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Mass Dictatorship and the 'Modernist State'

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Dictatorship and totalitarianism

To begin to write about mass dictatorship in relation to modernity is to walk into a minefield of the sort of definitional and methodological problems encountered in all comparative history. Every dictatorship is both unique and part of a more general pattern, and finding the appropriate grouping of similar regimes to compare meaningfully and the appropriate conceptual framework within which to carry out the study is deeply problematic. Once 'modernity', one of the most multifaceted and contested concepts in the human sciences, is thrown into the pot, the task of writing something coherent and significant is multiplied even in a purely Western context, where an enormous literature already exists on dictatorial regimes in Europe and Latin America. For European human scientists the task of analysis and generalisation is compounded further once the remit is enlarged further to include the plethora of non-European, especially Asian, dictatorships of modern times, all of which arose in quite distinct cultural, political, and cosmological traditions, and all of which respond to the impact of specific conjunctures or episodes of modernisation and Westernisation[1] in a unique way.[2]

There is, of course, a perennial tension in the human sciences between the 'idiographic' concern with uniqueness and 'nomothetic' concerns with general patterns. However, in this instance the tension is especially pronounced – and intensified rather than relieved by a deep-seated post-modern suspicion of 'big pictures' which set out to offer panoramas of the patterns observable in vast geographical or temporal areas of reality at the expense of contaminating the analysis with the virus of a 'metanarrative'. Against this background I propose to do no

M. Kim et al., *Mass Dictatorship and Modernity*

more in this introductory chapter than offer a brief clarification of the key concepts involved in this area, followed by a theory of the relationship between modernity and one particular type of mass dictatorship. These are certainly not to be taken as definitive pronouncements. They are presented in the hope that they will be found of some practical value to specialists working on specific dictatorships or their comparison. The methodological premise for carrying out this exercise is to be found in Max Weber's theory of the ideal type which circumvents the trap of essentialising concepts by stressing not only the constructed nature of all generic concepts but also their purely heuristic value. Likewise, the metanarrative offered here to underpin my account of modernity and reactions to it is immunised against the objectives which postmodernists make to any sort of *grand récit*, because it is a 'reflexive metanarrative': it is presented, not as *the* story, but simply as *a* story of modernisation's relationship to mass dictatorship; an exploratory device, not a revealed truth.

On this methodological premise what is constructed here is an ideal-typical distinction between two types of mass dictatorship, the totalitarian and the authoritarian, each of which has a distinctive relationship to modernity. To clarify the nature of this task it may be useful to dwell on an unresolved ambiguity in the conceptualisation of totalitarianism that lies at the heart of Friedrich and Brzezinski's (henceforth F&B's) seminal text *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1965) but which has attracted too little academic attention to date. The analysis they offer is famous for the 'six point' checklist of defining traits, which is generally summarised in such a way that the emphasis is on the imposed monopoly of coercive power and enforced destruction of individual freedoms. Totalitarianism thus becomes equated with the *repression* of pluralism, individualism, and freedom of speech and the imposition of a uniform world view. One text written for high school students summarises the hallmarks of totalitarianism according to F&B as (1) an official ideology to which general adherence was demanded, the ideology intended to achieve a 'perfect final stage of mankind'; (2) a single mass party, hierarchically organised, closely interwoven with the state bureaucracy and typically led by one man; (3) monopolistic control of the armed forces; (4) a similar monopoly of the means of effective mass communication; (5) a system of terroristic police control; and (6) central control and direction of the entire economy.[3]

The implication is that totalitarianism is to be conceived as an essentially repressive, reactionary, liberticide form of politics, a modern form

of despotism. However, F&B's original text shows how misleading it would be to equate 'demanded' and 'intended' simply with the pathological ethos produced by the blend of coercion with state propaganda dramatised in George Orwell's *1984* (1949) and explored with such sustained intellectual passion by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). Important nuances have become lost in the compression of their original argument. Point (1) above, concerning an 'official ideology', is a summary of a more nuanced statement by F&B that characterises it as 'elaborate' and 'focused and projected towards a perfect final state of mankind' and as containing 'a chiliastic claim, based on the radical rejection of the existing society with conquest of the world for a new one'.

But this original passage *itself* is a summary of a more discursive account of the totalitarian project offered in another passage in the book, one that highlights the regime's bid to create a 'new man' and utterly rejects any temptation to reduce the motivation behind totalitarianism to nihilism or the unbridled lust for personal power of a corrupt elite or megalomaniacal leader. Instead, genuinely totalitarian ideologies contain 'strongly Utopian elements' or 'some kind of notion of a paradise on earth'. This gives them 'a pseudo-religious quality', eliciting in 'their less critical followers a depth of conviction and a fervour of devotion found only among persons inspired by a transcendent faith', to a point where they act as what Marx described as 'the opium of the people'. In an important excursus F&B also insist that democratic political programmes are the descendants of what they call 'totalitarian movements', which corrupt and pervert the ethos of pluralistic politics into the ideological rationale for autocracy.[4] F&B thus recognise that a totalitarian state seeks the monopoly of all aspects of power over society for a 'higher' purpose, even if somehow it is the freedom-crushing side effect of this ideologically motivated drive in the practice of regimes that has so radically shaped the way their account of totalitarianism has survived in the collective imagination of political scientists and their students till this day.

