

A Spiritual Atomic Bomb?

Discourse analysis on Mao Zedong's Little Red Book as a political religious
work

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Quotations from Chairman Mao or more collegially known in the west as The Little Red Book, is the world's most printed book second only to the Bible with little over a billion copies printed. The book contains over 400 quotations from Mao collected from various speeches, interviews, essays and other quotes by the Chinese Communist party in 1966. It is seen as the embodiment and essence of the Maoist ideology, that has its roots in Marxism–Leninism. The book arose in prominence during the chaotic cultural revolution of China (1966–76), when the people were subjected by the ruling regime to study the *Quotations* by heart. The cult of Mao became more akin to a religious system than that of purely secular performance.

The ideology of Maoism along with communism and fascism was part of major academic interest in the field of studying the sacred in the modern world. One such proposed theoretical category for explaining the seemingly religious nature of the phenomenon, is the theory of political religion, which according to the famous political historian Emilio Gentile (2001) is adequate in its explanation power to help understand the religious mechanisms and aspects, that give rise to such totalitarian ideologies like that of Nazism, fascism and bolshevism.

My research involved analyzing how *Quotations* construct discourses derived from the chosen aspects of Gentile's formulation on the theory of political religion, and what kind of totalitarianism they postulate. The aspects are discriminatory nature, utopian aspirations and collective ethos. The whole of *Quotations* is my primary source, in making the research material.

The analysis is qualitative, and the research approach is both empirical and theoretical. The chosen analysis method is a hybrid of textual-driven critical discourse analysis and a context driven meaning-oriented discourse study, in which the parallels, consistency and similarities of the meanings are brought up from the research material by me as the interpretative researcher, and then discussed with the guiding theory.

The findings validated the hypothesis about the political religious nature of the *Quotations*. The discourses were further elaborated by me to convey transcendent immanence: The totalitarian essence created as part of a political religion through binding its ideology with familiar cosmology. Gentile's formulation was confirmed to be useful tool in analyzing single-party propagations and ideological textual sources. This thesis hopes to encourage similar research positions in analyzing any totalitarian regime and ideology through theoretical framework of religion as a system of meaning-network.

Keywords: Mao Zedong, Maoism, Little Red Book, Quotations from Chairman Mao-Tse-tung, China's cultural revolution, political religion, secular religion, Marxism-Leninism, ideology, discourse analysis, discourse study, meaning, proximization theory, otherness, palingenesis, totalitarianism, Mao-cult

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1 Introduction

“Once Mao Tse-tung’s¹ thought is grasped by the broad masses, it becomes a source of strength and a spiritual atomic² bomb of infinite power.” (Lin Biao, foreword to the second Chinese edition, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*. December 16, 1966).

China has taken the headlines of the world by storm. It has the world’s second largest economy measured by GDP (World Bank 2022), second largest amount of UNESCO World heritage sites (UNESCO 2024) and many massive multi-billion-dollar infrastructure investments into Eurasia and Africa as a form of the project called Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to challenge the hegemony of the US in the economic and political spheres of influence in the region (Maçães 2019, xi–xiv; Johnston 2019). However, there is also a more concerning side to all this power that China has accumulated. In recent times, there has been numerous news coverages about the mistreatment of China’s ethnic minorities – especially Uyghurs³ and the implementation of the national social credit system in 2020, which can dictate even the quality and availability of social- and healthcare services to the individual according to their allegiance to the party-state. Lastly, during the time of writing this thesis, the current president of China and the head secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Xi Jinping, has been accused of implementing a totalitarian regime, focusing more and more power to the communist party of China, while simultaneously strengthening its propaganda in all educational levels and society. (Paltemaa 2021, 1; 7–8; Garrick 2024; Dickson 2016, 7; Merics 2021.)

The school of thought or philosophy of Xi Jinping has been defined as the definitive and integral part of the CCP, when it was written as part of the constitution of China in 2017 (McCahill 2017, 2; Reuters 2018). In this political-philosophical school of thought, Xi has further defined Chinese socialism. For instance, the popularized slogan “Chinese dream” (中

¹ Mao *Zedong* as opposed to more familiar *Tse-Tung* wording, is the correct current standard written romanization of the name. The Chinese romanization standard is called pinyin. For the sake of accessibility, I will not use any diacritic symbols on the pinyin romanization. I will however use the simplified Chinese characters next to romanizations.

² The original English translation misspells the word *atomic*, as *atom*. I’ve taken the liberty to correct the misspelling in the citation, as well as in the title of this thesis.

³ China has been accused of incarcerating upwards to one million Uyghurs in internment camps in the province of Xinjiang. China denies the accusations. (Smith Finley 2020; Haukka 2019.)

国梦/zhong guo meng) – a reference to the American dream -slogan, has been one of the most well-known cultural embodiments of the Xi Jinping school of thought (Wang 2014). However, President Xi’s school of thought is not the only instance in Chinese history, when the constitution was modified by the head secretary of the party. Xi applies an earlier ideological system into his school of thought. In the 18th party congress of CCP, Xi mentioned in his speech: ”It is Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought that guided the Chinese people out of the darkness of that long night and established a New China.” (Greer 2019).⁴

To understand the political-philosophical ideology of the party state of China, its actions, traditions and models of operations, requires the understanding of the thought of Mao Zedong (1893–1976) – the founder of the People’s republic of China in 1949. The very same school of thought and ideology, that has been curated and summarized into the book *Quotations from Chairman Mao*⁵ or more popularly known in the west – *The Little Red Book*.

1.1 Subject of the research and the research problem

While traveling in China it might be hard not to notice a red book on vinyl covers with the face of Mao Zedong imprinted on it.⁶ Along with many photographs included in the book, are the collections of myriads of quotations from Mao. This book, that is often sold to tourists as a souvenir, has rather peculiar role in today’s China. *Quotations from Chairman Mao* (*Mao Zhuxi Yulu*), or *Red Treasure Book* (*hong baoshu*, 紅寶書) as it is known in China, is honored as a symbol of China’s past, and revered as a relic of Maoist ideology. The book itself is the definitive collection of carefully curated quotations of Mao’s texts and speeches collected by the CCP’s head of cultural matters and approved by Mao first in 1964 for the use of the People’s Liberation Army, then again in 1966 at the start of the Chinese Cultural Revolution as a more deliberately expanded and revised edition to the masses. (Leese 2013, 108–118; Zuo 1991, 102; Landsberger 2002, 139; Wardęga 2012, 189–191.) The book explains and encapsulates the essence of Maoist ideology, and it encourages its teachings to be spread everywhere. It has even been labeled explicitly and unofficially, as the “Mao-Bible” by some

⁴ Xi, Jinping. 5 January 2013. Speech at the 18th National Congress. Translated by Tanner Geer.

⁵ I will use the title *Quotations from Chairman Mao* interchangeably with *The Little Red Book*.

⁶ See figure 1 on annex.

scholars and historians. (Helmut 1982, 32; Landsberger 2002, 140; Gamsa 2009, 462; Leese 2013, 2.)

Quotations from Chairman Mao, or *The Little Red Book*, is amongst the most printed books in the world. second only to the Bible. According to some estimates, the printing range is somewhere among a billion prints. (Leese 2013, 108.) The book is the most well-known symbol and artifact of the Mao-era China, and depending on the interpretative person or a community, it can be either be seen as a symbol of a violent totalitarian oppression or emancipatory and revolutionary guide for making the world a better place. It is exactly this dichotomy and range of interpretations and meanings attached to the book itself, that I perceive it requiring a critical scientific inquiry.

As a researcher of this topic from the perspective of religious studies, I am especially fascinated by the era, when this book and its usages were tied to a seemingly zealous atmosphere: The Chinese cultural revolution in 1966–1976. During this chaotic time, that at first got its impetus from the in-fighting between the different power cliques within the CCP, quickly gave rise to a full-blown revolution, in which chairman Mao usurped the many young red guards and cadres to attack everything that was deemed as imperialist, reactionist, anti-revolutionary or feudal. (Kraus 2012 14–15; Landsberger 2002, 139–141.) The one and only goal of the China’s cultural revolution was to see a violent and complete transition to a socialist state, with ”The great teacher” or ”the great helmsman” Mao’s ideology implemented fully in the lives of every Chinese people. People were forced to study the quotations and implement its teachings to their everyday life. The book and its quotations were venerated and imbued with supernatural agency, and it also was frequently used as ritualistic paraphernalia. It was during this time, when the ideology and the cult of Mao most represented a fully functional, systematic religion of its own, hence my curiosity as a researcher of comparative religion. (Gamsa 2009, 462).

When I wrote my bachelor’s thesis *Maoism as a political religion during China’s Cultural Revolution 1966–1976*,⁷ I became more convinced for the proposition that the whole ideology of Maoism, not just the Mao-cult that rose in the context of that time frame, can be

⁷ English translation by me. Originally published at the University of Turku in April 2019: Maolaisuus poliittisena uskontona Kiinan kulttuurivallankumouksen aikana 1966–1976.

deconstructed as a categorical political religion, a form of secular religion, where the core political-ideological tenets have been given the ultimate meaning-marking status as a sacred-perceived system of beliefs. These ideological tenets form the creed of Maoism, which is summarized in the *Quotations*. The book serves as both a symbolic and a material embodiment of the essence of Maoism (Lin 1966; Leese 2013, 174–175).

It is precisely this symbolic embodiment, and the meanings derived and constructed from it, that are at the center of my research on the topic – meaning-oriented discourse analysis of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*. I will be analyzing from a qualitative research perspective the discourses of the quotations, through the theory of political religion, that is mainly reflected to highly acclaimed theorist Emilio Gentile’s formulations of the given theory. The goal of my research is to find and explain correspondences found in the meanings of quotations, in relation to the theory of political religion. The focal point or key-aspect of the political religion perceived in the meanings of the text is birthed from phenomena coined *sacralization of politics* by Gentile, which is at the essence of constructing a political religion. (Gentile 2006, 140.) It is paramount to understand, that no matter what theoretical framework or research methodology is applied to the topic of my thesis, the experiences under the regime of Mao or any other totalitarian at that, are real tragic events, that has touched millions of people regardless of their background. The brutality and violence stemming from a seemingly secular institution is always an important phenomenon to study and understand, especially in the modern world, where the perceived dichotomy between sacred and mundane is blurred. (Gentile 2006, xxxiii.)

Professor of East-Asian studies at the university of Tel Aviv, Mark Gamsa wrote in his article published in 2009 “The Religious Dimension of Politics in Maoist China”, that there has not been a successful and systematic academic effort in building a Maoist discourse analysis through a category of religion. At the time of writing this thesis in 2022–2024 this is yet to be the case, at least to the knowledge of me as a researcher of the topic. The justification of this thesis from this standpoint is hence valid, and it is exactly where I want to contribute. I will give my arguments later why the research field in this sense is lacking, even though the amount of source material and the impact on the cultural sphere of China and the world is undeniably vast.

While reading *The Quotations*, one doesn't have to read it long, to even come to a loose interpretation that the contents of the book are nothing short of totalitarian product of an ideological system. In the second quotation, under the first chapter of "The Communist Party", it is stated:

If there is to be revolution, there must be a revolutionary party. Without a revolutionary party, without a party built on the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory and in the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary style, it is impossible to lead the working class and the broad masses of the people in defeating imperialism and its running dogs. (2 q2/14.)⁸

This quotation summarizes in short, the key mechanisms that constitute a political religion. In the name of limiting my thesis to the presupposed key-mechanics, I've chosen and further refined three distinctive categories, based on the formulations of the renowned scholar of the subject Emilio Gentile. Gentile further elaborates the attributes to derive from the phenomenon of *sacralization* of politics (2006, xiv–xv; 46–47; 140; 2000, 25):

1. Political religion is by its nature a *totalitarian system*, that is, the regime which upholds the tenets of a political religion aiming to bring the "correct" interpretation to the masses to their everyday life, while shunning all the other "wrong" interpretations, deeming the people who follow this to be heretics or generally *others*, that either must be eliminated or converted. I will name this aspect as *adversarial juxtaposition*.

2. Political religion has a *sacred goal of transforming the society and the people* in it, to bring and switch the supernatural and transcendental sphere to the immanent and material world. This transformation of the society and the man, as a form of *palingenesis* (rebirth), is achieved by a violent revolution, and results in a utopia free of all the restrictions and evil of the old-world order. I will name this aspect as *utopia-building*.

3. Political religion utilizes the forming of a tightly knit community of the *masses*, that further enforces and solidifies the moral principles preached by the regime of the political religion, in the form of panopticon⁹-like structure. I will name this aspect as *communal demanded ethics*.

⁸ See page 40 about the used reference system on *Quotations*.

⁹ Panopticon refers to concept of English utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who conceptualized a prison building, in which the one guard can watch all the inmates from the center, all the while the inmates can't see that they are being watched.

This research is situated in the broader field of sociology, comparative religion, political history and literary studies. More specifically this thesis is a hybrid of textual and context derived discourse analysis of a political religion. The basic theoretical foundations and categories of this research are bound to the concepts of religion, ideology, meaning and power. As a student of comparative religion, it is of utmost importance to carefully and explicitly explain and operationalize especially the category of religion, within the context of this thesis. I will return to these basic theoretical foundations in chapter 2 (previous research) and 3 (Theory of political religion as a heuristic methodological tool).

In the introductory section of this thesis, I argued for the validity, relevance and the need for this thesis. I gave a brief history on the topic and defined the research problem. I also introduced the reader to the methodology and the source material. Following this, I will next explain in detail the concise research questions and my hypotheses in relation to research topic and the source material known by me at a first glance.

1.2 Research questions

My primary research interest is to analyze how political religion is constructed in the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*. To address this question more precisely, I will ask:

1. Do we find discourses of adversarial juxtaposition, utopia-building and communally demanded ethics in the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*?
2. How do these discourses relate to the totalitarian nature of political religion suggested by Emilio Gentile?

The research material is made not only from the primary source, but the research questions reflect upon the social-historical context of Maoism. To answer successfully the research questions, I will use meaning-oriented discourse analysis. In this case my research design is very typical from a qualitative standpoint: I am bound to a primary textual source, from which the research data is extracted and then reflected through my interpretive process in accordance with the guiding theory. The resulting analysis of the research will then be partly validated in interaction with research history of the past and the empirical data of my analysis.

It is very important to note to the reader, that the used major aspects of political religion in my analysis and in the research questions, are not entirely constructed by me. Rather, they are further refined and worded by me from the formulations of Emilio Gentile. The reason for this

is purely for the summarization; Gentile himself gives a rather vast definitions for the political religion besides the totalitarian aspect, so I perceive my refinements to be justified, so that the research can be fitted into a time-frame suitable for a Master's thesis. I will give further arguments for the justification of my summarizations in later methodological chapters describing the theory of political religion.

The three main aspects of a political religion, by my interpretation are: adversarial juxtaposition, utopia-building and strict communal demanded ethics. The second main question serves as a further validator for the political religion, since Gentile elaborated on the totalitarian essence being at the core of birthing political religion (Gentile 2006, 47). The main question is by a nature assumptive, for that is my main hypothesis. My earlier research in the field (bachelor's thesis) also gave me some strong arguments for the notion.

For the sake of limiting my analysis to a suitable size for the demand for a master's thesis, I have chosen not to include the following themes of a political religion, such as canonization of scripture, veneration of the party leadership and ritualization. These aspects are not in the focus of their own, but they do saturate my analysis as important parts of the main aspects, and without a doubt should deserve further study on their own rights.¹⁰

¹⁰ Stefan Landsberger has written a very prolific article on how the worship of Mao manifested in every-day life of Chinese people in their homes ("The Deification of Mao: Religious Imagery and Practises During the Cultural Revolution and Beyond" 2002).

1.3 Research ethical considerations

As a researcher, it is of utmost importance to clarify my interests and position in relation to the research topic, because it can affect the main analysis and the conclusion and its implications. Subject position also can affect interpretations of the earlier research and the primary source material, but also forming of the research data. Of course, while the notion of being perfectly objective as a researcher, is a forlorn conclusion, it is still possible to minimize the too subjective or radical takes: Partly because of the carefully chosen methodological context and its alignment to the research topic, and partly because of the general research ethics that are written openly to the reader of this thesis and to which the researcher abides by.

East-Asian studies comprise one of my minor subjects, and I perceive heavily, that my epistemic interests on the general area, especially that of China, culminates in this thesis. In my perspective, there is also a very deep need for understanding the political situation in China. After all, the government of China acts upon a totalitarian way according to many non-profit organizations, governments and news networks, as shown in the introduction. Also, the numerous news and articles, economic-, political- and cultural ties can tell all a rather gloomy story in contrast to the liberal civil society and democracies in the western hemisphere. However, one must keep in mind that even this presumed antagonistic position is just one part of the whole story. Even so, I intend not to make this thesis because of a potential emancipatory interpretation. That conclusion and potential actions from that perspective is up to everyone who reads this thesis. My interests are purely epistemic, I receive no funding or endorsements from any third party, and I am not politically tied to CCP, its affiliates, or any affiliates who openly opposes the party. This said, the research topic is very controversial, much like any research which includes CCP as its main subject, purely because of the censorship that CCP actively promotes (Kraus 2012, xiii; Mitter 2004, 207).

However, while the subject and background of it might raise some emotions, the primary source material in use of this thesis is open for everyone. I have not deliberately ordered or modified the source material, in fact, I am using a free pdf/e-book format of the English translation of the second edition available openly on the internet on the Internet Marxist Archives. The analysis is based on the text of the source book, so the validity of the analysis based on the source material on this research, is for everyone to see.

1.4 A Brief history and on the context of the Little Red Book

Before one can understand the content of the Little Red Book, we must first understand its birth context in a very turmoil-filled, chaotic and complicated political-cultural environment, that has its roots in the political-philosophical theory of Karl Marx, the great narratives of the 20th century and in the unique linguistic and literary tradition of China in progress of modernization.

