

THE IDEA OF LEGITIMACY
AND THE TWO BODIES OF POLITICAL MAN

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Abstract: *Reporting the concept of political man to the idea of legitimacy constitutes a current and challenging topic research and the reading of legitimacy, starting from Ernst Kantorowicz's work The King's Two Bodies, proves to be particularly prolific in this respect. Using the metaphor of the two bodies of the king (divine and human), Ernst Kantorowicz argues that symbolic and ideological foundations of the modern state are found in the idea that the kingdom is a mystical body whose head is the king – even through his divine body. According to the fundamental Christian ideology of kingship in the first centuries of the Middle Ages, the king is human by nature and divine by grace. Compared to this model, paradoxically, any perishable politician carries the perpetual form of the power, which is spiritual. In this paper I aim to show that in a certain sense in the contemporary world too, a sort of invisible power confers legitimacy, even if in the democratic legislation the concept of leader's "mystical body" does not appear.*

Keywords: *legitimacy, modern state, community, political body, mystical body.*

Reporting the concept of political man to the idea of legitimacy constitutes a current and challenging topic research and the reading of legitimacy, starting from Ernst Kantorowicz's work *The King's Two Bodies*, proves to be particularly prolific in this respect. In his book, using the metaphor of the two bodies of the king (divine and human) Ernst Kantorowicz argues that symbolical and ideological foundations of the modern state are found in the idea that the kingdom is a mystical body whose head is the king – even through his divine body. According to the fundamental Christian ideology of kingship in the first centuries of the Middle Ages, the king is human by nature and divine by grace¹. Compared to this model, paradoxically, any perishable politician carries the perpetual form of the power, which is spiritual. In a certain sense, in democracies this form is

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¹ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Cele două corpuri ale regelui. Un studiu asupra teologiei politice medievale, (The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology)*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), trans. by Andrei Sălăvăstru, Jassy, Polirom, 2014, p. 57.

recognized by those who invest the political man by voting him. Just as according to medieval mentality beyond the physical body of the king, both political and mystical body embodies the state, the mystery of the modern state can be interpreted at the level of a political philosophy that does not exclude the theological dimension of the secular society.

In fact, the modern world – according to the analysis of Olivier Nay – has favored the Hegelian model of political power of the state which would be only the depository of universal interest, the arbitrator of conflicts and the frame of organizational structure, the necessary and legitimate purpose of social existence, (...) a “totality” in which each individual is called to melt².

Even if nowadays we are witnessing at “the twilight charismatic legitimacy”³ and the Weberian typology does not fully cover the relationship between legitimacy and democracy, certain perspectives are oriented toward rethinking the fundamental criterion for defining the legitimacy, so that the prevalent belief in the legitimacy of power becomes popular faith “in the social value of institutions and the system capacity of maintaining this belief”⁴. From the idea of traditional domination based on the belief about the intangibility of the hereditary monarch conferring legitimacy to its progeny, the size of “sacredness” of power was preserved: at least in the collective mentality. And the representatives of the power do everything possible to maintain this state of mind, despite the demagogic democratic discourse. But beyond the “sacredness” or the “magic” as attributes of power in the collective mentality and therefore as essential theme of the political philosophy and anthropology, the specialists in the domain of the imaginary also took into account another dimension, less transparent, of the power and its legitimacy, namely the “mystery” as a part of the horizon of understanding through which the power is credited by the citizens, whether they are people which accept this phenomenon as it is, or they aspire to rule themselves. There is a time of beginnings, as shown Balandier, “the moment when royalty occurs from the magic and religion” and “the sacredness of power consists in the relationship between the sovereign and the subject”⁵. A socio-anthropological perspective on the contemporary epoch allows Pierre Bouvier, through the concepts of “ritual” and “ritualization”, to present our society as one which, besides the behaviors reflecting a willingness to transform and even a socio-political human “mutation”⁶, is still dependent on a mentality that conceives the foundation in symbolic order⁷. The recovery of a forgotten symbolic

² Olivier Nay, *Istoria ideilor politice (Histoire des idées politiques*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2007), trans. by Vasile Savin, Jassy, Polirom, 2008, p. 439.

³ Constantin Nica, “Teorii postweberiene ale legitimității”, in *Teorii ale legitimității puterii*, Gabriela Tănăsescu (coord.), Bucharest, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale Publishing House, p. 109.

⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset, *L’homme et la politique*, Traduit de l’américaine par Guy et Gérard Durand, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1963, p. 89.

