



# Fundamentalist formations in Germany? ultramontanist catholicism and national socialism

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**Abstract** Central Europe is often seen as the “exceptional case” in the sociology of religion with a high degree of secularization, traditional religions in a process of decline, and fundamentalist movements small in numbers. However, this may not have always been the case. This article elaborates the analytical advantages to conceive late 19th century Catholicism and early 20th century National Socialism as two distinctive fundamentalist formations in Germany. Seen in this light, in between 1850 and 1945, fundamentalist movements were able to attract large strata of the population in Germany. This article includes four parts. First, I outline what I mean by the term “fundamentalism”. Second, I will describe 19th century German Catholicism, and thirdly, early 20th century National Socialism as a fundamentalist movement. In the conclusion I will discuss if their labelling as fundamentalist formations may be justified.

**Keywords** Fundamentalism · Catholic Milieu · National Socialism · Modernity

## 1 Introduction

This article aims to analyze the importance of fundamentalist formations<sup>1</sup> in Germany. Germany, and central Europe, are often seen as the “exceptional case” in the sociology of religion.<sup>2</sup> Secularization is particularly strong and observable here,

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<sup>1</sup> I use the word *formation* here in order to avoid a premature use of the often applied term “movement” and leave the question open in which kind of social form these formations may manifest themselves: as a “milieu”, as a “movement” or as a “sectarian group”, for example. As will be clear in the context of my empirical descriptions, it seems reasonable to qualify 19th century Catholicism as a milieu (as has often been done) and National Socialism as a movement. Most relevant for the term milieu is its con-

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most traditional religions are in a steady process of decline, and fundamentalist movements, while often portrayed in the media, are small in numbers. But this has not necessarily always been the case. Based upon a certain time span, the question shall be raised if Germany has once been one of the hot spots of fundamentalisms. In this article, I aim to analyze two specific social formations in Germany, first the so called “Catholic Milieu”, and second National Socialism as possible candidates for fundamentalist formations in Germany. The selection of these two formations is not meant to be exclusive. I do focus on these formations mainly to discuss—without necessarily arriving at a conclusive answer—the following questions:

- What is the analytical value of a general term “fundamentalism”?
- How does this analytical concept help us to understand religious—and political—formations in modern times?
- In how far does the analytical category of fundamentalism offer new insights into the study of different social formations such as the Catholic Milieu and National Socialism—and beyond?
- What are the social and historical contexts in which formations of fundamentalism arise?
- What is the possible relation between fundamentalism and violence?

These questions will be answered by (1) outlining an understanding of fundamentalism in the context of modernity, the historical contextualization of the rise of the Catholic milieu (2) and National Socialism (3), and (4) a conclusive discussion at the end.

## 2 Fundamentalism as a religious formation within modernity

In the various attempts to transform the term fundamentalism its judgemental usage in public discourse into a value-free social scientific concept, there is a general agreement that fundamentalism is in some ways, mainly negatively, tied to modernity. Fundamentalism thus is framed as a selective religious anti-modernism.<sup>3</sup> If this is the case, I would like to ask what exactly “modernity” is and in what ways fundamentalist formations may partly oppose—and partly confirm—to it.

On a *semantic* level, I take secularism as the most important feature, pretty much in the wake of Charles Taylor’s “Secular Age” (Taylor 2007). Whereas until the enlightenment period a “sacred canopy” in the terminology of Peter L. Berger, or a religious worldview with God in the center of the universe had prevailed,

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ceptualization by Rainer Maria Lepsius (1993; see also Hübinger 2008). On the vast literature about social movements, see Rucht and Neidhard (2020), on historical movement research Mittag and Stadland (2014). For an overview on social forms in the context of religion, see the chapters in Pollack et al. (2018, mainly pp. 467–658), mainly Kern and Pruiskens (2018) on religious movements and Gabriel (2018) on religious milieus.

<sup>2</sup> Among others, Warner (1993), Davie (2002), Casanova (2018).

<sup>3</sup> See, among others, Almond et al. (2003), Marty and Appleby (2004), Martin Riesebrodt (1993, 2000), Thomas Meyer (2011). A powerful critique against the usage of fundamentalism as an analytical concept is raised by Schiffauer (2001).

“reality”, the conviction of an objective outside world governed by its own objective principles substitute the will of God as the “unmoved mover”. This also holds true for a different understanding of time. Salvation turns into “history”, eschatology into “future”<sup>4</sup>. Without a common belief in an afterlife, the “pursuit of happiness” and the establishment of “heaven on earth” in the here and now turn into the main motives for action. “Pastoral Power”, in the terminology of Michel Foucault, is thus replaced by “Biopower”<sup>5</sup>. Deocentrism is transformed into Anthropocentrism in the sense that man’s fate lies in his hands alone.

This is not to argue that religious perspectives do not prevail in modern times, but they are challenged by this modernist view and must relate in some way or the other to it. Whereas religious liberalism tends to harmonize religion with modern world views, fundamentalism belongs to the larger family of religious conservatism that tends to oppose modernist perspectives, based upon a traditional, or modern, religious cosmology.<sup>6</sup> Fundamentalism on a semantic level can thus be conceived as a religious campaign against modern perspectives. Most of all, the present is understood as an apocalyptic or chiliastic scenario.<sup>7</sup> Everything that calls one’s religious traditions into question is conceptualized as an evil force that must be combated and overcome.

Looking at the *social-structural level*, I will firstly address processes of transformation on the social meso-level, namely the vast extension of societalized against communitized social relations in reference to Max Weber’s distinction of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* (Weber 1972 [1921], p. 21–23). Modern times experience a vast growth of impersonal relations both on markets and in modern organizations, whereas patrimonial relations<sup>8</sup> loose their legitimate status (Schlamecher 2013, p. 77–82). Social movements from the left to the right, including fundamentalist ones, share a critique against these societalized social relations. They all seem to be based on a romantized notion of a “good” community and conceive societalization as its degeneration. Non-communitarian social relations in society are perceived as alienated, immoral, corrupted and the cause of injustice, exploitation and misery. Deploying the classical sociological distinction of “community” versus “society” (Tönnies 1887), this line of criticism is based on the paradoxical claim that a good society can only be a community. Fundamentalist formations don’t seem to be an exception here.

On the *societal macro-level*, one of the great changes in modernity seems to be a transition in the field of politics. The shift from hierocracies (God-Kings or Emperors by the Grace of God)<sup>9</sup> to people’s sovereignty (Agamben 1998, p. 126–136;

<sup>4</sup> Hölscher (1999).

<sup>5</sup> Foucault (2007).

<sup>6</sup> Almond et al. (2003); see anti-secularism as the key defining feature of fundamentalist movements.

