

Multiculturalism, or the Vile Logic of Late Secularism. The Case of Anders Breivik

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Abstract: More than four years ago, Anders Breivik launched his apocalyptic raid in Norway. His killing raid was not an action standing on its own but a statement to invite people to read his manifesto called *2083. A European Declaration of Independence*. The highly despicable and disgusting mission of Anders Breivik addresses us whether we like it or not. Maybe there are good reasons to read and analyze Breivik's 'oration?' He confronts us with many questions we cannot simply run away from: What about the Islamization? How could this happen in secular Norway? What about the role of religion in European societies? In this article, I will argue that Breivik's plea can only happen from within a secular society in which the homogeneity already has been lost, which allows him to deal with religion and politics on a very specific basis. In no way whatsoever, the context of our secular society forced Breivik to do what he did. However Breivik could only construct his actions and ideas within the (Christian) democratic context he lives in. I will analyze this with the writings of Hannah Arendt on political theology and the complex relationship between politics and religion and a late secular society.

Keywords: secular, Breivik, Arendt, violence, political theology

'Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.' (Genesis, 9: 6)

1. Introduction

More than four years ago, Anders Breivik launched his apocalyptic raid in Norway that began when he set off a car bomb near government buildings in Oslo killing eight people, and ended with the massacre of tens of participants in a Labour Party youth camp on the nearby island of Utøya. Not only was he after the destruction of many young lives, he also aimed to destroy the hope and innocence of a whole generation of 'leftists' because, he kept on repeating, he had a mission to tell the world in general and Europe in particular, namely: we have to stop 'Islamization,' the great danger from which (he believed) Europe suffers.

His killing raid was not an action standing on its own but a statement to invite people to read his manifesto called *2083. A European Declaration of Independence* (Breivik 2011). This 1500 page document is stuffed with declarations, statements, and fulminations against the world, as it is, Europe in particular. Page by page, Breivik develops his crusade against 'Islam imperialism' supported with fragmented quotes from books, articles, lectures, and newspapers. He presents us with his final product, an intellectual bricolage,

through which he hopes to convince us all of the great danger of Islamization and at the same time directing us about how to stop it.

The highly despicable and disgusting mission of Anders Breivik addresses us whether we like it or not. We can always ignore him and not read the manifesto for good reasons of which moral deprecation of Breivik's actions is only one, but an important one. Many people wonder, why should we pay attention to the manifesto of a mass murderer? Although these moral objections are reasonable, from a philosophical point of view, they are insignificant. Naturally, we disapprove of Breivik – what else could we do? – Nevertheless, does his case stop here? Maybe there are good reasons to read and analyze Breivik's 'oration;' he confronts us with so many questions we cannot simply run away from: What about the Islamization? How could this happen in secular Norway? (Mogensen 2013), What about the role of religion in European societies? And so forth.

For some among us, it may seem disgraceful to spend time on Breivik's manifesto. However, our disrespect of his highly excessive and morbid actions and their background ideology must not dispel us from thinking about these frictions and the precarious role religion plays in it. Despite his childish fantasy about some mythical European past, the way(s) Breivik writes about the relationship between politics and religion challenges us to think over our understanding of Europe as a secular continent and religion as a matter of individual, private choices. What about the (political) role of religion in contemporary Europe? (Goldstone 2007).

In this article, I will argue that Breivik's plea can only happen from within a secular society in which the homogeneity already has been lost, which allows him to deal with religion and politics on a very specific basis. In no way whatsoever, the context of our secular society forced Breivik to do what he did. However, it is my argument that Breivik could only construct his actions and ideas within the (Christian) democratic context he lives in. I will analyze this with the writings of Hannah Arendt on political theology and the complex relationship between politics and religion and a late secular society.

2. 2083

From its very origin, philosophy has never ceased to handle the most aporetic questions we humans are confronted with, albeit their moral connotation. Therefore, I will argue we should do more than declare our moral deprecation of Breivik's actions. We will not understand anything if we only condemn Breivik on moral grounds, just as we do not legitimate his actions because we want to understand them. As Jean-Luc Nancy makes it clear in *The Forgetting of Philosophy*: "It is one thing to denounce the ignominy of slavery; it is quite another to think sovereignty, which is not simply the cessation or the opposite of slavery. And which brings another essence – or another meaning – into play" (Nancy 1997, 20).

