such as 'militia' sub-cultures in the United States. Even so, any challenge that is issued in our own times to central authority must be accompanied by a clear alternative to the ruling relations. Mostly, parties internal to the state apparatus may replace each other, sometimes with the consent of the citizenry, and still, often without. The combination of both is also not unheard of, and it was Hitler himself to come to power through just such a shady series of events. The problem of focused power that can be wielded by those who are not directly responsible to the population at large is also not limited to the idea of dictatorial reign. Whatever its from, central authority implies that all else in the realm of politics is but a political hinterland, and this authority can survive even the threat of being understudied by other organizations attempting to gain access to centralized political resources. Authority in reality is obviously quite different from any rationalization of it: "...when it begins to be seen clearly that, in a popularly governed nation, the government is simply a committee of management; it will also be seen that this committee of management has no intrinsic authority..." [13]. We are more or less accepting of the notion that there is nothing that has any inherent authority over us. Norms,



laws, morals, folkways and mores are all acknowledged to be social constructions. Certainly the Durkheimian social has great suasion over all its relevant members, but there are many cultures and many ways of being human. Nothing, in other words, is 'sacred' but perhaps the sacred itself, and we remain unsure of what exactly such an idea is composed. Authority in modernity thus has a novel *de facto* character about it. This development aids the also recently understood conceptualization of human freedom or free will in that it liberates human consciousness from the hypostasized bonds of a society 'worshipping itself'. At the same time, however, we have given the State an air of the sacred which people ensconced within its elite hierarchies are often apt to take advantage of. We may no longer worship ourselves, but we are forced to adore the state in many ways, as we have seen. And unlike the great world religions, the art and music of world cultures, and yet also the solidarity of small scale societies marginal to the global development of a common sense of what humanity consists, the State, and especially specific incarnations of it that have deliberately tried to do this, has in fact not made us more than we were before; it has not made us better human beings. The leaders of state who claimed visionary goals for 'their people' "...were not equal to the real task of statecraft and political leadership; they missed the mark because they never succeeded in 'making the souls of the citizens better'. Not only individual man but also the state has to choose its demon. [ ] The desire to have 'more and more' is just as disastrous in the life of a state as in individual life." [6]. It does appear that in all cases where the leaders of this or that nation have desired to extend the material reach of their powers, they have done so at the expense of the spiritual depth of their charges. Whether through genocide, military actions, enforced poverty, abetting social class systems through the structures of formal education and many more agencies, modern states have utterly shirked their ethical responsibility to the human beings who happen to live within their contrived borders. The demons that have been chosen are negative, sirens and scions of a kind of *orexis*, or irrational and unethical desire. If individuals are to be able to choose their own demons within the architecture of modern society, it must mean more than picking one career of wage-slavery instead of another, paying one's taxes and voting, choosing amongst competing brands of commodities, and heeding the laws of the realm. But what exactly does 'choosing one's demon' mean to us today? Can it indeed have any relevant meaning, given the forces just described? Should in fact the state make such decision on our behalf, and if not, what range of demons are left unchosen? "It is one thing to secure to each man the unhindered power to pursue his own good; it is a widely different thing to pursue the good for him. To do the first efficiently, the State has merely to look on while its citizens act; to forbid unfairness; to adjudicate when called on; and to enforce restitution for injuries." [13]. Surely these sentiments are naive. They assume a citizenry of like-minded fellowship, first of all, where all are willing to play the game and take their chances with the knowledge that some of us will cheat. It assumes that those who cheat have the same resources and access to powers, litigious or legislative, monetary or physically violent, as do all others. It assumes that those who have been cheated will always recognize who and how they have been so. It assumes we are all after the same goals. The 'survival of the fittest' is here overdrawn its blank check, it has overbalanced upon itself, and the state apparatus is corroded from within by those who in reality have more of the same thing that most people might well desire.