<sup>7</sup> Auffahrt (2015, p. 118) distinguishes these terms by the passive (apocalypse) or active (chiliasm) part of the believers. The apocalypse calls for patience, chiliasm for action.

<sup>8</sup> Against what is suggested by the wording, I do not want to highlight the gendered aspect, the dominance of males against females, but the to personal relations in a hierarchical structure such as master and servant, lord and vassal etc. See Weber (1972 [1921], p. 130–140).

<sup>9</sup> Krech (2011, p. 186f.) conceives this shift from hierocracy to civil religion.

Hardt and Negri 2000, p. 67–114) constituted a political auto-legitimation so that the obvious injustice that few people are in power (and enjoy privileges) against a majority does not need to be justified by means of a “sacred canopy” (Berger 1967). Without the need for a religious legitimation, the political system could withdraw its functional achievement for the religious system: To guarantee, in Niklas Luhmanns terms, the “scarcity of religious communication” (Luhmann 2013, p. 156f.), e.g. to ensure with the help of the sword that the “one and true religion” (which, by the way, will legitimize existing power relations) is defended against all possible religious alternatives. “Freedom of religion” is thus based on the functional independence of the political system from religious legitimation, and has the effect that politics may allow that any sacred canopy is called into question.

Against this independence of political legitimation from religion and the political granting of religious freedom, fundamentalisms aim to replace the sovereignty of the people by the sovereignty of the sacred canopy of their respective religious world views.<sup>10</sup> Any political decision shall be justified by the religious tradition that is claimed to be the one and only true cosmic order. This is where I would like to make a distinction in conservative religious positions. While religious conservatism can also be individual piety, the striving for religious virtue on a personal level, fundamentalisms do not accept the freedom of religion. From a fundamentalist position, there is one—and only one—sacred canopy, and a violation against it is a violation against the sacred and cosmic order. Religion is important for everyone’s live, it is a matter of collective decision making, and thus a matter of politics. In this sense, one might consider to apply here the term *political religion*, however in a value-free manner and without the theological claim that this is an anti-religion.<sup>11</sup> Fundamentalism understood in this way may result in sectarian tendencies between those who accept this sacred canopy and those who do not. Very often, this leads to discourses of alteration in which the one camp denounces the other as a fundamental threat to the well-being of society in general.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, on the sociological micro-level, many accounts of modern life observe an individualization and the pluralization of lifestyles. Fundamentalist formations

<sup>10</sup> Krech notes (in my own translation): “Religious elements have their systematic place where it is a matter of giving unconditional validity to political values and not wanting to put them up for disposal.” (Krech 2014: 393).

<sup>11</sup> This of course also opens up the possibility to include a discussion about the totalitarian nature of Fundamentalisms and to merge the debates upon Totalitarianism (Arendt), Political Religion, and Fundamentalism. Meyer (1989) has laid a path for this discussion, but there seems to be a further potential for a theoretical and empirical analysis. For the merits and difficulties of the concept of political religion, see Schreiber (2009) and Krech (2014).

<sup>12</sup> On fundamentalisms as alterization discourses, see Schiffauer (2001). Whereas Schiffauer argues against a social scientific usage of the term fundamentalism because because it denounces certain groups as pathological and excludes them as legitimate members of a “normal”, secular and liberal society. Schiffauer may certainly be right in his assumption. However, one may ask the question if “we”, including social, I would add that “fundamentalists” themselves denounce “mainstream”, “secular” society. Fundamentalist discourses seem to be based on a clear distinction of “we” against “them”, on demonization of alternative world views, including secularism, but also other religious perspectives, and even theological liberalism. In a certain sense thus, fundamentalist discourses and public discourses on fundamentalism resemble each other. They blame the other side to be the evil other.

may thus constitute a certain kind of social-moral milieu, distinguished by a rigid conduct of life according to the ethics proposed by their respective sacred canopies, and often by their dress codes and public displays of membership. In their political orientation, when fundamentalisms turn into movements, they aim that their distinguished lifestyle is the only acceptable one and each and every citizen has to adopt it.

These considerations upon the semantic and structural conditions of modern society shall outline how the term fundamentalism may be applied usefully. Fundamentalism can then be conceived as a certain type of social formation that responds in a certain way to the semantic and structural modernization of society. In this sense, fundamentalism is applied as a family of religious formations that emerge in correspondence with modernization processes. Thus, they also react—and contest—the processes of religious transformation in modernity that sociologists of religion have detected since the 1960ies, e.g. secularization, privatization and individualization, and the pluralization of religion. Fundamentalist movements aim for a restoration, or erection, of the sacred canopy, whatever this sacred canopy means for them.

### 3 The catholic milieu

In the main chapters of this article, I will address two different social formations in Germany in the time span in between 1850 and 1945, first the so called Catholic milieu and second National Socialism. As my following discussion will show, both may at least share some family resemblances with formations that are more commonly described with the term “fundamentalism”.

I will first look at late 19th Catholicism in central Europe. The so called “Catholic Milieu”, a term coined in the 1960ies by Rainer Maria Lepsius (1966) has received a widespread scholarly attention of historians and sociologists between the 1970ies and the early 2000s. The importance of this field of study may derive from the fact that the bare existence of this formation may cast doubt about the master narrative of secularization in the sociology of religion. It is interesting to note that it is vastly in the context of fundamentalist movements that scholars discuss a “resurgence” of religion. But if the ‘Gods return’, as a book title of a German theologian (Graf Friedrich 2004) suggests, they must have been gone before. If we live in a post-secular age, according to Jürgen Habermas (2008), then there must have existed a secular age before. The Catholic Milieu, and later National Socialism, indicate however, that religion may never have gone from Central Europe, or if so, then only since the second half of the twentieth century. Religion in this time could still mobilize masses in central Europe. This is not to say that secularization trends were not observable in the 19th century: a flourishing intellectual critique against religion in the course of enlightenment philosophies and a new trust in “scientific” conceptions, including Darwin’s theory of evolution in the midst of the century, a worker movement based on anti-religious socialism, and the obvious declines in participation rates in the Protestant church. But there was more about it. Religion was (still?) present and strong, as the awakening movements, the flourishing free churches, and the success of ultramontanist Catholicism demonstrate. If there ever existed a real

“secular” age, it begins in Germany only after 1945, when conservative religion is on a retreat and fundamentalist trends are only observable in small minority groups of mainly migrant milieus.

