

Idealised Historical Myths and Meta-Temporal Space in Nazi and Fascist Political Religion

Jack Spencer
13027158@brookes.ac.uk

Abstract

Political religion is the 'sacralisation', or making sacred, of formerly political entities – in this case the nation-state – as an item of worship.¹ Such a process is integral to totalitarian ideology, as it enables the manufacture of societal values.² In Nazism and Fascism, a specific 'Idealised Historical Myth' was created in order to present a nation worth worshipping – this manifested itself in the Italian Fascist 'Romanità', concerned with Imperial Roman values and architecture, and the Nazi 'Germanentum', likewise fixated with ancient Germanic and Norse culture.³ In turn, these myths offered a 'Meta-Temporal Space' in which Fascist and Nazi values became eternal, and enabled individuals to transcend their decadent present selves. Thus, Nazi and Fascist political religion had a genuine transcendent, spiritual value comparable to the experience of conventional religions.

Methodology and Sources

Traditionally, the historiography surrounding this subject has rejected the link between aesthetic modernism – the ideas expressed in the literature of Joyce and the paintings of Picasso, among others – and the ideologies of fascism and Nazism. However, the methodology employed in this research took this link as a foundational fact, building on the work of Mosse and in particular the idea of 'political modernism', viewing Fascism and, to a lesser extent, Nazism, as the political manifestation of previously aesthetic aims.⁴ Through such a perspective, a number of primary sources were utilised which dealt with cultural factors, ranging from examples of architecture and art to photographs and film of political ceremonies. Additional to these were the official documentation of state-sanctioned historical societies such as the Istituto di Studi Romani and Ahnenerbe, as well as the writings of key figures such as Paluzzi and Rosenberg.⁵ Such sources provide a more rounded perspective of both the formation and celebration of a 'Meta-Temporal Space', whilst also highlighting the centrality of aesthetic modernism to its foundation

Conclusion

The research makes a contribution not only to the field of Fascist and Nazi studies, but also to the wider study of modernism and Twentieth Century thought. It does this by highlighting the synthesised points between aesthetic and political modernism, aiding the understanding of the wider movement. In addition, it reminds the current historiography of the spirituality offered by totalitarian political religion, enabling genuine individual transcendent feeling.

References

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[3] – Bernard Mees, 'Hitler and Germanentum,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, Understanding Nazi Germany (2004): 255-270; 256.

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[5] – Romke Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (1992): 5-22.

[6] – For the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palazzo_della_civilt%C3%A0_del_lavoro_\(EUR,_Rome\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palazzo_della_civilt%C3%A0_del_lavoro_(EUR,_Rome).jpg) (5904657870).jpg. Accessed 04/04/2016.



The Palazzo della Cilla Italiana in Rome, built in 1940, displays the link between aesthetic modernism and classical design