In the Chinese literary tradition, The Little Red Book can be situated in the category of works regarding general morals, prescriptive ethics or utopia-manifests. As early as 1670s, the Chinese emperor of the Qing-dynasty *Kangxi* commissioned with the help of the court-bureaucrats a book called *Sacred Edicts* (*sheng yu*, 圣谕). In the book were listed sixteen moral principles, that the citizens were required to learn by heart, and the principles were placed on many noticeboards of villages, hamlets, towns and cities (Wakeman 1973, 10; 13).

China has been under the moral guiding ethics and sophistication of Confucius since the fifth century BCE. Confucianism was born during a perilous time, when the Zhou dynasty failed in centralizing the government, which resulted in a period of many smaller vassal states vying for power. This period is called in contemporary historiography “The Spring and Autumn period” (770–476 BCE.) It was during this unstable period, when the need for stabilizing the status quo arose, and many teachers roamed the courts of Chinese leaders offering their guidance. One of such teachers was Confucius¹¹, whose teachings on general morals regarding the relations of subject to another and between subject and the ruler, has had a tremendous impact on East-Asian societies to this day. (Paltemaa 2018, 39–49; Nolan 2018, 274.) Philosopher Roland Boer goes to even argue, that in the book *Quotations*, Mao shares similar moral principles that are found on the Confucius’s book *Analects*. I too would argue that *Quotations* adheres to and continues¹² the earlier mentioned type of Chinese literature on ethics. Ironically, Mao himself despised the teachings of Confucius, attributing them as a negatively perceived part of a *feudal* past of China. (Boer 2015.)

¹¹ Another transliteration is Gongzi (孔子, Kongzi).

¹² This continuum should not be perceived in the literal sense, but more as a symbolic one.

Another very significant work of such Chinese literary tradition that had an influence on Mao, is the *Datong Shu*, 大同书 (Schrecker 2004, 169). Published posthumously in 1935 by a Chinese reformist Kang Youwei (1858–1927), the work is loosely translated as “The Great Unity/Harmony/Community”. The book is one of the leading examples of Chinese social- and cultural reformation movement, although a very extreme example at that. Kang Youwei had the ideas for the book as early as 1884. The book underlines the basic concepts of a future society, where all the natural constrictions and social constructions such as gender, class, race and even private ownership were to be erased from the world by all-governing global government, which at the same time would have kept vigil over mankind’s moral compass. Kang called this theoretical state of being, as a “Great Unity” (*Da Tong*, 大同), a term, that corresponds and echoes in Chinese philosophy and especially in the Daoist religious concept that emphasizes the natural balance and harmony of all entities. It is important to note, that Mao was familiarized and partly even impressed by some of Kang’s works (Brusadelli 2020, 4–7; Leese 2013, 1–2; Schrecker 2004, 23–25.) However, the precise influences by the *Da Tong* on Mao’s thinking, stays elusive.

Before the arrival of the Little Red Book on to the homes, pockets and arms of the Chinese people, society had to be prepared for the massive shift of what was to come: The Chinese Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976 was the defining moment for cementing the Mao-cult and with it, the whole Maoist ideology into the Chinese society (Zuo 1991, 99–101). Mao was a devoted Marxist-Leninist. He took the role as the unquestionable sole interpreter and theorist of the socialism with Chinese characteristics. (Kraus 2012, 13; Kauppinen 2006, 1.) Many of his guiding principles were heavily derived from the general Marxist doctrines, that I will be explaining in further chapters.

In his version of socialism “with Chinese characteristics”, Mao underlined the importance of the role of the common peasantry in a revolution against the *bourgeoisie*, instead of the proletariat of the industrial urban areas. This change towards arming and propagating the peasantry must have undeniably been largely because of the agrarian nature of Chinese economy – over half of the annual GDP of China during the reign of Mao, was from agricultural sector (Paltmaa 2011, 73). This doctrine – which later evolved into the idea of the “mass line”, can be argued to be partly due, to also being extremely pragmatical for the manpower needs of the CCP.

The second and unique integral element to Maoism is the concept of cultural revolutions. If a society is to achieve the communist utopia and civil order, then for the new societal birth to take place, the old constituents of the older and “worse” societal values and constructs would have to be destroyed and replaced by the new order. In 1966 the great Chinese Cultural Revolution was declared by the mandate of Mao, in which Mao agitated the Red Guard and especially the young students to destroy “The Four Olds” from the Chinese society: old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. (Zuo 1991, 101–103; Kraus 2012, 10; 44.) The Maoist regime viewed all the established religions as the products of “feudalism” or “imperialism”, heralding an aggressive stance against such enemies of the Communist project. Wang Xiaoxuan (2020) also points out, that the Maoist rule “could have simultaneously suppressed religion and sparked religious reinvention.” (Wang 2020, 5–6.)

For the cultural revolution to have the impetus for changing Chinese society, it needed mass-produced propaganda. The People’s Liberation Army of China had already started to recite Mao’s quotations, found in various Newspapers, as per instructions of the General Lin Biao. Officers and party cadres had also brought with them banners and signs to bring to military camps. However, unlike commonly stated, Mao’s second in-command, general of the People’s Liberation Army Lin Biao did not give the order for the printing of the *Quotations*. It was the deputy editor-in-chief of the Jinsui Daily, Tang Pingzhu, who presented the idea at the General Political Department work conference in December 1963.¹³ (Leese 2013, 110–112.)

Initially, the book presented as an example contained 200 quotes collected from Mao’s textual works, speeches and interviews. The resulting work was approved by Mao himself. The *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* was first printed for the inner use of the People’s Liberation Army on 16th of May 1964. The book was made mandatory reading for every military personnel and was given to every military cadre and squad. (Leese 2013, 112.) The prioritizing of the target group as military, indicates the militaristic nature of the ideology of Maoism, but it also reflects upon the growing fear of what the ruling party CCP had: potential

¹³ The idea itself was inspired by Lin Biao, who was known for zealously propagating and studying Mao Zedong though (Leese 2011, 109).

usurpers. The party leadership needed to indoctrinate not only the people, but first the People's Liberation Army, so that it could secure its legitimacy. (Mitter 2004, 240.)

Quotations was printed to large masses to rest of China later December 16th, 1966. After its second publication it was followed with a mass political educational campaign. It was to become the most important cultural priority; the expanded edition of *Quotations* had a total of 427 quotations with 33 chapters or sections. Sinologist Daniel Leese emphasizes, that China experienced acute inflation of print industry, paper and ink, due to the mandatory requirements of printing the *Quotations* (Leese 2013, 118–119; 121). *The Quotations of Chairman Mao* became the most published book after the Bible, having little over one billion printings in the years 1966–1969 (Leese 2013, 108).

The different reasons for the Cultural Revolution are a subject to debate, at least regarding the emphasis of the political in-fighting. A more recent take on the subject by sinologist Daniel Leese (2013), is that the Cultural revolution was due to an inner-political performance, from above to below, and that the unwanted attention from factionalism and political power struggle needed to be projected unto different societal sphere. (Leese 2013, 20–21, 23, 87–88, 110, 259–260.) Finnish sinologist Lauri Paltmaa (2018) also emphasizes the role of the political elite in initiation of the cultural revolution. However, it is without a doubt, that the juxtaposition of *we* the revolutionaries vs. *them* the counterrevolutionaries, and the creation of the narrative of Mao as the messiah by the ruling party ideology, was in one sense creating a huge vernacular system of meanings that replaced the traditional religious sphere. (Gentile 2006, 122–125; Zuo 1991; Landsberger 2002.)

Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung was the key catalyst for grounding and transferring this ideology – political religion, from the top - meaning party leadership, to the bottom - meaning the ordinary people, in means of a symbolic power and language. The work encapsulates the essence and the power of the CCP, and the quotations and their contents worked as political-ideological guidelines for the model of righteous and correct demeanor (Landsberger 2002, 140). This harkens to ask how the totalitarian elements are conveyed by these qualities and carried over as political religion. The next chapter will bring light to the overall theoretical framework, on how *Quotations* and Maoism in general have been positioned in academic research concerning ideological history.

2 Previous research

I will address the research history of study of Maoism and the *Quotations* in general, in this section. Although it should be noted that the larger theoretical foundations are also tackled on. This is because theoretical foundations often rise from the context of research history, guided by the observations of the researcher. They are largely intertwined. Therefore, I will first write from a more specific subject of the research – meaning the *Quotations* as the research topic, then I will gradually pin-point the field of research towards the larger phenomenon of the religious category in question of this thesis. In this way, the reader can follow logically from my perspective the building of the triangulation of my research problem, while getting to know the lay of the academic field firstly from a simpler category onto more complex ones, while understanding the concept of the political religion attached to the analysis.

As I previously argued for the evident research gap, there has not been any kind of specific study with the methodology of my choosing regarding the analysis of the *Quotations* as of 2024. However, the work is included as a major example in number of studies for explaining the larger phenomenon regarding Maoism as a political religion, or at least as a quasi-religious ideology with quasi-religious manifestations in the forms of rituals, dogmas and sacred pantheon. Researchers such as Stefan Landsberger (2002), Jiping Zuo (1991) and Daniel Leese (2013) all have analyzed the *Quotations* as an important ideological tool and symbolical asset in shifting the Chinese society towards communism in the form Mao-cult and Maoism. All the abovementioned researchers use the *Quotations* as an example, rather than pinpointing the larger role of Maoism or their research field solely to the work.

One recent contemporary research example – although over ten years old at the time of writing, comes from the research monograph by German sinologist Daniel Leese (2013) *Mao-Cult – Canon vs Charisma*. In the book, Leese takes the position to rather than holding the *Quotations* to be the quintessential embodiment of the Maoist canon, to be more of a constructed party-tool of a secular nature to control and hold the loyalty of the population. (Leese 2013, 20–21, 23, 87–88, 110, 259–260.) This juxtaposes with another research stance, where the *Quotations* and the Mao-cult at larger is seen as a representation of a more religious nature.

Indeed, I have identified a standing debate in the research field regarding the penultimate nature of the phenomenon of Maoism as a religious ideology: On the one side, Maoism and

its different representations through canon and paraphernalia such as the *Quotations* and ritualistic behavior are interpreted through transcendental and functionalistic systems¹⁴ (Jiping Zuo, Stefan Landsberger, Stanley Payne, Emilio Gentile) of inter-woven beliefs – a religion *per se*, and on the other side, the ideology of Maoism and the surrounding ideological propagations are nothing more than representations of spontaneous and pragmatic oaths of fealty to the ruling party, guided by a complex political and sociological performances. (Daniel Leese, Rana Mitter, Hans Maier). This duality of approach is deeply connected with the perceived vagueness and complexity of the phenomenon of Maoism as an ideology or religion, but it also derives largely from the criticism of the appliance of the term *religion* – and all its sub-categories, such as the *political religion*, to the phenomenon. Semantics and context are the key issues, and I will cover the issue more clearly in chapter 3.2.

My research position of the chosen topic is connected to a larger tradition of studying secular religions. At the crossroads of perspectives, lies discursive study of religion, study of ideology, power and symbolic language. Because my research focus is condensed on explaining the seemingly secular – or non-religious, I must carefully and explicitly explain my ontological presuppositions. Naturally as a student of religious studies, the category of religion will receive diligent investigation and explanations in relation to the research topic. Therefore, operationalization of the category of religion is critical.

Next, I will introduce and briefly explain the core of the most elemental and important research tradition and literature about the *Quotations*. The next segment after that will cover the larger theories of religion, ideology and their sub-categories and lastly, I will introduce the theoretical discussion and framework of Maoism and Marxism-Leninism as a political religion. I must emphasize that the research history and the theoretical foundations for my thesis intertwine, before I cover the more practical approach of my choice of analysis methodology.

2.1 The Little Red Book in earlier research

Unfortunately for my thesis, the *Quotations* have not been in the center of creating research material, nor in the center of any study I have found regarding my point of approach of only

¹⁴ One such proponent of functionalistic theory of religion is Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) In his classic essay in anthropology: *Ethos, Worldview and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols* in 1957, Geertz stated religion to be more than just metaphysical subjective stances, but rather concrete collection of meanings that upholds the justification of people's everyday life.

analyzing the discourses in the *Quotations*. The work is only given a minor scholarly representation as part of larger Mao-cult of Maoist ideology¹⁵, or as part of a wider catalogue of Chinese religious history in modernity¹⁶.

The only monograph of a western academic type, where the Little Red Book is the sole focus, is *Mao's Little Red Book: Global History* edited by Alexander Cook in 2014. The beginning of the work introduces the birth context and some of the meanings attached to the work, but the focus of the book is to define the global role and influence on the communist regimes in different cultural spheres. In the end, unfortunately the monograph doesn't offer much substance to my thesis, besides the hard data linked to the production and distribution of the *Quotations*.

Peculiar enough, there has not been any scholarly work or analysis of the contents, discourse, meanings or symbols of *Quotations* (Gamsa 2009). One such rare typologizing effort of a singular Maoist discourse was made by Swedish sinologist Michael Schoenhals in the article "Demonizing Discourse in Mao Zedong's China: People vs Non-People" (2007) where Schoenhals analyzes the rhetoric constructed by the party leadership regarding people of China as to being either "with the ideology" and therefore with the party, or "without the system" and therefore without protection of the party and without basic human rights. Schoenhals did not use *Quotations* as a singular source, but rather many Newspapers propaganda, speeches and texts from the *Selected Works from Mao*.¹⁷ However, many of the quotes in the *Quotations* are from the said *Selected Works from Mao*. Beforementioned Daniel Leese has brought the western academic world a marvelous history and analysis of the rhetorical and canonical aspects of Mao-cult, but even so the dedicated chapter in his book only illuminates the complex history, from its contemporary birth context.

I would argue that the proportionally small quantity in the scholarly publications in relation to the rather large impact of *Quotations* lies in two reasons: First, the *Quotations* can be dismissed as a rather eccentric and localized product of Mao Zedong thought, that is not coherent enough in the canonized ideology it aims to crystallize, to justify its scholarly analysis as a sole subject of research. Also secondly, the deduction and deconstruction of the myriad different discourses, such as "us vs. them", approval of violence or instructions on

¹⁵ Leese, Daniel (2011). 2013. *Mao-Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in Chinas's Cultural Revolution*.

¹⁶ For example: Goossaert, Vincent & Palmer, A. David. 2011. *Religious Question in Modern China*.

¹⁷ Mao, Zedong. 1967. *Selected Works of Mao-Tse-tung*. 4 Volumes.

moral dedication, can be interpreted to be rather ambiguous. Especially so, because the chapters contain quotes about strategy and military doctrine. In my scholarly opinion, because of these reasons the *Quotations* is also prone to carnivalization and exoticization.

It is important to note, however, that there also lies a more pragmatic reason for the lack of any concrete research material. CCP has censored several archival materials due to the traumatizing nature of the Cultural Revolution and the perceived negative impact that it has been feared to have on the party. This censorship has only been recently lifted, and so it enables scholars to investigate more thoroughly the corpus of written memoirs, newspaper inserts, letters and other official documents that haven't been available for the use of the academic world. Unfortunately, for this thesis, this has had no impact on my research subject, since I am analyzing the contents of a singular public work. Also, one such factor for lacking earlier research on the subject, is perhaps because the trend for studying totalitarianism and especially from a standpoint of a cultural or religious studies has slowly waned. This can be seen easily from the slowed frequency of studies published by the scientific journal *Politics, Religion & Ideology* by keywords such as *totalitarianism* or *political religion*, especially after the year 2009.

2.2 Secular religion and ideology

Continuing from the last sentence, valuable source of research literature for the use of my thesis comes from the scientific journal called *Politics, Religion & Ideology*. The journal has renewed its name since 2011, when it was named *Totalitarian Movements & Political Religions* since 2001. The name change reflects certain research turn in terms of the use of the term political religion, but above all, the journal gathers all parties and fields of studies that investigate the intertwining of politics, religion and ideology. The field of research is interdisciplinary and covers sociology, history sciences, political research, cultural studies, philosophy, religious studies, theology, language research and other special fields, such as the study of a certain geographical area and even psychology.

Regarding scientific research in the field of humanities – such as cultural studies¹⁸, the topics and subjects of research are usually universally abstract and humanly attached units or rather shared networks of subjective meanings. These intersubjective meaning-networks – *i.e. religions, ideologies, language* etc. are often understood to be socially constructed in a macro-

¹⁸ The broader field of cultural studies includes subjects such as media-, art- or religious studies.

theoretical sense. When I use the concepts of religion, ideology, power or meaning in my thesis, I understand them through this traditional sense of social constructions, as famously theorized by Berger and Luckmann (1966). However, social constructionism does not mean that any meaning system created by people, do not have or is not possible to have any categorizations created by outside observers. That categorization is the very thing that makes it possible to define the contents and forms of systems in the study. Let this serve as the basic ontological axiom of my thesis, with which I simultaneously explain the categories of religion, ideology, power and meaning – the meanings of which I study by means of discourse analysis.

When I write about secular religion, I mean a religion that appears to the layman as a secular, i.e. worldly or material, but which at the same time contains almost all the identical denominators as in any institutional religion (Cristi 2001; Gentile 2006; Payne 2008, 21–22). Some of these denominators or characteristics are but not limited to: Perceived sacredness, need for ritualistic behavior, codes of morality, supernatural entities, pantheon of venerated beings, social cohesion on these principles and the belief of meaningful total existence from birth to inevitable death and the perceptions on life after death. According to Gentile, the concept of secular religion has been used loosely in the 19th and 20th centuries to explain any substitute for traditional religion, that emphasizes new humanistic values (Gentile 2006, 1).

Gentile sets up the historiography of studying the sacred in the secular: The most well-known early concept of secular religion in an academic context was used by the French sociologist Raymond Aron (1944), who used the concept to describe all doctrines that promise salvation in the earthly world¹⁹. However, the concept was used for the first time by Guy Stanton Ford (1935) in his edited essay collection *Dictatorship in the Modern World*, where secular religion is seen as one of the tools created, along with radio, film and the press, to produce propaganda in favor of the prevailing dictatorship. (Gentile 2006, 1–2.)