Thirty-five years later another seminal definition of totalitarianism was offered that considerably refined F&B's conceptualisation of its utopian, 'religious' thrust towards a new order and a new man. Appropriately enough, Emilio Gentile's article 'The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism', a chapter from the Italian book that has been published in English translation as *Religion as Politics*,[5] appeared in the very first issue of the journal *Totalitarian*

Movements and Political Religions. In it Gentile offered the following discursive definition:

> The term 'totalitarianism' can be taken as meaning: an *experiment in political domination* undertaken by a *revolutionary movement*, with an *integralist conception* of politics, that aspires toward a *monopoly of power* and that, after having secured power, whether by legal or illegal means, destroys or transforms the previous regime and constructs a new state based on a *single-party regime*, with the chief objective of *conquering society*. That is, it seeks the subordination, integration and homogenisation of the governed on the basis of the *integral politicisation of existence*, whether collective or individual, interpreted according to the categories, the myths and the values of a *palingenetic ideology*, institutionalised in the form of a *political religion*, that aims to shape the individual and the masses through an *anthropological revolution* in order to regenerate the human being and create the *new man*, who is dedicated in body and soul to the realisation of the revolutionary and imperialistic policies of the totalitarian party. The ultimate goal is to create a *new civilisation* along ultra-nationalist lines.[6]

From such approaches totalitarianism emerges not as a system of total state control but as a project for the total transformation of society and of human nature itself.[7]

The totalitarian mass dictatorship

Taking as our starting point the emphasis on the utopian movement driving totalitarianism implicit in F&B and fully elaborated by Emilio Gentile, we can postulate the existence of a category of political regime we propose to call the '*totalitarian mass dictatorship*'. Its definitional property is that it makes a sustained effort in various spheres of state intervention – political, economic, social, and cultural – to exercise power as far as possible through the masses in order to bring about their eventual emancipation from the old order and integration within an eventually sustainable new order, one which sets out to eradicate the alleged anarchy, decadence, and corruption generated over the now superseded phase of history embodied in the status quo. This means that any coercion, propaganda, social engineering, terror, or persecution to which the population is subjected by the new autocracy is regarded as necessary to complete the transition to the new stage of civilisation

and that the victims are regarded as collateral damage in the struggle for a better world.

Under totalitarianism, the dominant elements within the ruling elite – rather than be motivated by megalomania, self-interest, or sadism – set out to conquer society and gain extensive power over the behaviour and thinking of the masses not as an end in itself but as an integral part of a wholesale experiment in social engineering made possible by the unprecedented power of the modern state. Its most fanatical members at all levels of authority see themselves constituting the nucleus or vanguard of a totalising populist movement and the executive of a total social transformation that will eventually mass-produce a new type of human being integrated within a new community. In his chapter 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', Lim also stresses the centrality of this 'anthropological revolution' to totalitarianism:

> It is not a coincidence that both Italian Fascism and Stalinism very loudly proclaimed their intention to create the 'new man', 'homo fascistus' and 'homo sovieticus' respectively, through an anthropological revolution. Neither of these regimes reached perfection, but both had been driven by an unstinting effort to perform that revolution.[8]

In the visionary and delusory scheme of historical development postulated by the ideologues of totalitarianism, the process they have launched will be finally complete when the basis of the regime is genuine populist consensus for its values, goals, and policies, allowing it to work with a minimum of state coercion and terror. In preparation for this stage the new generation reared by the regime (the youth) and the most fanatical of the pre-revolutionary generations will willingly 'work towards'[9] the leadership, whose charisma and spontaneous popularity stem from the fact that it (or at least its dominant personality) embodies a palingenetic myth of the ideal society now enjoying deep-seated cultural hegemony. According to the idealistic futural scheme of totalitarian ideologues, if their project were ever realised, the coercive regime and terror state it can sometimes give rise to in the process of socially engineering the new world will eventually wither away, though not the need for a strong state to govern society. The result in the totalitarian *imaginaire* would be a dictatorship of the masses, for the masses, and by the masses.

Four highly diverse experiments in establishing regimes that broadly correspond to this definition of the 'totalitarian mass dictatorship' were

undertaken in certain phases of their development by Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Bolshevik Russia, and Communist China. It is important to recognise that in each case the totalitarian regime was able to take power and make a sustained attempt to realise its vision of total societal transformation, at least in part, only because, in a highly unusual conjuncture of social breakdown with wide-spread messianic hopes, a populist momentum for revolutionary change – 'palingenetic community' – spontaneously arose from below, which made an important segment of the 'masses' (proletarian and bourgeois) malleable by the dictatorship from above.[10] Moreover, assessments of totalitarian mass dictatorship's importance as a historical phenomenon should not lose sight of the scores of secular totalitarian *movements* of the extreme right and left that arose in the twentieth century in various parts of the Europeanised world, movements that would have attempted to establish a totalitarian mass dictatorship had they been able to gain state power and retain it long enough to undertake society's total regeneration. Their presence within liberal democracies had a major impact on the history of inter-war Europe and continues to compromise the ethos of liberal democracy today, even if they have largely lost their potential to destabilise parliamentary politics.

