

THINKING ABOUT GOD, POWER AND STATE

-An Inquiry On Theological Roots of The Modern Political Paradigm-

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Abstract: *This article aims at shedding light on the rational structure that dominated the political and intellectual life in the West during the Medieval Ages. Defined as the Church theology, this structure principally depends upon a particular form of ontology and social theory. One can argue that almost all of the ethical and political values of the Medieval Ages originated from these two sources. In this article, I will analyze the collapse of the church as a political power and development of this understanding into the Enlightenment from the viewpoint of political thought.*

Keywords: *Political Thought Medieval Paradigm, Raison D'etat /Political Mind, The Reformation, The Conception of Political Authority, The Conception of God, Modern Political Thought.*

Tanrı, İktidar ve Devlet Üzerinde Düşünmek -Modern Politik Paradigmanın Teolojik Kökleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme-

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Özet: Bu makalenin amacı, Batının Orta Çağdaki politik ve entelektüel hayatında baskın olan rasyonel yapıyı aydınlatmaktır. Kilise teolojisi olarak tanımlanan bu yapı, ontolojinin ve sosyal teorinin belirli bir türüne dayanır. Makalenin bir iddiası, ortaçağdaki bütün etik ve politik değerlerin kaynağının ontoloji ve sosyal teori olduğudur. Bu yazıda, siyasal düşüncenin evrimi bağlamında Ortaçağ kilise teolojisinin düşüşünü ve Aydınlanma düşüncesinin gelişimi analiz etmeye çalışacağım.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Politik Düşünce, Ortaçağ Paradigması, Politik Akıl, Reform, Politik Otorite Yapısı, Tanrı Düşüncesi, Modern Politik Düşünce

I. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE MEDIEVAL MIND AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR MODEL

In Medieval Christian theology, there was a comprehensive concept in use: *Universitas*. Coined by the Christian theologians in the Medieval Age, the *universitas* implied a sacred cosmic order and signified the whole universe created by God (Akal, 1995: 83). Though this concept depended upon the design of a sacred cosmology, it went beyond the limits of cosmology, extending to the life of the world, social order, and human activities. The conception of a static universe that theoretically rejected change prevailed in the Medieval Age. The world was accepted as the center of the universe. Beings were perceived in a fixed cosmic hierarchy from God to the simplest things. Having roots in ontology, this cosmic hierarchy extended onto the social plane. *The golden chain* connected the beings with a sacred bond and legitimized the social order (Christos C. Evangeliou, 1997: 71)

This theocentric worldview was not restricted to a particular culture or a certain region; on the contrary, the phenomenon of adherence to the theocentric conception of being and society characterized almost all the medieval cultures, Western or Eastern. Understanding reality in metaphysical terms and measuring the visible against the transcendent was the main mode of thinking in the Medieval Age. Since every being was an image and sign, man had to understand reality within the theo-centric view. (Çotuksöken&Babür, 2000: 29).

The medieval ontological conception held the Hereafter and the eternal life over the world and the temporal life. Therefore, the worldly relations and political authority were united with the holy. The rulers' understanding of the holy could not be surpassed because it was an *a priori* perception. The issue of political authority was dealt with on the grounds of its relation with God and the problem that who God gave political power received a great attention from the scholars (Tuck&Silverthorne, 2003: 225-228).

It seems that the *Universitas* formed a sacred veil which concealed the real medieval social relations and political structure and presented them as different from what they really were. Behind the veil, the real power relations went on but could not be perceived as they really were.¹

The Medieval Age had a social behavior model in harmony with its perception of ontology. This perception outright rejected the notions of social progress and reformation. Such notions were on the list of the *unthinkable* of the medieval culture. Instead of intervening and changing the course of the life, one had to accept it as it was. The life and its inherent sufferings, contradictions and unacceptable situations were idealized and interpreted as a different reality. The ways of reaching the idealized life versus the real life were developed and eternalized with the support of religious discourse. The most known of these ways was retreating from the world. However, this practice was predictable and applicable only for a limited number of people. The more common was seen in the public perception of social and political institutes. Instead of reforming the social institutes, one should think of them as created that way because God created all of these institutes as natural and good but man spoiled them. Thus, the effort should be made to purify the human soul of the evil and sins (Gauthier, 2000: 20-26).

Theocentric point of view turned the beings and relations to phenomena and indications. They were not meaningful *per se*, but the carriers of a divine meaning. The reality was always little beyond the perception.

