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Dune, Depolitization and Decolonizing the Future

"Religious war has signified the greatest progress of the masses hitherto; for it proves that the masses have began to treat concepts with respect. Religious wars start only after the more refined quarrels between sects have refined reason in general to the point where even the mob becomes subtle and takes trifles seriously." Nietzsche [1]

Introduction

In the mini-series Dune, there is a scene in which Paul Atreides finds himself hailed by the indigenous desert-dwellers of the planet Arrakis as "the Mahdi". Paul raises his hands to silence the crowd and proclaims: "You say I am the Mahdi, I say I am your Duke". There could be a number of reasons why Paul would refuse the title of "Mahdi" in favour of the title of "duke". Since this series is made for a mass audience, it could be that his reluctance has purely to do with the 'necessary' banalization of popular entertainment. Thus by refusing the unfamiliar "Mahdi" in favour of the familiar "duke", the makers of the series could simply be making a concession for a mass audience. It could be easier to deal with a feudal lord as a hero, than with a cosmic Deliverer. Yet these presumptions are not that likely, given that sci-fi often deals with realities that involve all kinds of cosmic beings. Is a 'saviour' really that difficult to grasp as hero? Surely, the various biblical epics have inured an audience into knowing how to watch stories of divinely guided redemptive figures. Besides, science fiction often requires its audience to master new worlds with new languages and new customs. Why would "Mahdi" be a more difficult concept to incorporate than "Klingon"? Is the idea of a divinely guided saviour figure more problematic for an audience than the figure of a traditional leader? Again there is no reason why this should be the case, since science fiction often deals with concepts which are not familiar or commonplace e.g. time travelling, the exploration of alien cultures etc.

It could be that the filmmakers were deliberately emphasising the title of duke as a subliminal homage to John Wayne, an icon of American cinema. This could function as some kind of reassurance for the audience: although we may find us in another galaxy far away, we can still rely on the spirit of John Wayne to make this alien world comprehensible. So by calling himself "duke", Paul could be making a gesture towards the audience that he is the "John Wayne figure" – and despite the exotic trappings of the story, underneath it all Paul is the rugged individual destined to win the fight for freedom and what would be more commonly called "the American way". Furthermore, as Paul's father was also a duke (Duke Leto), Paul's self-proclaimed entitlement as a duke could be a homage to his father, and could be gesturing towards the

continuation of the Aterides genealogy. Nevertheless, this supposed burst of filial loyalty (perhaps to both Leto and John Wayne) still doesn't explain why Paul Aterides would favour this title; because, why should he accept a title that forms part of the imperial hierarchy, when he is leading the Fremen in rebellion against the forces of the empire?

Another questionable option could be that the makers of Dune wanted to express the reluctance of Paul to be a messianic figure. In this, they would be illustrating his humility, his reluctance to play the part of a great historical figure. Such an interpretation of Paul Atrides, however, seems to mark not the rejection of leadership, but rather the rejection of a particular form of leadership. That is, the rejection of the leadership entailed by being the Mahdi, in favour of the leadership entailed by being a duke. In what follows, I would like to explore this rejection at close, for if popular science fiction can be understood as a dramatization of political theory [2], in which issues associated with political thought are explored in a mass medium, then we can ask ourselves what sort of political theory is being articulated through the production and reproduction of Dune, given the massive popularity of the Dune world (both the novels and the mini-series). [3] Science fiction's emergence in the West is not accidental, since Western culture came to be the first and perhaps the only culture to organize itself around technology. Science fiction emerges from the exploration of the relationship between technology and the political.