Indeed, there has been a massive motivation in the western academia to study secular entities, which have dominated the European ideological spheres often in dictatorial forms of governance in the 20's to 40's. The motivation for *why* and *how* the atrocities happened in the Second World War needed to be answered in the academic field as well, especially because the common denominator did not appear to be of an immediate religious origin.

¹⁹ This parallel ties to my conclusion of the analysis.

More precisely, Gentile perceives secular religion as an umbrella concept under which any worldly phenomenon is placed, on which people project a system of beliefs, myths, rituals and symbols that creates an aura of sacredness (Gentile 2006, 1). Understood in this way, institutions such as science, sports or citizenship can take on the characteristics of a secular religion. However, religion is not simple to define, and the category of religion is not intended to be exhaustively explained. However, in the phenomenon studied in my thesis, a few central constitutive materials of religion can be outlined: The community and its shared and sacred purpose, moral code and deterministic understanding of human history.

Émile Durkheim's classic theory (1912) still serves as an excellent outline of religion as a system of the shared network of meanings of the human community, interpreted to be of a supernatural origin. Without the sustaining community and the protective boundaries of the perceived supernatural origin on the sacred/secular axis, it would not be meaningful to talk about religion. Religion is therefore reduced to a social construction, and I place the operationalization of the category of religion on this *Durkheimian* characterization in my thesis.

In the same fundamental way, the concept of ideology is placed in my thesis. As an everyday, emic concept, ideology is seen as a set of concepts or a worldview that is independent of religion and guides the life and values of an individual (Hjelm 2022, 235). The basis of ideology is not necessarily in the supernatural itself, but ideology often takes on a *de facto* religion-like role in the world of human experience. The French philosopher and well-known theorizer of the concept of ideology, Louis Althusser, summed up the definition of ideology in two main theses: 1. Ideology is somehow an individual's imaginative representation in relation to objective reality. 2. Ideology always also has a material form. (Althusser 1971.) These two main theses of Althusser line up perfectly in my study of the *Quotations*.

Maoist ideology, i.e. Maoism, has concurrences with Althusser's theory of ideology. It gives an imaginative representation as an explanation of the reality and is tied to the official interpretation of the entity and party that created it, compiled in the Little Red Book. This forms the material form of ideology. However, Maoism can also be interpreted as a political religion, a form of secular religion. In my thesis, ideology and religion converge to the concept of political religion. I elaborate on the theoretical concept of political religion in

chapter 3. Next, I will present the field of research where Maoism as part of Marxism-Leninism has been discussed and theorized as a political religion.

2.3 Marxism-Leninism and Maoism as a political religion

Mao was a committed Marxist-Leninist and emphasized his exclusive right to act as the sole theoretician of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Kauppinen 2006, 1). To understand Maoism and the study of Maoism precisely as a political religion, we must first be able to conceptualize Marxism-Leninist ideology as a religion-like system. I will guide the reader on to the research history of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism as a political religion.

Marxism-Leninism as a concept is the political- philosophical system of thought of Karl Marx (1818–1883), which was further refined by Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) as the first head of a fully communist state, i.e. the Soviet Union (Schram 1969). Marxism in general has been frugally studied in the subjects of philosophy and political history, but more relevant for my own thesis are the studies in which Marxist-Leninism is compared to a religion-like system. Prolific political historian James Gregor wrote in his 2012 published monograph *Totalitarianism and Political Religion : An Intellectual History*, that the philosophical main essence from the first writings of Engels and Marx, contained the narrative of any religion – that of “preparing humanity” for its “ultimate redemption”, marking ideology of Marx and Engels to be a “secular surrogate for religion”. (Gregor 2012, 95–96.)

In the 1920s and 1930s, the European academic world sought to explain why dictatorships and totalitarian regimes were increasing their power. Bolshevism under Marxism and the totalitarian ideology it brought were also interpreted as a form of secular religion (Keller 1936). American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr was the first to use the term political religion in Marxism and Communism in his article “Christian Politics and Communist Religion” (1935). In 1938, the Austrian philosopher Eric Voegelin was the first to present a systematized presentation of the nature of political religion in the work *Die Politischen Religionen*, where the point of view was apologetically theological for its time; Marxism, fascism and other totalitarian ideologies were seen in western countries as new humanist religions that went hand in hand with modernity, expelling all traditional Judeo-Christian values and ethics. Thus understandably, they were imbued with negative connotations by the clergy and theologically motivated scholars (Gentile 2005, 22–23.)

According to Gentile, the research interest on political religions and the totalitarian regimes sustaining the ideology, began to grow noticeably from 1990s– onwards. This was especially exacerbated by the fall of the Soviet Union, which leading ideology was now put on intellectual autopsy (Gentile 2000, 20). How did scholars begin to define the underlining ideology, that seemed to transform societies in a totalitarian way?

Russian anthropologist Anatoly Khazanov has researched Marxism-Leninism as a secular religion, which is the theoretical basis for Maoism, and its study as a religious ideology. Khazanov became convinced that Marxism-Leninism fits the theoretical formula of a totalitarian project, within the framework of a secular religion. The three totalitarian characteristics that Marxism-Leninism is constructed of, according to Khazanov, are: ideology, organization and terror. Khazanov argues for the usage of a secular religion rather than political religion, mainly because of his perceived reduction of the sacralized sphere to consider only politics. (Khazanov 2008, 119–120.) I deem that argument to be too generalized, but I respect the commitment to the Occam’s razor. I will discuss the definitional and methodological problems of the category of political religion, and its ambiguous other derivatives and neighboring categories in chapter 3.2. However, it is important to note from the example of Khazanov’s research, that the theoretical concepts about secular religion all connect to the idea of sacralization of secular entity and a totalitarian nature.

From more traditional research standpoint of a religious studies, Russian historian Igal Halfin clearly uses the terminology of the theologically motivated research of political religion in his 2000 work *From Darkness To Light: Class, Consciousness, & Salvation in Revolutionary Russia*. Halfin studied Marxist discourses of power and historical narratives to find out that they contain a surprising number of identical and comparable discourses and narratives to Christian eschatology.

The same conclusion was reached by philosopher Klaus-Georg Riegel, who specializes in 20th century philosophy. Riegel analyzed Marxism–Leninism as a political religion in the article “Marxism as a Political Religion” (2007) through Lenin’s utopia-designing. In his article, one of the main theses of Riegel, is that the creation of totalitarian projects is purely born from the catalyst of the western modernization paradigm, that infuses and restructures the perceived dichotomy between political ideologies (material) and religious ideas (supernatural). This total paradigm shift enabled the creation of totalitarian political ideologies, that permeates

itself with the supernatural agency, that was once at the other side of the spectrum explaining and justifying the existence of human and its role in the society. In other words, this shifted supernatural agency brought means and the general concept of salvation from the field of transcendent, to the field of the immanent world, thus transforming the seemingly secular political entity as a herald of answering humanity's existence in the ultimate matters. (Riegel 2007, 27–28.) Marcin Kula wrote similarly in his article of “Communism as Religion” in 2005. He too draws the parallel of salvational myths found in institutionalized religions to the communist ideology. “The predetermined divine plan” is changed with Marxists “principles of historical development”; the cyclical nature of time from the dark beginnings to the paradise, that will restore the classless society through inevitable suffering: violent revolution. (Kula 2005, 371–372.)

The characterization of Marxism as a secular religion promised by "salvation on earth" is an important consideration when studying the topic of my research field, which belongs to my hypothesis with a pre-understanding of the material. However, it is important to note, that the academic study of the category of political religion began in the field of theology and was mainly written by theologians (Gentile 2005, 22–23). This has contributed to the Christian-based emphasis of analysis units and categories, which is not necessarily without problems. I will return to this problem later in chapter 3, which deepens the concept of political religion.

The first mentioning of Maoism as a religion-like system is by the Japanese American scholar of religion Joseph Kitagawa in his article “One of the Many Faces of China: Maoism as a Quasi-Religion” (1974). It is interesting to note how the religion-like nature of Maoism, or in general secular ideology, has sought its category in academic research. Yet again it serves as a testament to the fact that the research of the immanent, secular ideologies and thought-systems have not been studied beyond the face-values or aesthetics of the dogmas themselves. Kitagawa argues that although as a Western category *religion* does not fit the Chinese context, as a broader (Durkheimian) functional category, religion as "total existence in relation to sacred reality"²⁰ is fully interpretable in Maoism (Kitagawa 1974, 126). Kitagawa does not

²⁰ Durkheimians often equate the western agent-centric supernatural personal beings in religion, to those of a more ambiguous” mystical essences” found in East-Asian religious traditions (Payne 2005, 163–164).

use the category of political religion in his article but rather categorizes Maoism as quasi-or pseudo-religion²¹. It remains unclear if Kitagawa has even heard of the term political religion.

It was not until the Chinese sociologist Jiping Zuo in her article “Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China” (1991) that Maoism is interpreted as a purely political religion. According to Sinologist Daniel Leese, the article in question lays the groundwork for studying Maoism as a political religion. What also makes Zuo's article significant is that it contains an autoethnographic approach, as Zuo himself witnessed the Chinese Cultural Revolution and at the same time the ecstatic, cult-like admiration and even worship of Mao. Zuo also mentioned the *Quotations* being used as a magical talisman, which was deemed imbued with supernatural properties, and with it came a myriad of attached rituals and meanings, such as mandatory study sessions and waving the book in public when a new instruction by Mao was published. (Zuo 1991, 101.)

Political historian and sociologist David Apter uses the term transcendent dimension of Maoism in his article “Bearing Witness, Maoism as a religion” (2005). Apter argues the positioning of research to the religious sphere, to be the consequence of Mao portrayed to be part of so remarkable phenomenon, that nothing explains it better than belief systems. (2005, 7–8).

Sinologist Stefan Landsberger wrote more specifically about the religious elements of Maoism in his article “The Deification of Mao: Religious Imaginary and Practices during the Cultural Revolution and Beyond” (2002). In the article, Stefan emphasized the deification of Mao and the resulting forms of ritual behavior, such as praying to Mao altars, the birth of loyalty dance and song, and a comprehensive personality cult. Historian Rana Mitter in his 2008 article “Maoism in the Cultural Revolution: A Political Religion?” Became convinced of the proposition that Maoism can be validly interpreted as a political religion.

²¹With the prefix *quasi* or *pseudo*, it is meant that a phenomenon is something, "almost"-like. That is, something that can identify the most obvious characteristic factors of the phenomenon, but at the same time it is something that lacks something essential when describing the phenomenon. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quasi>.) In the context of the article, Kitagawa has therefore not wanted or been able to give a specific classification to Maoism, which nevertheless appears like a religion to the researcher.

Mark Gamsa, an East Asian researcher familiar with Chinese and Russian literature, chronicles different methodological approaches to the study of Maoism as a religious phenomenon. To apply this element to the examination, Gamsa presents four main trends in his article of studying Maoism as a religious phenomenon: ideological historical, political-historical, religious-historical trend and discourse analysis (Gamsa 2009). Political religion as a theoretical concept is placed on the junction of all of these as its own research paradigm, but the unproblematic usage of the term is questioned by Gamsa. Historian Thoralf Klein, on the other hand, emphatically writes in his article “Political religion in twentieth-century China and its global dimension” (2014) that Maoism is undeniably a political religion.

In the previous research historical review, it appears that Maoism has been studied as a political religion, or at least as something similar to a religion. The articles deal with Maoism, the mass movement towards Mao, and worship as a secular religion, which manifests the same concepts that are at the center of religious phenomena, such as ritual, cult, explanatory models of the purpose of life and promises of a better future. Many of the researchers in the field of studying Maoism approach the Mao cult and Maoist ideology as a religious phenomenon, not just as a secular political ideology or performance. However, this approach is not without criticism, although previous research examples provide confirmation of the validity of the context of my study. Next, I offer an overview, and I will cover the details of the most important theoretical basis of this research: The concept of political religion.

3 Theory of Political religion as a heuristic methodological tool

Previously, I wrote about the concept and category of political religion as part of the broader field of secular religion. I also summarized, referring to previous research, how political religion has appeared in research and in what kind of context it has been used. According to Gentile, The Austro-Hungarian historian, economist and sociologist Karl Polanyi was the first scholar to use the term political religion in academic writing. He studied political religion's relation to fascism in his article "The Essence of Fascism" in 1935. His work coincided with the publication of the article "Christian Politics and Communist Religion" in the same year. Although, the Austrian philosopher Eric Voegelin was the most known scholar of using the concept right on the eve of World War II, referring to secular religions, especially the European dictatorships of the 1920s and 1930s (Gentile 2006, 2).

Now I will deepen the meanings of the concept of political religion. I discuss the different aspects it includes, how politics can acquire religious-like meanings, and how political religion differs from the more well-known concept of civil religion. At the end of the chapter, I provide a categorical definition of political religion in my own words, which I will use in the analysis of the research material. In addition, I deal with the criticism of the concept of political religion, advocating for its usefulness as a heuristic methodological tool, as per famous proponent of the concept of political religion Stanley Payne has written (2008). The absolute foundation and cornerstone of the definition in question comes from Emilio Gentile's formulation of the concept of political religion. I also notice to the reader again at this point that the emphasis on the nature of the theoretical concept is mostly gathered from Gentile's thoughts, unless otherwise stated or referred to.

When talking about political religion, one cannot fail to mention the recent popularizer of the concept in the academic field, the Italian political historian Emilio Gentile. Gentile has done his life's work in the study of fascism, his perspective and research interests being the mechanisms of ideology. His reflections on the topic culminated in the 2001 contemporary classic *La Politica della Religioni*, in which Gentile examines the religion-like nature of politics through historical examples and creates his own overview and theory of political religion, which he interprets as a secular religion born of a certain kind of sacralization of politics, in which the political ideology itself has been elevated to the ultimate meaning and as the total justifier and creator of existence (Gentile 2006, 40; 140). Gentile verifies his

interpretations on the relations of religion, politics and totalitarianism within the theories of secular religion, political religion and totalitarianism with historiographical examples (Gentile 2000, 18).

Gentile won the Sigrist prize for his work in 2003, and with the 2006 English-translated version *Politics as Religion*, Gentile's work and theory also received a lot of criticism, to which of course Gentile has written his own responses. As I wrote in the chapter regarding the previous research, many researchers consider the theory valid. My purpose is, in a broader sense, to analyze Gentile's definitions of political religion and to produce my own perspectives on the concept, given if the research material supports them. Gentile himself also reads Maoism as a political religion (Gentile 2006, 122–126).

What is important to note is that Gentile has by no means created the concept of political religion himself, but rather in his work, after his meritorious historiography of the concept, he systematizes and justifies the features of political religion. However, the systematization is only Gentile's interpretation, so I have taken the freedom of a researcher to interpret the loose ends of political religion in my own words and to my own findings in the research material and in the research history.

3.1 Further refinement of the theory by Emilio Gentile

There is no political religion unless the community/regime sacralizes, i.e. sanctifies, the political ideology, or often as is the case for the more totalitarian regimes - the internalization of the ideology of that community involves totalitarian aspects – like that of the threat of violence or coercion (Gentile 2006, 45). The sacralization of politics and the totalitarian notions and attributes are therefore the most central criteria for the realization of political religion, according to Gentile. (Gentile 2006, xxii.)

Gentile elaborates his definition of a political religion on his first essay on the subject:

Political religion is the sacralization of an ideology and an integralist political movement that deifies the mythical secular entity; it does not accept coexistence with other ideologies and political movements, and sanctifies violence as a legitimate weapon in the battle against enemies of the faith and as the instrument of regeneration; it denies the autonomy of the individual and stresses the primacy of the community; it imposes a political cult and enforces obligatory observance of its commandments; toward traditional religion it adopts either a hostile attitude or attempts to establish a symbiotic relationship with it, in the sense that the political religion aims to incorporate the traditional religion

into its own system of beliefs and myths, while designating to it a subordinate and auxiliary function. (Gentile 2000, 25; 2006, 140.)²²

At this point, however, it is critical to reiterate the conceptual hierarchy, so that religion, ideology, politics and political religion do not become confused.

Throughout the ages and in different cultures, humanity has had at least two different ontological foundations of the meaning network system: Secular, which includes the human domain and possibilities of action in the community; and supernatural, which includes perceived supernatural agents and their morally loaded supposed influence through or without people on society and the afterlife. However, these ontological foundations or spheres of humanity often overlap. In his work, Gentile uses Ancient Rome, Greece and Ancient Egypt as examples of this dualistic approach, on how power is legitimized through religion and vice versa (Gentile 2006, xiv–xv).

The political sphere, normally understood as secular, reflected and on the other hand also produced, i.e. emanated, a supernatural mandate, as well as the principles of governance for rulers were justified by divine origin. In the more traditional *emic* sense today, politics encompasses the secular, and religion encompasses the supernatural sphere of life (xiv–xv). Before a more specific mention of political religion, we must talk about the *sacralization of politics*, i.e. *religionization of politics* according to Gentile.

The sacralization of politics in the modern, gave rise to civil religions and political religions. Phenomenon was born only with the Declaration of Independence of the United States in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789, when the traditional institutional religion gave way to politics, taking the aura of sanctity from religious entities and turning itself into the holiest entity, to which the existence of the human collective and that of the individual is justified. This includes the transcendental network of meanings, i.e. the separate symbols, language use, moral code, rituals, myths and objects of worship (Gentile 2006, xiv–xv). This "religionization" of politics is therefore a completely modern phenomenon, according to Gentile, which only took place with the supposed development of secularization.

²² The latter reference is the same definition than the original citation, but some word choices are minorly changed.

