

Political Theology Without Religion

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ABSTRACT

There is a constant tension that exists within each individual. This is the struggle between the hidden ideologies and fixed ideas which enslave the individual and the need to rid themselves of them. It is through these that implicit religion forms. We require, in order to counteract this, a new theology, a secular theology – one which emphasizes the individual. In order to bring about a new theology, it is necessary to reconsider the philosophies of Adam Weishaupt, Louis Althusser, and Max Stirner and bring them into the modern discussion of implicit religion. This paper aims to bring together these understudied philosophers as well as contemporary leaders in political theology in order to reimagine the potential of the individual to rid themselves from fixed ideas and to realize their potential.

1. Introduction: A Theological Distinction

Long after the end of the Servile Wars and the eventual fall of Rome, there had arisen a new uprising against the established political *zeitgeist*. In the late 1700's into the mid-1800's, a second Spartacus² was born. Adam Weishaupt, a professor of law at the University of Ingolstadt, was an intellectual moved by passion to fight against what he saw as a restraint on freedom of people: organized religion – along with the tenacity it arouses – and government. I will aim, in this essay, to argue that in our case, there is an ever-growing need to eliminate a false dichotomy that continues to haunt our social and political theology. Namely, this is the secular and non-secular distinction. Through reconsidering the understudied philosophy of Weishaupt along with Max Stirner's discussion and ultimate rejection of *fixed ideas*, along with contemporary political theologians such as Clayton Crockett, we can rid ourselves of this dichotomy and begin addressing concerns in a new light free from the black-whiteist categorization which has long been in place.

It is often quoted that "God is dead," just as Nietzsche would have it (1974).³ What does this mean and is it truly the case? This phrase has two meanings: one, a social or political meaning, and the other a theological meaning. According to the latter, God is no longer necessary to explain events in the world, existential or ontological curiosities, nor holds any purpose in aiding individual's finding of meaning in life. In the former, the phrase would mean that we live in a secular society – one in which God, or the divine generally, holds no place within, and in fact, is not necessary for the politics of a given society. There seems to be complications in evaluating the claim in terms of these modes of use. Based on his work, I would argue, that Nietzsche meant that God is dead

² This may be a bit misleading as there was a rebel around the same time period named, Toussaint Louverture who was awarded the nickname "Black Spartacus." This sentence however is not referring to him, but rather to Adam Weishaupt, who often in his secret correspondence to his followers signed his name as Spartacus.

³ Section 125. "Gott ist tot! Gott bleibt tot! Und wir haben ihn getötet." Perhaps the most famous assertion of Nietzsche and likely of 19th century philosophy. Less cited however, is the appearance of this phrase in section 108 of the same text "Gott ist tot! aber so wie die Art der Menschen ist, wird es vielleicht noch Jahrtausende lang Höhlen geben, in denen man seinen Schatten zeigt. — Und wir — Wir müssen auch noch seinen Schatten besiegen." Trans. "God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. — And we — we still have to vanquish his shadow, too." This latter quote is more important for us, since we here are forced to recognize that we are still responsible continuing to eliminate the remnants of God that still remain. We must therefore too, remove from ourselves any paths that lead back to the caves.

theologically, and that meaning can be, and should be found absent the divine command (Nietzsche, 2012, 43).⁴ However, if this is truly what he meant, then we have yet to actually 'kill' God, as we must, according to Nietzsche in our own individual way.⁵ Thus, God yet lives theologically, even if one might say he should not. Politically, I believe, it certainly *seems* to be the case that we are living in a secular society, at least for the most part (Caputo et al., 2007, 3).⁶ However, contrary to the above, it does not seem so evident, in actuality, that it *is* in fact the case, although, perhaps one might argue, it *should* be. First, we must clarify the distinction which has so long held without much contention.

What then, is the difference between secular and non-secular politics? Typically, when one thinks of a non-secular politics, they think about a government structure which revolves around organized religion at its center. Thus, the religious beliefs shape the political bodies and social norms of the society. Carl Schmitt, for example, argues (1985, 36) that modern political concepts are secular "not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts." But this is a drastic assumption that is far from the truth. Much of the governing laws of a society are not based on ideals and superstitions, but rather on pragmatic concerns for social order, such as safety. The omnipotent God is unquestionable. The omnipotent lawgiver is unquestionable only so long as he may fool others into viewing him as God. Thus, to equate the two is a bit of a stretch. Perhaps a different distinction can help account for this confusion: theology versus religion.