The three-point syndrome that characterises a totalitarian mass dictatorship can be summarised thus:

i) It strives to realise an ideologically elaborated (palingenetic) project of creating a new type of society and a new type of 'man' through an all-pervasive politico-cultural and anthropological revolution.
ii) It deploys coercion and social control – and in extreme cases terror and mass persecution – not as ends in themselves but to reinforce the drive towards maximising the cultural hegemony of the new order through mass mobilisation and consensual participation in the new society it forms. This may involve removing from society (through incarceration, exile, or liquidation) those perceived as active enemies of the new order or as passive obstacles to its realisation.
iii) The mass single party, mass youth and leisure organisations, the displays of spectacular politics, the propaganda, and political religion which characterise the regime are intended by the new ruling elite not to delude or brainwash the masses but to legitimate and sacralise the new society and thus contribute to engineering a new mentality, a vast community of human beings of the new age inspired by the same faith.

The authoritarian mass dictatorship

As characterised above, totalitarian mass dictatorship is to be distinguished from the *authoritarian mass dictatorship* exemplified by most military and some personal dictatorships (regimes of military or colonial occupation by definition lack a 'mass' populist dimension). In such regimes power is exercised *over* the masses, with no serious intention to inaugurate a new era or socially engineer a new man. However, rather than exercise power in a nakedly despotic way, most modern authoritarian regimes go to considerable lengths to legitimise themselves by staging public displays of popular support and collective enthusiasm for the regime or its leader. Some may even hold plebiscites, create an artificial leader cult from above, or emulate the external trappings of fascism or Bolshevism. This they do by deliberately creating a facade of dynamism, youth, and radicalism, cynically adopting the language of revolutionary myth, forming youth movements, organising a nationwide single party with mass membership, and staging elaborate displays of political religion and charismatic politics but with no genuine palingenetic purpose. In short, authoritarian mass dictatorships tend to emulate totalitarian ones to establish their legitimacy in the eyes of the 'people', but they are essentially coercive and reactionary.

In such regimes the monopolistic control of the armed forces, effective mass communication, and the economy, as well as the police control of society, whether terroristic or not, referred to in F&B's six-point model, is exercised for fundamentally reactionary, antirevolutionary ends. The utopian promises of a better future serve only as the pretext for social control and the rationalisation of mass regimentation. The main purpose of exercising power, beyond satisfying the self-indulgence of corrupt or megalomaniacal individuals, is the eradication of social instability, anarchy, pluralism, and potential opposition from sectors of civil society, whether the extreme left or extreme right, and the safeguarding of the power and privilege enjoyed by traditional power elites under the protection of the autocratic state. As a result, the authoritarian mass dictatorship, especially if it resorts to terror against those deemed in the civilian population to be state enemies, corresponds much closer than the totalitarian one, as we have described it, to the Orwellian dystopia. In such a regime politics has become perverted into a sinister stage set, where politics has become a charade devoid of idealism, goals, or substance and the state in practice orchestrates untold physical and

psychological suffering to the point where it assumes the macabre ritualistic dimension portrayed in Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*.

Whereas a central drive of the totalitarian mass dictatorship is to achieve cultural hegemony for its project of retooling society, any semblance of it observable in authoritarian mass dictatorship reveals itself on closer examination to be predicated on enforced consensus – what Gramsci called 'dominion'. Its leader cult is a sham. Its ritualised displays of popular enthusiasm for the regime are feigned, expressing not mass mobilisation and spontaneous fanaticism but mass disempowerment, subjugation, and fear; lip service without devotion, collaboration without conviction. The displays of political religion staged by such an authoritarian dictatorship approximate much closer than under a genuinely *totalitarian* state to the 'aestheticisation of politics' described by Walter Benjamin; namely, as a technique of mass depoliticisation and brainwashing. In the twentieth century Latin America was particularly fecund in producing such regimes, Pinochet's Chile and Argentina's military junta being outstanding examples, while Ceauşescu's Romania and Saddam Hussein's Iraq provide further case studies in the genus. Such regimes suggest that the Weberian triad of tradition, legal rational, and charismatic politics needs to be supplemented by a fourth category in the modern age: 'autocratic politics'. By this I mean the exercise of power by a regime which is sanctioned, not by tradition, by legal rationality, or by *genuine* charismatic authority, but through the imposition, rationalised or thinly camouflaged by cynical propaganda, of a modern despotism through a propaganda machine underpinned by the constant threat that violence will be employed against personal or collective targets to crush dissent.