Gentile thus follows the general secularization theory, in such a way that at least the apparent religious influence, such as the authority of the church, has faded with advent of humanism and the natural sciences, but the very essence of holiness has moved from the religious sphere to other, secular fields of phenomena that people have become attached to. Gentile considers political ideologies and narratives to be the biggest example of this, among the first ones being the democratic, liberal and human rights-emphasizing modern republics mentioned above. Gentile describes this sacralization of politics in his own words:

By a religion of politics, I mean a particular form of *sacralization of politics* that has occurred in the modern era after the political realm had gained its independence from traditional religion. By taking over the religious dimension and acquiring a sacred nature, politics went so far as to claim for itself the prerogative to determine the meaning and fundamental aim of human existence for individuals and the collectivity, at least on this earth. A religion of politics is created every time a political entity such as a nation, state, race, class, party, or movement is transformed into a sacred entity, which means it becomes transcendent, unchallengeable, and intangible. As such, it becomes the core of an elaborate system of beliefs, myths, values, commandments, rituals, and symbols, and consequently an object of faith, reverence, veneration, loyalty, and devotion, for which, if necessary, people are willing to sacrifice their lives. The resulting religion of politics is a religion in the sense that it is a *system of beliefs, myths, rituals, and symbols that interpret and define the meaning and end of human existence by subordinating the destiny of individuals and the collectivity to a supreme entity*. (Gentile 2006, xiv.)

Nietzsche's statement about the death of God, written in 1882, is in a way descriptive in this discussion. Even if God in the traditional sense is seen as "dead" or less important in the modern world, this does not mean that the role and importance of religion has diminished. Gentile refers to the *fideist* interpretation of religion by Gustave Le Bon, a French social psychologist who influenced the end of the 19th century: The human need to believe and experience religious meaning transcends the core of human experience in a fundamental way. In addition, Gentile refers to the historian of religion Mircea Eliade, who famously coined the term *homo religiosus*: modern man has the inherited need for religious dimension, thus this "rebellious" against the traditional manifestations of religions is in vain (Gentile 2006, 12–13.) In conclusion, the forms of sacredness change, but the content of sacredness does not. The reflection on the nature of the intertwining of religion and politics was pushed into the wider academic discussion by the American sociologist Robert Bellah in his thought-provoking essay "Civil Religion in America" (1967), with the example of which we can reach the next level in the hierarchy of concepts: Civil Religion.

Bellah argued that a *civil religion*, had arisen in the United States, which was largely determined by the symbols, values, pantheon of worshiped persons, holidays and rituals derived from the political system of the United States, which *prima facie* seems to be secular

entity, but within its systems, in its unity and mechanisms, seems very similar to religion. This civil religion, a concept borrowed by Bellah from the Enlightenment French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, is, according to Gentile, the second main degree of sacralization of politics alongside political religion. (Gentile 2006, xv.)

Civil religion is characterized by its emergence in a democratic, liberal society where no single religion or ideology holds absolute power. It is permissive and inclusive in the sense that citizens can belong to any social class and adhere to the practice of the religion, if citizens consciously or unconsciously sign up to the "sacred codes" of their citizenship. The first modern examples of the sacralization of politics are civil religions, such as the doctrines born in the United States and post-revolutionary France at the end of the 18th century. (Payne 2008, 23–24; Gentile 2006, 26–29.)

Political religion versus civil religion is largely determined by the sacralization of such politics, which takes place under the supervision of a totalitarian mode of governance. Political religion is built on an authoritarian, totalitarian power structure, where other ideologies or belief systems that compete with the political ideology raised to the status of a sacred entity are not allowed. It is therefore completely ideologically monistic; it does not allow other similar systems in the democratic spirit. Gentile argues that the totalitarian element is the fundamental distinction between a civil religion and a political religion (Gentile 2006, 139–140). Sociologist Marcela Cristi also comes to the same conclusion. Cristi reflects that political religion is a civil religion, where the leading existing political order or ideology is forced upon the group identity of the collective, that is being repressed by injecting transcendental dimension or religious justification to the legitimizing actions by the leading authorities or the political religion (Cristi 2001, 3).

Gentile largely constructs his observations about the nature of political religion from the examples of the Italian Fascist, Nazi German National Socialist, Lenin's and Stalin's Soviet Communist, and Mao Zedong's Communist Chinese rule periods. A more systematic classification grounds for political religion are provided by Gentile in two different instances: The purpose of the anthropological revolution, where the effort is to create a new man, and the classification of the basic characteristics of the totalitarian experiment/project. (Gentile 2006, 46–48). According to Gentile, the anthropological revolution is created with the following instruments of political religion: 1. Coercion, 2. Demagoguery, 3. Totalitarian

pedagogy and 4. Discrimination against outsiders. (Gentile 2006, 47.) According to Gentile, the nature and aim of an anthropological revolution, stems from the totalitarian essence of political religion: to regenerate human being as a new man, who is dedicated to the realization of the revolutionary ethos of the political party. (Gentile 2000, 20)

The ethos that assembles and upholds this sacralization of politics into a political religion, comes in the form of totalitarianism, which Gentile saws as an on-going project or experiment, not only as an abstract marker. The characteristics of a totalitarian project according to Gentile are: 1. Militarization of the party, 2. Monistic concentration of power, 3. Organization down to the grassroots of the masses, and finally sacralization of politics. (Gentile 2006, 47; 2000, 20.) It is important to note that the hierarchical relations are thus: Totalitarianism produces a certain kind of sacralization of politics, that results in a political religion.

The anthropological revolution, discriminatory nature, transcendental secular sphere and other discussed features of the totalitarian experiment partly contain overlaps, and I feel that I have succeeded in condensing those ideas into three categories: adversarial juxtaposition, the utopian-building and the communal demanded ethics. These are yet reflected and determine the principles and rules of belonging to the community and to the political religion it maintains. These categories and principles are presented and reproduced in community rituals. Next, I will detail the categories in question, starting with the most central one, i.e. totalitarianism.

3.1.1 Totalitarian aspect and adversarial juxtaposition

By the term "totalitarianism" we mean an *experiment in political domination* implemented by a *revolutionary movement* that has been organized by a party with military discipline and an *all-absorbing concept of politics* aimed at the *monopoly of power*, which on taking power by legal or illegal means destroys or transforms the previous regime and builds a new state founded on *single-party regime* with the principal objective of *conquering society*, that is, the subjugation, integration, and homogenization of the ruled on the basis of the *totally political nature of existence*, whether individual or collective, as interpreted by the categories, myths, and values of an institutionalized ideology in the form of a *political religion*, with the intention of molding individuals and masses through an *anthropological revolution*, in order to regenerate the essence of humanity and create *a new man* devoted body and soul to the realization of the revolutionary and imperialist projects of the totalitarian party, and thus a *new civilization* of a supranational nature. (Gentile 2006, 46.)

Roger Griffin cites this definition to be "discursive" (2013 36). While civil religion is born as a secular religion's by-product of liberal democracy, in contrast, a totalitarian, authoritarian society produces a political religion; a religion in which political ideology has been raised as

the creator and object of absolute power and that which permeates all layers of society, from individuals to communities and from everyday routines to moments of celebration. The most important totalitarian task of a political religion is the creation of the new order; a utopia, where the tenets of the political religion are adhered akin to supernatural piety. The material immanent world is transformed to be transcendent. This transformation of society calls for strict communal ethics, demanded by the political elite, who upholds the monopoly on orthodox interpretive authority. (Gentile 2006, 46–47.) Regime does not shy away from violence or methods that require anger, for revolution, or this palingenetic transformation is the most important end-goal; “politics of salvation”. Scholar of comparative politics Peter Calvert argues that anger as a tool and legitimate motivator for enforcing the ideology of the regime, is often ritualized in a way that it seems justifiable physical compulsion. (Calvert 2000, 1.) Totalitarianism is thus the most visible sign of political religion, and unfortunately it also brings a lot of suffering and violence to non-adherents (Gentile 2006, 145).²³

Gentile envisions totalitarianism as an experiment or project, rather than a mere by-product of authoritarianism. Gentile emphasizes that there is not a pure totalitarian regime anywhere, because none of them have succeeded in their mission in the anthropological revolution. It is an ongoing project that aims to socially shape society from the top down to the envisioned utopia in the model of the leading party’s ideology. To ensure this, political religion is characterized by a certain kind of terror and the use of violence as mechanisms, which are perceived as legitimate means of propagating and defending the ideology. (Gentile 2000; 2006.) Anger and violence as a legitimating force for the state and politics is natural for totalitarian regimes. According to Calvert, the origin and the function of any state derives power from the primitive notion of defending itself from any external threat. It then makes sense, that any state would emphasize armed forces as an important institution for the extension of state’s legitimating anger. (Calvert 2000, 5–6). This externally projected threat is then aimed inwards towards society, where the perceived ills are to be neutralized by force.

Mao himself incited the Red Guards to use violence to root out imperialist and revisionist elements in China (Gentile 2006, 121–125). The Little Red Book contains precise and clear instructions for war strategy and how an individual citizen should be able to defeat the enemy

²³ One of the first ones to proclaim bolshevism as a new religion, was Bertrand Russel during his journey to the Soviet Union in 1920. He was appalled. (Calvert 2000, 1–2.)

even in civilian life. Militaristic nature is the cornerstone of the violence machinery of the totalitarian project. This is also highly pragmatic: Military organizations not only emphasize and embodies obedience and discipline (Gentile 2006, 47), it also serves as an important means for the party to secure its existence in case of unrest. Militarization also guarantees the possibility of conversion via violence, and in the most chaotic situations, even a sanctified war of aggression.

Extrapolating from the views of Gentile, Payne, Griffin, Khazanov and the classic theorizer of totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt²⁴; Totalitarianism means total authoritarian control of society; an individual's own personal opinions or convictions do not matter to those in power in a totalitarian society. Rather, the purpose is to aggressively create boundary lines between "us" and "others", because one's own perceived sacred party ideology and political power apparatus is perceived as the only correct one in a monistic ideological environment. Discrimination against outsiders or "others" serves two purposes: By marking people outside of one's own ideology that is perceived as sacred, one gets the justified right to one's own perceived experience of reality. The notion is like a vicious circle. Other people who are under serious threat of violence are less likely to inspire defectors. In addition, other people will inevitably be enemies of the idea, because they will not, out of their own volition, want to be included in the seemingly self-evident salvation. Violence is therefore sanctified and justified in a political religion. (Gentile 2000, 36; Kula 2005, 371–374.) I will use the term adversarial juxtaposition, which indicates the boundary building between the orthodox/orthopraxis and the heretical, which is antagonizing, or adversarial in its nature.

3.1.2 Utopia as a mean to anthropological revolution

The totalitarian project therefore harnesses and binds the masses of people with the machinery of justified violence to the transformation of society in accordance with the leading party and ideology. What is meant by this transformation and why this category is important in a political religion? In his work, Gentile refers to the ideas of sociologist Salvador Giner, according to which politics, as part of other systems of meaning relations with features of secular religion, is not only an institution striving towards a certain goal; it strives to explain the very ontological condition of the basis of the entire human existence, even to the point of

²⁴ Arendt emphasizes the totality of control desired by a totalitarian regime: It does not only use external means of violence but seeks to dominate individuals from within (Arendt 1958, 325).

a singularity (Gentile 2006, 14–15).²⁵ Griffin cites Ernst Bloch on the notion of this goal, this mission of *utopian principle* to be a constant of human religious and political cosmology. (Griffin 2002, 27). The anthropological revolution, which creates the conditions for the creation of a new human being and the perceived salvation on this earth, *i.e.* utopia, is my second central unit of analysis.

What is a utopia? Researcher of the subject Karl Mannheim posits utopia as paradoxical concept: It is “an exercise in imagination unrelated to the present reality”. Utopia reflects the desire for the change of the present order to something new and better. In other words, utopia is the dream state, where the best possibilities are realized, and serves as a driving force for change. (Mannheim 2016, 31–32.) Utopia then coincides with the concept of ideology defined by Althusser; it reflects our fictitious desires for our better view of reality.

In his article “The Deification of Mao” (2002), Stefan Landsberger wrote about Mao as a “religiously transfigured leader”. Mao was a secular leader who was given a sacred mandate to build a communist utopia in China. The same logic of transfiguration works with my main argument in favor of utopia-building as part of integral aspect of political religion: When I wrote about secularization theory earlier, I discussed the relationship between the immanent world, (*material*) and the transcendent world, (*supernatural*). Whereas the sacredness in religion has not changed its content but its form, in the same way political religions promise earthly salvation instead of heavenly salvation. Utopia can thus be seen at the same time as an active project towards the end-goal of renewal of society, and it serves as the platform for change, since the ideological construction of Maoist political religion is constitutive of the same principles. Since the most important sacred ideology and its derivatives in society in political religion is perceived in secular institutions, salvation is also perceived to take place on earth, the secular social structure paradoxically. This notion of messianism and inner-worldly salvation is a clear indicator in political religion to aim for the renewal of society through utopia-building (Riegel 2007, 27–28; Gentile 2006, 123).

To lead this utopian project, the party raises a charismatic leader from among its ranks, around whom a spontaneously or purposefully created cult can form, overseeing orthodox

²⁵ Giner, Salvador. 1994. La religione civile. In *Religio. Ruolo del sacro, coesione sociale e nuove forme di solidarietà nella società contemporanea, Incontri europei di Amalfi*. Mongardini, Carlo & Ruini, Marieli, eds. 5(1): 153–154. Rome: Bulzoni.

worship and rituals. In the anthropological revolution itself, noteworthy in the context of Marxism-Leninism is the concept of *homo sovieticus*. A person who has fully embraced the ideals of a communist person; he is busy, gets by with little, is strong, obedient to the party and always energetic. (Gentile 2006, 115.) In his book *History of the People's Republic of China*²⁶, Lauri Paltemaa also refers to this *homo sovieticus* to the ideal of the Soviet man (2012 150). I will use the term *homo sino-sovieticus* to underline Maoist ideals of a perfected person.

One important concept in understanding the political religion's mission of creating a new societal order where the correct dogmas are proliferated, is that of *palingenesis*, a sought-out return to a pure and original form of humanity and history, thus defeating the teleological explanation of history, that for example communism has postulated in the form of the class-struggle and its developments through the material dimension of ownership of the means of production (Kula 2005, 371–372). Stanley Payne most famously made the concurrence of palingenesis and soteriological purposes of ideology governing political religion. Payne listed Maoist China as a richly potential case study with palingenetic aspirations. (Payne 2002, 35). Thus, utopia-building is chosen as my second main aspect of political religion.

3.1.3 The Importance of the collectivity

The functionalist approach to the idea of religion such as the Durkheimian paradigm discussed earlier, is at the ontological basis of political religion (Payne 2005, 163). The system of beliefs attached to the political ideology becomes sacred, and it is the reaffirming and renewing of these beliefs by the adherent collective, that binds and legitimizes the power that the political ideology has with all its hierarchy. This is also Gentile's macro theoretical foundation (Gentile 2000, 28.)

Piotr Cap, the author of the *Proximization : the pragmatics of symbolic distance crossing*, and the theory of *proximization* within *Critical Discourse Analysis*, cites Aristotle's definition of politics, of being individual's social perception becoming socially shared perceptions that legitimate common decisions (Cap 2013, 2). I will return to the proximation theory by Cap in chapter 4.2. This harkens to the term *collective effervescence* by Emilé Durkheim, which explains the continuity and excitement of collective social phenomena, which happens when

²⁶ Freely translated by me. Original book in Finnish: Kiinan Kansantasavallan historia (2012).

people come across each other for a common shared ritual. The ritual brings the individuals together as a community, which strengthens the community's perceived meaning of the ritual in question. The individual is transported to sacredness within the community that shares the same values. The community becomes the individual and vice versa. Veneration is mutual, but it is only through collectivity, when the meanings of one's existence according to sacred creed is fully realized. (Gentile 2006, 8.)²⁷

The most important conclusion to draw from this collective emphasis, is on the applied ethics and commandments that are instituted by the governing sacred entity that is elevated by the masses; political liturgy – *i.e.* rituals and deeds, political organizations, martyrs and heroes and revered past; these objects serve as a referent to the sacred beliefs, thus creating the sacred aura to the said objects. This in turn determines many practical aspects and the ethics of the code of conduct. When for example the political organization representing the leading ideology of the political religion becomes criticized against, the criticism is deemed as heretical, because it mocks the image of the collective consciousness. (Gentile 2006, 8–9.)

The demand on the individual to become part of something more by the political religion, is demonstrated clearly by Mao Zedong's thought of the "mass-line". *The Quotations* include a myriad of basic instructions on correct demeanor and ethics. *The Quotations* serve as a political-ideological model for the righteous conduct of the individual. The attachment to the collective ethos which represents and fulfills the goals and sacred creed, is of the utmost importance, for the overcoming of any physical obstacle is only possible by the sheer determinism of the masses. (Landsberger 2002, 140; 147.)

The importance of the collectivist mode of operation is thus justified as a major aspect of political religion. Not only the ethical actions are deemed from this collectivist premise, but the aspect is also rooted more fundamentally to the other two aspects that I'm using as analysis units: Adversarial juxtaposition and the mission to fulfill the anthropological revolution. Gentile elaborates these formulations on describing sacralization of politics itself: Collectivist ethos is brought in these instances when a political movement:

²⁷ Durkheim, Emile. (1912). 2001. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Carol Cosman. 46. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- a) Consecrates the primacy of a collective secular entity, placing it at the center of a system of beliefs and myths that define the meaning and ultimate goals of social existence, and proscribe the principles that define good and evil.
- b) Incorporates this conception into a code of ethical and social commandments which bind the individual to the sacralized entity, compelling the same individual to loyalty and dedication to it.
- c) Considers its members an elect community and interprets political action as a messianic function aiming toward the fulfilment of a mission.
- d) Develops a political liturgy in order to worship the sacralized collective entity by way of an institutionalized cult and figures representing it, and through the mystical and symbolic portrayal of a sacred history, periodically relieved through the ritual evocations performed by the community of the elect. (Gentile 2000, 22.)