Due to the difficulty in defining "religion" there needs to be a more general method of understanding the separation, or lack thereof, between religion and politics. This can be achieved by distinguishing religion from theology. Religion, in its modern use, "connotes especially the organized and institutional components of faith traditions" (Paloutzian and Park, 2005, 26). Thus, while certainly not a definition, we can note that there is no focus on the individual and more personal relation to the divine, the supreme, and the like. If this is the meaning of religion, then what can we know about theology? Theology would be the rationalization, the rational evaluation, of the religion. It is the process by which the individual posits the ideas which he subjects himself to in religion.

Thus, I suggest that any entity held up as "supreme," any *idée fixe*⁷ can supplement for religion, whose sole defining feature is the presence of an *idée fixe* at its core. Clayton Crockett suggests in his work *Radical Political Theology* (2011, 16), that the aim of a contemporary radical political theology is to "substitute for God other names in a complex metaphorical or dialectical interplay of meanings and significations." He further claims that after the death of God, freedom is what must take over – freedom as potentiality. Thus, this freedom Crockett argues in favor of "does not simply substitute for God, but in a formal sense captures the possibility of thinking God as well as thinking anything at all" even in the absence of God (2011, 17). In this case then, freedom, or potentiality, becomes a fixed idea, and transforms the theology into a different religion.

We can see then, just how one fixed idea replaces another, and can take up arms against theology as a religion, which thus leads us into a non-secular political world. Our current political situation forces us to be in a state of suspense where we fall in-between a non-secular and secular society. Because of the claimed distinction between our political centers and religious centers, we are often considered secular; mostly, this seems to be due to the fact that our religious beliefs are not dominated by a singular religious entity. Even in speeches, the words "God bless" or the like, are not referencing a specific deity, though our history is certainly majorly Judeo-Christian, but could reference Allah, or perhaps, Buddha in the traditions where Buddha is seen as more of a divine being than a human being.⁸ In short, it is a simple phrasing in which we seek some spiritual force, entity, and the like, to grace us with some sort of acknowledgement, be it health, economic gain, etc. In that sense, one may think that we can call ourselves secular. However, if we maintain the distinction between theology and religion, one which I think most would agree to, and religion simply requires, at minimum, a fixed idea at its core, then our ideals of democracy, freedom, liberty, are all fixed ideas, and are enough to justify the labeling of American society as non-secular.

⁴ "Christian morality is a command, its origin is transcendent; it is beyond all criticism, all right to criticism it has truth only if God is the truth - it stands or falls with faith in God. - When the English actually believe that they knew of himself, "intuitively" what is good and evil when they imagine; therefore, Christianity as a guarantee of morality is no longer necessary to have." Thus, man can find value without the need of God.

⁵ This is not unlike the Koan in Buddhism, a notable influence on Nietzsche and other existentialists, that we must Kill Buddha on the street (仏に逢えば仏を殺せ). In this case, we are to kill Buddha so as to not be caught up in narrowmindedness, dogmatism, dualism, as well as to avoid treating another as Buddha while neglecting one's own Buddha-nature. Thus, the suggestion to kill God, would be akin to this: we must, in order to find our own potential existential, be rid of God, as well as anything with which we may replace him.

⁶ "long before theologians explicitly took up this thematic of the death of God in the 1960s, philosophers, historians, novelists, and cultural observers had already made this connection between the collapse of Christendom and the birth of a new, more secular culture."

⁷ I here use the French rather than the German *fixe Idee* which Stirner uses.

⁸ For example, in countries that are traditionally Buddhist, the exclamation "oh my God!" is replaced with "oh my Buddha!". Likewise, atheists often invoke 'God' in similar fashions.