It should be noted that this ideal-typical distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism is implicit in much writing on modern dictatorships, not just in English (e.g., in the work of Juan Linz),[11] but in other languages.[12] It should also be clear that it is a distinction that has important implications for the 'mass support' which plays such an important role in Jie-Hyun Lim's analysis of 'mass dictatorship'.[13] The authoritarian mass dictatorship seeks to manufacture genuine or simulated mass consensus to fulfil the *reactionary* goal of neutralising the anarchic, subversive, decadent energies potential of the 'masses' and enlisting the support of the productive forces of the state. In this way they attempt to integrate them into a regulated society without disrupting traditional hierarchies of power, often using spectacular displays of political religion so as to demobilise the masses while providing the illusion of their empowerment. Walter Benjamin's theory of the 'aestheticisation

of politics' fully applies to *authoritarian* mass dictatorships. The aim of consensus manufacture and the regimentation of the masses under a totalitarian regime is different. It serves to turn them into a mass of individuals either proactively enthusiastic or sufficiently passive and pliable to be integrated into a *new order*, a new community in which traditional elites and social hierarchies are overthrown. The aim is to turn the 'masses' not just into an agency of support and legitimacy needed by a ruling elite within an 'mass authoritarian dictatorship' but into the collective historical subject of a *charismatic* process of communal self-transformation and renewal which will continue beyond the death of the present leadership.

Having hopefully imposed an ideal typical dichotomy of concepts on the chaos of the term 'mass dictatorship',[14] we now attempt to put some order in the second nebulous term which is the subject of this chapter: modernity. To do this means starting not with modernity but with a related and no less contested term: 'modernism'. Furthermore, to understand modern dictatorships we need to travel back into the mists of time when human beings first started imposing elaborate collective meanings, familiar to us as 'culture', on the alien world in which they found themselves.

A primordialist concept of modernism

In *Modernism and Fascism* (2007),[15] part 1, or half the book, is devoted to building up step by step a new model of the relationship between modernity and modernism. One important inference to be drawn from the six chapters in which the argument gradually unfolds is that the more devastating modernity's impact on a traditional society, the more powerful the countervailing reaction precipitated in those whose social and ontological security has been threatened. This is so because the forces unleashed by the various destabilising forces compounded within modernisation – such as atomisation, secularisation, materialism, individualism, rationalisation, disenchantment, and the disembedding of time and space – have the aggregate effect of eroding or in some cases destroying the subjective sense of rootedness, home, and belonging that is a premise of all viable human existence. It is in this sense that the cultural historian Fredric Jameson writes of modernity as a 'catastrophe' that 'dashes traditional structures and lifeways to pieces, sweeps away the sacred, undermines immemorial habits and inherited languages, and leaves the world as a set of raw materials to be reconstructed rationally'.[16]

The influential social anthropologist of an earlier generation, Peter Berger, refers to what Jameson calls the 'lifeway' as the *nomos*, the sphere of ritually underpinned suprapersonal meaning and values that constitute the *sacred canopy* of a given society held aloft by the elaborate myths and rituals that formed the basis of existence in pre-modern societies, whether minute tribes or entire civilisations. This, Berger argues, is not merely some colourful backcloth for the material process of daily life but a primordial, vital human necessity to counteract the instinctual fear of personal extinction without some form of suprapersonal purpose or transcendence. It is a fear stemming from the human reflexivity that makes our species uniquely aware of what philosophers call euphemistically our finitude: our mortality.[17] Seen from this standpoint, the ultimate purpose of all human cultural production is to create or maintain an essentially fictional sphere of communal custom- and ritual-based suprapersonal meaning to prevent the descent into a bottomless dread of the existential void at the core of each individualised being, of the nothingness in which the fragile bubble of each life floats till it pops.[18] From this ruthlessly disenchanted perspective, then, culture reveals itself to be an elaborate trompe l'oeil, an integral component of the socially constructed stage set on which the drama of all life is lived out at both the macro and micro levels of social being.

The social function of the sacred canopy of a totalising *nomos* is thus to act communally as what Berger calls society's 'shield against terror', as a refuge from the horror of anomie. The stronger their culture, the less vulnerable human beings are collectively, since their existence is lived out within what Friedrich Nietzsche called 'a fixed horizon framed by myth', which endows existence with a 'higher', suprapersonal meaning. But once the sacred canopy protecting them from the prospect of personal annihilation begins to be slowly degraded, or is even ripped to shreds by a flood of 'culture-cidal' forces, ancient culture-healing and society-renewing reflexes are automatically set in motion that work to put in place an effective communal *nomos*, thus repairing the canopy of transcendent meaning or, in extreme cases, erecting an entirely new one.

It follows from this analysis that, despite Jameson's reference to the devastation of the old *nomos* leading to the *rational* reconstruction of a new one, every act of replacing the lost world of transcendence involves intensive – though in the modern age frequently subliminal or highly *rationalised* – mythopoeic activity, especially of the regenerative, redemptive, palingenetic variety. One well-documented example of how this largely subliminal human reflex to mend the sacred canopy operated in

pre-modern societies is the 'revitalisation movement'. When a community entered a collective crisis in which traditional beliefs, ceremonies, and rites of passage[19] failed to guarantee cultural cohesion and a fixed metaphysical horizon, the conditions were created for the emergence of a minority 'breakaway' movement, whose members might eventually provide the nucleus of a new community and a new social order. Following the triadic stages of the rite of passage, the initiate moves from a 'stable' initial situation through a *liminal* phase of *predictable* transition and disaggregation to reach a new stable life phase which brings closure to the process of change.