More importantly, such casual ideas assume that there are no other alternatives in the minds of persons subject to the machinations of state and economy, society and business, and that such people, even if they did exist, would never act on these novel suppositions. No doubt, there are comparatively few of these people, but all governments continue to wager heavily on the inertia of a conformity that they can truly enforce only before the fact, as it were. That is, conformity is always and already a potential mirage, a fragile house of cards where the aces are held up by a supporting cast of lesser ranks. That such an edifice has the appearance of something monolithic is remarkable, but there are generally formulas that exist that can be applied anywhere, on both sides of the issue: "People who conform, who feel generally at one with the given environment and its relations of domination, always adapt themselves much more easily in new countries. Here a nationalist, there a nationalist. Whoever as a matter of principle is never unrefractedly at one with the given conditions, whoever is not predisposed to play along, also remains oppositional in the new country." [1]. Ironically, but perhaps fittingly, the 'authoritarian version' of the state - and indeed, the sense that there are but guises of authoritarianism rather than guises of states is the more likely understanding of political reality - seeks more than anything else to reduplicate not only itself but the long-lost solidarity of mechanical societies. To be a citizen is to be the same thing in the eyes of the State. And in those eyes, like those of the previous godhead, all are seen as equals. To defy such an edict is to relinquish citizenship, with all its security and sentiment, with all its pretense at solidarity and community, and with all the loyalty due to oneself that an individual can command of his or her country. If the state demands that we 'look not for what our country can do for us', this cynical rhetoric blinds us to the fact that what each country asks us to do for itself means the ultimate sacrifice of one's individual 'demon'. Patriotism, although it is at one level merely loyalty made into the claptrap of nationalist propaganda, is also at another level the key to life within the dominant political landscape of our times. We must adhere to what the State demands, even though there may be some small interstices in its framework where an individual can escape for a time and be by oneself. Even so, an injury, physical or mental, must be treated. An unemployed person must find work, and a child must be educated. If we share, at a great distance, the desire for a solidarity and community that linked our ancient ancestors, we also are fated to share their plight that authentic individuality must at length escape us as well: "In the end, what the songs of the Guayaki Indians bring back to us is that it is impossible to win on all fronts, that we cannot but respect the rules of the game, and that the fascination of non-participation entices one to a great illusion." [7].

In spite of this tension, our sociality, our very humanity, commits us to not merely playing the game and thus of course being played by it, but as well understanding it as a game created by and for ourselves. It not only represents our humanity, it encapsulates it. It also essentializes it, perhaps in a too reificatory manner, but it nonetheless is more than a symbol for who we consider ourselves to be: "The state originates in the social instinct of man. It is this instinct that first leads to family-life and from there, in a continuous development, to all the other and higher forms of commonwealth. It is, therefore, neither necessary nor possible to connect the origin of the state with any supernatural event." [6]. Whether we look to Aquinas or Engels, utterly different in their metaphysics, there is the sense that the frameworks of human community are not based on anything but themselves. Therefore we must take full responsibility