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It is (too) easy to distance ourselves from Breivik and describe him as a lunatic or a 'sick mind,' and absolve ourselves from any attempt to try to understand what is at work here. Nor should we reduce Breivik to the contemporary context of Islamization and religious tensions by calling him a mere representation of today's democratic politics – Breivik is no more a representation of democracy than Bin Laden was of Islam. Of course, given today's political setting and the increasing anti-Islam tendency, it is perhaps not a coincidence that Breivik relates his actions to anti-Islam ideas and not, for instance, to alchemy or astrology. However, the attempt to understand how Breivik used society's setting as it is does not make of that setting as a whole a criminal given. To give another example: if a 'deep ecologist' would kill the CEO of Unilever, we need to investigate if and how his actions are related to his ideology, we have to analyze if the ideology as such tends towards violence, but if even this were the case, that does not make any ecologist idea suspect or violent.

Therefore, I call the act of Breivik a major dilemma of our time: how do we understand the ideological context behind his unimaginable act? I am not interested in the psychological analysis of this man, all the more I want to understand his ideas. Breivik is most and foremost an idealist in the strict sense of the word: a man who did and does everything to realize his ideas, no matter how excessive they are. Remarkably, although there is no comparison to whichever movement in Europe in what Breivik did and does, for more than a decade now, his background ideas and ideology are common sense in liberal, right or extreme right wing parties all over Europe for who 'leftist' ideas – Marxism, multiculturalism, the 'nanny-state,' etc. – are responsible for all what goes wrong in today's society. Think, for instance, about the success of the work of psychiatrist Theodor Dalrymple and his critique on the 'sentimental society.'¹ This kind of critique is a 'sign of the times' and a symptom of a paradigm shift, such as the work of Herbert Marcuse was crucial for the revolts of May '68 or Woodstock for the sixties.

For everyone reading his compendium, it is obvious that Breivik had the ambition to present himself as the avant-garde spokesman of this anti-left tendency and to declare war against the "the ongoing Islamisation of Europe which has resulted in the ongoing Islamic colonization of Europe through demographic warfare" (Breivik 2011). Breivik is very clear in his highly stated ambitions:

Time is of the essence. We have only a few decades to consolidate a sufficient level of resistance before our major cities are completely demographically overwhelmed by Muslims. Ensuring the successful distribution of this compendium to as many Europeans as humanly, possible will significantly contribute to our success. It may be the only way to avoid our present and future dhimmitude (enslavement) under Islamic majority rule in our own countries (Breivik 2011).

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/7894907/Sentimentality-is-poisoning-our-society.html>

Breivik called his own actions 'spectacular', but what can be said about the quality of his writing? Starting from a very clear but high ambition, he writes "This compendium presents the solutions and explains exactly what is required of each and every one of us in the coming decades. Everyone can and should contribute in one way or the other; it's just a matter of will" (Breivik 2011). As we read this manifesto, we are consistently confronted with an ongoing copy cat-bricolage of quotes, (re)writings, statements, and references to all sorts of articles and books about what goes wrong on the 'old continent,' in particular on the supposed increasing influence of Islam in Western world. Breivik's thesis is born out of this: he is obsessed with what he calls 'the dangers of Islam' and how to restore Europe into a Christian bastion from which all 'leftist' sympathy with Islam is banned.

2083 refers to a 'prophetic year' in which Europe would defeat Islam, thereby reminding us of former crusades and battles between Christianity and Islam. The subtitle of the manifesto is twofold. First of all, "A European Declaration of Independence" Van Gerven makes clear in his "Anders Breivik: on copying the obscure" this subtitle is copied from a blog post by Peter Are Nøstvold Jensen operating under the pseudonym Fjordman, integrally inserted into Breivik's manuscript. The second subtitle is called "De Laude Novae Militiae Pauperes Commilitones Christi Templique Solomonici," to be translated as "In Praise of the New Knighthood, the poor fellow soldiers of Christ and of the Temple Solomon" (Breivik 2011). The first part is taken from a title of a text written by Bernard de Clairvaux between 1128 and 1146, entitled *Liber ad milites Templi: De laude novae militiae* (A Book for the Knights Templar: In Praise of the New Knighthood), the second part *Pauperes Commilitones Christi Templique Solomonici*, also abbreviated as PCCTS, was according to Breivik the official name of a Christian military order founded in 1119 also known as the Knights Templar.