Olaf Blaschke (2000) called the 19th century a “second confessional age”. He argues that the confessional divide into Protestant, Catholic and Jewish was paramount in this era. While confessionalization is conceived as a process of the 16th and 17th century in the aftermath of the reformation, it seems to have had rather little impact on the identities in these times. This changed in the course of the 19th century, when under conditions of “time-space compressions” (Harvey 1992) and urbanizations the spatial separation of Protestants and Catholics became porous and encounters in the emerging cities a daily experience. This second confessional age, as I would add, was mainly structured on the distinction of liberalism and conservatism, a very modern distinction indeed, which took place at two distinctive levels. First of all, the debate about liberal—pro-modernist and pro-national religiosity on the one hand, and conservative, rather anti-modernist and in parts at least anti-nationalist religiosity on the other hand — arose in each of the three camps among Jews, Protestants, and Catholics. However, it did so in different regards. Whereas in the Jewish communities, a certain balance seems to have occurred between liberal (reformist) Judaism, orthodox Judaism and the mediating conservative Judaism, mainstream Protestantism heavily leaned toward the liberal side, whereas conservative tendencies would rather flourish in the marginal milieu of the free churches. In the Catholic spectrum, however, it was reverse. In the course of the 19th century, mainline Catholicism became ultra-conservative and turned into a *strong religion* (in the terminology of Almond et al. 2003). This imbalance among the two mayor denominations in Germany is important to note. Even if confession was the dividing line, it did mean something very different on either side. Blaschke in a later article (2016, p. 205) goes even so far to state that it was mainly this anti-Catholicism that would stabilize the eroding Protestantism in Germany. In an even larger, “post-colonial” or second order framework then, the situation in the 19th century within Germany had some similar features with the situation today worldwide. “Fundamentalism” in a discursive perspective is also the act of an observation of a modernist, secular public that celebrates itself as “enlightened” and “progressive” upon people that they deem as backward, blinded and deviant in religious terms.<sup>13</sup>

The formation of the Catholic milieu had its peak in between the mid nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century among large strata of the catholic population in central European countries (Holland, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland etc.) in whose emerging nation states this population group formed a minority.<sup>14</sup> It did not include all formal members of the Catholic church in these countries. Whereas Catholics in these countries were disprivileged in general due to the higher economic and educational status of Protestants and Jews—a topic that motivated Max Weber to his famous study on the “Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism” (1992 [1904]), Catholics with higher education and income, a minority within a minority,

<sup>13</sup> This is baseline of Schiffauer’s critique of the social-scientific usage of the term “fundamentalism”.

<sup>14</sup> A groundbreaking analysis of the conditions under which a Catholic Milieu formation has occurred in various areas has been conducted by the Arbeitskreis für kirchliche Zeitgeschichte (2000).

were only rarely attracted, intellectuals and liberal thinkers rather repelled. The milieu thus consisted mainly of a traditional population in rural areas that came under pressure in the course of modernization processes: Peasants, craftsmen, small traders and the petite bourgeoisie (Gabriel 1992, p. 97f.). Thus, on the side of the laity, the Catholic milieu comprised pretty much the same strata of the population that, according to Martin Riesebrodt (1993) formed the nucleus of fundamentalist protest movements among Protestants in the early 20th and Iranian Shiites in the mid-20th century: Groups that were negatively affected in the course of structural modernization and societalization processes.

The 19th century with its tendency of “melting all into air that is solid” (Marx and Engels 1969 [1848], p. 99) put not only large strata of the society under threat, but also whole established institutions such as the Catholic Church. Since the beginning of modern times, the Catholic Church was exposed to a number of humiliations that finally challenged its status as the one and only corporation of the one and only *religio vera*. First, since the Reformation the Unity of the Church was dissolved and the Protestant state churches competed with the Catholic one for the true interpretation and representation of Christianity (Berger 1967, p. 111–131). Second, in the age of Enlightenment an intellectual climate hostile to the Catholic Church arose; if religion was not criticized per se or the possibility of proof of the existence of God or any other transcendent truth claims rejected in the course of the philosophies like David Hume or Immanuel Kant, intellectuals opted for a “natural” religion or a religion based on the fundamentals of reason, against dogmatic and irrational “superstitions” that would only serve for the purposes of fraudulent priests. In the late 18th century, this culminated in the political denunciation of the traditional state-church relationship, in which the prince, as defender of the true faith, created a political protective wall around the sacred canopy’.

In the course of the consolidation of the emerging nation states new conflicts arose between Church and the states. The universalist constitution of the Catholic Church reached beyond the tight boundaries of nation states. It demanded a kind of loyalty against the logics of the liberal national constitutions. From a liberal perspective, obedience to the pope was seen as an anti-national attitude. “Catholics don’t have a fatherland, they only have a father, a papa, in Rome,” mocked the German poet Heinrich Heine in 1840.<sup>15</sup> The situation in the Netherlands, in Switzerland and most of all Germany was even more difficult, since Catholics were a minority in these countries. Against the “*großdeutsche*” (‘Great-German’) solution which also included Catholic Austria, the “*kleindeutsche*” unification of the German Kaiserreich in 1871 had the consequence that Catholics were a minority of about 33% against a dominant Protestant population, that would inhabit territories at the margins of the *Reich*, either in the east or close to the French and Belgian border. The project of national unification was directed partly against the Catholic Church and also turned the Catholic population into second class citizens. The establishment of national states in Central Europe thus resulted in a felt marginalization of both, the Catholic Church, and the Catholic citizens. This may be one decisive factor for the “coalition” or “*Schulterschluss*” in the words of Karl Gabriel (1992) between the Catholics and

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<sup>15</sup> Heinrich Heine (1840): Über Ludwig Börne. Viertes Buch.

their Church in Germany. It resulted in an apocalyptic movement in which Church and Pope were seen as the safe harbor in a sea of blasphemous perils of atheism, Protestantism, Socialism, Nationalism that modernity has created.

The Church, and mainly the Roman Curia played an active part in this milieu formation. First of all, it highly supported the formation of an ultra-conservative theology in the framework of neo-Scholasticism. Whereas the Protestant theological departments tended towards a liberal orientation that sought an intellectual exchange with religiously critical enlightenment philosophy and included historical critical methods to its biblical studies, from about the mid-nineteenth century the Vatican suppressed these trends and censored liberal perspectives among Catholic Theologians and priests, erecting a “wall of hierarchical control of knowledge, speech, writing and publication” (Weber 1990, p. 142; own translation). A key figure was Pope Pius IX (Pontificate 1848–1878), who condemned liberal positions outside, but also within the Church. Among anything else, the First Vatican Council in 1871 aimed at the silencing of liberal voices within the Clerus and second to unite the Church under the pope as a charismatic and patrimonial “light figure” (Gabriel 1992, p. 91) and savior of the pure souls in the sea of blasphemy and decadence.