A point of view that sanctified the reality completely was, in the final analysis, a way of perception. The most problematic aspect of this legitimizing and sanctifying viewpoint appeared in the attempt to transform an ontological relation into a social relation in spite of the fact that social organization is a human product, and not a natural, sacred and necessary phenomenon. This thesis means that every social regulation is artificial. However, the recognition of this truth would require the passage of a very long time.

This Medieval theological approach which set up an ontological connection between religion and politics was worked out by philosophers, too. Having an important position among these philosophers, Hegel influenced many thinkers. His philosophy essentially relied on a certain kind of ontology. The main theme of his thought was *Geist*, its nature, its attributes and self-realization in the scene of nature and history.

The *Geist* and its growth are *essential*. In other words, everything submits to it. The *Geist* first reveals itself in the nature. However, this phase is incomplete because the nature is restricted by the definitiveness of its laws. The real and perfect realm for the self-realization of the *Geist* is the history. This process has impact on language, thought, arts, philosophy and eventually political institutes. These are the means through which the *Geist* realizes itself (Taylor, 1979: 37).

There is a shared conviction among the circles of philosophy that Hegel turned the Christian theology upside-down. For this view, Hegel appropriated major concepts of the Christian theology and gave a philosophical continuity their functions. In this sense, some thinkers contended that his idea of the self-realization of the *Geist* was inspired by the medieval theology. Indeed, Hegel makes clear references to the God of Christianity when he endeavors to philosophically clarify the concept of *Geist* (Wallace, 2005: 125, 279).

In the philosophical analysis of Hegel, God revealed Himself to the world in Christianity. So, God informed the people of what He is as He did not want to remain hidden. Nevertheless, it is our task to know God. The spiritual and intellectual growth of mankind is understood and explained as a process related to the phenomenology of spirit. Whether the time to know God has come or not depends upon whether the ultimate purpose of the world has entered or not into the realm of reality everywhere in a valid and conscious manner. Hegel makes a leap from this point to the *Creative Intellect* and points out that his philosophical endeavor is essentially some kind of *theodicy*, i.e., an attempt to *justify the ways of God* (Robert B. Pippin, "Hegel, Freedom, the Will: The Philosophy of Right", 1-33; Wallace, 2005: 53).

After providing a ground for the self-realization of the *Geist* in the history, Hegel touches on the law, social order and state organization in his discussion of the means of the self-realization. Achieving a political organization in harmony with the most ultimate purpose, i.e., the self-realization of the *Geist* is a matter of time and effort. A happy state structure can be attained only after the process of successive clashes and the counterbalance of conflicting wills take place. So Hegel appoints theological functions to the state apparatus.

The famous Greek philosopher Plato is the first and foremost person who interpreted human activities, notably political arrangement, on an idealist ground. Some political scientists describe the Platonic state theory as the common wealth of human culture because this theory survived up to the present time though the Greek way of living and performing politics vanished. The most important factor in this survival is the fact that Plato's discourse is not shaped by a parochial cultural background; instead, it is the fruit of a higher theoretical and philosophical vision. Seven centuries later, Christian theologian Augustinus would think over the issue of state and political authority on the foundations laid by Plato (Cassirer, 1984: 87).

The Medieval Christian culture is not other than the continuity of the Ancient Greek thought may be too assertive, however, one can notice close similarities between the two in the construction of political authority and in the ethical values and in the higher idealism in logics. Though the place of some terms was changed, they continued to serve the same purpose. Plato thought that man needs to follow a *long path* in order to understand and achieve the idea of good. To the mind of Augustinus, this long path overlapped with the purpose that was weaved of religious themes. Augustinus argued that no state and government could satisfy the human craving for felicity. Real felicity can be attained by believing and trusting God and by seeking refuge in His *grace*². Both Plato and Augustinus focused on the unwritten laws of real justice. These laws had no after and before; they did not belong to the past and the present; whence they had come was not known; they were not created by any human power; they had no origin. But they went as far back as to the creation of the world. In this respect, the conversion of the Greek *logos* to the Christian *logos* can be described as the feat of Christianity (D. M. Nicol, 1988:, 52; Cassirer, 1984: 88).