As Van Gerven sorted out, the two Latin parts do not match grammatically:

In his manifesto, Breivik refers to himself as Justiciar Knight Commander for Knights Templar Europe and one of the several leaders of the National and pan-European Patriotic Resistance Movement". It is unclear to what extent the "Knights Templar Europe" organization actually exists; in chapter 3, "A Declaration of Pre-emptive War," Breivik refers to the "PCCTS, Knights Templar" as a "hypothetical fictional group." (van Gerven Oei 2011).

As stated, the manifesto is a bricolage and already the title witnesses the diversity of sources Breivik used.

The manifesto is also highly repetitive, not only in its statements, but also in the use of words and concepts of which Islam is one the most quoted.² One can ask why Breivik, who would possibly have stood up to commit violence in any

² A simple item search in his manifesto gives us the following hits: Feminism: 77; Marxism: 190; Multiculturalism: 469; Multicultural: 1164; Islam: 3444; Identity: 109; Christian: 2237; Europe: 4310; Secular: 132; Jihad: 1018. Obviously, Christianity, Jihad, Islam and Europe are central references to his writings.

case, with or without Islam, is that much focused on this religion, and not on, for instance, ecologism or conservatism. Interestingly enough, Breivik's hate toward Islam is not to be situated at the level of the other-as-Muslim but at the level of the European-as-Muslim. He prophesizes that by the year 2083, Europe will be Christian again and "All traces of current and past Islamic influences in Europe will be removed. This includes mosques and Islamic cultural centers. All Muslims will be deported from European territory" (Breivik 2011).

Despite the harshness of the above quote, Breivik's manifesto does not appear directed toward foreigners or Muslims as such but people from within his own community who he believes are too tolerant toward foreigners, Muslims in particular. He argues that because Islam and Europe are not compatible, a new knighthood should take back Europe from the cultural Marxists, humanists, leftists, feminists, or suicidal (read: pacifistic) Christians who, according to Breivik, have already alienated Europe from its true Christian destination. As a result of this thinking, we notice that in his attacks in Norway, Breivik did not intend to kill Muslims but young innate people who are, to his conviction, part of a next generation of what he calls 'cultural Marxists,' leftist people who are unaware but nonetheless guilty of handing over Europe to an ongoing Islamization.

Breivik wants to remind Europeans of their cultural Christian background. He argues, "A re-christening is crucial to leave behind the dangerous and suicidal humanistic, secular and multicultural ideologies of our times" (Breivik 2011), further suggesting that "Europe should stand up again and fight against its enemies which are, as said, stemming from inside" (Breivik 2011). Therefore, we might conclude that first and foremost, the manifesto's baseline is that we (Europeans) are destroying ourselves by allowing others to take over our continent. Moreover, Breivik proposes that the decline of Europe has only been possible because we have forgotten the supremacy of Christian religion and culture. However, he suggests that Christianity has nothing to do with tolerance or peace rather Christians ought to join an ongoing crusade against the threats from inferior cultures currently infecting our great European project.

As previously stated, 2083 is the prophetic date to restore Europe and give it back its old strength and supremacy. According to Breivik, this restoration entails more than re-christening; everyone within Europe who relies upon the wrong ideas or ideology requires re-education. In his delirious description of the phases of the revolution towards a new Europe, Breivik not only foresees breeding programs to increase European population, but also a 'Declaration of Defection' for all Europeans who will be prepared to confess publicly their wrong ideas about the future of Europe as we know it today reciting this phrase, 'I hereby admit and acknowledge that multiculturalism is a European hate-ideology designed to deconstruct European identity, cultures, traditions and nation states. I used to support this anti-European hate-ideology. However, I no

longer support the European cultural and demographical genocide' (Breivik 2011).

Obviously, we should not expect to distill a coherent theoretical framework from *2083*, although the tendency of this manifest appears repetitively clear: Europe can only be Europe if it is restored and if it expels all Muslims or people from other cultural backgrounds, if Europeans are aware of their 'suicidal multiculturalism' and the need of a new knighthood. In short, Europe will be Europe if by 2083 Christianity is restored as its (only) grand narrative. Then and only then, Breivik is convinced of, Europe will rise as the new phoenix of a shining world order.