By "technology" I mean a way of being which transforms the world into a resource that can be deployed and controlled through the application of calculative reasoning. Technology refers not simply to a set of complex tools, but rather to the instrumentalization of the world [4] and instrumental analysis. By "the political" I mean two related things. Firstly, the political refers to any situation in which it is possible to make a distinction between 'friends' and 'enemies'. [5] Secondly, by the political I mean the foundation of any naturalized order. In other words, it is a moment that inaugurates an ensemble of social relations so that their constructed nature, their originating as exercises of power, becomes erased. This conception of the political doesn't reduce it to a specific domain of life, i.e. the political is not reducible to activities of governmental agencies, or political parties or movements. The political demands a decision-making between contending alternatives that cannot be placed upon a common scale – by which experts determine "the correct solution" [6]. Technology promises a neutralization of social strife, since it suggests that all society's problems can be resolved by the application of its methods – in other words: a rational ordering can banish antagonisms. One could argue that ever since the religious wars that ripped Christendom apart in the confrontations between the forces of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, there has been a desire within Western thought to find a means of overcoming civic conflict. And with the advent of modernity, the increasingly improving technology and its cognates have been thought capable of guaranteeing that neutralized social sphere. [7] Technology would seek to transform the antagonistic nature of the political into conflict-free routines, it would turn the political into mere administration. Thus the political and the technological have an antithetical relationship. Science fiction, by juxtaposing the technological and the political, establishes a way of thinking about the relationship between the political and its domestication. An investigation into the decision of Paul Aterides to reject the mantle of the Mahdi in favour of being hailed as a duke, doesn't only raise questions about the relationship between technology and the political, but also about the relationship of the West to the political.

The World of Islam, the world of Dune

The world of Dune offers us a vision of a future universe dominated by Islamicate themes. [8] A causal glance at the creation of Frank Herbert immediately brings this forth. It can be seen in the subtle and not so subtle use of Islamicate terms ('jihad', 'padishah', 'aql'…). Apart from this lexical influences, there is also the adoption and translation of concepts associated with Islamicate cultural practices – for example, Dune features the specially genetically engineered human computers called "mentats", and one could draw parallels within Islamicate cultures with the existence of hafiz, i.e. those who committed the Qur'an to memory. Furthermore we can discern a parallel between the way in which spice is the commodity on Arrakis that enables interstellar travel, and the way in which oil has a central position within the contemporary world economy.

For Frank Herbert, Dune was an exploration of the messianic impulse in humanity and the dangers of religious and political intermingling. [9] Given the themes that he set out to explore, it is not surprising that Herbert culled fragments of Islamicate history to flesh out his vision. [10] For the themes of the messianic impulse, the conflation between religion and politics, fatalism and fanaticism are often described, by Western accounts, as being intrinsic to the world of Islam.

One way to describe the representation of Islam within Western discourse is "orientalism" as described by Edward Said. Said points out that orientalism provides accounts of Islam and associated phenomena that are organized around three main themes. Firstly, he maintains that there are ontological and systemic differences between Islam and the West. Secondly, that the world of Islam is static, uniform and derivative. Thirdly, that the world of Islam is either to be feared or mastered. [11] Orientalism provides an account of an alternative vision of a society in which politics, social change and philosophy, are all marked as being "exotic". Though Said never explicitly drew the relationship between orientalism and science fiction (in particular its subgenre science fantasy), one can see how it is possible to think of orientalism, in its exploration of a hostile and strange world, as a form of science fiction. [12] While many types of science fiction are able to keep the Islamicate influences and references either discreet or hidden, Frank Herbert's Dune series is far more explicit in its gestures towards an alternative distant future over-determined by Islam.

Dune can be seen as a relatively sophisticated space opera in which the crude and causal "Yellow Peril" inflexions of Flash Gordon are replaced by an elaborate and studied "Green Peril" of Islam. No text however, can be contained within the intentions of the author. Dune in many ways exceeds Herbert's reach. [13] A Muslim reading Dune is confronted with a structural ambivalence of the text. On the one hand, the text is populated with orientalist tropes and caricatures. From the valorisation of the European man leading the Muslim masses (T.E Lawrence), to the ability of Western man to disguise himself as a native, to the primitive superstitious nature of the Muslim masses, to the idea of Islam as a simple religion – all of these can be found in Dune, represented through figures as Liet Kynes, Paul Mau'dib, the Fremen… What transforms these orientalist stereotypes and introduces the structural ambivalence, is that they are located in a narrative set situated in a (alternative) future. By reproducing all these orientalist themes and making explicit references to Islam, and by then placing them in the future, Dune seems inadvertently to project Islam into the future. It can be argued that the quasi-Muslims of Dune, although situated in the future, are actually still in the past of the future, because they are found at the edges of the civilized world, living poverty stricken lives in a harsh desert landscape. This dichotomisation goes to such an extent that the primal construction of Western identity stands in relation to the negation of Islam. A zero-sum relationship is established in which Westernization and Islamization are only possible at the expense of the other. Thus, if Islam is situated in the future, it implies that the West has been left behind in the past. The binary structure of Dune in which the West and Islam are 'spatialized' as being represented by respectively the world of imperial order and civilisation, and the world of tribalism and barbarism, seems to preserve the hierarchy between "the West and the Rest". Even if there are Muslims in the future, they are still in a subordinate position. Thus the relationship between quasi-Muslims and the civilized world can still be contained within the idea of an "Islamicate inheritance". This could remind us of Andalusia, where monuments and achievements of the Islamicate civilization are all present – but the Muslims itself absent. This allows that the past becomes incorporated as a part of the common heritage, and this without having to pay any moral reparations. A gift from a dead past, without any living descendants, does not need to be acknowledged.