One of the most fundamental distinctions between the Greek political thought and the Medieval Christian political thought lies in the conception of *legislator*. Judaism is a prototype of monotheistic religions. The concept of legislator is so conspicuous in Judaism that some political scientists speak of the *Mosaic Law*. The emphasis on this concept was used to differentiate between the Platonic and the Christian theological perceptions of law. Describing the attempts of the Christian thinkers to harmonize between the Greek philosophical theism and the theism introduced by the prophets as a mistake, Cassirer views the attempt to set up similarity between Plato and Moses as impossible, also. It is impossible to place the Platonist and Mosaic understanding of law on the same level. These are mutually opposite beyond being different. The Mosaic

Law recognizes a legislator in advance. If there is no legislator to explain the law and to bring its trueness, validity and power under security, the law loses its meaning. This is quite different from what we come across in the Greek philosophy (Gilson, 1964: 25-30).

The ethic system developed by the Greeks has common features. Accordingly, we can ascertain the standards of ethic actions by logic. It is reason which accords authority to them. In contrast to the Greek intellectualism, the Abrahamic religions are founded on a strong will, i.e., the Divine Will. God is a “person”, which means that He is at the same time a will. So, purely rational and speculative methods do not enable us to understand His will (Cassirer, 1984: 90).

The profound influence of the medieval culture comes from its emphasis upon the notion of transcendental unity and from its homogeneous nature. Every formation and value was understood on theological bases. This character could be seen in its theological discourse, too. Science, religion, ethics, politics and arts were filled, grounded and interpreted in accordance with the same spirit. The Medieval thought relied upon a holistic *weltanschauung* that viewed all the human activities from the theological perspective. Therefore, all the debates which took place in the course to the modern political theories always had an ontological background. Thus, with the collapse of the medieval scholastic order, a new ontology began to appear. The former strong relationship between ontology and social order helped accelerate searching for a new social order. The collapse of the medieval scholastic mode of thinking is described as the disenchantment of the world. Not only the structure of social order dissolved but also the deep-rooted mentality and intellectual paradigm vanished.

The process of transition from the Medieval Age to the Enlightenment did not occur in decisive leaps as in theoretical certainties. Rather, it would be more accurate to talk about a transformation which went through intermediate epistemological positions and transitional stages. There is a relationship between the Medieval and modern thought in respect of the transformation of political authority. As the Medieval Christian thought carried in its bosom the seeds of modern secular state, the idea of modern secular state bore the indelible traces of the Medieval Christian thought in its depths. People had to await the advent of monotheist belief in order to get the concept of state or the notion of *one*. This belief, i.e., the transcendentalized abstract principle of *one* formed the bridge between the notion of modern secular state and the Medieval Christian thought (Tuck&Silverthorne, 2003: 173-181).

II. THE THESIS OF THE TWO SWORDS

There must be many halfway stations and theoretical transitional stages. The new human typology that came into scene as result of the collapse of Scholasticism was not sheer atheistic. On the contrary, the theoreticians of the new order had strong religious beliefs. Nevertheless, the new man played the role of *transitional type* in an epistemological and mental sense. Being the symbol of the Reformation, Luther, for instance, regarded himself as a theologian and religious reformist, and not as a political theoretician. In the essence of his thesis lied a theological speculation. He had to address the tension between the spiritual and the physical authorities because religion and politics were so closely interconnected at his time. Thinking that this relationship was disadvantageous to the spiritual authority, Luther aimed at saving the Church from this humiliating and bad situation and at restoring it to its primordial state as defined in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it came first on his agenda to displace the Catholic hierarchy. However, Luther's struggle ended up in his entirely exclusion from the religious and political arena. The Lutheran thought displayed continuity with the medieval mentality on one hand and meant break with this mentality on the other. It displays continuity in the respect that Luther approached the issue of the relationship between religion and politics on the ground of Christian theology and displays break in the respect that he tried to introduce a clear distinction between the political authority and the religious life (Barbier, 1999: 27-28; Tuck&Silverthorne, 2003: 173-185).

Luther believed that since the true faithful possess all the virtues, they do not need a distinct law. However, because the others, i.e., non-Christians are deprived of divine grace, they understand only the language of law. Such people can only live under the sway of law and sword. "If the world consisted of the true Christians only", asserts Luther, "it would not be useful and necessary to have emperors, kings, feudal lords, sword and law." Departing from this perception, Luther proposes the thesis of *the two swords*. One is *the kingdom of faith* where there is no need for law, the other is *the kingdom of law* which lacks faith (Benson, 1982: 15; Beiner, 2011: 289, 332; Barbier, 1999: 31-32).