So often, it seems we are scared of living in a non-secular society, and we cast off the notion and revolt against, as we do with "socialism," "communism," "atheism," and the like. Why do we do this? Neoliberalism exerts its influence on society economically and seemingly strives to keep us secular. Banu Gökariksel and Katharyne Mitchell note the complex relationship between the two writing:

Secularism as a contemporary political project aims to keep the body in the domain of the state and in the production of a particular deterritorialized global economic order. The neoliberal individual must be free of any particularist spatial ties that prevent him or her from competing effectively in the global marketplace. From the secularist point of view religious symbols mark religious, ethnic or cultural differences onto bodies that are supposed to be neutral, rational, equal and competent in neoliberal terms (2005, 150).

In neoliberal free-market capitalism, secularism keeps the individual competitive. "God is dead" and so we must keep it as such! But is this really necessary? Must we live in fear of the non-secular? If we make proper distinctions between theology and religion, then such fears seem to be misguided as we do not need to be governed by religion immersed into our politics to be non-secular. But what we need to ask ourselves is which is better? Where should the death of God lead? Marian Burchardt is correct to state that "the critical analysis of formations of power around religion and secularism must take neoliberalism as its starting point" (2017, 4), however, it is important to recognize the inherent theological underpinnings of this neoliberal approach to secularism – it turns consumerism into a theology and therefore we cannot treat neoliberalism as purely secular either, even if it strives to be so through its own ideological efforts.

2. Following the Death of God

In order to answer these questions, we must consider the conception of fixed ideas in greater detail. One can hold a fixed idea in several capacities. It can be a *core* fixed idea, such as God; that is, one which is the source, transcendent, fundamental, etc. In addition, however, a fixed idea can serve as a cause, a motivation, a militancy; that is, a reason to "take up arms." In simple words, it can be what one values. So long as the latter does not transform into the former, the fixed idea, is not *idée fixe* in the sense that one like Max Stirner writes and warns so diligently against, as his concern is the idolization of an idea, *idée fixe* in the proper sense, which we see in the former method of holding a fixed idea. If we need not be concerned with the latter – assuming we can keep it separate from the former at all – then a non-secular political theology should not be the source of much angst. However, this requires a further discussion as to whether or not a genuine separation between these two ways of holding fixed ideas can actually exist within the individual holding the idea.

It does not appear that Stirner believes such is possible. Let us return to what he claims of 'fixed ideas.'

What is it, then, that is called a "fixed idea"? An idea that has subjected the man to itself. When you recognize, with regard to such a fixed idea, that it is a folly, you shut its slave up in an asylum. And is the truth of the faith, say, which we are not to doubt; the majesty of (e. g.) the people, which we are not to strike at (he who does is guilty of — lese-majesty); virtue, against which the censor is not to let a word pass, that morality may be kept pure; — are these not "fixed ideas"? Is not all the stupid chatter of (e. g.) most of our newspapers the babble of fools who suffer from the fixed idea of morality, legality, Christianity, etc., and only seem to go about free because the madhouse in which they walk takes in so broad a space?" (Stirner 1995, 43)

All of society becomes a 'madhouse' in which all within it are taken hold by, and remain captive of, ideas which places one in a state secondary to the idea itself. The matter has been taken up long after the time of Stirner as well. While he spent much time discussing fixed ideas, little of that time was devoted to explaining exactly how it is one becomes subjected to an idea – why can one not simply switch focus? To elaborate on the process of becoming slaves to our own imagination, James Walker's *The Philosophy of Egoism*, which follows in Stirner's footsteps, is helpful. Walker (1972, 26) suggests that from the moment one "loses sight of the end for which his care and trouble are taken, and becomes a slave to the idea...he ceases to be intellectually his own master; he falls under the domination of a fixed idea and is in that respect like a fanatic."