⁵ Georges Balandier, *Antropologie politică (Anthropologie politique*, Paris, PUF, 1967) trans. by Doina Lică, Timișoara, Amarcord & CEU, 1998, p. 119.

⁶ Pierre Bouvier, “Lectură «socio-antropologică» a epocii contemporane”, in *Mituri, rituri, simboluri în societatea contemporană*, coordonator Monique Segré, trans. by Beatrice Stanciu, Timișoara, Amarcord, 2000, p. 27.

⁷ Lorena Stuparu, “Simbolismul și semnificarea politică a discursului mitico-simbolic”, in *Teorii ale legitimității puterii, op. cit.*, p. 274.

thinking seems today necessary in both the public and private space, as we can infer from some pertinent observations according to which “we reach at the original contradiction of a society which is known in detail, but not understood as a whole”⁸.

The fact that politics occurs itself sometimes in a trivial manner does not exempt this obscure area to be related with mystery. If the good feats or the heroism of the leaders would be consubstantial with themselves, so permanent, this cognitive attitude, founded on the belief in the miraculous power of the politician, that/which can pass as “primitive”, would be considered a natural attitude in receiving the phenomenon of power. But the paradox consists precisely in the fact that this association with the mysterious “sacredness” of power really confers legitimacy to the political man, irrespective of its behavior: ranging from the psychological foundation of the subjective belief in the “goodness” of the leader, to objective forms of recognition.

In a certain sense (which we shall decrypt starting from Ernst Kantorowicz’s work *The King’s Two Bodies*) in the contemporary world too, a sort of invisible power confers legitimacy, even if in the democratic legislation the concept of leader’s “mystical body” does not appear.

Beyond the discovery of the metaphysical foundations of the state, Kantorowicz argues that the ideological matrix of the modern state lies in the medieval “political theology” and more specifically in the idea that the kingdom is a mystical body whose King is the head, a community where power is embedded in the strong sense. Thus, studying the theme of royalty, according to his own statement in the “Introduction” of his book, he notes the essential role of mystical, legal and political “fictions” for the definition of power institutions⁹. And among these complex intellectual constructs, the most original is the one concerning the king’s two bodies which emerged in the late medieval jurisprudence. Kantorowicz exposes the idea of the double body as it was formalized by lawyers of Elizabeth I of England in the early seventeenth century, staged in *Richard II* of Shakespeare, namely, that the first body of the king is mortal and natural and the second body of the king would be supernatural and immortal.

Quoting from the “Plowden’s Reports”, Kantorowicz describes the transformation of the idea of the King’s two bodies, into the idea of political body: “In 1571 English jurist issued ‘Plowden’s Reports’ which tried to resolve tangled disputes that arose in connection with the notion of two kingly bodies and from the concepts of monarchical authority that were being deduced from the concept of the King’s Two Bodies. Plowden took the central points to be: *that by the Common Law no Act which the King does as King, shall be defeated by his Nonage. For the King has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government,*

⁸ Marcel Gauchet, *Ieșirea din religie*, trans. from French by Mona Antohi, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2006, p. 146.

⁹ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Cele două corpuri ale regelui. Un studiu asupra teologiei politice medievale*, trans. by Andrei Sălăvăstru, Jassy, Polirom, 2014, pp. 19; 35.

and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body”¹⁰.

Another Paragraph recorded by Kantorowicz from the Plowden’s Reports shows that: “[T]he King has two Capacities, for he has two Bodies, the one where of is a Body natural, consisting of natural Members as every other Man has, and in this he is subject to Passions and to Death as other Men are: the other is a Body politic, and the Members thereof are his Subjects, and he and his Subjects together compose the corporation, as Southcote said, and he is incorporated with them, and they with him, and he is the Head, and they are the Members, and he has sole Government of them: and this Body is not subject to Passions as the other is, nor to Death, for as to this Body the King never dies, and his natural Death is not called in our Law (as Harper said) the Death of the King, but the Demise of the King, not signifying by the Word (Demise) that the Body politic of the King is dead, but that there is a Separation of the two Bodies, and that the Body politic is transferred and conveyed over from the Body natural now dead, or now removed from the Dignity royal, to another Body natural”¹¹.

Based on these, Kantorowicz notes that “The King’s Two Bodies thus form a single indivisible unit, each being fully included in the other. However, there is no doubt about the superiority of the political body over the natural body”¹².