As two important political theoreticians after Luther, Calvin and Jean Bodin further advanced the distinction between the religious and the political realm. But the religious arguments which had seemed in the Lutheran discourse were still prevalent in their thought. Bodin remained faithful to the ancient thesis that political power should serve the religious goals. He clearly believed

that religion fulfills a substantial function in a well-ruled state because, to his view, religion constitutes the foundation of state. In other words, God is the foundation and ultimate goal of state and government. The dependence of state upon God and His will guarantee political stability and social harmony (Barbier, 1999: 58).

In the transition from Scholasticism to the Enlightenment, one should emphasize the new relationship between man and God. From the ontological and political perspective, the Scholastic worldview described man as a servant whose fate is drawn in detail by God and as an agent who is not the real author of his own action. But the Renaissance brought a new understanding of man, society and history. So they began to look at the relationship between these with a different paradigm. Man was no more living in a history predetermined by the absolute will of God nor in a society with divine aim. The Enlightenment replaced the perception of history whose unique and greatest subject is the sacred with the perception of subject-man which builds the history freely. Being no more a passive and impotent object vis-à-vis the history, man began to obtain his individuality. The illusory connection of government with the sacred was cut off and political authority began to be defined as the networks of worldly power.

After the dissolution of the medieval paradigm that despised the life of the world, the glances turned from the heaven to the real world. The worldly relations were no more ephemeral, insignificant, and worthless. The reality and happiness were looked for within the life of the world and the worldly relations, not beyond the world. The circular time perception of the Medieval Age was superseded by a new thought of history, i.e., the evolutionist and linear history of the New Age. The construction of time in an irreligious frame is one of the milestones on the way to modernity. This is the inception of the perception of government within the worldly borders. This distinction signifies the threshold where modern political and legal conceptualization began to appear. A new social arrangement came into view in this stage in which the West *began to think politically*.

III. THE IMAGE OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY AND THE STATE PERCEPTION

The idea of modern state had theoretical roots in the Christian Medieval Age. The state could come into being only after the people began to think of it. As result of the collapse of the Scholastic ontology and cosmology, important changes occurred in the thought of God. The perception of the King-God, which occupied too large a place in the ontological and social arrangement,

began to leave its place to the image of a more distant and restricted God, a process which resulted with the partially exclusion of God from the life of the world. However, what was dismissed was only the traditional image of God. In fact, the intellectual and philosophical function of the idea of God could not be destroyed completely. Actually, Religion and religious institutes maintained their traces and state occupied the throne which became free as a result of secularization (Augustinus, 1952: 14). From this point of view, secularization can be described as an exchange of concepts rather than a mental rupture or leap (Benson, 1982: 17)

Throughout the Medieval Ages, political authority presented itself in the context of *Universitas* in a sacred and ontological guise. In fact, this is a paradox in the fullest sense of the term because political/social arrangement, being in fact a human product, was made under the auspices of the sacred and God. However, in the Medieval Ages, the kings were believed to receive their power from God during the ceremony of crowning. Viewing themselves as the *Vicegerents of God*, the kings thought that they occupied a sacred position³. In his *Memoirs*, Louis XIV pronounces his belief that his post is sacred. In his view, since a king occupies the place of God, he partakes of His knowledge as much as His authority (Parkinson, 1984: 64).

Louis believed that the kings who fulfill the divine mission on earth are appointed by God who is the only protector of the public well-being (Parkinson, 1984: 67).

Owing to the dissolution of this fundamental paradigm of the Medieval Age, i.e., *Universitas*, the connection between social order and God, and the divine values and the worldly life loosened. Consequently, a radical change occurred in the perception of political authority. As the ruling elite in the Medieval Age were considered the vicegerent on earth of God's ontological authority, the rulers began to govern on behalf of the state. Both political views have reference to a transcendental abstract concept. It seems that there was imagined a conceptual similarity between God and the state (Akal, 1995: 73).