There is but one hope for those in the 'asylum;' they must liberate themselves, as no one can do it for them. Stirner (1995, 135) explicates to us the method through which we can liberate ourselves stating:

*Ich setze Mich nicht voraus, weil Ich Mich jeden Augenblick überhaupt erst setze oder schaffe, und nur dadurch Ich bin, dass Ich nicht vorausgesetzt, sondern gesetzt bin, und wiederum nur in dem Moment gesetzt, wo ich mich setze, d.h. Ich bin Schöpfer un Geschöpf in Einem.*⁹

This self-positing, or thinking oneself, has a Hegelian feeling behind it, but it should not be mistaken as denoting an indeterminate consciousness above and beyond the individual – it requires no deconstruction or breaking down of the self in order to rebuild and re-posit the self – there is no dialectical process. In fact, it is anti-dialectical for Stirner.¹⁰ One must be rid of anything not of immediate concern – metaphysics, transcendence, etc. All of these remain fixed ideas and need to be eliminated. This concern sparks recollection of the Vienna circle and logical positivists of the 20th century, perhaps most notably Rudolph Carnap.¹¹

Thus, this self-positing should be thought of as self-reflection. It is an introspection that aims at awakening the individual from the dogmatism of fixed ideas, at liberation from them. It requires only an individual and his willingness to leave the shore and head into the vastness of the ocean without safety lines. To be liberated from fixed ideas completely is to be in a state of absolute existential freedom, a freedom for which one must take up the ultimate responsibility of *being alone*. There is no ghost peering from behind your shoulder, no spook in your corner of the ring, no wheels still spinning in your head¹² – you alone must confront the reality of your existence, now entirely secular and absent fixed ideas.

With this in mind, we can return back to Crockett. While Crockett would seek to revive God in the name of Freedom, this would solely serve to make freedom sacred. The only purpose for doing so is a reluctance to accept a genuine freedom, which includes a sense of responsibility. This will get us nowhere. Crockett's view of freedom rests on potentiality, but potentiality does not make one responsible; it instead only removes from task the individual of holding true to their cause. Stirner instead argues in favor of a true freedom, one in which we are held accountable, one that is not *idée fixe*. This, however, comes at the cost of all fixed ideas. The problem with being absent of fixed ideas in general, is that one is also absent their motivational abilities. For how can one be motivated absent potentiality? If not in freedom, where then are we to turn to following the death of God?

3. The Deification of Morality

In politics, that is, in society, we often turn to morality as the secular deity – the “supreme law of the land!” To be moral is to be the ultimate citizen, and what more should we seek than to be just that: one who upholds the laws of the social order in which we find ourselves. We label anyone who seeks to be other than this selfish. Even still, if we take morality to be “not a field to be defined solely by a reactionary religious right mobilized under the hegemony of media and articulated through a political process dominated by corporate money power,” then this is true of all politics, not in that we ought to be moral, but rather in its, the society's, demanding of us to be *moral citizens*, to be moral for the sake of the other, for society's sake (Harvey, 2001, 51).

Morality, then, is the ‘white lie’, the noble lie of contemporary society! In what way is morality a ‘white lie’? It has a goal set for it: to keep social order, to keep *us* civilized. ‘Social order,’ ‘civilized,’ these are fixed ideas, which again, subject us to themselves, keep us locked in chains of ‘social order’ and the like. This is cause for concern and we should be wary of it, for as Knigge reminds us, “*Es gibt keine Notlügen; noch nie ist eine Unwahrheit gesprochen worden, die nicht früh oder spät nachteilige Folgen für jedermann gehabt hätte*” (Knigge, 1788).¹³ And how has morality harmed us?

It has again filled our heads with a fixed idea. We cannot turn strictly to morality, nor to freedom, to help save us from our own self-enslavement. Yet, we cannot do away with fixed ideas in general, or we lose all sense of militancy which is required of us in our current state of affairs. We must find a fixed idea which does not, and cannot become *idée fixe*. How can we go about doing this?

⁹ Trans. I do not presuppose myself, because I am every moment just positing or creating myself, and am I only by being not presupposed but posited, and only in the moment when I posit myself; that is, I am creator and creature in one.

¹⁰ This is part of the challenge – excitement? – of reading Stirner. The text reads as if a parody, drawing from and making use of the Hegelian dialectical structure in order to critique the very same dialectic Hegelianism.

I. ¹¹ “MEANINGFUL METAPHYSICAL STATEMENTS ARE IMPOSSIBLE.” RUDOLPH CARNAP, “THE ELIMINATION OF METAPHYSICS” IN *LOGICAL EMPIRICISM AT ITS PEAK: SCHLICK, CARNAP, AND NEURATH*, P. 76.