In the case of a revitalisation movement, however, society enters an open-ended *liminoid* situation whose resolution demands a groundbreaking, pathfinding, culture-generating initiative to lead at least a segment of the original community into a newly constituted, newly *invented* society founded on a new *nomos*.[20] The history of millenarianism in the Christianised world is teeming with examples of this generic phenomenon, and doubtless studies of Asian societies by cultural anthropologists reveal an identical pattern even if the cosmological assumptions are radically different. From a rigorously secular anthropological perspective, the genesis not just of Christianity but of Judaism, Islam, and all religions, great and small, along with the civilisations founded on them, can be traced back to processes of cultural revitalisation born of material economic, ecological, social, military, or political crisis, decay, or breakdown that threatened a society's existence as a homogeneous community.[21] Just as stars in a galaxy are constantly forming and dying, so the history of humanity is one of cultures constantly coming into being, changing, and perishing in one form to mutate, whether slowly or dramatically, into another in an eternal process of birth and decay.

The revitalisation movement enabled a traditional society that entered a profound crisis, instead of being destroyed or absorbed by a more powerful one, to be reconstituted through internal regenerative mechanisms. If the instinctive self-healing mechanisms worked, a segment of humanity emerged once more with an intact shield against anomie provided by a significantly modified world view, a new *nomos*. Indeed, without infinitely repeated episodes of social palingenesis, human societies and cultures would have been condemned either to total extinction or to total stasis. One recurrent hallmark of successful processes of social rebirth has been the emergence of a *propheta*, a figure credited with the supernatural powers of an inspired 'charismatic' leader, who enables his or her followers to complete the transition to a new

order and put a final end to the decline. To do this has meant presiding over a phase of 'mazeway resynthesis' – in other words, the elaboration of a totalising world view and ritual forged from both traditional and newly improvised, 'invented', elements capable of supplying the new *nomos* of the embryonic community. The intense process of syncretism and hybridisation this involves is known to anthropologists as 'ludic recombination'.[22]

Modernism and Fascism argues that the atomisation and secularisation of society fostered by Western modernisation progressively destroyed the foundations of traditional feudal, absolutist, theocratic, and eventually even Enlightenment-based society. As a result, 'high' modernity was, by the second half of the twentieth century, bringing about in the European heartland an unprecedented state of *permanent* liminoidality, which was experienced by those with a strong psychological need for closure, order, and metaphysical certainty – predominantly the intelligentsia and artistic avant-garde – as sustained anomie, as permanent transition, as decadence. The instinctive, primordial human urge to reconstitute the disappearing nomic world and find a new sense of belonging and transcendental purpose could not aggregate itself into a collective movement of rebirth throughout any one society, let alone in an entire nation or the whole of the West. Instead, it expressed itself in a highly fragmented, atomised way, proliferating thousands of alternative *nomoi* and action plans for regenerating the world, whether in the microcosm of a few enlightened people or at the level of society as a whole. Aggregated with all the others, each movement formed one of the pixels constituting the familiar face of modernity. Rather than being housed under a single sacred canopy, the West witnessed an extraordinary proliferation of new canopies, some as vast as football stadia, some more like minute personal sunshades to keep out the blinding glare of nothingness.

It is on the basis of the primordialist theory of cultural production outlined earlier that I argue that the term 'modernism' should be extended[23] from the sphere of artistic and cultural history to all social, technocratic, and political attempts under high modernity to create a new regenerative *nomos*, if not for 'the world', however conceived, then for a particular grouping of humanity. What distinguishes modernism from the cosmological creativity of the traditional revitalisation is that the assault on the status quo is conceived as a bid to resolve the decadence and spiritual bankruptcy produced by modernisation. Within the conceptual framework I propose, cultural products as different as Picasso's paintings and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* can be approached as two

radically different permutations of the same primordial drive to overcome the decadence of the present phase of history and create a new world of higher meaning and transcendent purpose.

When modernism operates not in the subjective inner world of the artist but in the external, outer world of sociocultural transformation, its hallmark is the quest for an *alternative modernity*, for a society bound together, in Nietzsche's terms, by a new 'fixed horizon framed by myth'. It is an interpretation of modernism that has a profound bearing on the way we conceive the relationship of modernity in what we have termed 'totalitarian mass dictatorships' and brings us finally to the theme of this volume.