Strauss posits that under the modern political thought lie the traces of the past and its cultural heritage. In tracing the roots of modern political thought, he goes further beyond the Medieval Age and calls attention to the Ancient Greece. In his view, in order to understand ourselves and enlighten the way to the future, we should probe the past experiences deeply and widely. To support this view, Strauss symbolizes the two conflicting mentalities with the name of two ancient cities. Standing for the relationship or the clash

between the Greek philosophy and the Scriptures, these two cities are Athens and Jerusalem, which are regarded as the two basic components of modern Western culture. Seeing harmony as well as a deep discrepancy between these two, Strauss believes that modern culture inherited the clash between reason and revelation from the past. The conflict between Athens and Jerusalem is not only a philosophical and theological question problem but also a political question (Strauss, 1959: 33).

Philosophically, Athens and Jerusalem signify two basic paradigms and there is not the third one. There is no common base that allows us to evaluate Athens and Jerusalem, i.e., philosophy and revelation. Strauss, however, stresses that there is no *Organon* beside these two. This is because either Jerusalem will reckon philosophy as *paganism* or Athens will see revelation as *contradictory* (Strauss, 2009: 30). This means that various intellectual formulations that were positioned between the classic and modern thought have an eclectic nature. In other words, while these transitional modes of thinking were evolving towards secularism, they carried the traces of both religious and secular paradigms, alike.

One of the most important stages on the way to the Enlightenment is the Reformation movement. Though it had a heavy theological hue, the Reformation is very often associated with the Renaissance. In 1523, Luther wrote a charter concerning the attitude to be taken vis-à-vis the Reformation. This text discusses the subject of worldly authority and what extent this authority will be obeyed. The text can be described as a religious affirmation of obeying the worldly authority. Accordingly, the spirit that belongs to God and the body that belongs to the king are separate from each other. Departing from the Platonic spirit-matter dualism, Luther suggests that one cannot be forced to believe in God, while the king can force the bodies. In fact, the worldly sovereignty simply means ruling over the bodies. But the real freedom is, argues Luther, the freedom of spirit. Though one should obey the worldly authority, one may not obey the Pope. The issues addressed and the religious proofs produced by the reformist theoreticians confined the religious thought versus the worldly life to a very limited realm. However, the practical and political result of the Reformation is more important. For, as consequence of the Reformation, man who had been the servant of God became the servant of the king's political authority. One should keep in mind that a battle was fought from within against the century-old political and institutional hegemony of the Church. The fact that everything was interpreted on political grounds in the Medieval Age can be seen as the reflection of social structure.

For the strongest organization was the state and there was no powerful 'civil' organization except the Church's religious and political institutions. This process is a reminder of the case of the clever and powerful sultans in the Muslim world who gained an increasing political power at the expense of the Caliph's declining power. In face of many nascent monarchies, the social and political control of the Church began to weaken. In the heating struggle between the monarchy and the Church, the clergy and intelligentsia became the strong side of this theoretical and political battle. Of the clergy, some defended the Church as an institution, while the others opposed the Church and defined religion merely as a bond of belief. Luther can be seen in the second front. There appeared an interesting movement to balance the Church, which weakened in the late Renaissance, against the king. The founder of the Jesuit Order, Ignacio de Loyola, developed a middle solution which proposes that every authority comes from God through the intermediacy of people. According to the medieval perception of the sacred authority, the authority comes directly from God. But Loyola's formula inserted the intermediacy of people between the king and God though it preserved the notion that authority principally comes from God. In this view, the king receives his power from God through a certain kind of *pactum* with the people, not directly from God (Gauthier, 2000: 187-188).

As a religious and political institution, the Church lost power before the king. In fact, the pressure of this fact can be observed even in the religious discourse that prevailed in the speculations. The conclusion that Luther achieved departing from the Platonic spirit-matter dualism should be seen as the admission that the Church's political power came to an end. The theory developed by the Jesuits involves the furthest concessions which can be made by the Christian theology. For this reason, the secular authority of the King's can be legitimated by the Christian theology. As a result of the three century-long transformations, a definitive clash took place between sixteenth century social structure and the traditional social norms. The organized religion resisted this and called for wiping out the inequalities by *returning to the old*. However the Church lost this war and had to adapt itself to the new conditions (Chavura, 2010:42).

From the perspective of paradigmatic change, one of the most important consequences of Luther's efforts is the disentanglement of morality from the state of being an *incomprehensible decree*. Undoubtedly, Luther's translation of the Scripture into the language accessible to the public played the decisive role in this development. This was the removing of the shawl from over the

teachings of the Church and the inception of the process which resulted with the Western man's acquisition of freedom to determine how to live. As a matter of fact, this process brought the conflict between religion and politics to the threshold of the worldly authority's secular discourse (Mansfield, 1991:101-114).