Second, as Michael Ebertz (1979) argued, the Church made a lot of compromises to popular religiosity and magical rites in order to meet the religious interest of the rural population and the petite bourgeoisie with only basic education in small towns that responded to the anti-modernist program of the Church. Unlike liberal Protestantism, which tended towards an intellectualized religiosity based upon inert commitment and a continuous effort to individual bible studies, along with a reductive aesthetics and a devaluation of rituals, Catholicism in this time went into a different direction: non-intellectuality and the simple demand to be obedient to the Church, revivals and inventions of rituals, feasts, pilgrimages, and religious symbols that allowed the people to participate and display piety and at the same time an anti-Protestant, anti-secular and in parts also anti-national Catholic identity. Catholic identity however turned into a *lifestyle* and people would take a lot of effort in the participation of rites and in the fashioning of religious symbols as markers on bodies, houses and apartments and towns. Being catholic resulted in a time-costly identity performance. Highly conscious that they were a social group that took care for displaying their distinctiveness by boundary markers against others (Protestants, liberals, intellectuals, etc.), Catholics formed a milieu *für sich* (for itself). People tended to hold contact to people within the milieu and reduce interactions with others. They thus lived their lives within the milieu, from the *cradle to the grave* (Klößner 1992). The milieu thus achieved a high intensification of social interaction within and an outward demarcation.

How do the features of fundamentalist movements apply to the Catholic Milieu in Germany? Scholars so far have come to different conclusions, based on different

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<sup>16</sup> The application of the term fundamentalism has not received a wide scholarly attention. Christoph Weber (1990) has used the term and proven that various characteristics of fundamentalism apply to the Catholic Milieu, whereas Christoph Marx (2001) opposes this view and typifies ultramontanist Catholicism as only reactionary militant conservatism. Marx' distinction between militant conservatism and fundamentalism on the other hand does not seem to be very helpful in my regards, however.



definitions of the term fundamentalism.<sup>16</sup> Here, I want to highlight the three distinctive characteristics that I have outlined in the previous section: Religious Anti-Modernism; the defense of a patrimonial social order, and a strict coupling of religion and politics, where politics is called to enforce and oblige itself to the rule of a specific religious tradition.

In semantic regards, the worldview propagated by the Church was explicitly anti-modernist in nature and met all criteria of anti-modernist discourses outlined in the previous section of this paper. As Karl Gabriel (1992, p. 82–84) pointed out, the neo scholastic worldview was dualist and apocalyptic in nature and religiously disqualified anything that was conceived as a threat to the Church as a work of the devil: liberalism and religious-critical intellectualism, anti-religious movements such as Marxism, nationalism and the idea of the nation state persuading a secularizing agenda against the Church, and Protestantism as an alternative Christian institution. These movements that all shared a critical perspective on Catholicism were demonized and religiously disqualified as inspired by the devil to seduce the poor souls of believers. The souls of the people had to be defended against these perils. With the dualist disqualification of all alternative worldviews, Catholicism was strongly anti-liberal.

The aspect of patrimonialism needs some further qualifications, since for many centuries it has been deeply embedded in the Catholic Church. In late Antiquity and early medieval times, the Church experienced a transition from a world-defying sect into a “Church” (in Weber’s sense) that resembled and internalized the patrimonial patterns of its social environment (Schlammelcher 2017). What Michel Foucault has termed “Pastoral Power” (Foucault 2007, p. 115–190) is in a certain way a religious configuration of patrimonial rule. The pastor and the layperson constitute a hierarchical, personalized relationship. Like nobility and the common people, there is a clear division of rank between the two, along with a division of labor: guidance and protection on the side of the priest and pastor, obedience and tribute on the side of the layman.

The shift in the society at large from patrimonial to bureaucratized rule was by no means complete in the course of the 19th century. Against France or the United States, Germany remained a stronghold of the nobility. The Catholic Church itself was affected by this transition. Michael Ebertz (1987) argues that the “bureaucratization of the Church” has occurred in three distinctive regards: First, the dioceses established bureaucratized administrations. Second, this process was accompanied by a standardization of the training of the clergy; thirdly and in connection to the former points, the importance of descent for the eligibility for an office thus decreased dramatically. However, these modernization processes did not touch upon the patrimonial structures of pastoral power, which have been strengthened in the formation of the milieu. Whereas the Church itself modernized itself from emancipating itself from its embeddedness into an overarching patrimonial structure, at the same time it enforced the patrimonial ties between clergy and laypeople.

Here I would like to make a small insertion and ask if today’s problems of the Catholic Church, mainly the accusations of sexual abuse, may in some way have

originated in the milieu character of the Church many years after its dissolution.<sup>17</sup> Some considerations may be worth noting. First of all, abuse may to a certain extent be considered as a concomitant phenomenon of patrimonial structures. If patrimonialism is a kind of personalized hierarchical relationship beyond a bureaucratized legal framework, it is at least an option for the master against his servant to enjoy the benefits of his position in this way (Graeber 2011, p. 176–186). Of course, due to the sexual morality propagated by the Church and its doctrines such a behavior is not only illicit or illegal; it is a sin. A pastor serves the flock; he may never enjoy any benefits for his superior position. The potential to enjoy the sexual benefits of one's patrimonial position and doctrinal prohibition stand thus in clear contrast to each other. But for those clergies that failed to meet the moral codex one possible resolution was a culture of secrecy. No one speaks about what happens, word (sermon) and deed drift apart. This culture of secrecy may have played a vital part in the image management of the Church as not only a sacred, but also a moral canopy that protects the helpless souls from the perils of their sinful environment. This aspect seems to be relevant because it also corresponds to what I call the “fundamentalist theodicy of modern suffering”—the specific answer of the question what causes suffering in modernity. Typically for fundamentalist movements, the cause of suffering is perceived beyond the bonds of a morally upright community. The evil—the causes of suffering—stems from a demonized social other, in the case of the Catholic milieu from Protestants, intellectuals, liberals, communists etc. The sacred community is pure and needs to defend itself. The culture of secrecy is thus a strategy to protect the purity and the hallow of the sanctuary. This strategy seems to have functioned for a long time, but broke down several decades after the disillusion of the Catholic milieu, and now seems to accelerate the erosion of the Catholic Church after all and worldwide.