Totalitarian mass dictatorship as a form of political modernism

The first point to emerge from this (necessarily highly condensed) analysis takes us to the heart of the topic of 'mass dictatorship and modernity'. Despite sharing many features as systems of government, especially when contrasted with the evolution of political regimes throughout human history until the French Revolution, there is a fundamental difference between the authoritarian and totalitarian mass dictatorship in their relationship to modernity. Of course, both are products of modernity in that they employ the executive power of the modern state and the unprecedented technocratic, executive, and bureaucratic resources at its disposal to impose its rule and implement its policies. From a liberal humanist or democratic perspective they may seem equally despotic and repugnant. But with the sense of history and temporality inherent to their policies subjected to forensic examination, the cleavage becomes apparent. The genesis of the authoritarian mass dictatorship lies in the neoconservative bid by power elites to solve the socio-political crisis occasioned by the collapse of traditional society and to regulate the tsunami-like wave of anarchic energies unleashed by the rise of the masses so that traditional society can assume a modern dynamic guise without shattering the pre-liberal status quo. It represents, therefore, a modernising but *reactionary*, antirevolutionary, and essentially repressive form of conservatism. The project is one of regulating modernisation in a spirit of containment.

In contrast, the totalitarian regime pursues the modernist goal of resolving the nomic crisis of modernity itself by offering a totalising sense that history can be remade, that an *alternative modernity* can be constructed, that time can be renewed, that a transcendent sense of

suprapersonal (but no longer metaphysical) purpose can be restored to human existence not just at the collective political level but at the most intimate personal and existential one. It is characterised in its various fascist and communist forms by a *futural temporality* which seeks a break with the past, a break that makes it hostile to conservative elites, even if it is forced to make compromises with them in order to achieve legitimacy and take advantage of the military, ideological, executive, economic, and technocratic power they hold. Whereas the authoritarian regime is usually imposed from above without being brought to power by a mass movement or by a vanguard movement working in the name of the masses, the totalitarian mass dictatorship seeks to implement a programme of change intended to resolve the liminoid conditions of society and bring completion and closure to modernity's open-ended rite of passage from tradition to a new age.

The second point to emerge is that the totalitarian movement driving a mass dictatorship is not just – or not even – a degenerate descendant of democratic movements, as F&B suggested. First and foremost, it is a modern variant of the archetypal revitalisation movement on which the evolution and metamorphosis of human societies have always been based. Authoritarianism seeks to resolve the anarchic conditions of modernity by forcing society into a superficially modernised and bureaucratised version of the traditional order that prevailed before the descent into liminoidality – the 'chaos' of modernity so hated by conservatives – while adopting non-traditional forms of socio-political organisation such as the military junta and personal dictator. By contrast, totalitarianism seeks to drive society forward to a new order and an anthropological revolution and thus attempts to exert control over every aspect of existence, not just political and economic but social, aesthetic, and moral; their tendency is to generate political religion and charisma, to bring about the transition to a new type of society.

The third point is that it is necessary to recognise the revolutionary and, in the minds of the ruling elite, *liberating* dynamics of the political religion and leader cult of a totalitarian mass democracy. Their original goal is not mass coercion and brainwashing, or the reduction of civic society to the autonomy of a termite colony. The ideology they seek to realise has the qualities of a new mazeway, often containing a high degree of syncretism brought about by a process of ludic recombination and embodied in a leader who has for his followers the qualities of a *propheta*, whose pronouncements have the quality of revelations and a higher truth for at least a section of the masses. The mass organisations they create are meant to not just regiment the masses but turn them into

the vehicle for the eventual realisation of the utopian project to create a new society appropriate to the modern age – an alternative modernity. Whereas an authoritarian mass dictatorship exercises social control, its totalitarian counterpart undertakes vast programmes of social engineering that, in the Third Reich and Soviet Union, led them to pursue biopolitical and eugenic measures to accelerate the appearance of the 'new man'.

Inferences for the relationship between modernity and mass dictatorship

Several inferences relevant to the theme of this volume are to be drawn from the model proposed here. First and foremost, it may be useful *ideally* – typically to distinguish between authoritarian and totalitarian mass dictatorships' radically different relationships to modernity. Authoritarian mass dictatorship can be conceptualised as a *reactionary* response of existing elites to the collapse of tradition under the impact of modernisation, one which nevertheless produces a modern state to contain the ensuing chaos. Imagining itself fighting a war against anarchy and subversion, its task is to resolve the crisis brought about by the age of the masses now that traditional social and cosmological structures no longer keep them in their place.

The authoritarian regime may be a military regime or personal dictatorship that fills the power vacuum or the degenerate version of a totalitarian communist or would-be fascist regime. Alternatively, it is installed on behalf of or in collusion with traditional ruling classes and institutions by a dynamic political and military elite. In either case the new ruling elite understands the unprecedented executive power of the modern state and uses it deliberately to create an organisational and ideological dyke to contain the flood of chaotic sociocultural and economic forces unleashed by modernity as it erodes traditional society and religion. At the same time the authoritarian mass democracy uses the forces of the masses as a reservoir of potential social and productive energy that will enable society to be run in a more efficient, more technically and productively advanced system, even if the main product of the system is a disproportionate military capacity.

Behind the facade of populist legitimacy and simulated charismatic dynamism, the ruling elite of a mass authoritarian dictatorship adopts radical measures to curb individual freedom and control large spheres of human and social existence. It is compelled to do so by a reactionary fear of the potential of unbridled modernisation and globalisation to

generate social and moral anarchy and decadence. Hence authoritarian societies work to repress any ideology that could threaten that control, which, according to the official ideology of the regime, could be liberalism, socialism, communism, nationalism, racism, ethnic separatism, or religious belief.

