And it is said that on returning from a journey some time afterwards, as he traversed the land just after the harvest, and saw the heaps of grain standing parallel and equal to one another, he smiled, and said to them that were by: "All Laconia looks like a family estate newly divided among many brothers." 

(Plutarch, Life of Lycurgus)

The following sections will attempt to trace the most important features and the eventual transformation occurring within two different traditions, namely eschatology and utopianism. This will be important for understanding the patterns which aided the emergence and the inner dynamics of totalist heterodoxies, whether influenced by religious or secular themes, or, indeed, mixing the two into a distinct hybrid.

There are a number of authors have pursued a reconstruction of eschatological thought and of political utopianism. Naturally, their approaches are influenced either by the period of their activity and by their cultural background. This arguably explains, at least in part, the major focus on eschatological thought in the understanding of totalist heterodoxies, as they have been called in this work. While more authors pay attention to an eschatological dimension than to political utopianism, both of these traditions are present, with varying degrees in the works of researchers such as Talmon, Löwith, Cohn, Voegelin, Eisenstadt, Pellicani or Griffin, among others.

While this book is greatly indebted to their scholarship, the major difference which separates the present work from the authors mentioned is its focus on totality. Furthermore, the book attempts to systematically approach the concept of totality alongside the interaction between temporality, charismatization and the pure-impure and truth-untruth dichotomies. The historical examples to be discussed in the following section will be typically chosen according to their significance – whether direct or indirect – for the overall impact of eschatological though or political utopianism. The main examples, such as in the case of Joachim of Fiore and the Taborite Hussites, are, by themselves, extremely important to any discussion on the interaction of eschatology and utopian elements. Nevertheless, this section will also approach other, lesser known examples, yet which point to interesting nuances, or which represent a surprising anticipation of other works closer to modernity – such as the Byzantine katechon, or the work of Gemistos Plethon, respectively.

The first tradition to be discussed stems from Abrahamic monotheism and deals with the concept of the eschaton. The following sections will outline the broad features and evolution of eschatological thought, while maintaining a particular focus on the medieval eschatological heterodoxies. Crucially, this was the period when eschatological movements posed the greatest direct threat to the secular authority of the European polities. Furthermore, such movements possessed recognizably totalistic features embedded in the charismatic, ideocratic structures which they created.

In depicting the archaeology of totality and totalist movements in the classical Abrahamic world, one should consider, on one hand, the principles of monotheism and its focus on eschatology as fulfillment of salvation and, on the other, the principles of Western political utopianism and its gradual shift from an ideal to an achievable society. Eisenstadt


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M. Murariu, Totality, Charisma, Authority,
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argues that the tradition of utopian models encountered in Europe can also be discovered in China and other so-called Axial Civilizations in apparently similar manifestations. Yet, as he himself points out, the Chinese case differs from the Abrahamic world in the sense that utopian and heterodox movements did not achieve long term or far-reaching institutional reconstruction of the political centres of society.

The fundamental figure here will be Joachim of Fiore, an individual who was ultimately responsible for a decisive paradigm shift from eschatological thought which was atemporal and transcendent, to one which could be increasingly seen as historical and immanent. A number of authors have discussed the influence of Joachim of Fiore, and that of his direct or indirect followers throughout the later centuries, with the most important recent ones being Marjorie Reeves and Bernard McGinn – this is alongside a quite considerable literature which touches on Joachite interpretations of such important concepts as the tertius status and its apparent vigour and resilience across centuries. Together with works on eschatology and temporality, like those authored by Hall and Williamson, such perspectives have been instrumental in the structuring the reconstruction which follows. Moreover, Joachim of Fiore’s impact will be instrumental for a discussion on what remains the most detailed debate on the nature of temporality and secularism, that is, the debate which pits the work of Karl Löwith against that of Hans Blumenberg.

The second tradition stems from the Hellenistic utopian tradition, dealing with the increasing orientation of political utopianism from a theoretical ideal to the blueprint of what was meant to be an achievable and increasingly secular society. In this case, the most important figure chosen for analysis will be the Greek-Byzantine intellectual Gemistos Plethon. If Plethon was not as directly influential in the development of political utopian traditions as Joachim was in influencing eschatological thought, his major importance is found in the rather unusual nature of some of his writings, specifically, his Memoranda. Thus, rather than simply being a product of his time, Plethon stands out as a major thematic forerunner of what is essentially modern political utopianism, as well as of features associated with modern nationalism. This arguably makes parts of his work appear closer to the Enlightenment than to the intellectual environment of the 15th century.

Finally, although concentrating in more detail on premodern and early modern eschatology and utopianism, this section will also link these topics to the transformation of European Christianity. Manifesting itself with the greatest vigour and intensity in the Western Church, this transformation paved the way for the removal of religion from the centre of public space in Europe and the rise of secularism and modern nationalism. Standing at the centre of these new soteriological projects, the idea of freedom functioned as a powerful symbol. Whether it was meant for a certain virtuous community or for a universal brotherhood of Man, freedom would later be encompassed by the ideocracies of the 20th century. The freedom they offered was the only type of freedom possible in a totalistic vision of the world – the freedom to submit to its principles.

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475 This does not mean that political utopianism in the Western sense of the word can be that easily compared to non-Western civilizations, as the sheer number of utopian theories, treaties and communities which flourished throughout the long history of European civilization demonstrates.
476 The Taiping represent a special case in this regard, due to their unique blend of Christianity with native features, thus representing a powerful monotheist inspired counter-model to the established order. On utopian and renovative movements in China see Hubert Seiwert, *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History*, in collaboration with Ma Xisha (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003).
477 Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, 16.