Ernst Kantorowicz has always been fascinated by the problem of the State which was embodied in the Frederick II of his youth, Nietzschean superman infusing the medieval Reich majesty and universal claims of imperial Rome that he opposed to the universal claims of pope. Finally its accomplishment passes through the installation in a perspective of temporal life which confers to the invisible political body formed by the King and the past, present and future community a legitimate superior reality compared to the same monarch’s body of flesh.¹³

In other words, the sovereignty of the monarch necessarily escapes death and this sacred body of political power is not subject to biological corruption. The idea of the immortal “political body” is itself a theological-political idea, since it comes from a secularization of the conception of the church as *mysticum corpus*, as it was promoted by St. Paul.

Relying on the work *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Pierre Manent argues that although its idea about *the corporation*¹⁴

¹⁰ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957, chapter one <http://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Kantorowicz.htm>; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Cele două corpuri ale regelui*, op. cit., p. 22.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, <http://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Kantorowicz.htm>; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Cele două corpuri ale regelui*, op. cit., p. 27.

¹² Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Cele două corpuri ale regelui*, op. cit., p. 24.

¹³ <http://www.decitre.fr/livres/les-deux-corps-du-roi-9782070714162.html>.

¹⁴ “(...) the other is a Body politic, and the Members thereof are his Subjects, and he and his Subjects together compose the corporation”, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957, chapter one <http://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Kantorowicz.htm>, loc.cit.

“today seems bizarre”, however, it has, more than a cultural construction, a logical order, difficult to describe, but very important. And this is because a long time in Europe the term “political body” was used to denote by a generic term political organizations such as cities, principalities, kingdoms. According to Pierre Manent, a body is more – and something else – than a body. And this is so because in a body, the whole is present in every part, the same life animates every part, because enlivens the whole. Thus, considers Manent, the idea of body applied to political communities is not a mechanical idea, but on the contrary, it is a complex and truly spiritual idea. A such idea designates that in a political community, each element is itself the whole, he lives his own life and equally the life of the whole. And in this sense, any political community is, in some way, a body¹⁵.

Kantorowicz noted that the conception of a symbolic body which represents the nation and never dies is a Christian theological one, because for a Christian, the Church is the body of Christ on the Earth. The symbolic body was inviolable and through this symbolical body the king exercises his responsibility of divine right.¹⁶ On the other hand, this doctrine is a secularization of the Christological model of the two bodies of Christ : a human body and a mystical body. By researching the medieval foundations of this thought we discover that in the kingdom of the early Middle Ages, “founded on Christ”, the King is already “human by nature and divine by grace”. But this liturgical kingship disappears in the twelfth century, “giving way to a new royalty structure centered on the sphere of law”. The perishable man carries the perpetual form of humanity. This conception prepares all the “republican”, simply parliamentary forms of corporal dualism¹⁷.

As already has been shown, “the transmutation of the royal figure has as a starting point the model of the two natures of Christ”. Edouard Delruelle explains this view, arguing that beyond the mimetic rivalry between secular power and the church, finally its accomplishment passes through the installation in a perspective of temporal life which completes to confer on the invisible political body formed by the King (and his ancestors and successors) and the present and future community, a higher legitimate reality than the same monarch’s body of flesh. Much more, beyond the discover of the metaphysical foundations of the state, Kantorowicz argues that the ideological matrix of the modern state lies in in the medieval “political theology”, specifically in the idea that the kingdom is a mystical body whose King is the head, a community where power is embedded in the strong sense¹⁸.

In another recent interpretation, it appears that we are all susceptible to have two bodies because we are all susceptible to exercise responsibility. Our responsible

¹⁵ Pierre Manent, *O filozofie politică pentru cetățean*, trans. from French by Mona Antohi, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2003, pp. 220-222.

¹⁶ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Cele două corpuri ale regelui*, op.cit., p. 348.

¹⁷ Patrick Boucheron, «Les Deux Corps du roi d’Ernst Kantorowicz», *Les classiques*, Dans mensuel n° 315 daté décembre 2006 à la page 98. <http://www.histoire.presse.fr/livres/les-classiques/les-deux-corps-du-roi-d-ernst-kantorowicz-01-12-2006-4673>.

¹⁸ Edouard Delruelle, «Démocratie et désincorporation», *Noesis* [En ligne], 12 | 2007, mis en ligne le 28 décembre 2008, accessed at 5.11. 2014, URL: <http://noesis.revues.org/1353>.

body, our body engaged in action is different from our normal body, it is the tool of action and responsibility and we conduct according to this action and responsibility. Each man is engaged in action, and from this point of view he has two bodies like the king: the physical body and the responsible body. The physical body is fed, cared for, maintained, rejoiced, while the responsible body is instrumentalized. The physical body knows things, the responsible body believes things because it acts with beliefs. But this hypothesis of the two bodies has meaning only if we assume that the dialogue between the two bodies is not perfect¹⁹.