3. Religion and Politics

Of course, the brief sketch above does not pretend in any way to discuss *2083* in detail. Despite my close reading of many chapters, it would take another volume to present an exhaustive analysis of it, and to be honest; I do not think that would be of an interesting kind, given the repetitive nature of the manifesto. In this article, I only want to discuss one of Breivik's major points in his bombastic compendium, the plead for Christianity as the grand narrative of future Europe for I believe it touches upon one of the major frictions Europe has dealt with for a few decades now: the relationship between the West and Islam, or more general, the relationship between politics and religion. *2083* is far more than an 'absurd' statement because it reflects the difficult relationship between politics and religion (Wessely 2012).

In the last two decades, numerous analyses of the problems between political modernity and Islam have been made-for example see (Cesari 2005; Parvizi 2007; Vaner, Heradstveit et al. 2008; 2009). More often the analysis is presented as a clash of civilizations (Huntington 1996; Hunter and Gopin 1998; Véguez 2005; Achcar and Drucker 2006; Jansen and Snel 2009) or as a battle of enlightened people vis à vis conservative religious people (Bauberot 2007; Goldstone 2007; Mahoney 2010). And of course, the stakes are high. Since 1989 when the former Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini declared a fatwa on Salman Rushdie for his novel, *Satanic Verses*, the West has developed a troublesome relationship with the Islamic religion. Today, huge tensions are evident e.g. the response, to the cartoons in the Danish newspapers, 9/11 and the resultant aftermath, or the recent movie "The innocence of Muslims" in 2012. It would seem fair to suggest that daily frictions between Western societies and Islam have increased over the past decade and now rest at the centre of our societies.

Though useful to be aware of the tensions modernity is dealing with, none of these perspectives touch the problematic relationship between politics and religion in modern society as such. Religious violence or fundamentalism is of course not the privilege of Islam; think only of the violence against abortion doctors in America's bible belt or against homosexuality in some African countries at present such as Malawi and Uganda, or the ongoing provocations of

protestant Orangemen in Northern Ireland. The relationship between secularism and religion is far more complex than an argument that they are simply opposed to one another, as several scholars have demonstrated (Gauchet 1985; Gauchet 1998; Nancy 2005; Alexandrova, Devisch et al. 2012). Imagine only for a second Breivik to be a Taliban militant. Would it not be reasonable for us to expect another round of debates about the 'primitivism' of Islamic militias and their fight against modernity or the West?

With Breivik's actions and manifest, not only have we lost a certain moral comfort – since 9/11 it is common sense to project the current problems with religion as an exclusive problem of 'the other' (the primitive, unenlightened, religious other) –, we are also left behind with numerous blunt questions. This time, the religious violence does not stem from Islam but from someone who claims Christianity to be the only way to lead Europe to its bright and shining future and therefore pleads to get rid of Islam in Europe. Next to that, Breivik brings religion into play in a very particular way; not as a source of anti-enlightenment, but as the only way to retrace Europe onto its enlightened pathway as he sees it.

Therefore, his manifesto does not fit into the mold of the so-called clash between the enlightened west and unenlightened religion, as is common sense, mainly since 9/11. Breivik puts religion into play in a way that seems very inconsistent at first hand; first of all he stresses on the need for Christian religion as a conservative gesture to save Europe and to make us aware of the disasters of both secularism and Islam; on the other hand, he is in favor of individual freedom when it comes down to personal beliefs, which is one of the main characteristics of a secular society. Apparently, Breivik discovers in Christian religion a political and cultural function that it has lost in secular modernity, but as he calls for a re-christening, he describes himself as someone not very religious: "I'm not going to pretend I'm a very religious person as that would be a lie. I've always been very pragmatic and influenced by my secular surroundings and environment" or "Regarding my personal relationship with God, I guess I'm not an excessively religious man. I am first and foremost a man of logic. However, I am a supporter of a monocultural Christian Europe" (Breivik 2011). Having gone through this evolution, it does not stop him from calling Christianity the only platform able to restore Europe in its strength: "As a cultural Christian, I believe Christendom is essential for cultural reasons. After all, Christianity is the ONLY cultural platform that can unite all Europeans, which will be needed in the coming period during the third expulsion of the Muslims" (Breivik 2011).