for their failures, whether in the home or in the nation, whether as specific face to face relations with other individuals, or on the global scale amongst competing states. What these metaphysics are implying is that there is an ethical onus that we must honor, that we live in the time of humanity and its communities and absences thereof, and that we also live with a conception of time 'itself' that is also a human invention: "They understand the term 'origin' in a logical sense not in a chronological sense. What they are seeking for is not the beginning, but the 'principle' of the state..." [6]. If this principle be unity, be at first the mimicry of the 'One' which dwells in the realm of forms, indeed of the principles 'themselves', then we do have our connection between the solidarities of human chronology. As Clastres suggests, the difference lies in their valuation of this idea of unity. Small scale societies say that it is evil, and larger scale ones good. This makes sense insofar as the larger the scale, the more likely division is to develop. The larger scale cultures need to believe in the goodness of the One because through it they can remain together. Since small scale cultures already are unified in their rejection that there needs to be a representation of the collective conscience in a person or a position, they associate this oneness with a negative force, a force which would impel dissolution of the solidarity they already have *and can maintain* without symbolic reference precisely due to its small scale: "...prophetism is the heroic attempt of a primitive society to put an end to unhappiness by means of a radical refusal of the One, as the universal essence of the State." [7]. Given that such discomfort must only be sensed - and one wonders in what experience could the members of a mechanical solidarity have sensed it at all, in a word, where does the sense of symbolic oneness come from given their social conditions? - because if it was actually realized it would be too late, the idea that any symbolic representation of unity could thence become more than symbolic, could in fact wield the power of the group by itself and for itself, is highly prescient. We might well imagine that it was through warfare and other conflicts with other groups, and even perhaps the factionalism of certain kin relations within small groups, that gave our apolitical ancestors the clue they needed to avoid following through on these 'opportunities'. The victory over the next village may have given the glimpse of political power, in the concentration of the two into the one. The polygyny of certain family groups may have exhibited a kind of superior oneness to contemporary observers. However this may be, it is startling that the scale of society 'itself' demands that such glimmers of accumulated resources and power be enacted on a wider and more realistic scale, that they no longer remain in the fantasies of those who flirt, but never seriously enter into a courtship, let alone a marriage, with them: "Be it or not that Man is shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, it is unquestionably true that Government is begotten of aggression and by aggression. In small undeveloped societies where for ages complete peace has continued, there exists nothing like what we call Government: no coercive agency, but mere honorary leadership, if any headship at all." [13]. *The reality of unity in mechanical solidarity can afford to deny any symbolic form thereof. The reality of division in organic solidarity cannot afford to let go any symbolic unity it may construct therein.* This is the kerygmatic quality of the theme we are receiving from an evolutionary or a non-evolutionary analysis alike. If this be the case, one must either decide to let go of essential individuality as an existential affair of the heart, as it were, as a self-concern which tends towards both vanity and compassion, or to strike out literally on one's own, become the unity oneself and thus also participate fully in both the ultimate vanity - that the single

human being is in fact all that is necessary for the essence of oneness to take hold 0- and concerned being - in that it is due to one's ethics that all our part of oneself and that oneself is part of all others that generates the higher and essential unity.

### Conclusion

Either way, one must shed one's actual and symbolic bigotries, and in the end, this is not truly possible, given that the ideas themselves from which unity are derived, the very observations of power at work and at rest, must come from specific cultures and specific histories that we call our own. We do not know any other histories that may have been, the 'universality' of the human condition is but a moot point, though a convenient starting point for both an ethics of humanity but also for yet more bigotry: "We shall go no further than to reject what ethnocentrists take for granted: that the bounds of power are set by coercion, beyond which and short of which no power would exist. In fact, power exists [ ] totally separate from violence and apart from any hierarchy." [7]. The great myth of power's power, as it were, comes from the bias that empowers us to see it only in the coercive form that is dominant today. Its very dominance may be ascribed to our willingness to let it symbolic dominate us in the manner we have grown accustomed to since birth. Because its reach is as striking as its ability to disregard other symbolic systems which once claimed to have a coerciveness of their own, it appears that it is not merely a question of one system of signs supplanting another, taking from it the power that already was extant rather than transforming the character of power itself. But this is indeed an appearance, and the root condition for its ability to maintain and reproduce itself over the modern period is likely the existence not so much of the immediately and irredeemably fascist architecture of the modern nation state as its rational-legal character, its emplacement in a sphere of *amorality*: "...the modern state erodes traditional moral concepts. [ ] The will of the state rewrites moral rules. The Holocaust shows that no moral rule is sacrosanct. Even the most traditional moral canon falls before the presence of unlimited Power." [12]. And it is hardly the weight of tradition alone that adjudicates whether this or that moral system is worthy of our notice, let alone our obedience or adoration. In fact, the powers of other realms which are inherently non-moral have carried moralities along with them as either handy rationalizations - The Nazis invented a new morality for their deeds, just as did the ancient Hebrews for their mythological triumphs; in other words, it is not morality per se that guides the world of action as recorded by history - or as the dross of other more structural items that were borrowed or absorbed in the confluences of culture history. Those who run the state apparatus transmit their already moral will into the juggernaut that will vanquish all other morals. It is our contemporary lot to either suffer or gain from the state's ability to 'rewrite moral rules', to image the other in its own image, but in previous ages there were other institutions that did so with equal aplomb. So there is nothing to be gained by pining for traditions which themselves had all of the organic forces focused within them and could act with the same fascist impunity against competing or conflicting moral systems. What we must take away from such a plaintiff is no nostalgia, but a renewed vigilance that it is also our contemporary lot to be, not guardians of morality at all costs, but adjudicators of morality; to be those who also value and revalue systems of values, and not let the state, or any other single organization of power, do for us this essential task.