The stronger side, i.e., the monarchies got hold of both worldly and religious domain. In other words, it seized both *swords*. In the meantime, political thought underwent many important transformations. Chief among them took place in the theory of sovereignty. In order to understand the theoretical dimension of the struggle between the Church and the monarchy, one needs to take account of the socio-political settings. The arguments and theories were expressed in a chaotic and hot state. So the evolution of political thought carried the traces of the rising and declining institutions (Gauthier, 146-161).

IV. "THE DEBT OF MEANING" AND THE PRINCIPLE OF EXTERIORITY AND THE PROBLEM OF LEGITIMACY

Just as man lives in a physical world, he lives in a mental realm, perhaps more intensely. One can assert that our universe of meaning is more real than the vault of heaven that surrounds us and under which we breathe. This definition holds true of social structures since societies also live in a world of meanings. Some political scientists depart from this point in addressing the issue of political authority. To this view, every society is under a *debt of meaning* (Akal, 1995: 108). The debt of meaning emanates from a society's need for a reference that is outside and beyond its own world. This source to which the society has recourse in interpreting itself is the source of the sacredness. The people first submit to this power and then to the political authority that they regard as the concrete institutional representation of this power in society. The political authority gains sacredness and societal institutionalization takes place under the auspices of the sacred principle and the abstract reference. In this regard, one can argue that the question of political power is at the same a religious/theological question.

The first instant in which a society under the debt of meaning needs the sacred is its phase of formation. The meaning constitutes and brings the community together. However, the need for the concrete political authority to hold the people together and prevent them from dispersing is more conspicuous. Once the political authority is established, it can stand on the grounds of purely concrete functions such as the maintaining of security and order, the punishment of the criminals, the collection of taxes, and fighting against the

enemy. Relying on a transcendental principle, the political authority justifies its power of ruling and holds the right to use force including the decision of death. So, the notion of political legitimacy comes into the scene, being the first and foremost quality that this sanctification earned for the political authority.

The core function and goal of sanctification is to secure the people's submission to the social regulations and consequently to ensure their obedience to the social norms. There is no form of administration that does not seek source of legitimacy for itself. The quest of legitimacy can be seen as an effort of sanctification in reference to an abstract principle which is *not present* here. Therefore, as a technique of exteriorization, every kind of political legitimization has a religious nature. There are some approaches that define the concept of sovereignty on the basis of the relationship between the sacred and the profane. According to these approaches, the societies should be arranged in accordance with a certain principle or norm is required. Since the rules and verdicts came from another sphere of influence, they should be respected and obeyed. Built on the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, this duality would lead the whole society to submitting the verdicts which appeared as regulations. The notion that the law comes from a sacred source has a decisive role. Thanks to this perception and belief, the concrete regulations of the political authority are obeyed. Otherwise, saying that *I am the creator of the rules* gives rise to the notion that *I can disobey them* (Akal, 1995: 9).

The sanctification of the political authority involves a problem from the perspective of the pre-modern-state communities. The communities ruled by the sacred leaders faced the problem of the interruption of the political authority when the leader died. Because of the fact that although the sacredness interrupts in such situations while the political authority continues, the reality that the control and administration are actually maintained by social powers reveals itself. The leader articulates and implements the law. The fact that the death of the leader causes profound traumas in the minds of the society comes from the sacredness ascribed to the leader and his function of the implementation of the law. In the Medieval societies that ascribe sacredness to the body of the king, the bonds between the sacred and the profane are severed by the death of the king and the society falls into chaos till a new king rises to the throne. With the death of the sacred king, the society's connection with the law is cut off, too. In consequence, the society falls into the vacuum and chaos created by the sudden loss of the law.

The death of the universe along with the decease of the king is a direct result of the discontinuity of the political authority experienced in the societies with sacred leaders. The value produced by society in the course of overcoming this chaos is the separation of *continuity* peculiar to the principle from *temporality* peculiar to the practice. As result, the function of the king or the leader began to acquire sacredness in place of his physical existence and body. So, the foundation of the continuity of the political authority was laid. The universe no more would be re-built along with the installation of a new king. The kings would be mortal but the kingdom would be eternal. *Not the ephemeral and worthless assets of the gentlemen would be respected; instead, their seats and the positions that they occupy would be respected* (Akal, 1995: 54).