To Breivik, a 'cultural Christian' can be a Christian practicing, a Christian agnostic, and even a Christian atheist, as long as Christianity is recognized as the only grand monoculture narrative that will situate Europe as the world's cultural and political trendsetter. This may include a sort of secular society, as long as Christianity is put at the forefront. I quote at length:

The European cultural heritage, our norms (moral codes and social structures included), our traditions and our modern political systems are based on Christianity - Protestantism, Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and the legacy of the European enlightenment (reason is the primary source and legitimacy for authority). It is not required that you have a personal relationship with God or Jesus in order to fight for our Christian cultural heritage and the European way. In many ways, our modern societies and European secularism is a result of European Christendom and the enlightenment. It is therefore essential to understand the difference between a "Christian fundamentalist theocracy" (everything we **do not** want) and a secular European society based on our Christian cultural heritage (what we **do** want). So no, you don't need to have a personal relationship with God or Jesus to fight for our Christian cultural heritage. It is enough that you are a Christian-agnostic or a Christian atheist (an atheist who wants to preserve at least the basics of the European Christian cultural legacy (Christian holidays, Christmas and Easter) (Breivik 2011).

From the aforementioned suggestions, we can discern Breivik's complex stance towards secularism. On the one hand, people are allowed not to believe in God, which is a common secular stance. On the other hand, secularism is being blamed and religion is described as the cement of a monocultural society: "[S]ecularism promotes a more short term and hedonistic attitude towards life. Since secular people have little faith in God or an afterlife, the tendency is for them to adopt the attitude of 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die'. Of course, not all secular people are like that. But in general, secularism promotes such attitudes" (Breivik 2011). It seems as if Breivik is after some kind of religious authority to lead us towards the right path, but then why does he allow people not to believe?

4. The Doctrine of Hell

As stated, Breivik seems very inconsistent or illogical in the way he brings religion into play and his combination of personal freedom and monocultural Christian violence is at best very puzzling since a conservative religious revolution generally leaves no individual option at all to believe or not, since belief is put forward by force. Therefore, the 'simple' analysis that may serve to explain the rise of fundamentalism as a symptom of the clash between freedom versus violence and enlightenment versus religion, is not explaining anything here. What then is at work in Breivik's manifesto and (how) can we explain it? Is the combination of individual freedom and religious violence only the intellectual bricolage of a lunatic or can and need we say more of this awkward relationship between politics and religion?

Of the many philosophers and theologians who have written extensively about 'political theology' and the relationship between politics and religion in ancient and modern society, Hannah Arendt is one of the most remarkable. In her essays "Religion and politics" and "What is authority?" she makes an interesting and original analysis of secularism and the political function

Christian religion used to have in Western history (Arendt 1968; Arendt 1994). These two chapters may help us to understand why Breivik is in fact 'modern' in a very consistent way when he states that we are free to be Christian or not at the same time demanding that all of Europe to become Christian. Moreover, Arendt's thinking on authority helps us to analyze why Breivik calls his sentence 'pathetic' and asks for a punishment in true accordance with the magnitude of his actions.³

From the very beginning of her analysis, Arendt is transparent in her central assumptions. First of all, she outlines the importance of the doctrine of Hell to the ancient polis and Medieval Christianity "But there is one powerful element in traditional religion whose usefulness for the support of authority is self-evident, and whose origin is probably not of a religious nature, at least not primarily – the Medieval doctrine of Hell"(Arendt 1994, 380). Arendt leaves no doubt about the crucial role of hell and further argues that this doctrine has lost its authority in modern society as revealed by her suggestion that "The outstanding political characteristic of our modern secular world seems to be that more and more people are losing the belief in reward and punishment after death, while the functioning of individual consciences or the multitude's capacity to perceive invisible truth has remained politically as unreliable as ever" (Arendt 1968, 100); and also: "Who can deny, on the other hand, that disappearance of practically all traditionally established authorities has been one of the most spectacular characteristics of the modern world?"(Arendt 1994, 383).

I will discuss the doctrine of hell, and then proceed with the loss of its function in modernity and the remaining means by which religion can survive in modernity. I hope that this will guide us through one of the many puzzling questions Breivik confronts us with: is his combination of individual secularism and religious violence a mere atavism or an incoherent kind of idiocy, or is there some sort of 'late secular logic' behind it? Though multiple perspectives are possible to address this complex question, the way Arendt stresses the loss of authority and of the doctrine of Hell in a secular society, and her analysis of the remaining figures of religion in contemporary democracy, is of good help.