## Notes

- I. The individual plays a strong and semi-voluntaristic role in the apparent omnipotence and omniscience of governmental authority, certainly when the regime is transparently authoritarian, but no doubt all the more so when it is not, given that no ruling body can be all places at all times. Gadamer speaks of this during the Nazi period: "What a tragedy it is that we have these demagogues and their unscrupulous band of followers governing us! And there was the Gestapo, whose omniscience we probably overestimated. That I admit. We all had a part in spreading the terror by overestimating the knowledge the Gestapo had. We believed they knew everything." [10].
- II. Speaking of a number of conservative historians in the former West Germany, Bosworth relates how the claims of Habermas against this group publicized the problem of 'relative revisionism' of the recent past: "The purpose of their pact was exhibited both in new museums of Bonn and West Berlin and in a number of recent books and articles. What was planned was a re-minted German nationalism, which would explain Nazism away and re-connect present-day Germany with a glorious past. As part of that process, both Nazism and the Holocaust were to be relativised." [5]. Hitler's ultimately reckless military adventures against the East were to be seen as justified given Stalin's more 'original' purges and atrocities and the danger of a rampant and suffocating Stalinism in Europe.
- III. These more recent and completely political fetishes of course come in many forms; some which Spencer and others would not necessarily have foreseen, just as Marx may have not had in mind the advent of modern advertising in the mid-1920s at the precise moment that over-production was attained. The ideal realm too has its over-productions, where real drama is turned to unreal or surreal melodrama. Cole reminds us that the theologian Neusner suggested that the Holocaust became mythic somewhere around the 1967 war and it was in the USA where this first occurred: "His argument is that in 1967 American Jews took hold of the Holocaust in direct response to the geo-political situation in Israel, and created 'the American Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption. This - Neusner suggests - involved 'the transformation of the mass murder of European Jews into an even of mythic and world destroying proportions'." [8].
- IV. The individual is subsumed in both forms. In the first, as a real likeness of his actual neighbor, as one who is very much what the other is, as members of the same clan or totem, for instance, or kinship group or village. In the second, unlike persons must conform to the laws of citizenship and can only derive an identity within the framework of the state: "This way of thinking is not opposed to Marxism; it is different, however, in that it gives the state the preponderant and definite place that Hegel gave it. man as defined by the Hegelian idea is not an individual, but the state. The individual has died in it, has been absorbed into the higher reality and into the service of the state; in a wider sense, the 'statesman' is the sea into which flows the rivers of history. Insofar as he participates in the state, man leaves both animality and individuality behind him: He is no longer separate from universal reality." [3]. It is this cosmic ordering of human relations which is the ultimate symbol of unity, and the ultimate value, good or evil, to which humanity either aspires or desires to avoid.
- V. Even in our most primordial imaginations, otherness was something to be extinguished and avoided: "Archaic societies, societies of the mark, are societies without a State, *societies against the State*. the mark on the body, on all bodies alike, declares: *You will not have the desire for power; you will not have the desire for submission*. And that non-separate law can only have for its inscription a space that is not separate: that space is the body itself." [7].

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