At the beginning of Dune, the world can be interpreted as a world that resembles the European Renaissance – that is, a world marked by an Islamicate inheritance, which it largely disavows. This is the world of civilization and the omnipotent empire, of the "Atrides" and the "Harkonones". What changes the balance of forces, what turns the Islamicate from an inheritance into history, is the mobilization of the quasi-Muslims by choosing a lexicon of power that is not derived from Western history. It aren't the slogans of the French or Russian revolution that herald the Fremen storming of the (winter) palaces of the empire, but the return of the Mahdi. The introduction of the figure and concept of "the Mahdi" has significant consequences. It is the centrality of the

Mahdi within the Dune universe that turns the story of Dune into a history of the future, that breaks with popular science fiction conventions by which the future continues to be colonized by the Western enterprise. The Mahdi is not just the expression of the messianic interruption of a naturalised social order, he is the unravelling of the process of naturalization as westernization. The appearance of the Mahdi demands a double negation: of the naturalized social order and of the order of the West.

Lexicon of Power

To understand the significance of the Mahdi, requires an appreciation of the way in which the advent of Islam impacted upon the construction of political categories. While it is the case that the founding dichotomy of Western political thought between Occidental democracy and Oriental despotism predates Islam, this dichotomy has been deployed to incorporate Islam into parameters set by Western political thought. What this shows is that Western political thought is not immune to orientalism. Rather than replay the representations of Islam found within Western political thinking, I would like to explore the way in which Islam articulated its own categories of power. There are distinct repertoires through which power is expressed. These expressions of power include rituals, narratives, tokens, and titles. It is the lexicon of power as articulated through the construction of categories of power-holders that allows us to understand the implications of the deployment of terms such as "duke" and "Mahdi".

Prior to the advent of Islam, western Afroeurasia was dominated by three distinct lexicons of power. There was the Persian lexicon harking back to the Achemenids, and before them to Babylonian and Assyrian monarchs. There were the titles developed by ancient Rome as it expanded from a large city-state to become the ruler of the Mediterranean. [14] Third, there were the various titles associated with the tribal periphery of these two great empires: the Germans, the Turks, etc.

The advent of Islam, and the establishment of its geopolitical order, entailed the total conquest of the Persian empire and large portions of the (Eastern) Roman empire. The Muslim leadership was aware that the scale and rapidity of their conquest contributed to the creation of a political entity that was practically ex nihilo. [15] The empire of the Muslims was not the rejuvenation or continuation of a previous state (mythical or historical). By consequence, there was no prior lexicon of power that the Muslim leadership could draw upon without reservation. [16] Thus, the Muslims developed a distinct lexicon which eventually consolidated itself into a more or less coherent hierarchy of "supreme ruler", "rulers" and "petty rulers": Caliph – Sultan – Malik/Shah, Emir…This hierarchy underpinned a political, social and economic order – an order that was Islamicate, largely because the ruling elite of that order was Muslim –, and its 'Muslimness' was partly manifested by the use of its specific lexicon of power(-holders). Islam bequeathed to the world a distinct nomenclature of political titles, and it is within the context of these political titles and entitlements that the category of "the Mahdi" has to be located.