By contrast the totalitarian mass dictatorship is a *revolutionary* response both to the concrete socio-economic dilemmas created by modernity and to the prevailing nomic crisis it produces. It thus can be seen as a *modernist* state, striving to establish a total alternative modernity. The space for it to arise is created when an acute political crisis cannot be resolved through traditional power or liberal democracy and liberalism's concept of a revolutionary temporality based on secularism, pluralism, economic development, individualism, and technological progress has no mass appeal or relevance. It imagines itself fighting a war against decadence. As a form of political modernism, it attempts to found a new order which creates forms of political, social, and cultural life designed to resolve the nomic crisis and inaugurate an alternative modernity which provides a new sense of transcendence.

A second point is that the different natures of the two regimes lead to contrasting fates. What tends to destroy authoritarian mass democracies in the long run are such forces as the corruption of the ruling elites, the failure of the regime to create a viable domestic economy based on autarkic principles, and the impossibility of maintaining isolation from the international community indefinitely. It dies through entropy and collapses into anarchy or liberalism.

The totalitarian mass dictatorship, on the other hand, has displayed several different scenarios. In the case of Nazism it was finally destroyed as a consequence of its own unlimited dynamism and ambition, which led to unrealisable campaigns of colonial conquest. Fascist Italy's overweening ambition, on the other hand, eventually led it to be embroiled in an international war it was not equipped to fight. Soviet Russia, though it survived far longer than the two fascist regimes, failed ultimately for a variety of economic, social, and ideological reasons to create either an alternative modernity that was viable or the New Man who was supposed to populate it. By the 1960s it had degenerated into an authoritarian society. Its satellite states within the Soviet empire, which combined rhetorical elements of the totalitarian coercive state and the ideological emptiness of authoritarianism, soon became grim travesties of the original Bolshevik dream. Communist China is currently experimenting with the possibility of liberal economics with the centralised 'socialist' regulation of society. This experiment,

though so far allowing it to be far more economically viable than the Soviet empire, represents the wholesale abandonment of its original totalitarian project (or at least its gradual entropy and corruption) for a form of authoritarian capitalism. The Chinese New Man is more likely to be wearing a Rolex and carrying a mobile phone and an MP3 player than Mao's Little Red Book.

One final example for consideration is the case of the two Koreas. A special instance of a mass dictatorship is that imposed on a people by an imperial foreign power allegedly to bring the fruits of an advanced society but actually to serve the foreign power's interests. This was the case of the states that after 1945 fell under Soviet occupation and then communist dictatorship in Europe and of Korea, which experienced and still experiences communist imperialism in the North and arguably 'capitalist imperialism' in the South. Do 'capitalist' dictatorships fall into the category of 'authoritarianism' because of their 'puppet' status, or do they retain something of the 'liberating' (hence under a dictatorship, 'totalitarian') mission claimed by the 'Free World', which gives them the utopian, totalitarian elements of what I have called a *modernist* state. Do dictatorships imposed abroad by 'totalitarian' – or originally totalitarian – regimes such as the Soviet Union and Communist China continue to express some of the original 'futural', revolutionary, modernist energies of the mother regime? If so, do they retain anything of this totalitarian drive after they become independent? Or are they coercive and pseudo-revolutionary – hence authoritarian – from the start, devoid of genuine mass-mobilising ideals of societal and anthropological revolution? If scholars one day can address such issues by examining in depth the relationship between the two post-war dictatorships of Korea in the context of its unique path to modernity, their answers would be fascinating not just in themselves. Such comparative perspectives would enrich the understanding of the nature of mass dictatorship in the West as well.

Notes

1. A seminal text in the context of this chapter is Schmuel Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2003).
2. For a refreshingly non-Eurocentric treatment of the topic of dictatorship, see Jie-Hyun Lim's chapter, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship: Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship', in Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone, eds, *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
3. Gilbert Pleuger, 'Totalitarianism', *New Perspective* 9/1 (2003), http://www.history-ontheweb.co.uk/concepts/totalitarianism.htm.

4. Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: 1965), pp. 21–6.
5. Emilio Gentile, *Religion as Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). The passage cited below appears on p. 46.
6. Emilio Gentile, 'The Sacralization of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism', trans. Robert Mallet, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1/1 (2000), 18–55. The passage appears on p. 46 of *Religion as Politics*.
7. For those interested in the way that totalitarianism is now becoming a dynamic concept identified, no longer with the static connotations of 'monopoly of power', but with the bid to implement a revolutionary concept of a new society, involving political religion in pursuit of its claims for 'fundamental renewal', see Simon Tormey, *Making Sense of Tyranny: Interpretations of Totalitarianism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Daniel Schönpflug, '*Histoires croisées*: François Furet, Ernst Nolte and a Comparative History of Totalitarian Movements', *European History Quarterly* 37/2 (2007), 265–90. For a brilliant comparative study of totalitarianism in the spirit of this 'new wave' of scholarship, see Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Beyond Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
8. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', p. 8.
9. Cf. Anthony McElligott and Tom Kirk, *Working towards the Führer: Essays in Honour of Sir Ian Kershaw* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).
10. Roger Griffin, 'The Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimation of Totalitarian Regimes in Inter-war Europe', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 3/3 (Winter 2002), 24–43; see also Roger Griffin, 'The Legitimizing Role of Palingenetic Myth in Ideocracies', *Totalitarismus und Demokratie/Totalitarianism and Democracy* 1 (2012), 39–56.
11. Simon Tormey, *Making Sense of Tyranny: Interpretations of Totalitarianism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000).
12. Andrzej Walicki, *Polskie zmagania z wolnością* (Kraków: Universitas, 2000). On Walicki's distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, see Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', p. 9.
13. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship'.
14. It need hardly be pointed out that the reality of dictatorial regimes is frequently far more complex than these two artificially polarised categories imply. In inter-war Europe several authoritarian regimes imitated the fascist style of totalitarianism but lacked any genuine totalising or utopian project. Franco's Spain, e.g., despite the fascist rhetoric of the early years, in practice operated as a personal dictatorship with a largely pseudo-populist consensus, especially once the passions of the civil war burnt out and the radicalism of the genuinely fascist Falange had been neutralised. How far Kim Il-sung's Democratic People's Republic of Korea can be treated as the communist equivalent of such a regime of disguised authoritarianism or pseudo-totalitarian despotism is a matter for experts to judge.The purity of ideal-typical categories in this area is complicated further by the tendency for regimes born of totalitarian – hence utopian and genuinely revolutionary – movements to decay into authoritarian regimes, as far as the broad masses are concerned, once they enter a systemic crisis or the failure of the utopian

vision becomes increasingly self-evident. Illustrations of this syndrome can be found in the Third Reich after Stalingrad and in Soviet Russia in the last three decades of its existence. Even Saddam's Iraq was born of Ba'athism, at the outset a utopian totalitarian movement.A regime that equally defies simple classification was Imperial Japan under Hirohito (Showa Japan) in the 1930s, where legitimacy was still theoretically based on the concept of the emperor's divinity, while power was exercised in practice by a military junta which reinforced genuine mass patriotism (partly articulated through a politicised form of Shinto religion with genuine fascist elements) with a state terror apparatus complete with its own thought police, the Tokku. The result was that it attempted to realise the palingenetic myth of Japan's destiny to become the hegemonic Asian power, filling the vacuum left by the decay of European imperialism, through an amalgam of authoritarianism, totalitarianism, imperialism, militarism, and populism, with elements of feudal-traditional, legal-rational, charismatic, and autocratic power. Another complicating example is Pol Pot's Cambodia, where a would-be totalitarian regime was imposed by a militia with so little consensus and such extensive use of genocidal terror that it effectively operated as an authoritarian regime, showing minimal interest in building up a powerful populist movement of support by the manipulation of civil society. Its idyll of a re-ruralised Cambodia purged of alien decadence thus remained almost a secret project rather than the central goal pursued through an intensive campaign of mass mobilization.

15. Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of an Ending under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave, 2007).
16. Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 84.
17. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (London: Doubleday, 1967). A number of other theories underpin the 'primordialist' approach to modernity summarised in this chapter but cannot be considered in detail here, notably Antonio Gramsci's distinction between 'dominion' (coercion) and 'hegemony' (consensus); Anthony Giddens's prolific publications on social and spiritual malaise–induced modernity; David Roberts's concept of totalitarianism as an essentially unrealisable project to establish alternative modernity; Zygmunt Bauman's insistence on the intimate causal link between modernity and the Holocaust and his concept of the 'gardening state' that arises once a ruling elite takes upon itself the use of the power of the state to reform and regenerate society by weeding and rooting out social elements held to disseminate crime, immorality, or chaos; work by Victor Turner (e.g., Victor and Edith Turner, 'Religious Celebrations', in Victor Turner ed., *Celebration. Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press (1982), pp. 211–12; and Anthony Wallace (see Robert Grumet ed., *Anthony Wallace. Revitalization & Mazeways. Essays on Cultural Change*, vol. 1, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) on the rite of passage and the revitalization ceremony. I engage with these theories extensively in *Modernism and Fascism*, which provides a full bibliography.
18. Cf. Ernest Becker, *Birth and Death of Meaning. An Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Problem of Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962).

19. The pioneering study of this universal phenomenon was Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1909) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960).
20. Victor Turner makes the link between liminoid situations and the revitalization movements in Victor and Edith Turner, 'Religious Celebrations', pp. 33–57.
21. The classic text is Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (1957) (London: Granada, 1970).
22. See particularly Anthony Wallace (Robert Grumet ed., *Anthony Wallace*).
23. My own analysis builds on the pioneering attempts by a number of cultural historians who have similarly extended the concept of modernism, notably Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring* (1989) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000); Peter Fritzsche, 'Nazi Modern', *Modernism/Modernity* 3/1 (1996), 1–22; Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time. Modernity and the Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995); and Peter Schleifer, *Modernism and Time. The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).