We will return to the discussion of the fundamentalist theodicy of modern suffering again in the discussion on national socialism in the next paragraph. For now we have to turn to the question of Catholicism as a “political religion”. During and immediately after the unification of the Kaiserreich, a political conflict emerged between the Church and the state arose in the context of the so called *Kulturkampf*. In the course of the German-French war, the Vatican, due to the retreat of the French troops in Italy, lost its last remaining territory, the papal state. The whole process of the national unification in Germany and Italy was thus a political disaster for the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Bismarck policy aimed at its political castration. The Pulpit Law act of 1871 criminalized political statements of the clergy. It also aimed to shift social accomplishments that were traditionally provided by religious institutions towards the state: (1) the nationalization of the civil status by the introduction of the civil marriage in 1875; (2) the abolition of the ecclesiastical supervision of schools in 1872, and (3), after the *Kulturkampf*, the slow establishment of a welfare state that provides benefits for people in need, classically another realm that was covered by the churches. In a certain way, the *Kulturkampf* in Germany comes close to a second or third “Investiture Conflict” about the arrangement

<sup>17</sup> Keenan (2012) offers insights that tend to support my argument partially, without drawing an explicit line to patrimonial structures.

of responsibilities and claims to power between Church and state. The nation state emerged also by pushing back the Catholic Church as a political player. The liberal idea was that religious institutions may only serve for religious purposes, and religious purposes are a private matter and thus may not interfere with the public affairs which are to be arranged within the structure of the nation state. Any political claim of Catholicism was refuted as “Ultramontanism”, behind the mountains, with the criticism that Catholicism betrays the nation, another and new “invented community” (Anderson 1983) that conflicted with the one of the Church.<sup>18</sup> However, besides all its successes, this hostile politics also resulted in the unintended consequence to unite Catholics under the umbrella of the Catholic Church. The *Kulturkampf* thus contributed to the sustainment of the Catholic Milieu, convincing clergy and laypeople alike that they were exposed to a hostile world from which only the shelter of the Catholic Church, together with their self-organized associations (under the conditions of the absence of a welfare state) may protect them. Thus fundamentalism in its fashioning of religious anti-modernism seems the sibling of modernity and secularism. You cannot have the one side without the other. Radical liberal secularism is likely to challenge a counter-movement.

Scholars argue how long the Catholic Milieu lasted. Began processes of dissolution in the Kaiserreich or during the Weimar republic? Was it due to the National Socialist politics of *Gleichschaltung* that erased many of the Catholic associations? Or was it even later, in the late 1950ies, as Karl Gabriel argued, when conditions for the Catholic Church in Germany were much friendlier and the social discrepancy between Protestants and Catholics levelled down? I would opt for a synthesis between the positions who argued for 1933 and those, as Karl Gabriel, for the 1950ies. My hypothesis is that the Catholic Milieu indeed dissolved for a first time in the early 30ies, while its re-erection after 1945 under politically favorable conditions basically failed. The decline in the 1930ies may however not only be explained by the repressive politics of the Nazi government. More than that, something bigger came along, a *national religion* that would finally include the Catholic population in the concept of the German nation as well.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4 National socialism as a fundamentalist movement

The nineteenth century in Germany saw the emergence of three different “imagined communities” (Schlammelcher 2013, p. 84–87), the Catholic Church was only one of them. Another was the worker movement that was hardly less chiliastic,

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<sup>18</sup> As I argued elsewhere (Schlammelcher 2013), the formation of the Church in late Antiquity can well be seen as an imagined community, however one that in the course of the 19th century may have caused the clashes that are described here.

<sup>19</sup> There is an interesting scholarly debate about the Catholic Milieu in its response to the rule of the National Socialists (see Kösters and Ruff 2018). This response ranged from silent and open resistance to euphoric support. Since demoscopic surveys do not exist for this time, it is hard to measure the popularity of Adolf Hitler and the NSDAP among the Catholic population. It is important to note, however, that many NSDAP members, among them some of highest rank such as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, were Catholics.

another candidate to be described as a fundamentalist formation as it was based on an utopian anti-modernism that promised that the modern capitalist society will be overcome. The third imagined community emerged around the idea of the nation as a community of comradeship. Each of them drew different lines of who was part of that imagined community and who was not. The Catholic Milieu included Catholics and excluded Protestants, Jews, and people with a secular orientation. The worker movement was a movement of the “oppressed” and basically excluded the “Capitalists” and the “bourgeois”. Both movements were international in their orientation. However, this term “inter-national” does only make sense in the framework of what it is not. It indicates the importance of the greatest of all of these movements, nationalism, that evolved around the idea of “the nation”, and would only include those people who could be considered as part of the “Volksgemeinschaft”.

The German Kaiserreich’s policy *and* national identity was both anti-Catholic and anti-communist. Its nationalism was based on a bourgeois *Kulturprotestantismus*. From the beginning, Bismarck forged a *Kulturkampf* against the Catholic Church and against the socialist movement, mainly their political associations. The nationalism propagated by the Kaiserreich was thus exclusive to a certain degree. Catholics and Communists alike had a difficult relation to their German “fatherland”. After the catastrophe of 1918, the political struggle for hegemony among these three camps did not cease. It determined the political spectrum of the Weimar Republic: the *völkische Nationalbewegung*, the socialist movement around the Social Democratic Party, and the Catholic *Zentrumspartei* were in a constant struggle against each other. Why, in the end, was the *völkische Bewegung* the most successful? Why would none of these three movements survive the first half of the twentieth century as mass movements? And how is this connected to the topic of this article, fundamentalist formations in Germany?

National Socialism is a certain variety of German nationalism and even as such never reached a high degree of dogmatization. Beyond Adolf Hitler’s publication “*Mein Kampf*”, it did not consist of a “canonic text”. But a kind of “Nazi civil religion” in the sense of Robert Bellah (1967) existed. The basic ideas included the existence of a German or Arian “people” that was captured in an eternal race struggle and thus competed with other races and moreover with the “Jewish race”. The struggle against inferior races and against the Jews however could only be victorious when the superior race finally turns into a “race for itself” in Marx’s terminology, as a true and exclusive “*Volksgemeinschaft*”. As bizarre as these ideas may seem from a contemporary common sense perspective, I assume that the success of this movement may be explained by the fact that it managed to resolve and reconcile several key conflicts that arose since the late 19th century in Germany. Among them were:

- The tensions between secularism and religion: National Socialism allowed for the integration of a “scientific” and a “religious” world view. Hitler’s own belief system combined a monotheistic theology with the “scientific” approach of social Darwinism.
- It included the idea of evolution, popularized by Herbeinto a religio-mythological framework, as has been shown by Ernst Cassirer (2015 [1945]). Hitler himself

was a Catholic and believed in the existence of God, for him, the race struggle was the eternal principle of His creation. The biological theory of evolution was thus translated into apocalyptic and even chiliastic teleological process.<sup>20</sup>

- The tensions between Protestants and Catholics: National Socialism was a project to unite “all” Germans—except of the Jews, no matter if they felt to be part of the German nation or not. Religious denominationalism, the great divide in the first and second “confessional age”, were set indifferent from a Nazi perspective. Whereas earlier Nationalism in Germany always suffered from the denominational division, this was overcome by the Nazi ideology, in a framework that would not only create a new, German Christianity and chiliastic religion, but that would also harmonize a “religious” and a “scientific-secular” perspective.<sup>21</sup>
- The tensions of the social question. National Socialism not only included key terms of the socialist movement, such as the term “Socialism” itself. Furthermore, National Socialism proclaimed that social justice and the distribution of wealth, key aspects of any socialism, would naturally realize in the context of the formation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In this framework, the social tensions between the social classes, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, simply turn meaningless. Exploitation and social injustice are, in this account, not a result of a certain kind of modern, capitalist class structures, but of the silent rule of a parasitic group that has conspired itself to proclaim world power and to subdue the race that was meant to rule: the power of the Jew over the Arian. With the Arian race coming to a consciousness of itself, the evil Jews will be wiped out, and so will social injustice.