Nevertheless, the Mahdi does not mark a specific rank within the Islamicate convention of power-holders, for the Mahdi emerges with the development of an Islamic eschatology. The return of the Mahdi marks the rupture of the existing order of privilege and injustice and cruelty – the Mahdi is the disrupter of all hierarchies, except those based on virtue. The Mahdi (i.e. "the one who is divinely guided") is expected prior to the Day of Judgement, and his return would enable the restoration of the world to justice and order, prior to God's judgement. While the Mahdi is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, he emerges as a significant figure within Islamic thought. For example among the Shia, the Mahdi has an eschatological significance, and he is regarded as the saviour that will restore the world prior to the end of time. Whereas, among the Sunni- traditions, the Mahdi is initially one of several important figures and was used, for example, as honorary title linked to some of the Caliphs. Later on, however, the Shiite eschatological view of the Mahdi started to influence the Sunni interpretations, and the Mahdi was increasingly considered as a figure that transcends social and political categories.

Historically, a number of figures have been associated with the title of the Mahdi; most famously during the 1880s in Sudan, where a Mahdist state was established, as result of a movement lead by

a Muslim who claimed to be a Mahdi. Upon his death, the head of the state took the title of "Caliph", thus signalling that within the Islamicate lexicon of power, the title of the Mahdi even transcends the canonical title of the supreme ruler. The Mahdi trumps any lexicon of power-holders – for his authority transcends all mundane authority.

In contrast, the title of duke derives from the Latin "dux", which was the rank of a senior officer of the later Roman army in charge of a frontier district. [17] With the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the title of duke became incorporated in the system of European peerage. The duke was the second-highest rank just below royal titles, and often dukes exercised sovereign powers (e.g. the Duke of Burgundy). The title of duke connotes if not a feudal order – since the power of European peerage extends beyond the feudal era –, it certainly connotes an established order of privilege. And in this order, hereditary rather than ethical or moral values predominate. If the appearance of the Mahdi marks the transvaluation of all established values, then the appearance of the duke precisely symbolizes those established values – values and privileges that are naturalized, and whose ignoble beginnings are erased from memory (if not from history).

Thus the contrast between "Mahdi" and "duke" is not only a contrast between the established and the revolutionary, between the divinely guided and the mundane, between the anti-hierarchal and the hierarchal; it is also a contrast between Islam and the West. [18] For the presentation of the messianic through the figure of the Mahdi translates the messianic into an Islamicate category. This translation has a number of consequences for the way in which Islam (and its cognates) have been represented within the discourse of orientalism. This is because within orientalism the contrast between the Orient and the Occident is always predicated on the relative superiority of the Occident vis-à-vis the Orient, and on the relationship between possibilities of transformation inherent to the West. The West has a History, while the Orient is organized around a system of differences, which change only in a cyclical fashion. Nevertheless, the concept of the "messianic" is inherently historical, in the way that the messianic signifies the possibility of history as a teleology, and this teleology is what gives history a meaning. In other words, history becomes not simply a record of the past, but an account of significant transformations that will lead to the end of time: history becomes History. So, the deployment of the Mahdi within Dune, threatens to disrupt this orientalist schema in which Islam is essentially static. Dune not only makes it possible to think of Islam as part of a history of the future, but more importantly, to think of it as History itself. If, however, Islam is History, than the West, which has been constructed in opposition to Islam, can only play a secondary role. This would reverse the hierarchy upon which the colonial vision of the world ultimately rests, that is, the hierarchy of the "West over the Rest".

The significance of the reversal suggested by Dune can be illustrated by contrasting it with another popular American science fiction series. In the episode of Star Trek called The Omega Glory, a conflict rages on a planet divided between two civilizations: the Khom and the Yang. The Yang are a primitive, freedom loving people, subjugated by the oppressive Khom. As the episode progresses we discover that the Yang civilization is based on the United States: not only is their name derived from "the Yanks", next to this their holy book is the U.S. constitution and their most scared relic the U.S. flag. The Yang are also racially marked as being Caucasian. The Khom on the other hand, are clearly identified as being related to communists and racially signified as being East Asian. [19] The episode concludes with the victory of the Yang and their commitment to make real the "holy words" as found in the U.S. constitution. The end of The Omega Glory signals the restoration of the West and the Rest hierarchy. In the case of Dune, it is precisely because the Mahdi cannot be seen as a proto-American or quasi-Western figure, that the reassertion of the West and the Rest hierarchy is prevented.