The doctrine of hell, Arendt states, goes back to Plato's myth of the Hereafter in which the souls of people who committed atrocious crimes will be subdued to eternal suffering, as a stunning example to the others. In the *Republic* but also in the *Gorgias*, Plato discusses indeed the idea of a reward or punishment in the hereafter:

But of those who have done extreme wrong and, as a result of such crimes, have become incurable, of those are the examples made; no longer are they profited at all themselves, since they are incurable, but others are profited who behold them undergoing for their transgressions the greatest, sharpest, and most fearful sufferings evermore, actually hung up as examples there in the infernal

³ <http://www.ctvnews.ca/breivik-wants-death-penalty-or-acquittal-for-massacre-1.798047>

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dungeon, a spectacle and a lesson to such of the wrongdoers (Plato 1994, Gorgias, 525c).

And also:

[...] and that they came to a mysterious region where there were two openings side by side in the earth, and above and over against them in the heaven two others, and that judges were sitting between these, and that after every judgment they bade the righteous journey to the right and upwards through the heaven with tokens attached to them in front of the judgment passed upon them, and the unjust to take the road to the left and downward, they too wearing behind signs (Plato 1994, Republic, X, 614c).

To Arendt, Plato is not alone in inventing a myth on the Hereafter, but his myth is unique because of its explicit *political* function. As Arendt writes, the legend has been “enlisted in the service of righteousness” (Arendt 1994, 382). Plato, Arendt states, needs the myth in order to prevent people from doing something the state has no other means to than frightening people with an even worse punishment than their own crimes. The myth needs to prevent people from killing others in this world. The whole of Plato’s universe is split up into a real world of brightening Ideas and of world of shadowy representations, but these insights, as Plato explains with the Allegory of the cave, are only for the privileged ones. To convince the others, the masses, Plato’s state needs another story that will lead people to set the standards and principles to human behavior in this world. This ‘other story’ becomes the myth of the Hereafter:

We find it somewhat difficult to gauge correctly the political, non-religious origin of the doctrine of hell because the Church incorporated it, in its Platonic version, so early into the body of dogmatic beliefs. It seems only natural that this incorporation in its turn should have blurred the understanding of Plato himself to the point of identifying his strictly philosophic teaching of the immortality of the soul, which was meant for the few, with his political teaching of a hereafter with punishments and rewards, which was clearly meant for the multitude (Arendt 1968, 129).

As Arendt’s reading of Plato’s myth insists on its political importance, she also demonstrates how this political function lives through in Roman and Christian thought:

Just as the derivative character of the applicability of the ideas to politics did not prevent Platonic political thought from becoming the origin of Western political theory, so the derivative character of authority and tradition in spiritual matters did not prevent them from becoming the dominant features of Western philosophic thought for the longer part of our history (Arendt 1968, 124).

The roman triad of religion, authority, and tradition is confronted with a substantial test once the ‘anti-institutional’ Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire, and needs to be integrated in the ‘secular’ political framework of Roman political thought. This was a major challenge as the Roman

Empire had lost its political authority leaving only God with authority and the king as nothing but a secular power within an empire that was grounded into a transcendent revelation. And secondly, the caesura between the Roman worldly grounding of power and authority and the Christian ideas of revealed truths stemming from a transcendent instance outside the world, was a significant test to the Roman Empire; how to relate the transcendent God to the immanent worldly power?

Only Plato's ideas on the standards for human behavior on top of the world and his myth on the Hereafter, made it possible to understand God's revelation politically: "God's revelation could now be interpreted politically as if the standards for human conduct and the principle of political communities, intuitively anticipated by Plato, had been finally revealed directly [...]" (Arendt 1968, 127). As only from the fifth century on, the doctrine of Hell is of real importance to Christianity, Arendt conceives this as a proof of the political function of this doctrine. The Christian creed, Arendt writes, shows no doctrine of Hell as long as Christianity remains without secular interests and responsibilities. The increase of this secular interest goes hand in hand with the integration of Platonic ideas into Christianity.

The amalgamation of Roman political institutions with Greek philosophical ideas allows Christianity to turn its vague ideas on the hereafter into a dogmatic system of punishments and rewards for human deeds in the hereafter. This framework dominates medieval Europe and it is only once Christianity loses its authority in the modern world, the doctrine of hell is no longer of political relevance. Christianity needed hell to prevent people from killing others by confronting them with a punishment far worse than dead: eternal suffering. Arendt therefore stresses the enormous consequences of the loss of this doctrine for modern society and for the relationship between religion and politics in general.