The reason for this aspect to be the last one I discuss is because of the cyclical nature of its function regarding political religion. It contains the justification for the values and correct demeanor propagated by the Quotations, while at the same time it makes it possible for returning to the first two aspects through collective point of view. This creates a logical pathway to reflect on the totalitarianism constructed in the discourses of the Quotations through political religion, and it at the same time can validate the correlation between totalitarianism and essence of political religion.

3.2 Critique for the methodological application of Political religion

Since Gentile's broader theory of a political religion came to known in larger academic world since the English translation of his book in 2006, the theory has seen several critiques based on its usefulness and usage as a legitimate tool for analyzing religion in the modernity, politics and the secular. Mark Gamsa, who listed and analyzed the different methodological approaches to studying Chinese politics from the religious point of view, stated that the general vagueness of the term and its different usages contributes to the methodological stagnation. Rana Mitter and Roger Griffin have also pointed out the seemingly ambiguous categorizations, although Griffin supports the theoretical usefulness when coupled with explanation related to totalitarianism. Rana Mitter in his 2008 article "Maoism in the Cultural Revolution: A Political Religion?" gives credit to the theory of political religion in explaining the overall phenomenon of Maoism, but Mitter urges not to use the theory too loosely, for Mao and his regime were not actively building a secular priesthood. (Griffin 2008, 1; Mitter 2008, 143.)

Daniel Leese has condensed the critique into two areas in my view (2013, 259–262): Critique over semantics and critique over context. Semantic critique of the term deals mainly with the issues regarding the definitions and meanings attached to the category of religion, and

therefore by logical extension, any concept derived from any proposed interpretation of religion. This can be seen as an argument from vagueness or ambiguity. Critique regarding the context of political religion, implies that the usage of the category itself is either from too Eurocentric point of view, and does not fit into the historic-cultural field in question, or the theory is seen as too excluding other more secular explanations, for example elite discourse or other pragmatic performances employed by the alleged ideological regime that political religion tries to taxonomize. Overall, Leese discredits the usage of the political religion to be too simplified (Leese 2013, 258–261).

The discussion and critique fall under the more general phenomenon of disenchantment versus sacredness in the modern. Gentile remains adamant in arguing the rooting of the theory in functionalistic and fideistic interpretations of religion, to be the key in solving the semantic issue. Religion defined by the Durkheimian paradigm gives plausibility to the phenomena of seemingly secular fields of social cohesion and meaning markers to be interpreted as religious systems. Political historian Hans Maier has written in his article “Political Religion: A Concept and Its Limitations” (2007, 10–15): how he fears that the explanation by religious concepts reduces the study of “real history”, into purely ideological and religious history. More so, Maier dismays the role of religion in the secular or material world. Gentile points out convincingly, that given the historical significance of the role of religious legitimization of the institutionalized power, it is therefore up to the sceptics of the theory of political religion, who presuppose the opposing mechanism of mandate from the sacred, to justify their claim. Gentile uses the term “never-never-religion”, as an example of downplaying the role of the sacred and mystical, from the criticizing peers (Gentile 2006, 3; 5–10). This semantic issue is largely solved by application of the discourse analysis.²⁸

The issue of context is a more open-ended problem and more relevant in my thesis, as I’ve attested with the semantic issue. Leese, Mitter and Gamsa are not fully convinced, that political religion as corollary of religion, even when defined by functionalistic approach can consider the notion of purposefully applied complex performances machined by the leading party elite. Any kind of explanation postulating religion is deemed artificial, as of only concerning the various aesthetic forms of rituals, symbols and language usage. Gentile vehemently opposed this proposition as being too simplified or in denial in relation to the

²⁸ See page 44 for critique on over-categorization of religion by Teemu Taira.

complex phenomenon of the irrational belief and faith of the masses explained by the functionalistic and fideistic theories (Gentile 2006; 5–6).

Indeed, as emeritus professor of theology Werner Ustorf writes in his article “The Missiological Roots of the Concept of Political Religion” (2008): the concept of political religion explains more clearly the devotion and why popular support is attached to the seemingly irrational and violent extreme political systems than other theories, that are keener to reduce religion as an empty marker or aesthetic *façade*. Ustorf claims that political religion “explains the force behind the psycho-social dispositions and political mechanisms of totalitarian rule as a quasi-religious in character”. (Ustorf 2008, 36.)

According to Gentile, the foundational theoretical cornerstone for the proponents of the non-religious explanations for the machinations of the totalitarian movements, lie in the crowd manipulation interpretation of religion by one of the founders of political science Gaetano Mosca in 1895 (Gentile 2006, 4–6). In his theory, the rituals, myths and various aesthetic elements of a political entity come from the conscious deployment of propagation, to allure the masses into following the party doctrine. Mosca does not attribute any sign of veneration or rallying as authentically religious, because of the invented nature of said referents. Gentile dismisses the utilitarian explanation as one sided, for it does not take into serious account the spontaneous and explicit materializations of the faith of the masses. (2006, 5.) It is also important to review, that according to the Durkheimian interpretation of religion, religion is not redundantly just a political resource as discussed in chapter 2.2; it emerges spontaneously by the collective reverence of the shared sacred objects and meanings.

Gentile also attributes the origin of the critique to stem from a different interpretation of totalitarianism. Proponents of political religion contribute totalitarianism as an innate attribute of sacralization of politics,²⁹ which gives birth to a political religion, while opponents analyze totalitarianism from a more isolated institutional standpoint. (Gentile 2004, 328.) In other words, I condense this whole critique to be about definitional reductionism. Academic research tradition and paradigm of political history don’t see the viability of using political

²⁹ Gentile points out, that totalitarianism is not itself created by the political religion (the causality is *vice versa*), nor interchangeable with the concept of PR. Totalitarianism is understood as a complicated collection of processes and dynamics of intricate religion-like maxims, such as “monopoly of power, “conquest of society”, “anthropological revolution” and “political religion”. (Gentile 2004, 328.)

religion as a serious methodological tool, because it doesn't condense the multiple phenomena from totalitarian/authoritarian regimes into concise category, that doesn't postulate more mechanism for it to explain. *i.e.* it is too vague or too intangible.

Griffin argues in defense of the phenomenon of the political religion, saying that it doesn't necessarily mean that because the categories of religion or any other "mysterious" phenomenon of the human social reality and totality are not tangible enough, it doesn't equal as a proof against the tangibility of the category of political religion as a heuristic tool for explaining the research field in question. Griffin also emphasizes that the dissident approach towards the category of political religion from the mainstream academia, and especially from the field of political history, are derived from the disbelief and the undermining of the power of the irrational and mythic. (Griffin 2008, 1–2). This seemingly irrational and spontaneous zeal can be interpreted as evidence for a more fundamental role of religious *modus operandi*, as attested by the proponents of PR.

4 Material and methods

The text corpus, that is at the same time my primary source, and the primary research material, is the whole of *Quotations*. I've chosen discourse analysis as my main methodology on which to base my study on. The making of research material is the concurring process, where I as the researcher, study heuristically the text and the meanings conveyed in the quotations in relation to the chosen analysis-units and write down my arguments and thought processes that leads to conclusions regarding the textual and broader historical social context.

First, I will introduce my primary source on which I will extrapolate research material through my interpretation of the theory of political religion. I've taken a large amount of care in investing introduction to my citation system of the *Quotations*. Secondly, I will elaborate on the discourse study: What does it mean in accordance with my research questions and how I'm to arrive at conclusions.

4.1 The Little Red Book as a primary source and for making research material

As part of this thesis, I will be using for the sake of simplicity and its availability, the English translated version of the second edition. Specifically, the e-book format available on the Internet Marxist Archive. My proficiency in Chinese language is not adequate to use the source material in its original language. The general translation is the same as in every second edition (Beijing Foreign Languages Press), but the transcription has been checked by David Quentin and Brian Baggins in 2019. This specific e-book format is clearer and more convenient to print and read while making my analysis.

Because the *Quotations* is a public work, and the further references in the quotations are the same as in any printed version, I have no negative presuppositions about the origin of the primary text in use. I have validated the translations by randomly checking quotations to the scanned versions found on the internet. There is a scanned version also on The Internet Marxist Archive. As stated earlier in this thesis, there are so many minorly differing editions³⁰, mainly by size of the actual physical publishing, so it is justified to use a convenient digital format, so that the reader can also easily follow along and check the quotations and their further references. For a recap on the history, cultural context and the

³⁰ According to Leese, up to 440 local editions have been noted (Leese 2011, 108).

structure of the *Quotations*, see page 11–12. Lastly, I have not ordered this primary source to be used as my research material. The source material is then, so-called *naturally occurring* (Juhila & Suoninen 2016, 448).

Quotations is a propagandistic fusion of different styles of text, that are part of collection of carefully curated speeches, writings, interviews and other quotes, which were deemed to encapsulate the Maoist essence the most. Alexander Cook describes *Quotations* as a free minded adaptation and hybrid of ancient Chinese classical philosophy and that of ideological manifest (Cook 2014). This non-linearity of the text is why I interpret the text in a narrative manner, with its main goal of spreading ideological teachings, as per the birth context and evidence suggest. I will return to why I am using preliminary narrative reading in the analysis section.

About the reference system of Quotations:

For the convenience of the readers and because of the historical lack of a systematic reference system, I have taken the liberty of creating my own. From here onwards, I will be using a simple two-piece-numbering system for the inclusion of the referred quote in question.

The system is marked as follows, for example: If the referred quote is from chapter one named, *The Communist Party*, and the quote is the fourth one read from the beginning of the chapter, the reference numbering is marked as *1: q4/19*. The first number on the left indicates the chapter in question. The latter numbering indicates the quote, in its logical ordinal way of appearance in relation to the total number of quotes on chapter being referred to. In the former example's case, the total number of quotes in the chapter is nineteen, and so the referred quote is the fourth one from the beginning of the chapter out of the total nineteen.

Being referred this way, it is much more accessible and convenient to be able to check and read the quotes, largely because of the sheer number of different publications and editions, which are only slightly varied by the translations and font size. Although this method of creating and checking the references made to *Quotations* is justified as convenient, the reader has to keep in mind, that to fully be able to check all the quotes referred by this thesis, the referred edition of the *Quotations* has to be the from the English-language second edition, but only because of the added three chapters and the respected added quotations by the General

Political Department of the PLA (Leese 2013, 113–114). However, the quotations that are referred to in this thesis should apply to the first edition as well, mainly because the PLA General Political Department didn't revise or add quotations to the existing chapters.

4.2 Meaning-oriented critical discourse analysis and its auxiliaries

Discourse study has gained a large traction in the field of humanities and social sciences since 1980–1990 (Hjelm 2021, 8–9). Study of human language and communication coarsely has two theoretical foundations, in which to base any research: language as a means or instrument of gaining knowledge or describing the surrounding objective world. This is called a realist approach of studying language. The second approach is the study or view of how language *constructs* the social reality within our perception. (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 2016, 17; Juhila & Suoninen 2016, 446.) Discourse study in its most basic definition, is the study of human communication, from the perspective on how communication defines, confines and categorizes our shared and constructed reality. It is a study of how, why and what upholds the rules that govern the construction of these meanings in our language – *i.e. discourses*. (Hjelm 2022, 229; Stuckrad & Wijsen 2016, 1–2; Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 2016, 26–27.)

Discourse study is not a clear distinction of any kind of research methodology, but rather a loose theoretical framework, that is rooted in the larger theory of social reality being considered constructed (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 2016, 25–26). It is important to note that discourse study is the more accurate term to use in singular study, rather than discourse analysis, because discourse analysis can be interpreted to be more of a singular method (Hjelm 2021, 8–9).

Discourse study as a methodology can be roughly categorized in two focus groups: linguistic/textual and meaning-oriented (Hjelm 2021, 10–11). Linguistic/textual discourse analysis is interested (usually) in the linguistic conventions and on how the actions of speech or text convey different discourses in the text corpus. The most famous discourse analytical method in the linguistic or textual branch, is the *Critical Discourse Analysis* by Norman Fairclough (1989), that is focused on analyzing and revealing the relations of power and ideology especially in the “material and social reality outside of discourse”, (Hjelm 2022, 234–235). This approach utilizes micro-level analysis of discourses, which is interested mainly in how language as a form creates or hides discourses. Hjelm gives an example of how using a passive form can be seen in analysis as to intentionally lessen the role of an active actor. (2021, 11.)

The other focus group of discourse studies is interested more in how the discourses construct and are embedded in the surrounding structures, such as different societal relationships, power structures and for example in our perceptions about poverty. Discourses are themselves considered to actively construct meanings, which uphold our conceptions about reality. This more sociological approach to analyzing discourses emphasizes macro-level analysis, which is more interested, in how the meaning of a discourse reveals itself from the broader context of text, or from another surrounding relevant context. Macro-level analysis aims to reveal and construct the discourse that derives itself from the general substance of the researched subject. (Hjelm 2021, 10–11; Jokinen, Juhila, Suoninen 2016, 32–37.)

To understand meaning-oriented discourse analysis better in the research historical context, it is useful to summarize the classic on the subject: According to the famous researcher on discourses Michael Foucault; discourses such as those on heteronormative sexuality, are historically contingent constructed social systems that derive from a priori presuppositions of the concurring historical epistemic logic, that has its motives in the fusion of knowledge and power. This connection between knowledge and power is why the social elite, intelligentsia and other institutive authors³¹ are at the birthing of the various discourses. The reason why discourses can remain ambiguous or hidden from the public, is in the way these discourses are embedded into social reality and how they are renewed constantly. One concrete example of this renewal would be how medical students before the 1980's learned through official curriculum, that homosexuality is a mental disorder, thus creating the shared social reality of homosexuals being regarded as second grade citizens. (Foucault 1972, 126–134; 135–140.)

For the analysis of my thesis, I'm combining micro-level discourse analysis with macro-level analysis. The chosen discourses from my research questions construct the ideology of political religion. The macro-level analysis is attached to interpretation of the broader meanings, that consist political religion according to researchers of the concept. The meanings are then further disseminated from chosen quotations, that help to explain and pinpoint in their textual nature the binding and conveying the ideology in discourses of political religion. I call this method meaning-oriented critical discourse analysis.

³¹ Such as medical personnel.

Because discourse study arises from the premise of social construction, explicating and operationalization of the different used categories and theories is important. Beginning at the category of discourse itself; Simply put, discourse in this study is understood to be the way in which text and speech is constructed as a social practice, which upholds and renews power-relations. It is co-dependent on the ideological substance and at the same time, the ideological substance gets its validation and the material form in the textual practices. This equilibrium of meanings that encapsulate constitutive elements of social reality, is possible to deconstruct into discourses, that reveals the ideology that it postulates. This requires careful interpretative and inquisitive grasp by the researcher. According to Titus Hjelm, discourses have two intrinsic qualities: discourses are both a) constituent and b) action-oriented (Hjelm 2021, 9). Discourses as constituent elements, means their nature as being constructive: They are not empty-markers in a vacuum, but they are constituent themselves as part of a larger meaning-system network. Discourses are also action-oriented, which at the core means that text and speech are also actions themselves; they actively construct the social reality we live in. (Hjelm 2021, 10–11; 2022, 230; Jokinen 2016, 26–32.)

Regarding the category of religion, the definition and categorization of the term *religion* is a discourse analytical question.³² Prolific Finnish discourse study scholar Teemu Taira in the realm of religious studies, doesn't problematize the notion of defining religion so pedantically. Because discourse analysis or rather, discourse studies do not withhold the idea of a one universally accepted, objectively postulated understanding or construction of any given statement as a corresponding fact within our *objective* world. Rather, discourse analysis does not exclude any researcher's subjective research conclusions, if the argumentative path is well explained and explicated. Facts are seen as socially constructed too. (Juhila & Suoninen 2016, 446–448; Taira 2021, 59–60.) The validation of the research is thus done by researcher's coherent methodological correspondence with the empirical research source and by its publicity to the readers of the scientific community.

Discourse analysis and its validity then is heavily dependent on explicit definitions of the theories and categories in use in intended research field. The researcher must clearly define the discourse and its constitutive markers he is researching, and the analysis units, such as

³² Also meta-methodologically speaking, the question why a researcher would do a discourse analysis, is a question about discourses as well, and therefore a discourse analytical subject.

specific syntax or the wording used in creation of the constructed and researched discourse (Hjelm 2021, 10–13.) For me, the explicable units are the term political religion, the derivative analysis-units³³ or just religion. From the broader questions on *why Quotations* can be interpreted as political religious work, to asking *how* some sections construct, for example, a discourse of justified violence regarding dissidents, to smaller details on to why a specific wording is used. All of these are valid discourse analytical questions and are answered in a qualitative matter.

Returning to Teemu Taira’s remarks about the question of defining the category of religion for a discourse study about religion: ultimately the definitions themselves become irrelevant³⁴, since the aim of a discourse study is to reveal the core historical, cultural, and social processes, that define the way how we negotiate or historize the category or term; religion. Religion as a functionalistic, Durkheimian category can never be studied at its fullest, if the scientific community is battling over its definition in purely formal argumentative standpoint. This question and problem also answer some of the critiques for the methodological usage of categories, like political religion in a social science. (Taira 2021, 59–60.)

I hold that these basic presumptions about ideology and the power it projects as through active agency, in the discourses I study, unlocks the meanings and therefore allows for the analysis of the corresponding meanings in the parallel of political religion. The macro-level analysis of the ideology constructed in the Quotations, is done within narrative representation, constructed by me as a researcher, so that the analysis does not give in to the fault of oversimplifying by just listing attributes, aspects or other correspondences. Roger Griffin calls for the importance of the “interpretive reconstruction”, rather than deconstruction of “facts to texts”, because the embodiment of the cosmological foundations of the political religion are not solely embedded in the material reality but is found in the very fabric of the “conceptual framework” of a unique kind of political and historical phenomenon (Griffin 2008, 17).