The closure of the possibility of overturning the hierarchy of the West and the Rest, requires the erasure of the double negation of a naturalized unequal social order, and the future expansion of the Western horizon. One way of doing this, is by demoting the Mahdi, by turning the Mahdi into a 'shaman', so that the Mahdi no longer connotes an eschatological figure, and he no longer represents the full stop of history, but a mere "witch-doctor" of a primitive, superstitious people. When Paul asks to be known as "the Duke of the Fremen" and not as "the Mahdi", he is not only asserting the primacy of a category culled from the Western lexicon of power, but also the idea

that only under the leadership of Western categories it is possible to become agents of transformation. The price of demoting the significance of the Mahdi in favour of the duke is, however, the depoliticization of the world. To make this argument I have to take a detour, I need to clarify the meaning of "depoliticization", I need to be clear about what is meant by the 'political'.

The political is not equivalent to politics. It is the condition of possibility of politics, but it cannot be appropriated fully by politics. Politics is an activity, which is embedded in various traditions, histories and cultural practices. Politics is a game, a competitive activity, governed by rules. The political, however, seems not to respond to the idea of rules, regularities or limits. [20] If all that matters is this distinction between 'friend' and 'enemy', then this must implicitly imply how to destroy this enemy. In this viewpoint, rules are useful when they can help us to destroy our enemy, and useless when they help our enemy to destroy us. Hence, most constitutional orders have an infra-legal level: the world of spies, judicial killings, a world where the normal rules of the game do not apply, where shortcuts are taken and expediency is the overriding logic. Making friends, however, requires the bringing together of various social actors, while making enemies requires them to be cast asunder. Beneath the simple elegance of the friend/enemy distinction lurks a complex set of relationships by which enemies and friends are formed. Thus, the political is not only defined by an antagonism, it is also defined by the institutionalisation of identifications, which make that antagonism possible. The difference between 'Us' and 'Them', requires grouping together Us (and grouping together Them) and differentiating Us from Them. This act of forming friendships and distancing enemies, means that the political is fundamentally about the construction of subjectivities.

Politics is a rule-governed activity, which, of course always bears the possibility of being turned into a contest without any rules, i.e. a fight. Normally, however, players of the game of politics exercise restraint. For a wide range of normative and pragmatic reasons, they try to prevent the game of turning into a fight. This distinction between a "game" and a "fight" is similar to the distinction between "politics" and "the political". In a game we have opponents – those who we want to defeat by the rules of the game, and those who will concede they have lost by the rules of the game. So for example, chess players are governed by the rules of chess, and the victory and the defeat in a chess game are clear enough. In a fight we have enemies, those who we want to defeat by any means we think necessary. Here the terms of defeat and victory are themselves not very clear. In Dune we find politics represented, for the most part, by intrigues between various noble Houses (Atrides, Harkonen) and the Emperor. The appearance of the Mahdi threatens this politics by introducing the political in the world of Dune.

Given that the political marks a space of contestation and an institutionalisation of social relations, we can conclude that any stable social order depends on the degree to which it can master that space of the political. There are three means by which the political can be kept in check. Firstly, the political can be controlled by the process of domestication. That is, the space of the political is occupied by politics, enemies are reduced to legislative opponents, and the game between government and opposition is installed as a means of regulating the political. Secondly, the political can be overcome by the cultivation of what Peter Sloterdijk describes as "cynical reason". [21] Cynical reason insulates the social order by making it immune to any critique of its values or any attempt to demonstrate its ignoble beginnings and exclusions. This is achieved by representing such critiques as the already known, as platitudes and clichés, without any force. Thirdly, the political can be mastered by an act of displacement, that is, by expelling the space of the political to the exterior. This means that the frontier between the limits and the outer-limits of the social order becomes a frontier between order and chaos, between civilization and barbarism, between a stable society and the deconstructive tendencies of the political. The consequence of the successful pursuit of these strategies is depolticization. Depoliticization promises the end of History, based on the establishment of neutral, conflict free social relations.