5. Secularization

To Arendt secularization means first and foremost the disappearance of religion from public sphere and the elimination of the doctrine of hell as the only real political element of Christianity. This doctrine is understood as the religious sanction of a transcendent *authority*:

Superficially speaking, the loss of belief in future states is politically, though certainly not spiritually, the most significant distinction between our present period and the centuries before. This loss is definite. For no matter how religious our world may turn again, or how much authentic faith still exists in it, or how deeply our moral values may be rooted in our religious systems, the fear of hell is no longer among the motives which would prevent or stimulate the actions of a majority (Arendt 1968, 135).

Authority is what religion and therefore society has lost today: "Politically, secularism means no more than that religious creeds and institutions have no

publicly binding authority and that, conversely, political life has no religious sanction”(Arendt 1994, 372). In a secular society, the Roman triad of religion, authority, and tradition has evaporated with the end of Christian religion as the grand narrative of medieval and early modern Europe.

From then on, Arendt concludes, political power has only two means of legitimatization left: first of all deliberation which is central to democracy and the way people try to look after consensus, persuasion or exchange of ideas; the other means is violence, rather characteristic but not privileged to totalitarianism, and often used in a context in which the authority has lost its authority and therefore needs violence to install it; authority then becomes authoritarian or even installs a ‘hell on earth.’ Consequently, to Arendt, secularization is more than an evolution of mankind from heteronomy towards autonomy. It is a political caesura in the history of the West: “The political consequence of the secularization of the modern age, in other words, seems to lie in the elimination from public life, along with religion, of the only political element in traditional religion, the fear of Hell” (Arendt 1994, 382).

Arendt conceives this loss as the major political event of secular modernity and she concludes her “Religion and politics” not in a mere optimistic mood. Taming the phantom of religion has advantages, she states, but it also includes risks we should be aware of:

But while in the past the danger chiefly consisted of using religion as a mere pretext, thus investing political action as well as religious belief with the suspicion of hypocrisy, the danger today is infinitely greater. Confronted with a full-fledged ideology, our greatest danger is to counter it with an ideology of our own. If we try to inspire public-political life once more with ‘religious passion’ or to use religion as a means of political distinctions, the result may very well be the transformation and perversion of religion into an ideology and the corruption of our fight against totalitarianism by a fanaticism which is utterly alien to the very essence of freedom (Arendt 1994, 384).

For my analysis of Breivik’s manifest, this is of course an important observation. Given the loss of its authority in secular modernity, to Arendt, the (political) place of religion in modernity is a precarious one. If religion aims at political power, it has only two political means left, she states: deliberation and violence. What Arendt fears the most is not religion as such but the transformation of religion into an ideology, often in the name of a fight against already existing violence. Obviously, today, if we look back upon the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is not that hard to see the danger Arendt is talking about. Not only we have undergone the violence of religious fundamentalism and terrorism but also of the fight against it, which has, often in the name of secular freedom, turned itself into a very violent war excluding civil rights and freedom. As is illustrated in a State of the Union by former President Bush, from 2006: “Abroad, our nation is committed to an historic, long-term goal – we seek the end

of tyranny in our world. Some dismiss that goal as misguided idealism. In reality, the future security of America depends on it.”⁴ The dangers of this ‘state of exception,’ as Giorgio Agamben has analysed so thoroughly (Agamben 2003), were and are still major: the suspension of civil rights, the legitimation of torture, the prison of Guantanamo Bay, all of these initiatives were taken in the name of Western freedom and the fight against Islam fundamentalism, while at the same time, Christian religion was also at the centre of this fight, think only of the words people like Donald Rumsfeld used these days: ‘eternal justice,’ ‘crusade,’ etc.

6. Late Secularism

Let me return now to Anders Breivik and his manifesto. As I have stated, even though Breivik’s crusade against Islamization may reflect similar thinking in our time, we cannot compare his actions with any other political event in contemporary politics. At the same time, neither should we become intellectually lazy and simply condemn any idea he sympathizes with, nor any author quoted by him. That would not make sense. Adolf Hitler being a vegetarian does not suggest vegetarianism to be a national-socialist practice, nor, alternatively, eating meat as a leftist progressive statement.