Among other ways of treating the subject, reading Kantorowicz leads to the conclusion that the exercise of power has for a long time been associated with sacredness of the person who embodies the rule, but it was desacralized by the exaggeration of this dimension. For example, the label of Versailles puts a nobility formerly rebellious at the service of smaller daily acts of the royal person: each courtier running for the privilege of attending the monarch in his rise, his meals, walks, sunset, etc. The most innocuous events of the life of the king and his courtiers make the joy of newspapers like *Le Mercure Galant*, which, though not limited to this kind of information, provide the same effects as the tabloids. Louis XIV whole life is dedicated to the representation of absolute power and to aestheticization of royalty confounded with himself. Political representation is identical with artistic representation, which announces the contemporary paradigm of publicity²⁰.

Thierry Saussez has applied to Francois Hollande the king's two bodies theory of Ernst Kantorowicz. The author explains how are both functions of the President of the Republic living and coexist. Saussez highlights the trap of the "normalitude", this rather vague concept that corresponds to everything that is consistent with the standard, that neither surprises nor disturbs: the negation of the exception, a function, a destiny. He analyzes the phobic obsession of the President which consists in doing the opposite of Nicolas Sarkozy²¹.

But Nicolas Sarkozy was also the subject of a conference held by Pascal Lardellier in 2011 in Bucharest entitled even «*Le double corps*» du Président. *Une analyse sémio-anthropologique des «deux corps sarkoziens»*²². According to the republican political tradition of France, the President is the heir of the symbolic prerogatives of monarchs. As the real body is support for symbolic political power, the analysis of public management of the body of President Nicolas Sarkozy through the intermediary of images in mass media, develops a discourse on the two bodies in different contexts. Also, a title like «Berlusconi, le corps du chef» written by Marco Belpoliti²³ is suggestive for the exploratory

¹⁹ Bruno Jarroson, «Les catastrophes possibles et irréelles (2): les deux corps du décideur», dans *Philo Contemporaine*, <http://iphilo.fr/2013/12/02/catastrophes-possibles-et-irreelles-2/>.

²⁰ <http://www.atlantico.fr/decryptage/louis-xiv-politique-people-avant-heure-politiques-sont-people-comme-autres-jamil-dakhli-435641.html#eShhvbpISkUdDTIO.99>.

²¹ Thierry Saussez, *Les deux corps du président. Un an après, pourquoi Hollande est-il au plus bas?*, http://www.laffont.fr/site/les_deux_corps_du_president_&100&9782221138199.html.

²² <http://topub.unibuc.ro/conferinta-%E2%80%9ELe-double-corps-du-president%E2%80%9D-sustinuta-de-pascal-lardellier/>.

²³ http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2010/11/19/berlusconi-le-corps-du-chef-de-marcobelpoliti_1442314_3260.html.

and hermeneutical value of the formula “the king’s two bodies” which is used more or less ironically in order to decipher the “mystery” of any political leader.

As a historian, Kantorowicz is interested in documents, but as the documents studied by him shows the connections between the theological principles and politics, he discovers in political theology a kind of interpretive technique which becomes a creative hermeneutics, original and useful for understanding the essence of the past and present political phenomena. Much more, “Bringing together liturgical works, images, and polemical material, *The King’s Two Bodies* explores the long Christian past behind this ‘political theology’. It provides a subtle history of how commonwealths developed symbolic means for establishing their sovereignty and, with such means, began to establish early forms of the nation-state”²⁴.

Kantorowicz’s theory has also inspired different thinkers such as Pierre Legendre, Régis Debray ou Marcel Gauchet – which share the idea that politics can find its legitimacy by defending the rights of the Institution, by the call to the Symbolic Order in a renowned world without landmarks; not to pierce the nimbus behind which the state power conceals the actual mechanisms of exercise, but to legitimize this power as it “embodies” the only possible resistance to *disséminantes* market forces and media²⁵.

The book of Kantorowicz helps me to question through a quite speculative approach the problem of power today, especially the specificity of its legitimacy. Interesting are the updates and comments related to the Heads of State or contemporary politicians: and we could rightfully say that they have two bodies too.