³³ The three of my chosen qualities within the theory of political religion: adversarial juxtaposition, utopia-building and communal demanded ethics.

³⁴ Or rather, the definitions never become irrelevant, only the presupposition that aims to completely understand definitively the category of religion.

This realization is the main reason why I will use a meaning-oriented discourse analysis, as opposed to purely textual analysis. What does meaning mean? Philosopher Wolfgang Teubert summarizes the essence of meaning quite thoroughly:

Meaning always presupposes society. It can only be assigned in a discourse. What something that has been said means is not a matter of speculation but of negotiation. When someone has said something, we can discuss its meaning, whether we are its addressees, or have learnt about it in some other way. We may even ask if what we heard was really a linguistic utterance or just someone clearing their throat. We may not necessarily agree. It can be a discussion without a conclusion. But beyond our various interpretations of this statement, concordant or discordant as they may be, there is nothing to be discovered about something someone has said and its meaning. Meaning does not correspond to a physical reality, unless through the agreed use of an arbitrary sign. (Teubert 2010, 77–78.)

With Teubert's thoughts about meaning, it becomes even more clear, that the constituent and action-oriented nature of the various discourses within the context of the presupposed political religious nature of Maoism derives from the same conclusion, from the established foundation of socially constructed reality. Discourses are not embedded in the texts solely by themselves – they do not exist in the “raw research material”. Discourses are only produced through the interpretative process of the researcher. Discourses are then products, that are thoroughly explicated in their meaning systems, and not from their mechanical nature only. This in turn implies an ethical responsibility for the researcher to reflect upon.

A researcher must write through the interpretive process, that is derived from dialogue from the broader research history of the subject, and from the chosen theoretical perspective. (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 2016, 35.) It is also important not to forget the action-oriented essence within discourses – they are fundamentally and actively creating social reality. For example, in the quote 2q 2/22, the statement about everyone living as a member of some class, is an action-oriented statement, that is the foundation for several discourses. When later in the quotes positive or negative traits are attached to the said classes, whether land-owning or proletariat, *i.e.* working class, the traits serve as a direct concrete indicator for people who are to be deemed in a positive light, and to people who are to be shunned. This is one example of how a meaning system derives its legitimation from totalitarian discourse of otherness, as per interpreted through a version of totalitarianism, that posits absolute division and discrimination in the name of the ruling party ideology.

Lastly, because discourse analysis enables the researcher to quite freely construct the more exact methodology in hand, I've taken the liberty to use Pjotr Cap's (2013, 73) proximization theory as an auxiliary methodological tool. Cap utilizes the distinctions of “spatial”,

“temporal” and “axiological” means on how power projections legitimate socio-political power through text and speech. Spatial projection aims to build the tension of encroachment by the hostile other, by emphasizing the urgent need for actions, before the other can destroy “us”, through spatial usage. (Cap 2013, 74–77). Temporal proximization involves the manipulation of the sense of time in relation to the perceived danger (2013, 85). Finally, the axiological proximization constructs the model for perceiving conflict between “home values” and the “alien” values (2013, 94). Proximization theory thus helps me to navigate through the different ways in which the Quotations build and maintains the discourses, that constitute political religion through the three analysis-units.

5 Discourse analysis of The Little Red Book as a Political religious work

“Every sentence [of Chairman Mao] is the truth; one sentence [of his] surpasses ten thousand of ours” (Leese 2013, 127).³⁵

Chairman Mao is the founder of our party, the creator of our national revolution, the great leader of our country and party; he is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of present times. Mao Zedong creatively, comprehensively, and with genius he inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism and elevated Marxism-Leninism to a new stage... The sayings, articles, and the revolutionary practice of Chairman Mao show his great proletarian genius. [...] We now support Chairman Mao and a hundred years after Chairman Mao we will still uphold Chairman Mao [sic]. Mao Zedong Thought will continue to be passed on forever... [Throughout the days] that Chairman Mao lives, ninety years, over a hundred years, he will always be the highest leader of our party. His words will always be the guideline of our actions. Whoever opposes him, the whole party will punish and the whole nation will suppress. If someone should ever deliver a Khrushchev-style report behind his back, this person clearly is an intriguer, a great bastard, and the whole party will punish him, the whole nation will suppress him. Mao Zedong Thought will be a general truth forever; it will always remain the compass of our actions. It will always be the common treasure trove of the Chinese people and the revolutionary people of the whole world. It will always radiate its glory. (Leese 2013, 125–126.)³⁶

These citations provide an insight into the ideological significance of Maoism. My first theoretical assumption that is embedded into the discourse analytical presupposition, is that the very meanings and the power vested in the language usage in the Quotations by Mao's quotes, is representative of the said power, and one which symbolizes that power (Bourdieu 1991, 109). That is why it is justified to interpret the meanings to be intended from the author to the reader, straightly put from the point of legitimization of the ideological power.

Quotations will not be analyzed as strictly narrative, homogenic and fictitious account on the deterministic buildup of socialism with Chinese characteristics, neither I will base any interpretive accounts on my part as a researcher on that notion.

I will, argue however, that the quotations are not by any means a randomized collection of quotes by Mao, that only serve the propagandistic agenda of the CCP. To analyze critically the discourses within the book, I must construct a seeming narrative, with which I can postulate aspects that constitute a discourse within the category of a political religion in a more structured way. This is how I attach the macro-level analysis on the corpus. My argument for this approach is twofold: firstly, it is purely for a pragmatic reason; narrative reading confines the larger themes of the studied phenomenon, and it narrows the research

³⁵ Lin, Biao. Important Instructions during a Report at the All-Army Political Work Conference. 24 January 1966. CRDB.

³⁶ Lin, Biao. Speech at the Enlarged Meeting of the Central Committee Politburo. 18 May 1966. CRDB.

material such as to not take into considerations every single detail that is within the text³⁷. This narrative element as implemented quality on the text also imposes a simple chronological nature, that makes it easy to proceed with the text from the beginning to the end, and to also connect some of the later findings on the text to earlier ones. It is also more comprehensible to the reader. Secondly the presentation and interpretation as a narrative text gives the researcher a much more organic way of examining the ways in which discourses are constructed and upheld. The constructed narrative and the constituent quotes are discussed more in the next chapter.

It can be seen evidently, that *Quotations* is constructed precisely by the leading party members to elevate the ideology of Maoism, to correspond to the inevitable social engineering project, as visioned to be the Chinese Communist Revolution, that is to birth a new Chinese World Order, and which will abandon all the older cultural ties with Chinese history that is deemed negatively to be “feudalistic”, such as Confucianism, or imperialistic, reactionary or counter-revolutionary, by the categorizations made in the *Quotations* (Gentile 2006, 119–124; Zuo 1991, 103–104). Ironically, ancient Chinese philosophies and old folk proverbs are intertextually referred to quite many times. Micro-theoretically interpreted, this choice of language use, can be seen as propagandistic validation through tradition or familiarity; Ancient China has a rich and ancient history, and this ancient history can be seen as a symbol for the temporal relation, which positively confirms the eternal wisdom of Chinese people, or provides solace in the anticipated time after the successful revolution.

Propagandistic birthing of the *Quotations* for the motivation of the printing, gives a logical reason and a starting point, to begin the interpretation of meanings and the construction of the discourses within the text, that’s main function is to convey the Marxist–Leninist message of socialist revolution, that brings forth the new age; a utopia, in which man is perfected from vices of reactionary or counter-revolutionary forces. I will then heuristically and simultaneously begin constructing and postulating a narration³⁸ based on the ontological premises of Marxism–Leninism, that is used as a method of analyzing the meanings derived

³⁷ Very few discourse studies implement both the micro and macro level analysis, for that would require too much work (Hjelm 2021, 11).

³⁸ Narrative means text that is operationalized as an instrument of certain goal (ideological in the case of my thesis) and how it constructs reality (Bruner 1991, 5–6; 21).

from the general theory of political theory, as popularized by Emilio Gentile, but also based on the work of other theorizers of the category.

By now I've justified the chosen three sub meanings, that are the most eminent features of a political religion, as per Gentile's thought. Now I will elaborate on the concrete analyzing-units as per my sub-research questions, so that the reader can follow along, as I write my argumentative paths towards the chosen meaning and how it constructs the discourse on a political religion.

Analysis units as per chosen aspects, and their respective derivatives (Gentile 2000, 19; 2006, 46–47; 140).

1. *Adversarial juxtaposition*: a) orthodoxy vs heresy. b) linguistic alienation c) ideological monopoly
2. *Utopia-building*: a) anthropological revolution. b) inner-worldly salvation
3. *Communal demanded ethics*: a) social hierarchy. b) mass-line. c) totalitarian pedagogy.

I will argue that these beforementioned aspects contribute and constitute a totalitarian ideology, that again manifests itself as a political religion that is seen in the discourses constructing political religion. It must be noted again that Gentile perceived totalitarian nature to be at the very essence of forming such sacralization of politics, that gives way to a political religion. Thus, the concept serves as an important validator for my study.

5.1 Setting out the analysis of the *Quotations* – Summaries and constructed political religious narrative

According to Stefan Landsberger, the usage of models is in key role in Maoism. The models are used as an educational tool that conveys concrete roles to people, on how to become perfected communists, and as such, how to perfect society itself after the former. (2002, 146–147.) These educational models can be noticed numerous times in the *Quotations*. They can be seen as concrete role models, in which to positively reflect affirmed qualities, such as diligence, sacrificial altruism and humbleness. One such concrete model is that of Lei Feng or Norman Bethune, who both are considered national heroes by the CCP, because of their unfaltering willpower for the cause and the party (Kraus 2012, 53; Helmut 1982, 29; Cook

2014, 2). Another type of model that can be derived from examples of *Quotations*, are constructed figurative models, that are created either implicitly or explicitly depending on the textual referent. One such typical example is affirming the reader when some quality or behaviour is to be expected by a good revolutionary, or by via denouncing the virtue's antagonistic nature. For example, portraying liberalism opposed to communism, with virtues attached to them that are qualified as bad, evil or counter-revolutionary, as opposed to good, desirable or correct.

This Marxist thesis on transformation is one aspect on how to interpret the main narrative of *Quotations*: The end goal of human perfection and therefore perfection of society (Appelbaum 1988, 38; 43–44). The propagandistic nature of the text reflects the totalitarian qualities that are constructed in various discourses, such as the discourse of justified violence, or discourse considering orthodox *versus* incorrect views and actions. I will now set out to summarise the narrative, from which I will proceed with my analysis of the discourses, and how they are constructed in the text and how they constitute the category of political religion.

I'm focusing the narration on ontological and cosmological foundation of Marxism, which the constituent essence of *Quotations* derives itself from (Gentile 2006, 119). The later chapters beginning from the chapter 8, converges between social hierarchy and ethical commandments, which in turn derives their justification from the substance of Marxism and serves to reinforce the tenets which they derive from. This also serves as a summary of the preliminary reading of the source material, as understood heuristically via the theory of political religion and by my chosen analysis units.

Ontological and cosmological foundations and constructed narrative:

This chapter covers the ontological and cosmological basis of Maoism. Strictly rooted in the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, as stated in the first quote's second sentence 1 q1/19: "The theoretical basis guiding our thinking is Marxism–Leninism", the depiction of the core ideological substance is second only to mention of the material body that uses the ideological power: Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This presented order almost gives a prescriptive feeling to the reader: The prescriptive author, *CCP* prescribes ideology based on Marxism–Leninism, i.e. Maoism, or "communism with Chinese characteristics", to bring about the remedy, meaning victory over the enemy, a violent revolution against counterrevolutionaries, revisionists, imperialists and their "running dogs" (1 q2/19; 1 q5/19). The arising status quo

after the remedy, is that of a communist world, where the eternal class struggle, boundaries constructed by the imperialist and capitalist enemy have been eradicated (3 q5–7/29). A new world with new people, *homo sino-sovietus*, that reign supreme and right over imperialist enemies of the past. To secure the legitimacy and to keep sure that the ever-on-going struggle between communists and imperialist ends in a communist victory, the ideological guiding tenets of Marxism must never be forgotten or scrutinized, for that is to commit revisionism (2 q20/22; 2 q22/22) a bold and shamed attempt to subjectively twist the truth. Revisionism is labelled as more dangerous than dogmatism (2 q22/22) and lays the foundation of perceiving correct ideas from the wrong ideas *i.e.* orthodoxy vs heretical interpretations.

The prescribed remedy to cure the world from the yoke of the imperialist, is labelled as a complete cure, that does not contain any unwanted side-effects. “[...] the most complete, progressive, revolutionary and rational system in human history”. (3 q1/29.) The outcome by the communist revolution, that is prophesized as inevitable winning its enemies, is the only truthful outcome, that factually succeeds the deterministic nature of history and within it, the social reality that is shaped by the material aspect of the societies: the class struggle (3 q2/29; Appelbaum 1988, 44; 47). This ideology perpetuated as “prescriptive” in my interpretation, also has its roots in one of the quotes:

We must have in mind two purposes: first. Learn from past mistakes to avoid future ones, and second, cure the sickness to save the patient... But our aim in exposing errors and criticizing shortcomings, like that of a doctor curing a sickness”. (27 q7/15.)

The ontological justification for the ideology that is constructed by and within these qualitative parameters of Marxism–Leninism, is therefore argued as a mandatory force to rid the world of the evil and wrongly justified imperialism, or *capitalist-bureaucracy* and reactionaries of all sorts that oppose socialist revolution. The concept of class-struggle is a perennial Marxist idea, which postulates a deterministic process of history, that sees humans as a product and therefore label of some class in relation to the means of production. The class that owns the means of production is the land-owning, repressive and exploitative group called bourgeoisie, and is seen as the originator of all things of social evil. The repressed class is the proletariat, the ones who labour and manufacture the production which enables the material distribution and therefore the materialistic dimension, that according to the dialectical nature of Marxism, leads to a evolved society, where the means of production are little by little transferred to the labouring class, eventually leading to the communist utopia,

where no such class struggle exist, among other constructed boundaries that restrict the realisation of this Marxist idea. (Appelbaum 1988, 37–47; Marx 1847.)

The first chapter of *Quotations* is named “The Communist Party” and is indicative of the nature and seriousness of this class struggle; The only way to rid the world of the evil US imperialism is through the ideological workings of a party which embodies the Marxist dogma. This can be interpreted as the orthodoxly only stable and viable option, to guide the population of (firstly) China and then the world to the communist utopia. As per the formulation of political religion, Communism is presented as the gateway to salvation, as written in the nomenclature of Judaeo-Christian worldview. This presented orthodoxy or the monopolistic status of the correctness in ideology by the Marxist Maoism, encapsulated in the *Quotations*, is the genesis and catalyst for constructing the adversarial juxtaposition of the “we”, the heralds of revolution, versus “them”, the counterrevolutionaries, who are against this mission and thus without correct ideas (heretics).

When the boundaries of the correct dogma and between righteous followers and their heretical counterparts have been explained, the *Quotations* sets to depict a pathway to the realized communist society – a utopia building process. Finally, the *Quotations* corporates and solidifies the image and values of the ideal communist human. The morality system is guarded by the correct ideology of the party and its disciplines – the masses, that renew, solidify and guards the totalitarian project of this political religion.

The monistic view of the correct ideology, that comes from the ideology perpetuated by CCP and Mao, is canonized partly due through strict social hierarchy. Chapter 8 opens with the statements that the revolutionary war is the war of the masses, it cannot otherwise be the herald of change, because it is the masses (proletariat) that represent the birth of a new classless society. The ideology perpetuated about the on-going struggle between hostile classes, needs its clerical divisions. In the first quote of the chapter 10 “Leadership of Party Committees”, the rights of the individual to interpret the Marxist ideology is curbed as heretical and incorrect versus the orthodox and right-minded leadership under the CCP and its myriad official party committees, that are to be established in every town and every military squad, ensuring the proper code of conduct and morally proper behaviour what is expected of good communist revolutionary.

5.2 "Who are our enemies, who are our friends?" Adversarial juxtaposition as an aspect of political religion

In the very beginning, at the second quote of the first chapter it is stated that without the revolutionary party (CCP) and without the revolution (socialist), there can be no defeating imperialism and its running dogs (1q 2/14). This lays the groundwork for creating a discourse on adversarial juxtaposition, or on discriminatory otherness. What is this enemy, how it is constructed and how it can be interpreted as a meaning system integrated in category of a political religion in the *Quotations*?

On the chapter 4 "The Correct handling of contradictions among the people", the first quote postulates from one of the ontological basics of Marxism; contradictions, a one basic distinction: Contradictions are either within a subject person or between "ourselves" and the enemy. (4 q1/15). The interesting notion comes from the second quote, that elaborates on the said relation: "We must first be clear on what is meant by the people and what is meant by the enemy" (4 q2/15). Later the same quote describes in totality what is meant by the enemy: The enemy is everyone resisting the socialist revolution (4 q2/15). This dehumanizing aspect is similar to the demonizing discourse, what Michael Schoenhals described in his findings, when researching hostile cultural revolutionary language usage (2007). The enemy is not to be characterized with attributes of human. The enemy is thus constructed to be *the other*, something that does not represent the values and mission of communism, and to which any act of violence is justified.

The meaning system that constructs this opposition has multiple justifications, that embodies their essence as a form of a political religion. Peter Calver argues that any state derives its violent tendencies from the constructed external threat. The threat is detrimental to the very existence of the state's legitimacy and its order of society. This primitive notion to defend its interests is therefore justified as violence. (Calvert 2000, 5–6.) Gentile mentions sanctified violence as one of the totalitarian principles of the political religion (Gentile 2000, 36). In the *Quotations*, this picture of the enemy is not only depicted as a static opposition of two opposing worldviews, that are part of a brief skirmish; it is depicted as an eternal struggle, one in which the winner is not decided on a single battle, but on Aeon. Utilizing Cap's proximation theory on how the enemy and the battle over the revolution is detailed, it can be seen as temporally reversed; No urgency is shown in the used language, other than the

statement, that the enemy will know defeat, and that the enemy will not defeat itself, and will remain resistant even after the communist victory. The struggle is depicted as eternal. It is not going to end in a swift victory, but the enemy will be vigilant and waging a guerrilla war, even without guns, meaning ideologically. (2 q16–20/22.)