The concept of sovereignty was developed in order to meet a certain need in the course of the evolution of political authority in the history of political thought. This need was concerned with the legitimization of the exercise of authority. When the principle of political authority was differentiated from the exercise of authority, the rulers faced the problem of legitimacy. Legitimacy is certainly related with the question of exteriority. The political authority acquires legitimacy by having reference to an exteriorized principle. It is the concept of God which supplied the political authority with this element of exteriority throughout the Medieval Ages. The rulers claimed that they ruled on behalf of God and their practices would be questioned only by God and they were responsible only to God.

One of the most important developments related with the change of the medieval political thought and the perception of the principle of exteriority is the revitalization of Aristotelianism. Thanks to the efforts of Albertus Magnus and Thomas of Aquinum, the Aristotelian philosophy had already taken its place in the Christian theology within the limits acceptable to the Church. So, the phenomenon of political authority arose from a natural need. However, this theory was not yet advanced to its logical conclusion, the fact that if the naturalness of state is accepted, there will be no need for another exterior source including the Church. No one dared to articulate this thesis for a long time (Ullman, 1965: 176-180).

Political scientists call attention to the critical role of Ibn Rushd in the reappearance and gaining influence of Aristotelianism in the Western religious thought. It is known that Ibn Rushd's views were used to criticize the Church authority and there appeared the current of Averroism in the West. His view that we can comprehend the reality of the worldly affairs through the rational

abilities without the help of a religious authority greatly contributed to the formation of the concept of political authority independent of the Church. The establishment of politics on rational bases and the perception of society as a natural entity are outcomes of the political interpretation of Averroism (Dag, 2011).

V. THE IDEA OF “AUTHORITY IS FOR ITSELF!”

Machiavelli (1469-1527) produced another principle of exteriority without renouncing the former principle of exteriority. An idea of political authority that gained independence from the holy freed itself from the physical existence of the king, too. An attempt was made to set up an abstract sovereignty which acquires its meaning from atemporalism and continuity. One should bear in mind that these two are the attributes of God. The idea of state crystallized as an indivisible, perpetual and efficient entity. Indivisibility is related with the exercise of authority while continuity is concerned with the principle of authority. The political authority relied upon the principle of a mysterious but equally powerful sovereignty. In the transition from the god of religion to the image of abstract state by virtue of secularization, the same values were used and re-defined. And it was these divine qualities that earned sacredness for the state. What is determining in this process is that the concept of state exists in the monotheistic belief. If there were not the belief of God, the notion of state could not be created in the mind and in actuality.

In his book which did not receive good reception when first written, Machiavelli dealt with the power of authority and state, being the institutionalized form of this power, as an entity which has particular and distinct values. In his view, state and authority *per se* had value and purpose. This point of view not only separates politics from ethical and religious principles but also exalts and places politics somewhere above the other realms. So the text of Machiavelli suggests that political behavior should be carried on in accordance with the *raison d’etat*, not in keeping with the individual conscious or Christian ethics. State is not part of the religion of Christianity or another supranational abstraction. State is state and therefore it itself must make its own rules (Thomson, 1997: 35).

What Machiavelli did can be summarized as putting state in the place of the Church. In fact, when cutting off the connection of politics with religion and ethics, he exalted authority and ascribed a fetishistic meaning to the state. Since the state is the center of all the values, the politician no longer has to act upon any abstract reference beside power. Due to this excessive secular

meaning he ascribed to politics, the political literature gained a new concept: *Machiavellism*. The term *Machiavellist* is minted to describe any unethical or immoral, harsh and cruel form of administration. By extension, this term began to be used to refer to the people who think only their own interests and count every way as legitimate to achieve their goals (Viroli, 2010: 75-88).

As an ardent Italian patriot, Machiavelli was not an atheist or anti-ethical person, philosophically speaking. He lived in a country where even the spiritual authority of the Church was shaken and small monarchies that were fighting each other arose. In such circumstances, every state had to be powerful and establish its own sovereignty in order to survive. However, small states were thinking only their own interests and the age of the powerful and great empires that were committed to the sublime ideal of serving God had already come to an end. Therefore, it was no longer possible to form a unity on the grounds of Christian values. In addition, Italy, Machiavelli's country, was suffering, agonizing in chronic crises the foreign invasions and was not able to form alliances against the occupiers. So Machiavelli experienced an actual situation and believed that he found the way of the salvation of his country (Thomson, 1997: 25-26). As a man of action and a tough reader of political history, Machiavelli inclined to draw a realistic picture of the actual world, which he observed, in his own discourse (Viroli, 154).