To finish, let me remind Plato’s requirements to the political man. This one should to master both the political science and the political art. His legitimacy consisted of the respect of laws and especially the practice of a policy that became “art” (as the military) which “interweave” a “wrapper” that “includes all those from cities”, as well as the fulfilling of the purposes of happiness²⁶. The features of the political man mentioned by Aristotle in *Politics* are: the nobleness, the property, the citizenship (freedom), the warlike bravery and the spirit of justice²⁷. Obviously, it is about the ancient notion of justice, much different from that of today. The profile of the political man has evolved over time from this classical type to the modern traits involving for example, according to Machiavelli, the cunning, the ruthlessness to achieve the goal. In other words “Machiavel opposes to the idealism of classical political philosophy a realistic approach of political matters”²⁸. The “virtue” of political man in Machiavelli’s vision is based on the concept of politics as an activity dominated by force, cunning,

²⁴ <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/6168.html>.

²⁵ Edouard Delruelle, «Démocratie et désincorporation», in *Noesis* [En ligne], 12 2007, mis en ligne le 28 décembre 2008, consulté le 05 novembre 2014. URL: <http://noesis.revues.org/1353>.

²⁶ Platon, *Omul politic*, trans. by Ena Popescu, 304 a, 305 e, 311c, in *Opere Complete* IV, edition by Petru Creția, Constantin Noica and Cătălin Partenie, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2004, pp. 172; 175, 185.

²⁷ Aristotel, *Politica*, Cartea III. Despre stat și cetățean. Teoria guvernământului și suveranitatea. Despre regalitate, 1, 6, https://archive.org/stream/Aristotel-Politica_05_/Aristotel-Politica_05_.djvu.txt.

²⁸ Luc Ferry, *Philosophie politique 1. Le droit: la nouvelle querelle des Anciens et de Modernes*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1984, p. 55.

corruption, cupidity and self-interest: just all of these imply the amorality of political man. Thus, far from the traditional conceptions of “virtue”, the Machiavellian “capable man” is characterized by ambition, calculated ability to keep the power, cruelty if necessary, capacity to adapt to any new situation. If these characteristics of political man can easily be recognized in the modern and postmodern history, certain traits like courage, energy, self-control, forecasting ability and the force of character are “rarities”.

I think that today the political man can supply the absence of the mystical body through a series of personal qualities which would inspire trust, so that his legitimization be related to what has been called “the belief in legality”²⁹.

And today, of-fact as always, the citizen does not want to meet or encounter itself within the political leader, but a higher principle. In my opinion, the empty place of “the mystical body” in democracy can be met by a legitimization process above the electoral majority principle and beyond the more or less transparent political games, a process which should be based on a second axiological principle, which is still to find.

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²⁹ *How to Signal and Label Democratic Crisis – Rethinking Political Legitimacy*, Working Paper Politicologen Etmaal 2008 – Jos de Beus Department of Political Science University of Amsterdam; Benno Netelenbos Amsterdam School for Social science Research University of Amsterdam.

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THE POLITICS OF BLANK SPACE

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Abstract. *The present study aims to address a tri-phased recourse to nodal points within the soft landmarks of “ideologies of nothingness” as translated through nihilist-centric spatial models: accessing certain alternative formulations in / from within an extension of “falling-from-the-center” / “falling to the periphery” anxiety, by launching the notion of ecstasy as a quality belonging to any body which is in a form of orbit around itself till all sense vanishes, delivering itself in a pure, empty form: a reactivation of philosophies and politics of threshold-spaces, with all their interstitial, intermediate, tertiary attributes.*

The present study’s hypothesis will decree the interchangeable proportion between striated space-smooth spaces, establishing through recourse to Deprimism’s Manifesto.

The conclusions presented will serve to strengthen the evidence stating that, blank space dispersion theory reconverts itself on political grounds into a theory of the blank seen as architecture of appropriate circumventions.

Keywords: *Ideologies of Nothingness, Blank, Deprimism, Threshold, Space.*

Philosophical and Cultural Ensigns for Ideologies of Nothingness

The concept of “ideologies of nothingness” (as a formulation accepting of nihilo-centrism, seen more as an ontologically prioritizing statute and less as a social one, as expression of latter-phase bourgeois culture) defines the desire to accomplish an individual personality transformation by a recourse to its own negation (through absorption, re-elaboration, re-identification).

Correlated with easy-to-decipher apocalyptic signs and visions already prominent in any contemporary theoretical approach (of various *endisms* with which both postmodernity and / or any currents timidly and hesitantly trying to impose their alternatives as ongoing continuity patterns try to deal) the nihilo-centric model accepts a double face, a destiny already sealed by its co-habiting

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