¹² Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 43 “Man, your head is haunted; you have wheels in your head! You imagine great things, and depict to yourself a whole world of gods that has an existence for you, a spirit-realm to which you suppose yourself to be called, an ideal that beckons to you.”

¹³ Trans. There is no such thing as a white lie: there has not yet been an untruth uttered, that sooner or later hasn't led to unfortunate consequences for everyone.

Let us recall Weishaupt's sentiment expressing what we saw as the primary goal of his philosophical work and of the Illuminati society which he founded:

Should you seek might, power, false honor, excess — seek that we would work for you to provide your temporal advantages — we will bring you as close to the throne as you wish, and then turn you over to the consequences of your folly, but our inner sanctuary remains closed to such. But should you want to learn wisdom — want to learn to make mankind more clever, better, free and happy — then be thrice welcomed by us (Weishaupt, 1794, 9-10).

Those who “want to learn to make mankind” better, this is his call to arms! Weishaupt noted that the separation between government and citizens was an insult to reason, which commands freedom. Thomas Jefferson himself (1800) noted in a letter that Weishaupt believed humankind can be “rendered so perfect that he will be able to govern himself in every circumstance so as to injure none, to do all the good he can, to leave government no occasion to exercise their powers over him, & of course to render political government useless.”

Humankind could be perfected, according to Weishaupt. More than this however, humankind *must* be perfected in order to be truly free – free from government, free from superstition, free from their own limiting factors, including Stirner's fixed ideas. The individual has a *perfectibility* to him; though, unlike Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1997, 141) conception of a primordial, *supreme* faculty of the individual, “the faculty of perfecting oneself: a faculty which, with the aid of circumstances, successively develops all others,” Weishaupt's perfectibility of the individual is strictly intellectual.¹⁴ This is why it is referred to as illumination – it aims “to enlighten men, to correct their morals & inspire them with benevolence” (Jefferson, 1800).

Weishaupt failed then, as it was the very idea of the illumination of humankind, which enslaved him. Both of these leaders saw through the illusion of separation that plagued the society of their day; in the former case, the separateness of persons, in the latter, the separation between institutions, religious or political, and persons. If we follow the trace, then it is noticeably one which continues to find the individual as no longer separate from that which he has, for too long, been subjected to. Thus, we need a new theory that will break down the illusion of the separation of the individual and the divine; one that can eliminate transcendence whilst accounting for the potentiality of humankind, a divine *individual*.

Catherine Keller (2015, 129) has stated that “If the separateness of our lives is a sham, then the work of our civilization to produce us as discrete subjects vying to emulate, master, know, and consume external objects succeeds only through its systemic repression of that site of active relationship.” So too, then, if the separateness of the divine and the secular is but a myth, if we ourselves are more than physical entities – if we are, or can become, transcendent in and of ourselves – then our work must be to reimagine the individual as divine.

This already burdensome task becomes ever more excruciating by the need to avoid the individual as *idée fixe*. We must also take into consideration here, the fact that it is often our desires, which are driven by fixed ideas, that lead us into the very subjectification that we fall victim to in the case of an *idée fixe*. Indeed, “*les hommes veulent être et riches et libres et c'est ce qui les conduit quelquefois à être pauvres et esclaves*” as Camus (2010) wrote.¹⁵ One might suggest that the reason for this, is due to what Louis Althusser terms, the ideological state apparatus.

4. Ideologies, Fixed Ideas, and Implicit Religion

Althusser distinguishes the ideological state apparatus from the Marxist repressive state apparatus. The repressive state apparatus, functions “predominantly by *repression* (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology” while the “Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by *ideology*,” though they “also function secondarily by repression” (Althusser 1972, 145). Thus, while the state uses violence and punishment, though not strictly in terms of physical violence or punishment, the church or the school ideological state apparatus holds power over the individual not in this same way, but instead first and foremost through the ideology that it ingrains within the individual.