Having said that, we are still challenged to try to understand what happened. Not only is it extremely shocking that in Norway, an exemplary model of democracy, a Norwegian citizen uses this kind of extreme violence towards his young fellow-citizens at the same time Europe’s self-confidence as being the enlightened continent got pulverized because someone ‘from inside’ appeals to the same ‘pre-modern’ or ‘religious’ violence that up until now has been attributed to ‘other’. An enlightened European democracy can easily pretend to (under)stand primitive tribes slaughtering in Africa, or Taliban Muslims destroying Western cultures; as argued, these are figures of the Other: those of which we pretend to have nothing in common with. In the case of Breivik, things are more complex for he appears as one of us. If such anger and revenge can be generated from within a democracy in such a devastating way: what about it?

This is a very tough and aporetic question, the more Breivik appears to rely upon the context of late secular societies in which individuals have the freedom to choose the religion of their preference. At first sight, Breivik is very inconsistent in allowing people to be agnostic or atheist while pleading at the same time for a Christian Europe. A superficial reading of *2083* would only confirm this inconsistency hereby relying upon the ‘sick mind thesis’ and leave the philosophical analysis behind. However, Arendt’s writings on politics and religion make clear how this combination is perfectly possible and even dare I suggest logical. Probably more than he is aware of, Breivik is the perfect demonstration of the two faces of religion in modern secular society Arendt

⁴ http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-250_162-1264706.html

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writes about for he repeats several times in the manifest, he is not really a believer and he would never blame others to be atheists, but at the same time, he counterweights the dangers of Islamization with a violent restoration of the force and authority of Christianity. Only when succeeding in this, 2083 can be the prophetic year of which he dreams.

As Arendt explains, an authority that has lost its authority can only restore itself by violent means. The doctrine of Hell has been lost, but not the danger of violence present at the core of Western religious thought:

The Introduction of the Platonic Hell into the body of Christian dogmatic beliefs strengthened religious authority to the point where it could hope to remain victorious in any contest with secular power. But the price paid for this additional strength was that the Roman concept of authority was diluted, and an element of violence as permitted to insinuate itself into both the very structure of Western religious thought and the hierarchy of the church (Arendt 1968, 132-133).

Maybe in our secular societies, we have been too comfortable in thinking that we had dealt with this violent religious thought and that all there was left of religion in today's Europe was nothing but personal belief. Arendt's analysis makes clear that at least there is another, darker side still present in a secular environment: the hope or tendency to restore what has been lost. It is too easy to distance ourselves from this tendency as were it the mere expression of primitive or lunatic thought coming from somewhere else: from unenlightened people, religious people, sick people, or from the Other in general. Arendt's analysis confronts us with the latent possibility of religious violence stemming from the heart of secular democracy itself. Consequently, the vile logic Breivik relies upon is more than a silly bricolage of extreme ideas. Instead of distancing from such ideas – democracy – should be interested in the political and intellectual contexts that shape expressions within texts such as *2083*. For it would seem that *2083* exemplifies a frightening proof that from within democracy, the 'phantom of late secularism' has never ceased to play its role. Time and again, we remain challenged to think through the difficult relationship between politics and religion, not to mention secularism and multiculturalism. Religion has lost its authority, not its political mean(ing)s. Though multiple perspectives are possible to address this complex question, the way Hannah Arendt stresses the loss of authority and of the doctrine of Hell in a secular society, and her analysis of the remaining figures of religion in contemporary democracy, offers us a promising perspective on Breivik's vile logic.

Starting from a liberal, secular viewpoint concerning our personal belief, one would never expect Breivik also to plead for the possibility and even the need for the restoration of Christian religion as Europe's grand narrative. For from being sick, primitive, or unenlightened, Breivik makes use of the two means Arendt talks about and therefore relies upon violence to reinstall its authority in Western Europe, to address the spread of Islamic religious ideas or Muslim

Multiculturalism, or the Vile Logic of Late Secularism. The Case of Anders Breivik violence in Europe, of course relying upon the vile logic he develops in his manifest. While Breivik does not stop from warning us of the dangers of Islam, he is convinced his own violence is legitimized by a higher purpose since the future of Europe depends on it. Though he falls back upon the 'medieval' idea that a political community presupposes (religious) homogeneity (Lefort 1981; Lefort 1986), his plea can only happen from within a secular society in which this homogeneity already has been lost. In no way whatsoever, the context of our secular society (en)forced Breivik to do what he did. However, it is my argument that Breivik could only construct his actions and ideas within the (Christian) democratic context within which he lived.

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