In a certain way then, national socialism was based on the harmonization of opposites: neither secularism nor religion, but a mythological reframing of the idea of evolution; neither Protestant nor Catholic, but a sacred canopy that serves as an umbrella for all Germans, Protestants and Catholics alike; neither capitalism nor socialism, but an utopia of the community in the realization of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and moreover after the final victory over the Jew. In a Durkheimian sense, National Socialism was thus a unified system of beliefs (into the apocalyptic process of race struggle) and practice (the liturgical practices of the Nazi celebration cults [Thamer 2004], the war itself and the extinction of Jews), relative to sacred things (the holy German nation and the holy blood and soil) which unite into a single moral community (the German *Volksgemeinschaft*) called a Church (Durkheim 1915, p. 191). It also qualifies as a system of symbols—circulating around the notions of *Volk*, *Reich* and *Führer* (Vondung 2013)—which acted to establish powerful, pervasive, and

<sup>20</sup> On Hitler’s religious world view and its coherence, see Schirmacher (2007).

<sup>21</sup> On the chiliastic nature of National Socialism, see the contributions in Ley (1997). However, one must take into account that the Nazis, and Hitler most of all, refused to call National Socialism a religion. Even if the relation to the Protestant and Catholic churches included many conflicts, the Nazis did not challenge them by claiming that National Socialism would be an alternative Religion or even a Religionsersatz. This however does not mean that from an external social studies perspective National Socialism includes many religious elements and fulfills quite a lot of criteria to be qualified as a religion, as will be shown in the following. About the distinction between the self-reference as non-religion and the scientific observation as religious, see Auffahrt (2015, p. 117ff.).

long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (Geertz 1973, p. 90). The extinction campaigns can thus be understood as a self-fulfilling prophecy to leave no doubt on the truth claims of the doctrines of race struggle. Conquest and blood shedding, the mass killings of millions of innocent people, all this was part of a sacred war to make the chiliastic utopia of a victorious German people come true.

Finally, National Socialism also qualifies as a religion in the Weberian sense. First of all, it included a theodizee of suffering: After the initial establishment of a garden Eden by the subordination of other races, the Arians committed the “eternal sin” of the mixture of races (“*Rassevermischung*”).<sup>22</sup> Whereas the German people among the Arians kept their racial purity, it fell victim to its powerful opponent, the Jewish race as a “parasite of all people” (Hitler 1925, p. 335), whose religion, according to Hitler, ensured by its ethical conduct of life the purity of its race. This is why, according to Hitler’s account, the Roman Empire of German Nation, and later the German Kaiserreich with its defeat in 1918, were doomed to fail. All evils of this modern world: injustice, exploitation, and a weakening of the strength of the people, resulting also from ideologies such as Capitalism, Pacifism, Democracy and Marxism were all the deed of the evil Jewish race. Second, National Socialism included a salvation good, a re-establishment of the original paradise on earth in the framework of an arian German Empire in which the Germans were united as a community, under the strict laws of racial purity, in which other people were racially separated, and the Jews extinguished. As such, Nazism formed an innerworldly salvation cult<sup>23</sup> that included, in the terminology of Saul Friedländer, an *antisemitism of salvation* (2006, p. 87). And finally, it was clear about the salvation methodology (*Heilsmethodik*): to unite the people and to wage a final war of races to subdue other people and to erase the Jews from the planet. Like all fundamentalized religions, the world view was based on the chiliastic struggle between good and evil forces. And unlike Catholicism, this struggle could not be won by announcing and performing one’s piety to God every day. National Socialism was a religion that required action. Race struggle and the victory of the Volksgemeinschaft could only be won if the evil forces were to be defeated. Whereas ultramontan Catholicism may be evaluated as rather “quietist” and even “mystical” in Max Weber’s sense, National Socialism was activist, and a religion of innerworldly asceticism. The ideal was the ascetic, merciless warrior.

In how far does national socialism qualify as fundamentalism? National Socialism, other than 19th century Catholicism, was not openly anti-modern, precisely because it did not have a paramount emic understanding of modernity. In these regards, National Socialism differs from the Catholic and the socialist movements as

<sup>22</sup> In *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler states: “Die Sünde wider Blut und Rasse ist die Erbsünde dieser Welt und das Ende einer sich ihr ergebenden Menschheit” (1925, p. 272). See Heep (2018, p. 332ff.).

<sup>23</sup> As Weber states in his “sociology of religion”, salvation goods may be otherworldly or innerworldly, and Weber is clear about the fact that many of the religious salvation goods are innerworldly indeed, such as health and wellbeing. This also holds true for many religious formations in modernity, from the communist utopia of socialist movements to the prosperity Gospel in Charismatic Christianity.

well. Against a perspective that conceives modernity as a certain distinguishable historical formation, National Socialism sees pan-historical forces at work. The world history in its entirety is explained by the apocalyptic drama of dualistic and eternal forces, the creative power of the Arian against the destructive power of the Jew.

Whereas semantic antimodernism is rather latent, it seems to oppose modern social structures. All three modern movements, antimodern Catholicism, Socialism, and National Socialism, were highly critical of the predominance of impersonal, and thus societalized, social relations such as impersonal interactions on the marketplace and in bureaucratic offices. What stands out in National Socialism is the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the communion of the German people. Hitler's idea was that the higher race needs to transform itself into a communion of the people. This will ensure the final victory about any other races and mainly about the Jews. The Arian race could only defend itself, and defeat its enemies, when it, the people, united itself within one polity, the Reich, guided by one, the Führer. The realization of this unity of people, empire, and Führer would unite the people in a comradeship under the heading "*Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz*" (the common benefit before the individual benefit), probably the most important—and most vague—formation in the party program of the NSDAP. This slogan documents well the call for community of the German people; it not only implies the term "*Gemeinnutz*" a sense of community (the "*Gemein*" for *Gemeinschaft*, German community'), it is also directly opposed to Adam Smith's liberal theory upon the "*Wealth of Nations*"—and thus for the call for societalized social relations, were anyone was free to follow his own individual interests, without bowing itself under any communized authority.