On the other hand, the timeline for the intensions of the enemy against China and the whole world, is leaved ambiguous. The commandments about never relaxing vigilance because of the potential imperialist revenge plot, creates itself a sense of urgency. By stating the conflict between Marxists and its enemies as an eternal battle, the tenets of the ideology can be rooted into the minds of people more easily. Communists are described as pro-peace, it is the projection of the onset of apocalypse on to the hostile other, that further justifies the juxtaposition: “We are for peace. But so long as U.S. imperialism refuses to give up its arrogant and unreasonable demands...” (7 q7/10).

By searching and analyzing the referent designations attached to the descriptions of the enemy, I can expand and *vice versa* triangulate more clearly, what groups of non-people are considered the enemy (2 q11–12;15/22). In the quote 2 q11/22, the baseline ideological boundary is strictly formed against imperialism. The grouping is:

a) warlords, b) comprador class, c) the big landlord class, d) reactionary section of the intelligentsia, e) bureaucrat-capitalists, f) counterrevolutionaries, g) imperialists, h) domestic reactionaries, i) liberals, j) dogmatists.

Utilizing Cap’s axiological proximization, the ideological enemy and its ideals are seen as ontologically peripheral in relation to the communist ideology (Cap 2013, 84). This connects to the monopolistic interpretation by Gentile on political religion: It does not accept any rivaling worldviews or ideologies, so it adapts a hostile attitude towards the “peripheral” lesser ideologies. In the quote 2 q21/22 this seemingly antagonistic and adversarial nature of the opposing ideological tenets, is made to seem more subtle in a quite apologetic and contradictory style versus the earlier depictions:

Both dogmatism and revisionism run counter to Marxism. Marxism must certainly advance; it must develop along with the development of practice and cannot stand still. It would become lifeless if it remained stagnant and stereotyped. However, the basic principles of Marxism must never be violated, or otherwise mistakes will be made. It is dogmatism to approach Marxism from a metaphysical point of view and to regard it as something rigid. It is revisionism to negate the basic principles of Marxism and to negate its universal truth. Revisionism is one form of bourgeois ideology. The revisionists deny the differences between socialism and capitalism, between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the

dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. What they advocate is in fact not the socialist line but the capitalist line. In present circumstances, revisionism is more pernicious than dogmatism. One of our current important tasks on the ideological front is to unfold criticism of revisionism. (2 q21/22.)

This quote underlines the monopolistic nature of the interpretative author. Marxist principles are not a subject of debate for the liberal individual, it is portrayed as a cosmological tautology. Political historian James Gregor has summarized, that the intrinsic system of Marxist epistemology and ontology leaves no room for subjective difference of opinions, for that would be a hindrance to the revolution (Gregor 2014, 147). The quotation also reflects the dialectical nature of Marxist cosmos: only through contradictions the real progress is made, there is no status quo without the continuous struggle between correct and wrong ideas, or oppressive class versus the proletarian class. This tautology is enforced and reinforced in the later quotes, when used as a staging ground for the more concrete ethical commandments on how to apply the action of the individual through the collective ethos. For example, in quotes 20 q2–3/8 the positively perceived qualities of being diligent and frugal, are attributed to the socialist economy of being twice as resourceful, because of the contradiction of China's poor economy in relation to the utopistic future. Thus, the positive attributes are too birthed in Marxist thought on praxis; it is total in not only ideological sense. Also, the importance of the author of the interpretive right is hierarchically placed strictly from the top-down perspective: "The leading bodies of the Party must give a correct line of guidance [...]" (10 q14/14).

The grouping is done in similar matter with the definition of "friends". What is meant by friends or allies, is in direct opposition of the depicted enemy. In 2 q15/22 it is clearly stated: "Our stand is that of the proletariat and of the masses." The opposition is thus rendered as elite, something that is opposite of the ordinary people: the masses, the proletariat of the Marxist theory. The glorification of the class struggle as the purifying force is one of the justifications for this dichotomy. Yet again pertaining to glorifying violence as a justified force.

One such ontological description that fits the discourse of adversarial juxtaposition in terms of purification, is the very nature of warfare depicted in *Quotations*. The primary objective of war is to destroy the enemy, self-preservation is only secondary, because if the enemy is not destroyed, by the law of contradictions, the enemy will destroy us, the righteous (8 q7/10). One interesting notion is that according to Goossaert & Palmer, Mao had successfully replaced the Confucian ideal of harmony, into that of conflict, where contradictions and class-

struggle is seen as a part of natural processes (2011, 187). The struggle is not only conventionally militaristic in its nature, but also an arena for the ideological battles (27 q6/15). This militaristic nature is harnessed in a mandatory political work, which again underlines the importance of ideological monism. (9 q3/8). On chapter 5 War and Peace, the quote 5 q9/21 states clearly that the army is the extension of state's power. These descriptions and prescriptions build a rather dualistic discourse on how to view the ideological opposition. The mandatory political propagation paired with the hostile juxtaposition all explicitly show the parallels with Gentile's definitions of political religion regarding the monopolistic and hostile nature of the political ideology being discriminatory: Orthodoxy versus heretical views is strongly suggested, and not implicitly hidden. The importance of the distinction between right and wrong is stated in the quote 10 q13/14: there are not any alternatives to deviate from the ideology. Understanding this discourse builds upon the foundation of realizing the rejuvenation of society and man through utopia engineering.

5.3 "Revolution is not a dinner party" Revolution as a purifying force for utopia

The pathway set to the revolution is not in any way described as a peaceful journey. "The enemy will not perish of himself" (2 q2-3/22.) lays the foundation for an active insurrection. Examining this premise through proximation theory of Cap, it can be interpreted either axiologically or temporally. Temporally interpreted, the implicit focus is to underline the imminent danger what the enemy is planning and doing, if they are not dealt with. At the same time, axiologically defined this statement creates a sense urgency and deepens the adversarial otherness seen in the "enemy". The enemy is, as defined by the referents of the text in the earlier chapters, in the way of the ultimate goal of the Marxist ideology of Maoism: the revolution.

What succeeds from the earlier analysis section, is the establishment of the correct ideas and its adherents; the allies, versus the enemy, that is against everything good the Marxist ideology propagates. This is further elaborated against the backdrop of the revolution. In quote 4 q1-2/15 the revolution is brought into definition with how to identify those who are or are with the enemy: everyone against the revolution. What is meant by the revolution as depicted in the *Quotations*? One implication is that of actively making the future of China into something better: without the class-struggle against the evil imperialists and their allies. In chapter 5 "War and Peace", it is stated quite vehemently, that the revolution is part of the

Marxist deterministic progress of history and contradictions. It is in the very nature of this ontological premise to make grounds for the revolution to materialize in counter to the current class-society and its corollary foundations: “When human society advances to the point where classes and states are eliminated, there will be no more wars, counter-revolutionary or revolutionary, unjust or just; that will be the era of perpetual peace for mankind” (5 q11/21). The goal of the revolution, or how to get to the paradise that is the era of perpetual peace, is straightforwardly put in the quote 24 q14/15: “[...] to advance towards a socialist and communist society.”

Revolution is attached in the Quotations very frequently to be part of justified war, to attain the socialist end-goal of a new China. “Revolutionary war” is mentioned in the quotes 24 times. This is again in line with the sanctification of violence, what Gentile proposed. What is interesting is that revolution is used in parallel with the concept of purification. It is the “antitoxin” not only against the enemy and their “poison” that is imperialism, as attested in the earlier analysis chapter, but the revolution also serves as an antitoxin that purges the righteous of their own “filth” (5 q5/21.) This intended realization confirms the ethical normative basis. The actions of the communists are of pure origin, while the actions of the enemy are impure. This demarcation through purity harkens to the classical theories of the ritual purity by Mary Douglas (1966) and the sacred by Veikko Anttonen (1996), but I shall focus on the transformative mission aspect, that Gentile formulated with wordings such as “creating a new civilization” and “anthropological revolution to creating a new man” (2006, 46).

This renewal is phrased in quote 21 q1–5/13 as regeneration through one own’s effort. The written regeneration is placed in the context of the successful policies, and that of the successful revolution, not only in China, but also in the whole world. The urgency in the statement “we should carry on constant propaganda” in quote 21 q5/13 is indicative of the seriousness of the ideological belief in the revolution.

The revolution is then both an active and violent war to purify society and its individuals from the yoke of the imperialist heretics, and it is also a constant of the nature of the cosmos, as per Marxist view on history. The anthropological revolution that aims to the realization of renewed society that has fully actualized the destination of the perceived teleological continuum in communism, can only attain its potential by the power of the masses – the

ordinary proletariat, against the tyranny of the imperialist elite. “The revolutionary war is a war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilizing the masses and relying on them” (8 q1/10). The masses are seen as the basic force for revolution, whether through pragmatic need for manpower, or from the desire to beguile the masses to become the carriers and guardians of the intended political ideology of the extrapolated political religion. One interesting quality of the described mission to realize utopia, is to see it as a validating resource as well as a space for the utopian mission to actualize (Geoghegan 2007, 256). This validating resource for the utopia can in my interpretation be seen as in commandments on how to be a staunch communist, and with that, help the revolution, but also, it can be validated through the promises what the revolution will ultimately give in to. Everlasting peace and a classless society free of injustice. Hence, the revolution is not only anthropological renewal of a new man, but also the palingenetic return to the sought-out paradise on earth. The beginning of a “new China” (5 q5/21).

It is therefore only for the conceived constant of nature in the form of inevitable class struggle, but also in the emphasis of the power of the masses, that manifests itself in a political religious eternal conflict. The second quote in chapter 8 “People’s War” gives a morally imbued substance to the form of the masses in the discourse of utopia-building: the people must genuinely and sincerely support the revolution (8 q2/10). Also, in the dedicated chapter on the Mass Line, it is stated quite bluntly, that “The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history” (11 q1/21). Next, I will analyze the discourse built by this “mass-line” thought, and how it is connected into the political religion.

5.4 “The masses are the real heroes” – Collectivity as a moral guardian

Liberalism is extremely harmful in a revolutionary collective. It is a corrosive which eats away unity, undermines cohesion, causes apathy and creates dissension. It robs the revolutionary ranks of compact organization and strict discipline, prevents policies from being carried through and alienates the Party organizations from the masses which the Party leads. It is an extremely bad tendency. (24 q13/16.)

Emilio Gentile writes demagoguery as being one defining characteristics of a totalitarian political religion (2006, 47). The pervasive propaganda and the mobilization of the enthusiasm of the masses, has been established in my analysis to be a part of the discourses considering adversarial juxtaposition, utopia-building and their respective constituent power structures, that resemble the attributes and instruments of political religion by Gentile: “coercion”, “demagoguery”, “discrimination against outsiders”, “militarization of the party”, “monistic

concentration” and “sacralization of politics” (2006, 46–47). To bind the continuity of the ideological work and with it, the legitimization of the party power to the people, the political religion must establish means of “totalitarian pedagogy”. (Gentile, 2006, 46–47.) Stefan Landsberger emphasized too the foundation what the masses have on renewing the sacred-perceived political ideology’s entity. For political liturgy to have any effect on social engineering progress, the basis on the imposition of the said process must be commanded through the masses. Gentile points out that one of the major purposes for the totalitarian political religion, is to harmonize the heterogenous masses to be that of a unified cohort of loyal adherents (Gentile 2006, 48). This harmonization is conveyed in the discussed meanings on how the people align themselves with the revolution or against the revolution. The perceived palingenesis, is to happen through unity of the people opposing the constructed opposition, that is the way of the revolution and thus the realization of the political religion.

Marxism–Leninism being the ideology for the proletariat against the imperialist elite, Mao refers to the masses of the proletariat being the main foundation for the revolutionary work to grow. This so called “mass-line” thought of Mao, and the discussion it reflects on the ethics of political religion, can’t be overstated. The word “masses” in *Quotations* occurs 144 times. The whole of chapter 11 “The Mass Line” underlines the necessity of this collective body. It is at the same time described in more superficial and formal qualities, such as the need for manpower, for example citing the war with the Japanese, or praising the potential of the Chinese industrial development through its large population (11 q1–21/21). On the other hand, the concept of “totalitarian pedagogue” by Gentile gives forth a more delicate interpretation, on how and why the ideology contained in the *Quotations* is so fiercely attached to the collective ethos and its prescribed moral actions. It is through this pedagogy which establishes group conformity and gives away the model of a good human being as a part of the totality of the reigning political religion to rule over the individual.

The quote 24 q8/15 stipulates the basis for the need of the individual to submit to the will of the collective greater good. This proposition is not contingent, as it is stated as a principle. This collective demand is attached in the main function of the ideological power projection and mission for creating a communist society, as stated previously (5 q8/21). This emphasis on the need of sacrificial tendencies by the individual for the greater good, attaches the discourse of collective ethos into the realm of justified violence, as discussed in chapter 3.1.1. Violence as a legitimate means to bind the tenets of a political religion into the hearts and

minds of people works as the main tool for controlling the masses, as per Gentile (Gentile 2006, 46).

Anthropological revolution needs the transformation of the individual to become one with the intended version of the new man. The whole of chapter 28 “Communists” is a sort of listing of the demanded qualities and traits, what the new purified, righteous and zealous category of people after the anthropological revolution must embody. The opening quote on the chapter summarizes this disposition staunchly:

A Communist should have largeness of mind and he should be staunch and active, looking upon the interests of the revolution as his very life and subordinating his personal interests to those of the revolution; always and everywhere he should adhere to principle and wage a tireless struggle against all incorrect ideas and actions, so as to consolidate the collective life of the Party and strengthen the ties between the Party and the masses; he should be more concerned about the Party and the masses than about any individual, and more concerned about others than about himself. Only thus can he be considered a Communist. (28 q1/18.)

The individual virtues of a good communist are tackled throughout the quotations by such attributes as “self-sacrificial”, “active”, “loyal to the party and the revolution”, “active in educating and befriending the masses” and “correcting wrong ideas”. Self-sacrifice and subordination to the higher power that is the ideology is the ultimate creed. The source of all this enthusiasm is from the freeing power of socialism (11 q1/21). The masses serve both as the power to achieve the revolution and as a vanguard for the moral ethos. A good communist must educate and correct others constantly for their mistakes might have them being labeled as revisionist or dogmatists. (28 q16–18/18). This encouragement to go forward and spread the teachings of communism can be interpreted to be that akin to the great commission of Christianity or other universal traditional religions. The missionary-like nature of a good communist serves as evidence to the reader, that the good communist doesn’t just fight the revolutionary war with conventional weapons, but with an ideological wit. In the classic theory of totalitarianism by Hannah Arendt, the masses actions are exacerbated by the violent drive to propagate (Arendt 1958, 304–307).

The Durkheimian category of effervescence can be clearly seen in the quote 13 of chapter 11 “The Mass Line”, which explains the exponential power of Marxist theory of knowledge, when the masses practice the ideological creed:

This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them

into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses so that the ideas are persevered in and carried through. And so on, over and over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge. (11 q13/21.)

The homogenization of the masses can be achieved through ideological indoctrination, which binds the ideological contents of the political religion to the ruled. The masses are hoped to serve the practical legitimization work in the field, after they are educated on the correct teachings of Marxism. This hierarchical, yet monopolistic stance on the party ideology conveys totalitarian undertones: the dialectical nature of the correct vs wrong ideas feed from and into the dichotomy of discrimination. It is only through the masses, when a wrong idea is coerced into the correct one. The masses can be thought to be the absolute unit of the whole nation and by its extension the world.

More so, in the end of *Quotations*, there are dedicated chapters on youth and women. The dogmas and praxis of the political religion are to be propagated to the youth, so that the indoctrination cycle is finished. In chapter 30 “Youth”, the reason for the active education on Marxism to the youth, is argued to be a protective act, for the imperialist regimes are portrayed as always trying to infiltrate the innocent minds of children, to make them forget the sacred myth of the communist triumph and their arduous struggle against the oppression of imperialists (30 q3/7). Women are seen as an equally important part of the revolution as men. The patriarchal system is of the imperialist origin and must be destroyed in the way of giving women equal change to join the productive forces (31 q1–7/7). This call to equality of the women and the youth, is the last theme in the *Quotations*, what I interpreted as a part of social engineering project, to bring about the renewal of a new human.

Let’s visit another totalitarian theorization as part of a political religion by Roger Griffin:

Totalitarian movements are ones whose ideological principles, if translated into the praxis of a political system, would create an autocratic regime with its full quota of liturgical politics, charismatic energies, propaganda, coercion, and social engineering directed to the creation of a ‘new order’, a ‘new man’, and a ‘new woman’. (Griffin 2008, 13.)

Emilio Gentile writes in his article of “Sacralization of Politics” (2000) that the lead-figure of the political religion in question is transfigured to the status of a “messianic leader”, who is the only one able to lead his people to the better tomorrow (Gentile 2000, 20–25). This utopia-engineering, that wants to achieve transcendence in immanence, is achieved through the perceived and manufactured “palingenesis” – a sought-out return to new beginning, a new

transformation of society, that is maintained in cooperation with the community, while at the same time remaining quite static in relation to the core tenets of the reigning ideology of the political religion. (Griffin 2002, 20–24.) The collective body remains the staging ground for totalitarian sacralization of politics, which is evident in the discourses analyzed in this thesis: They are all linked to the primacy of the collectivity.