This quest for a neutral social sphere free of strife, has characterised much of European history since the wars of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. With the advent of modernity, it has been assumed that technology provides the means by which such neutralization of social strife can be instituted. [22] Since Western culture was the first (and perhaps the only?) to organize itself

around technology, it is no wonder that most science fiction has been produced by the West for the West. [23] One way of understanding science fiction is to see it as genre of writing that explores the relationship between technology and the political. Technology denotes the transformation of human problems into algorithmic solutions, where resources are deployed to find equilibrium in solutions to conflicts. The political is mastered by its transformation into a mere form of administration, whereby the only attempt is to find equilibrium solutions to conflicts. The antithetical relationship between the political and the technological made that History had come to an end, based on the belief that the mixture of a neo-liberal capitalist organization of the economy with electorally based governments, cannot be improved upon. The end of the Cold War and communist inspired dreams of major social transformations have made it impossible to think of an alternative to the current order. De-politicization means that our ability to hope for a better world becomes unthinkable; since history has stopped, there can be no significantly better world. The end of the Cold War however, has not eliminated the political, it has rather displaced it. The political is no longer to be found at the core of the Western plutocracies, but at their edges. The Awakening or Islamic Restoration is a process in which the politicization of Islam disrupts and opens up to a contestation of the prevailing social order in the Muslim world. In doing so, its repercussions extend to the construction of the world order itself. The Muslim world is increasingly being opened up to the space of the political. The articulation of the relationship between the political and Islam(ism) has become increasingly noticeable with the end of the Cold War and the 'failure' of the Muslim world to embrace the values articulated by the neo-liberal discourse ("free markets and free societies").

It is in this context that we can understand the "war against terror" as a war against terror induced by the political. [24] The "war against terror" finds in Islamism its enemy, precisely because the enmity is between the political and the stable technologically orientated social order. (It is interesting to note that in the vocabulary of the "war against terror" one side speaks of the conflict in cosmological terms: "civilization", "freedom", etc; while the other side which is often condemned as being motivated by cosmological reasons speaks in specific policy terms: the end of the Israeli occupation, the end of the American occupation of Saudi Arabia, the end of the Western support for Muslim tyrants…). [25]

When Paul Atreides proclaims himself a duke rather than the Mahdi, the Dune mini-series does two things. First, it reasserts the hierarchy of the West over the Rest. Because Paul Atreides's preference of the second rate title of duke rather than the Mahdi echoes Locke's preference of being a "poor English man rather than a rich Indian chief", it is suggested that even a second rank Western power-holder is superior to a non-Western eschatological figure. Secondly, it reasserts the social over the political, because it establishes the preference for privilege in favour of a revolutionary change.

The duke offers stability and a society wherein so-called respectful positions and distinctions are fixed. The Mahdi implies an overturning of such hierarchies and a questioning of the distribution of respect and distinction as found in the existing social order. A consequence of favouring the title of duke over that of Mahdi is then the displacement of the political and the inscription of Dune as a re-colonized future of the world. Popular science fiction as exemplified by the mini-series of Dune becomes part of the colonial frame, beholden to the hierarchy of the West and the Rest, and committed to its projection infinitely onwards and outwards.

Conclusion

Staring into the abyss of a decolonized history of the future, the makers of the mini-series turn back, and by proclaiming the duke, attempt to defer the decolonization of the future. They do so, because they are ought to present a 'complete' story within the limits of a mini-series for a mass audience. But at a certain point Dune the mini-series becomes the text upon which the orientalism of mainstream science fiction is undermined by the construction of Dune as a "history of the future". In this context, the Mahdi becomes a signifier for the political, for Islam ("the Rest") and for History to be restored to a people without history. Nonetheless, the makers of the Dune mini-series attempt to prevent this over-determination of the symbol of the Mahdi, according to relegate Islam and Muslims again to the cycle of orientalist narration. The possibility of transformation

can only be articulated within a recognizable Western register. Hence, when Paul Atreides proclaims he is a duke, he is going back to the violent hierarchy between the West and the Rest, which underpins the colonial configuration of the world. In a strange echo of John Locke, the makers of the mini-series seem to suggest that it is better to be a feudal lord in the West, than the Muslim Lord of Time. Off course privileging the duke over the Mahdi, means privileging the "status quo" over the possibility of a better world – but in the age of the neo-liberal consensus the willingness of the makers of Dune to pay that price shouldn't surprise us. This unfortunately implicates that popular science fiction continues to defer the decolonization of the future.

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[1] The Gay Science, pp. 192-3.