The national socialist version of a community program was radical in the sense that an individual only had a right to live as a member of the Arian community. If he was not German Arian, he or she was disregarded as a person and thus had no right to be treated with respect or deserve legal protection. "Lowbred" people were thus denied the status of personhood; the national socialist ethics not only allowed, but required the Germans to see them as "*Arbeitsmaterial*" (working material) at best, but basically as a matter or a breed that, at least in the long run, needs to be extinguished. A legitimate existence beyond the *Volksgemeinschaft* did not exist. The sharp distinction was between being a member of the *Volksgemeinschaft* or being a *Gemeinschaftsfremder*.<sup>24</sup> Thus, National Socialism in a certain sense aimed at erasing society. Only the primordial—and utopian—community of the comradeship of Germans, against anyone else, who were conceived as depersonalized, de-individualized, disfranchised others or slaves.

To a certain degree, all this was only but a semantic reframing. The nationalist project of communitization, as well as the communist one, never managed, nor even aimed, at erasing societalized structures. The national socialist movement basically did not touch so much upon the market place. It also inherited and established bureaucratic procedures. This point is important to note, despite the long debate among historians and social scientists how to characterize the character of rule established by the Nazis, that also included charismatic and traditional elements in the classical

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<sup>24</sup> Hans Meier concludes about the construction of the "*Gemeinschaftsfremder*" that everyone is excluded that is not explicitly included. See Maier (1996, p. 244).

typology of Max Weber.<sup>25</sup> The pure characterization of a charismatic rule ignores the fact that the Third Reich rested upon a well established bureaucratic infrastructure. In this sense, the German Volksgemeinschaft was no less societalized as a society as a whole. But a general structural effect was that the bureaucratic infrastructure in Germany was now subordinated into the framework of a charismatic—and mainly patrimonial—state apparatus.

The second structural aspect in fundamentalism's antimodernism is its relation of religion and politics. In the first paragraph, I have argued that fundamentalism per se may be qualified as a political religion, since it opposes the political taming of religion in secular societies and its reduction to the private life. This applies to National Socialism as well. It was a religion that united the German people (or what it conceived as such) in a cosmological framework of an eternal race struggle. From an external perspective, the idea of a German people may seem as bizarre as the idea of an eternal principle of race struggle. But both bizarre ideas together provided a sacred framework in which the communion of the German people made perfect sense. The rituals in the local cities and the *Reichsparteitage* were set up to turn this communion of the people into an experience of effervescence and of the numinous (Heep 2018). In these rituals, the reality effect of this cosmic framework was engendered and the "clothing [of] these conceptions with an aura of factuality" (Geertz 1973, p. 90) completed. This however could only function if any kind of doubt on the truth claim of this "system of symbols" was stifled to the ground. Every critical voice was thus a threat and severely persecuted. The enemies of the German people were not only the Jews, other races, or the opponents in the wars, but from the very start also the fellow Germans who openly opposed this world view. Furthermore, the racial extinction campaigns mainly erected after 1941 can also be seen as a self-realization of this canopy. Also the non-Germans and the Jews had to experience the consequences of this cosmological truth, since it justified their extinction.

If national socialism was a religion, what about its moral foundations? From an external position, the Nazis have conducted criminal, violent, and anti-humanitarian acts unprecedented in history. My argument, however, points towards a different direction. In my perspective, National Socialism was highly saturated with morality, however of a special kind that is also observable in other variants of fundamentalist violence like Al-Qaida or ISIS. I will call this kind hyper-morality, a morality that at the same time suspends moral values, and, in the language of Niklas Luhmanns systems theory, may thus be understood as a re-entry of the distinction of moral and unmoral in itself. From the internal perspective, the suspension of morality, for example of the commandment not to kill innocents, is justified by a higher moral value, such as the right to self-defense (and to prevent future killing). "Unmoral" actions such as killing the killers of innocent people are thus seen as a means for a moral end. Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer SS, famously stated: "We had the moral right, we had the duty to our people, to kill this people [the Jews] who wanted to kill us. But we do not have the right to enrich ourselves even with a fur or a watch, with a coin or with a cigarette or with anything else." (Himmler 1943,

<sup>25</sup> For an overview see Hachtmann (2019).



p. 25; own translation). In the same speech, held in October 1943 in front of the leaders of the SS, he complains about the ordinary German fellow who basically admits that the Jews needs to be extinguished but stays away from taking action. In this sense, the comrades of the *Sturmstaffel* and the other actors and perpetrators of the Holocaust are framed as the true moral heroes. They are the avantgarde of the people, because they commit moral crimes for a higher moral goal, for the sake of the holy Volksgemeinschaft, in order to complete the course of history. They do the dirty work (of killing innocent people) without any personal benefit. They do not enrich themselves because as moral heroes they do not steal. And their good deeds will not even be memorized because this sacred, heroic killing has to proceed in silence.

The suspension of morality as a higher morality however is also connected, again, to what I have referred to as a fundamentalist, and in this case, the National Socialist theodicy of suffering in modernity. Where, after all, do the modern diseases of exploitation, alienation, unemployment and poverty come from? The concept of a racial community, in which everyone treats everyone else as a comrade, implies a moral purity and thus rules out an intern source of evil. The struggle against misery and evil is thus a struggle against an *exterior* threat. Unlike in socialism, structural explanations for perceived social injustice did not apply to the Nazis. The source of evil that they detected is not a social structure but an agitator, or a group of agitators; it is the Jews whose presence and malevolence for ages have undermined and cracked the communion of the higher race on purpose. If the realization of peace and harmony in the context of the communion of the Germans is a higher goal for the simple reason that the realization of a just and moral order can only be achieved in this context, it is a moral duty to eliminate anything, everything and everyone who stands in its way. And is the killing of a Jew unjust if malevolence and evil-doing is his nature? In this sense, suspension of morality is justified by a higher sense of morality. The killings of innocents is thus inverted into a moral act.

However, this emic perspective is unable to detect the tragic paradox of this hyper-morality. Probably the most precise formulation of this paradox is found in Max Horkheimer's and Theodor Adorno's essay on the "Elements of Antisemitism" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002 [1944], p. 137–172). Here they state:

The psychic energy harnessed by political anti-Semitism is this rationalized idiosyncrasy. All the gesticulations devised by the Führer and his followers are pretexts for giving way to the mimetic temptation without openly violating the reality principle—with honor, as it were. They detest the Jews and imitate them constantly. There is no anti-Semite who does not feel an instinctive urge to ape what he takes to be Jewishness. (p. 151)

The Jews—in the emic perspective of the Nazis—are evil, because they harm people not mainly for their individual benefit, but, as Hitler frames it in "Mein Kampf", for the benefit of their selfishness, on the cost of all the people they have infiltrated. This harming includes killing, and since the Jews are basically responsible for any, if not most violence that has occurred in world history, the Jews are the main offenders of the either direct or indirect killing of innocents. What however, does the antisemite, what did the Nazis do, when finally taking actions? They killed

Jews independent of the question if either single one of them actually committed any crime. In the end, it is the Antisemite and the Nazi fellow that kills innocent people. Thus, the Nazi turns into what he calls a Jew: the killer of innocents. This is, in my interpretation, Horkheimer and Adorno's thesis of mimicry: in what Gayatri Spivak calls "repetition in rupture", the Nazi imitates what he constructs as his complete opposite, the demonized other.