Each of the many ideological state apparatuses has its role in securing state power *vis a vis* the ideology it spreads. Althusser writes the following:

¹⁴ It is not so clear this is the case, or that it is not. Weishaupt is entirely unclear about the actual process of illumination, likely because this was something to be taught once a member of the illuminati, and was strictly to be gained from going through the rituals, working one's way up to the highest level of membership. However, much of what is discussed in reference to being ‘perfected’ or ‘illuminated’ deals with, what Aristotle calls *intellectual virtues*, along with morality and knowledge – of a specific kind sought by the Order of Illuminati – generally.

¹⁵ Trans. men want to be both rich and free, and this is what leads them at times to be poor and enslaved.

The political apparatus by subjecting individuals to the political State ideology, the 'indirect' (parliamentary) or 'direct' (plebiscitary or fascist) 'democratic' ideology. The communications apparatus by cramming every 'citizen' with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc, by means of the press, the radio and television. The same goes for the cultural apparatus (the role of sport in chauvinism is of the first importance), etc. The religious apparatus by recalling in sermons and the other great ceremonies of Birth, Marriage and Death, that man is only ashes, unless he loves his neighbour to the extent of turning the other cheek to whoever strikes first (Althusser 1972, 154).

Religion is an example of an institution that is an ideological state apparatus. I would argue that it is, in fact, an especially prominent ideological state apparatus. It is a forced subjectification of an individual to the very institution of religion. "If we consider that religious ideology is indeed addressed to individuals, in order to 'transform them into subjects', by interpellating the individual...we should note that all this 'procedure' to set up Christian religious subjects is dominated by a strange phenomenon: the fact that there ... is a Unique, Absolute, *Other Subject*, i.e. God" (Althusser 1972, 178). Is it, then, anything other than what Stirner denounces as a fixed idea? Indeed, it is the case that religion stands as an *ideefixe* insofar as it subjects one to itself. The interpellated subject can break away from this, subjection. It then follows that "the interpellation of individuals as subjects presupposes the "existence" of a Unique and central Other subject, in whose name the religious ideology interpellates all individuals as subjects" (Althusser 1972, 178).

Through the ideological state apparatus of religion, or the church, this unique subject, the subject which subjects or interpellates all individuals, is god. However, if we propel forward with the proposed revolution, the individual subject becomes subjected to themselves as an individual. The unique one (*Einzig*) is no longer god, nor the very institution of religion, but is instead the individual himself; it is not the individual as a general concept, but the individual recognizing the uniqueness of themselves. It is thus only through the individual accepting themselves as the central subject, that we may break away from interpellation through ideology.

To say that the ideological state apparatus and fixed ideas function similarly is certainly true, however it is far from suggesting that they are the same. The two are distinct in two ways:

- 1) The ends which they serve are, though not entirely or by necessity, different.
- 2) The ideological state apparatus, as set forth by Althusser contains within it everything necessary to term it in itself, a fixed idea.

Regarding the first, the ideological state apparatus aims at the continuance of the reproduction of the conditions of production, in order to keep state power. Fixed ideas, on the other hand, aim only at subjecting the individual to itself, for no reason other than to make the individual a subject. The goal of the fixed idea depends on the original source of the fixed idea. If it is the fixed idea of "patriotism," than perhaps the goal echoes that of the ideological state apparatus. If however, the fixed idea is that of the "individual," then the goal if subjecting the individual may instead be something like altruism.

Of course, one might argue that even such a goal has as its indirect end the bettering of the state, or put in different terms, the reproduction of the conditions of production. While this is certainly possible, and is often likely the case, there must be made allowance for the possibly for a fixed idea to have a different end than that of the ideological state apparatus, because the very notion of a fixed idea, allows for an infinite number of possible ends it may serve.

In response to the second, a more thorough discussion is needed. According to Althusser's notion of the ideological state apparatus, the individual is subjected to an ideology as instilled through the many apparatuses, such as the church, school, etc. Rounding back to the religion, which was dealt with in detail above, there is almost an indoctrination occurring *vis a vis* education, in order to ensure that individuals will end up being most advantageous to the state and the continuance of the means of production, as well as the current ideology. This is as Stirner writes "If one awakens in men the idea of freedom then the free men will incessantly go on to free themselves; if on the contrary, one only *educates* them, then they will at all times accommodate themselves to circumstance in the *most highly educated and elegant manner* and degenerate into subservient cringing souls" (1967, 24). According to Althusser, Stirner as well, it is the latter which occurs most often.