[2] Comments by L. Rassel

[3] In what follows, I confine my remarks to the Dune world constructed by Frank Herbert's Dune trilogy and the mini-series Dune (2002) – this means I have nothing or little to say in this piece about David Lynch's movie version of Dune or the subsequent Dune novels by Frank Herbert.

[4] This description is inspired by Heidegger's Question Concerning technology. Also see Leon R. Kass, (1993) "Introduction: The Problem of Technology" in A.M Melzer, J. Weinberger and M. Richard Zinman (eds), Technology in the Western Political Tradition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, especially pp. 2-8 where we find a definition of technology as a means of rational and instrumental calculation whereby the world is ordered so that it achieves the highest levels of efficiency, and control with least expenditure of effort.

[5] Carl Schmitt, The Concept of the Political.

[6] C. Mouffe, (2005) On the Political. London: Routledge, p. 8.

[7] C. Schmitt (1993) "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticization." Translated by M.Koneztt and J.P McCormick. Telos 96 (summer).

[8] 'Islamicate' is a term introduced by M.G Hodgson and it refers to social phenomena inspired by Islam, but not reducible to it as a religion. See M.G Hodgson, (1977) The Venture of Islam, vol. I Chicago: The Univeristy of Chicago.

[9] Frank Herbert in Dune Genesis http://www.Dunenovels.com/news/genesis.html

[10] I would not want to suggest that Herbert exclusively deployed Islamicate themes, clearly, there are references to other world cultures and histories – many of the rituals of the Fremen are for example extrapolated from the Apaches, it is however clear that the Islamicate influences are predominate in the world of Dune.

[11] Sayyid, 2003, pp. 32.

[12] In the wake of attacks on the Pentagon, and the World Trade Centre, rumors (on the internet) have spread in which Al-Qaeda is supposed to be based on Isaac Asimov's Foundation series, because the name of "Al-Qaeda" translates into English as the 'base' or 'foundation'.

[13] One could argue for example, that Herbert's handling of intrigue in Dune is rather unsatisfactory.

[14] It was increasingly influenced by the Persian lexicon; initially through the medium of post-Achemenid Hellenistic monarchies and subsequently through increased interactions with the renewed Persian empire under the Sassanid dynasty from the 3rd century CE onwards.

[15] "Ex nihilo" should not be understood literally, see Aziz Al-Azmeh, (2001) Muslim Kingship, (London: IB Tauris: 63) and the pedantic rejection of the ex nihilo character of the first Islamic polity.

[16] The 'revolutionary' nature of the formation of an Islamic state already implied that reliance on pre-Islamic Arabian political categories was not adequate to fulfil the task of ruling an empire much larger than any previous imperial order.

[17] This is the empire following Diocletian's reforms.

[18] For the analysis of some of these binary oppositions, see the work of Ali Shariati, who articulates the messianic impulse with a revolutionary potential of mobilization, under the sign of Islam. See the collection of lectures by Ali Shariati (1979) On the Sociology of Islam, Berkeley: Mizan Press.

[19] The Omega Glory was released during the second season of the original Star Trek series in 1967, as the Vietnam war moved towards its climax.

[20] Bailey, F.G (1970), Stratagems and Spoils: A social anthropology of politics. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

[21] P. Sloterdijk (1998) Critique of Cynical Reason, London: Verso

[22] C. Schmitt (1993) "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticization." Translated by M.Koneztt and J.P McCormick. Telos 96 (summer).

[23] See Leon R. Kass, (1993) "Introduction: The Problem of Technology" in A.M Melzer, J. Weinberger and M. Richard Zinman (eds) Technology in the Western Political Tradition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[24] Barnor Hesse and S. Sayyid, (2002)"War against Terrorism / 'War' for Cynical Reason". See www.opendemocracy.com

[25] The political nature of Osama Bin Laden's position can be clearly gleaned from the collection of his statements – this contradicts the image pushed by the advocates of the "war against terror" of fighting an enemy that is motivated by an apocalyptical logic. Thus the success of this presentation rests to some extent on the way in which it plays on the idea of "the fanatical irrational Muslim". It also plays on the theme of colonial conflict in which resistance to colonialism was always presented as being motivated by pathological or cosmological reasons, rather than something fairly mundane (e.g. the conflict against the imposition of colonial control). See B. Lawrence, ed. (2005) Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden. London: Verso. Trans. J. Howarth.

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