## 5 Conclusion

In this article, I have selected the Catholic Milieu in between 1850 until 1933 and National Socialism from the 1920ies until 1945 as possible candidates for fundamentalist mass formations in Germany. In this conclusion, I would like to ask what insight we may gain from such a perspective.

In Weberian terms, both formations articulate a theodicee (the reason of suffering), a conceptualization of salvation goods and thus how the end of suffering might look like, when only applying consequently the correct salvation methodology. Of course, on a first glimpse theodicee (diagnostic framing), salvation good (prognostic framing)<sup>26</sup> and *Heilsmethodik* look very different in both formations: 19th century Catholicism displayed a religious de-qualification of modern society, a firm belief in God, the bible, and conceived the Church as "*Gnadenanstalt*". Catholic salvation goods were predominantly otherworldly in nature. Against a dominant secular and protestant state, Catholicism deemed itself in a defense and tried to erect a force shield against the believers. But despite the political actions taken to protect the status of the Catholic Church in Germany, there were little expectations or motives to change society for the better. National Socialism, on the other hand, was based on a concept innerworldly salvation—heaven on earth is possible in the framework of communization of the arians and their victory against inferior races, whose realization however required political and military action, based on a martial innerworldly asceticism. In this sense, late 19th and early 20th century Catholicism was quietist in tendency and displayed characteristics of a social milieu, whereas National Socialism was may be referred to as a social movement aiming to change society—and history—and that finally succeeded in claiming state power.<sup>27</sup>

This distinction between an otherworldly salvation and an innerworldly salvation movement has also consequences in the respective legitimation and use of violence. The catholic milieu is basically a non-violent religious formation, or, as discussed above, the violence in the context of sexual abuse was completely different in type and scale. This may partially be explained by the ethos of this Catholic formation that includes a renunciation of violence in all possible means. The violence in the context of sexual abuse thus never had any kind of theological or moral legitimation. It happened, as argued above, in a culture of secrecy, which however seemed to be part of this formation in general. The Nazis, on the other hand, cultivated an ethos of heroism in which the autotelic annihilation of whatever was labelled as

<sup>26</sup> The terms diagnostic and prognostic framing are borrowed from Bendford and Snow (2000).

<sup>27</sup> For a sociological distinction between milieu and movement, see Rucht and Neidhard (2020).

“enemy” turned into a moral obligation.<sup>28</sup> Its innerworldly asceticism, very unlike the *Berufsethos* of the early Protestants, was a calling for destruction and murder of what was labelled “the enemy”. This ethos thus included the *ethization* of violence.

In how far do these vast differences then justify to subsume these two very different, but at the same time also concurrent formations, under the headline fundamentalism? Indeed, there may be relevant objections to use the term for either one: If fundamentalism is understood, as often framed, as a religious protest movement, how does 19th century Catholicism fit into the sociological type of a *movement*, and in how far may National Socialism be understood as a *religion*? In my theoretical remarks, I have not given a clear-cut definition of fundamentalism, probably on the cost of clarity, but with the advantage that it allows us to discuss family resemblances in a broader spectrum. As most contributions on fundamentalism agree on its pejorative perspective on modernity, as a selective anti-modernism,<sup>29</sup> I aimed to clarify this aspect by outlining what modernity is and in what ways fundamentalist formations might oppose it and offer alternatives. And indeed, at this vantage point I see quite a lot of structural similarities not only between these, but also to other social formations that have been discussed under this rubric.

In a certain way, both formations contest modernity in at least three similar ways. First, using Peter Berger’s thesis that secularization is mainly caused by the breakdown of a shared *sacred canopy* that would finally lead to an erosion and marginalization of institutionalized religion (Berger 1967), Catholicism and Nationalism provided exactly this: A renewed sacred canopy, a unified explanation of the nature of the world and the causes of human suffering, and the promising of salvation in the course of future. This includes a refutation of the modern political principles of people’s sovereignty and also of the freedom of religion, to a certain degree at the least. Second, these respective sacred canopies were both dualist and apocalyptic, National Socialism even chiliastic in nature. The non-believers were conceived as cosmic enemies that will receive their punishment by God (in the case of Catholicism), or (in the case of the Nazis) or were to be treated as traitors of the people—and finally wiped out, together with all the other declared “enemies” of the Arians. Both formations also repented an “objective”, “realistic”, social-scientific account of society and the course of history.<sup>30</sup> Both formations established an eschatological perspective on history, in a time when religious and mainly eschatological perspectives were already called into question. Thus, the perspectivism offered by these formations seemed, from the perspective of modernist observers, irrational, backwards, mythic or whatever other pejorative term was used. Third, both formations conceived themselves as the victims of external demonized forces—the Devil or the Jew—against which they had to defend themselves. As such, both formations deployed what I have argued above a “fundamentalist theodicee of suffering”. The

<sup>28</sup> The term autotelic violence (aiming at the annihilation of the victim) is borrowed from Jan-Philip Reemtsma (2012).

<sup>29</sup> Riesebrodt (2000, p. 276).

<sup>30</sup> With these terms I refer to the Anthropological debate about on different cosmologies and the description of the specificially modern cosmology in the account of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1996) and Philippe Descola (2013).

pure community of believers/the people are exposed to evildoers and must stand firm, in the case of Catholicism in trusting in the power of God and the holy Church, in the case of National Socialism in uniting themselves under Volk, Reich and Führer to finally stand up and wipe them all out. And finally, both formations highly criticized societalized social forms and took part in a romantization of a certain kind of imagined community. Politically, this resulted in the preference of charismatic *and* patrimonial *against* bureaucratic rule. The ruler itself, Pope and Führer, achieved their charisma by sacral forces, either as the direct representative of God, or, in the case of Adolf Hitler, as the Messiah of the German people, a never officialized, but very common appellation.

As I made clear at the beginning, I shall leave the question open to the reader if it makes sense to typify 19th Century German Catholicism and National Socialism as fundamentalist formations. But it should be clear that both share these characteristics mentioned above also with other, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim ideologies to which the term Fundamentalism has already been applied.<sup>31</sup> Without being able to go into further detail here, I think that further theoretical elaborations in the study of fundamentalisms may highly benefit by taking into account the debates upon political religion and totalitarianism.

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<sup>31</sup> See, among others, Marty and Appleby (2004).

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