If this is the case however, then no one is exempt from the ideological state apparatus nor from the ideologies which it instills. This would mean that, ultimately, the state itself, becomes subjected to the ideological state apparatuses and the spreading ideologies. Thus, the very concept of the ideological state apparatus becomes a fixed idea. Consider again the ideological state apparatus of the church. In order to fulfill its goal, and subject one to its ideology, the individual must first be subjected to the

church itself, meaning that they must value *knowledge*, or even more so, the *belief system* offered by that particular institution (the institution of the church), and this must be valued more than their own self – they must subject themselves to the very idea of the church and religion. “In the pedagogical as in certain other spheres freedom is not allowed to erupt, the power of the *opposition* is not allowed to put a word in edgewise: they want *submissiveness*” (Stirner, 1967, 24). Only if one values the church and religion above themselves will they become subjected to the ideas and ideologies that are instilled through that school and education.

If the ideological state apparatus is itself a fixed idea, then we must break away from this chain that holds us down. In order to discard these and the influence such exerts, then we must simply remove the source, fixed ideas. It becomes even more clear that fixed ideas are the source of the ideological state apparatus, since as Althusser himself ends with the following statement:

if it is true that the ISAs represent the *form* in which the ideology of the ruling class must *necessarily* be realized, and the form in which the ideology of the ruled class must *necessarily* be measured and confronted, ideologies are not ‘born’ in the ISAs but from the social classes at grips in the class struggle: from their conditions of existence, their practices, their experience of the struggle, etc. (Althusser, 1972, 185-186).

Indeed, ideologies arise out of the conditions of existence of the individual – thus, not out of the ideological state apparatus, but instead out of fixed ideas, as has been suggested. Even still, to eliminate fixed ideas is no easy task; it is perhaps the most difficult of tasks. Not because it cannot be done, but because we have an aversion to being without them.

To develop this thought further, consider Stirner’s claim that “Whoever will be free must make himself free. Freedom is no fairy gift to fall into a man’s lap. What is freedom? To have the will to be responsible for one’s self” (Williams, 2009, 17).¹⁶ We have already established that one must free themselves from fixed ideas, but here we get the explanation that freedom is the “will to be responsible for one’s self.” In a modernity filled with spooks, ghosts, fixed ideas, and ideologies, this is a scary thought. Not strictly for the state power and the ruling class, but for the individual themselves; for the individual who, for so long, has relied on something or someone else to give him responsibilities, duties, and the like. He must now take on this responsibility themselves, this responsibility of *being alone* alluded to earlier. But how is this done?

5. Conclusions

In order that we may eliminate fixed ideas *generally*, we must give ourselves a fixed idea, thus one which we are not subjected to, but instead one which we subject to us. It must be a fixed idea that overpowers all others such that no further fixed idea can subject the individual to it. It is the fixed idea of the individual themselves. Thus, the individual holds themselves as the sole fixed idea. In doing so, no other idea, no ideology, can penetrate and submit the individual to becoming a subject of anything but themselves.

Through an evaluation of contemporary political theology, in reference to some of the forgotten philosophers, I have argued that we require a new theology, as many have already pushed for. With the continued rise of those recognizing this as a necessity, and indeed as inevitable, it is now important to turn attention to the ‘how’ of making such a new theology possible. This should be the agenda for future research and with it will be made possible the rethinking of not only theology but of the conflict between theology and individuality, the subjectivation of the individual to the fixed idea of theology. Whatever answers future research suggests it is clear that there is but one direction it must take: a theology of the individual, Stirner’s very own contribution. Unlike Stirner however, we must conceive of the individual in an entirely unique way different from that of his *einzig eigentum*, or *unique property* – the individual must be perfectible. *Omnium rerum principia parva sunt* (Cicero, 2010).¹⁷

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¹⁶ Max Stirner as quoted by Nancy Williams in *Duty and Responsibility*

¹⁷ BOOK V, SECTION 58. TRANS. EVERYTHING HAS A SMALL BEGINNING

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