Even though Machiavelli did not oppose the Christian theology overtly, he ignored it, however. This is because the determining factors in the socio-political reality in which he lived were harsh political conditions, not religious ideals. Therefore, it would be unrealistic to say that religious and ethical discourses had correspondence in actual life. In this context, one should highlight that politics began to be addressed in its worldly borders. This effort can be described as building a wall between the Medieval Christian thought and the thought of the New Age. In addition to this wall, it signifies the mental break which would form the modern political-legal conceptualization. Thus, the idea of a new social organization begun to arise.

CONCLUSION

The mental structure that dominated the West in the Medieval Age depended upon a special epistemology. This epistemology viewed all the basic fields of human activities ranging from ontology to theology and political thought towards the same perspective. Its concepts were characterized by a holistic and theocentric worldview. In parallel to the physical power and capacity held by the Church, theology positioned itself on the top of the hierarchy of

sciences. All of the social institutions and notably the political authority were put in the service of religion. As religion presented the supreme reality, politics actualized it. The human actions had no meaning, value or legitimacy *per se*. Politics, arts, science and philosophy had value as much as they served religion and had an instrumental value. However, politics operated always on a concrete ground though much effort was made to mystify and cover political actions with the sacred veil of religion. So, despite all its theocentric appearance, the medieval political culture witnessed a power struggle into which political authority evolved in its own way.

In fact, the transition to modern political thought did not take place suddenly and in definitive leaps. Many thinkers who are regarded as the pioneers of modern political theory were paradigmatically situated between the two cultural textures. In other words, they thought in the medieval frame but contributed to the contents of the Enlightenment movement by their theories. The political theories with theological structure had a deep influence on the formation of modern political thought. However, in the course of time, modern Western thought broke away from its religious tendencies and assumed a secular character. The concept of political authority began to be thought within the frame of worldly power relations.

There is an epistemological relationship between ontological and social theories. Every form of evaluation regarding the being comprises a special perception of man and society and so a social theory. The nature of the being in general and the nature of the theories concerning the relationship between the beings propose a certain kind of epistemology. So every attempt of political-cultural re-organization relies on a different ontological design.

The theocentric perception of being and a social structure model that acquired its meaning and legitimacy from this source characterized the Medieval Age. However, especially in the Western Medieval Age, social structures and relations were under the regulative and authoritarian control of the Church being the institutional form of religion. The teachings of the Church made one-to-one connections between ontology and socio-political domain, and political structure were defined in a dogmatic manner. With the transition to the Enlightenment, politics began to be envisaged with a different paradigm. The political relations were imagined as the relations of worldly interests. Therefore, some of the concepts survived by gaining new forms and meanings, while the others entirely vanished.

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END NOTES

- 1 *There is a ground which allows us to illustrate the theoretical and historical roots of the relationships between religion and politics. This ground is the theocentric perception of ontology which prevailed in both the East and West. In spite of the nuances between them, many social theories and political thoughts were envisioned in the frame of the same paradigm. The medieval mental settings should be taken as one of the grounds upon which the Muslim Political thought which has a particular social and political theory is examined. Of course, it would not be proper to roughly equate the Christian, Jewish and Muslim Medieval Ages. Nevertheless, there are some similarities among these three major theological constructs. First of all, they borrowed arguments and approaches from each other as a result of mutual dialogue and interaction. On the other hand, though they produced different solutions, these three theologies had to deal with very close or the same problems. In analyzing how much Muslim political thought belongs to the Medieval Age and how much it belongs to the Middle East, the importance of the exposition of the Medieval thought is obvious. However, needless to say, that my assertion that there is a relationship between the Muslim mind and the Medieval intellectual traditions implies no humiliation or contempt. On the contrary, my effort should be seen as a scholarly attempt to illustrate the roots of the Medieval perceptions which involve the Muslim intellectual structure, too.*
- 2 *Some scholars view Augustinus as an Ancient Age philosopher since he reproduced some concepts and themes of the Ancient Grek philosophy in a different context.*
- 3 *The divine source of political authority appointed responsibility to both the rulers and the subjects. Firstly, the rulers were supposed to act as the Ministers of God.*