5.5 Constructing totalitarianism in the discourses of *Quotations*

All these discourses triangulate and exhibit totalitarian substance, as formulated by Gentile. The form and permanence in the *Quotations* is perpetuated by “totalitarian pedagogy” (Gentile 2006, 46–47). The Little Red Book can thus be interpreted as a concrete instrument of totalitarian pedagogy, that manifests and constructs reality by the goals of the political religion. By reading and learning Mao's quotes point by point, a person learns the main theses of political religion, the requirements for the anthropological revolution, *i.e.* how to prepare society for the future utopia, and what is required of the individual as part of the community for all of this to succeed. Totalitarianism is thus the matrix that holds together the other constitutive features of political religion.

I've set out to identify and construct three major discourses derived from the theory of political religion, mainly from the formulations of Emilio Gentile, but also from the discussion with the works of Zuo, Landsberger, Payne, Griffin, Khazanov, Apter, and Kula. The discourses have retained their names, but their descriptions and attributes have changed by my analysis. These discourses are in order of writing and my research questions:

1. Discourse of adversarial juxtaposition: The enemy or the other is seen and described as an inhuman actor that is detrimental to the fulfillment of the inevitable construction of a new society, that is rid of all the evil wrong doings and dogmas of the enemy and its allies. They are essentially against the Marxist ontological and epistemological presuppositions; thus, they are to be eradicated by justified violent campaign of annihilation, that can safeguard against revisioning Maoist ideology.
2. Discourse of utopia-building: The main goal of the Maoist ideology is that of creating a new China: a communist utopia, where there are no more class-struggle, injustices, war, and other wrongs that the previous world-order upheld. The everlasting piece of this new civilization brings within it the regeneration of a new man and woman – *homo sino-sovieticus*, that has achieved anthropological revolution in reclaiming the

path to salvation from the other-worldly supernatural to the material world; the process of palingenesis which results in actualizing the transcendent immanence.

3. Discourse of communal demanded ethics: The monistic ideology of Maoism, as interpreted by the sole correct author CCP and its clerical units, demands a collective compliance to the moral codes and ethics prescribed by the political religion. The model for a good communist is constructed as self-sacrificial, propagating and ever diligent for the revolutionary war both militarily and ideologically.

These discourses thus fit into the paradigm of political religion being birthed in a such sacralization of politics, that involves the creation of a political religion, that renews and legitimizes the actions and ideology of the leading revolutionary party. The discourses confirm the totalitarian nature of political religion found in *Quotations*, that can be constructed from Marxist–Leninist ideology that is refined by Mao, with the help of the guiding theory of political religion used heuristically. The totalitarian goal of “conquering the society” by subjugation, integration and homogenization, all serve the political ideology that is heralded as the only source of the authoritative interpretive power on the beliefs, myths, rituals and symbols that explain the meaning and purpose of collective existence.

6 Conclusion

I will argue that the main emphasizing points of the political thought of Mao Zedong, that was earlier connected by me to the larger theory of political religion by the guiding formulation of Gentile and supporting colleagues in this thesis, derives its meaning from the interpreted necessity of implementing transcendent totality to the more material and immanent reality. Gentile did not make any thorough analysis of Maoism except through his general characterizations, and was in no doubt, that Maoism is a political religion, in which the syncretistic nature of strict top-down rulings coupled with the spontaneous fervor from the masses, culminated in the religion of Maoism (2006, 120–124). The political religion constructed by the *Quotations* receives its syncretic strength from a more surprising connection to the dialectical Marxist theory of history, than that of classical Confucianism.

My analysis gave thus forth a promising insight into the mechanics of a political religion postulated by the discourses of *Quotations*: I've created the category of transcendental immanence, which pertains to the other functionalistic approaches and theories of secular religion discussed in my thesis, for example the paligenetic notion by Griffin and to the Durkheimian category of religion. Interestingly, Chinese anthropologist Mingming Wang in his article “All under heaven (tianxia), Cosmological perspectives and political ontologies in pre-modern China” mentions “immanent transcendence”, as a quality of the cosmological foundation for perceiving the immanent reality as a realm, in which the transcendent is part of, in relation with the Chinese context (2012, 17).

Transcendental immanence on the other hand reflects the “inner-worldly salvation” of the political religion as per Gentile, and is at the very essence of totalitarianism itself, that leads to the sacralization of politics to be considered political religion. For the totalitarian project to take hold over the ruling regime and its adherents, it needs the “mandate from heaven”, a classical Chinese concept about the legitimate ruler through traditional institutional religion, and to which Mao has been linked to taken influence from (Zuo 1991, 106). This transcendental immanence, which reclaims other-worldly salvation into the mundane, seemingly secular world, is itself the tenet that holds the ontological presuppositions of the authority and political religion that the *Quotations* propagates. This realization in a way seems similar to the first famous proponent of political religion, Eric Voegelin, but Voegelin held the idea, that secular entities do not exist in the same sphere as trans-worldly religions; they

do contain *a priori* religious essence, but only in the social sphere, when the respected relation to the transcendent has been established (Voegelin 1990, 184–186). Transcendent immanence in the context of this thesis, posits that the secular world with the values and meaning systems that reflects views on cosmology for example, is already projected to the transcendent. I would argue that it is precisely this actualization by the political religion, which results in the totalitarian inner-worldly salvation: the secular is realized as fully transcendent, explaining the total existence.

This is moreover shown to be the case in the discourse analysis of the *Quotations*, that further dissected the deeper meanings in the discourses, via political religion and its chosen three sub-categories. The main founding was, that the discourses on political religion in the *Quotations* themselves became much more ubiquitous to grasp, within their respected connection to the totalitarian nature of political sacralization, and how especially by the means of totalitarian pedagogy the salvation is promised equally to everyone. This extremity in the used language surprised me while making the analysis. The great ironic contradiction in the Marxist essence of the *Quotations*, which aims to bring about the end to the tyrannical yoke of the class-struggle perpetuated by the imperialists in the way of the salvation, itself constructs such discourses, that serve eschatological, soteriological, messianic and liturgical purposes. The focus for the transcendent is thus brought down from the previously postulated already supernatural, into the grassroot level of the masses, where the ideological concept or the creed of political religion is then sacralized as total authority of existence, thus reclaiming the immanent realm as the natural extension of the sacred.

However, the comparison of this political religion with the those of institutional religion, is not so straightforward. Roger Griffin notes that the Asian societies under totalitarian or political religious essence, share many similarities to Christian millenarian patterns, even though the cosmological assumptions are radically different (Griffin 2013, 43–44). Here lies a major misconception, that I have identified. I would now argue based on my analysis, that the cosmological assumptions are not so radical from one another, because the ideological tendencies homogenize in the totalitarian binding, that has birthed the political religion in the first place, as per the definition of totalitarianism by Gentile, and as shown by the analysis of the discourses that converge into a very coherent totalitarian mode of the said harmonization of the population.

Continuing from this realization, Chinese contemporary philosopher Chenshan Tian elaborates valuably the dialectical nature of classical Chinese cosmological premises (2005): “A celebrated dictum often consciously involves symmetrical polar concepts, with an emphasis on their correlativity, or analogical comparisons. For example, the superior must have the inferior as root; the high must have the low at base.” (Tian 2005, 36.) The political religion does not necessarily take similar forms to Christian concepts about salvation. This presupposition, while useful in comparing the intensity of phenomenon regarding systems of totalitarian existences, brings about the inevitable problem of eurocentrism or cultural relativism, birthed from concepts and nomenclature of Judeo-Christian tradition. Rather, the political religion transcends the immanent realm and re-negotiates the objects and objectives perceived to be at the center of totality – the meaning and justification of existence.

The totalitarian nature is pre-built into the code of political religion: violence is not problematized, because it accelerates the process of actualizing transcendent immanence, a justified means to an end, the return to the perfected society – utopia. The palingenetic return is rooted deep in the Chinese cosmological foundations. It can be then argued that the success and fervor of political religion conveyed by the *Quotations* is due to this ideological harmony.

7 Further research

Political historian and sociologist David Apter wrote in his 2005 article “Bearing witness, Maoism as religion”, Maoism to be a subject of moral nostalgia of sorts (2005, 7–8), but the reign of the current president of China Xi Jinping has given rise to the question of religious elements in the ideology again, especially with the constitutional modifications and deepening of the ideological indoctrination of its citizens through large surveillance technology and implementation of the Xi Jinping thought into school curriculums on all levels (Paltemaa 2021, 1; 7–8; Garrick 2024; Dickson 2016, 7). It is also important to note that there remain many former Red Guards in the CCP (Kraus 2012, 1). With the deepening of the ties between BRICS-countries, and with the current president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, paving the way for the new wave of transgression justified by totalitarian essence and one-party policies, the study of political religions seems as topical, as it was in the first half of the 20th century.

Political religion does not automatically demand a postulation of supernatural plane of existence. It offers a framework model of explanation that utilizes much more culturally and ideologically broad explanation of secular religion. Bruce Dickson states clearly in his work *The Dictator’s Dilemma*, that the authoritarian CCP has an unprecedented hold on its power, via methods of repression, and censorship, but the party also succeeds in generating public support via more discrete ways, such as rewarding those who work for the party and generally funneling finances to the economic growth of China (2016, 301–303). The category of religion can offer us different views on how humans develop deep relations with total meaning systems, such as totalitarian ideologies and with it, a better understanding of why religion as a universal phenomenon manifests itself in seemingly secular societies, and why this appears to be an accelerating trend.

While the frequency of academic publications regarding intertwining of ideology, politics and religions remains lesser than in the early second millennium, there remains plethora of subjects, that can be analyzed and explained through the lens of social sciences and humanities, especially through cultural studies. It could be, that we are currently living in the age of the second coming of the sacralization of politics, akin to the processes, that pushed revolutionary France and the United States into being and birthed the whole phenomenon of religionization of politics through mass-politics and separation of the state and church.

Geopolitics doesn't consider the varying cultural and religious ties that root our fundamental categorical impositions on the meaning of life, and to what ideology life is in relation to something "good" that we would like to perceive. Power projections through violence and discrimination through juxtaposition perpetrated by the various commanding totalitarian ideologies is a reality in some parts of the world. These realities and behaviors beg human questions and with that, the academic pursuit. We are all at the same time part of some meaning-networks, that give our lives the totality of religious-like purpose, whether we understand it or not. Rana Mitter urges the research on political religions to be made increasingly more comparatively and at greater output (Mitter 2008, 9). Meanwhile the totalitarian processes in modern China are on a path to a future, from which we have no historical examples of (Paltemaa 2021, 3).

Lastly, the experiences of the victims of totalitarian regimes fall under the understanding of the said mechanisms that serve as the *modus operandi* of the political religion. Gentile underlies the painful truth of the reality the victims under totalitarian political religions went through (Gentile 2000, 33). The academic discussion on the nature of the sacred in the secular remains meaningful as long as there are regimes, which uphold the means and keys to explain the power they possess as sacred of origin veiled in the totalitarian apparatus. Only by analyzing the elements of any totalitarian regime by their perceived religious-like nature, one like that of through political religion, can we as humans understand the complex patterns of why and how these regimes and ideologies come to dominate large number of people, and how they maintain their legitimacy even through acts of heinous terror. The spiritual atomic bomb can be as devastating as the conventional counterpart.

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Annex and appendix

Annex 1: Figure 1



Figure 1: Red vinyl covered Quotations from Chairman Mao -books, various translations, (2nd edition). (cc).
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Appendix 1: Summary in Finnish

Hengellinen atomipommi?

Mao Zedongin Pienen punaisen kirjan diskurssianalyysi poliittis-uskonnollisena teoksena

Johdanto

Tässä pro-gradu tutkielmassa analysoin Mao Zedongin (tai Tse-Tungin) 427 sitaateista koostettua *Pientä punaista kirjaa*, viralliselta nimeltään *Otteita puhemies Mao Tse-Tungin teoksista* poliittis-uskonnollisena teoksena diskurssianalyysin keinoin. Kyseinen teos on maailman painetuin kirja yli miljardilla kappaleella. Vain Raamattua on painettu enemmän. Teoksen nähdään kiteyttävän maolaisen ideologian, joka juontuu marxismi-leninismistä. Kirjaa painettiin kaaottisen Kiinan kulttuurivallankumouksen aikana vuosina 1966-1976, jolloin Maon ja häneen liitettyyn henkilökulttiin kohdistui ennen kuulumatonta, jopa uskonnonkaltaista ihailua ja toimintaa. Kiinan kommunistisen puolueen harjoittama totalitaarinen ote kansalaisista ja maolaisuuden propagointi osana pakollista kansalaishyvettä, tuotti paljon väkivaltaa ja kärsimystä. Kiinaa ryhdyttiin Maon ja Kiinan kommunistisen puolueen johdolla ohjaamaan kohti sosialistista paratiisia, jossa luokkataistelu, sodat ja kaikki vääräys olisi pyyhitty pois imperialismin ja työläisten vihollisten hävityksen myötä.

Minua on aina kiinnostanut ihmisten kiinnittyminen ja kyky luoda ja ylläpitää yli-inhimillisiä merkitysverkostoja – uskonnot suurimpana esimerkkinä. Uskontotiedettä opiskellessani kiinnostukseni näennäisen sekulaareista, eli maallisista ilmiöistä kuten politiikasta, urheilusta ja ideologioista tuli suurin tutkimusintressini uskontotieteen kontekstissa. Eräs sivuaineistani on Itä-Aasian tutkimus, jolloin maolaisuuden tutkiminen johti hypoteesiin, jossa tämä kyseinen ideologia kytkeytyy laajempaan inhimillisen kokemusmaailmaan pyhästä maallisesta muodosta, kuten politiikka, kansalaisuus tai talous uskontotieteen käsityksestä uskonnosta yhteisöllisenä merkitysverkostona käsitettynä. Miten ideologia kuten maolaisuus kykeni saavuttamaan miljoonien ihmisten hurmoksellisen käyttäytymisen ja miksi tässä käyttäytymisessä on nähtävissä jotakin perustavanlaatuisesti uskonnolliseen ilmaisurepertuaariin liittyvää? Tutkielmassa maolaisuus ja sen opilliset tiivistelmät Pienen punaisen kirjan sitaateista nähdään koostuvan ja luovan totalitaristista sekulaarin uskonnon

muotoa –poliittista uskontoa, joka parhaiten selittää edellä mainitut havainnot ilmiön intensiivisyydestä. Tutkielma nojautuu etenkin ansioita saaneen historioitsija Emilio Gentilen tulkintaan ja muotoiltuun teoriaan poliittisesta uskonnosta, mutta tutkielmassa keskustellaan myös laajasti muiden tutkimuskentän tuntijoiden kanssa.

Tutkimuskysymykset

Pääasiallisena tutkimusintressinäni on siis analysoida, kuinka poliittinen uskonto konstruoidaan teoksessa *Otteita Puhemies Mao Tse-Tungin teoksista*. Tarkemmin tutkimuskysymyksenä ovat:

1. Löytyykö teoksesta diskurssit toiseuttamisesta, utopian rakentamisesta ja yhteisön eettisestä korostamisesta?
2. Miten nämä diskurssit kytkeytyvät poliittisen uskonnon totalitaristiseen luonteeseen Emilio Gentilen ehdottamana?

Tutkielman ajallinen konteksti huomioon ottaen, olen kategorisoinut, tiivistänyt ja uudelleenmuotoillut kolme pääasiallista poliittisen uskonnon ominaisuutta, jotka palautuvat Emilio Gentilen määritelmiin poliittisesta uskonnosta. Ensimmäinen kysymys erittelee, kytkee ja merkityksellistää luodut diskurssit, joilla empiirisesti tutkijan teoriaohjaavan tulkinnan kautta, voidaan hahmottaa poliittisen uskonnon kategoria, jollaisena se laajasti hyväksytään. Toisena kysymyksenä tarkastelen kyseisten diskurssien selitysvoimaa totalitarismista, jonka pääasiallisena raaka-aineena poliittinen uskonto toimii Gentilen mukaan. Tämä myös osin validoi poliittisen uskonnon teorian ja kategorian käytön hyödyllisyyttä totalitaaristen ideologioiden ja uskonnonkaltaisten ilmiöiden selittämisessä.

Aiempi tutkimus

Tutkielman kirjoittamisen aikana, Pientä punaista kirjaa ei olla käytetty yhdessäkään tieteellisessä tutkimuksessa tai julkaisussa itse tutkimusmateriaalin tuottamisessa tai tutkimuskohteena itsessään. Teos esiintyy esimerkillistävissä teksteissä osana laajempaa tutkimusta Mao-kultista tai maolaisuudesta uskonnonkaltaisena ilmiönä. Tuorein länsimainen monografi, joka käsittelee Pientä punaista kirjaa on saksalaisen sinologi Daniel Leesen vuonna 2013 julkaistussa *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual In China's Cultural Revolution*. Leese ansiokkaasti erittelee ja historisoi Mao-kultin muotoja, mutta Pieni Punainen kirja ei ole tutkimusaineiston tuottamisen keskiössä, vaan osana Mao-kultin propagoimista selittävää

esimerkistöä. Leesen ansiokas historiikki teoksesta toimii erittäin relevanttina lähtökohtana teoksen syntyhistorian tuntemiselle. Systemaattista tutkimusta, jossa maolaisuus rekunstroidaan tai jonka konstituentteja ideologisia aineksia olisi akatemiassa tutkittu esimerkiksi diskurssianalyysin keinoin, ei valitettavasti löydy. Tähän osaltaan on varmasti vaikuttanut Kiinan hallinnon harjoittama sensuuri ja arkistolähteiden hiljattainen avautuminen.

Muutoin maolaisuutta on tutkittu aatehistorian ja poliittisen historian paradigmoista käsin. Tel Avivin yliopiston tutkija Mark Gamsa vuoden 2009 artikkelissaan ”The Religious dimension of Politics in Maoist China” toteaa maolaisuuden tutkimuksen osana uskonnonkaltaista ilmiötä saaneen uutena käänteinä poliittisen uskonnon käsitteen, jossa maolaisuus nähdään vasten perinteisiä poliittisen historian tutkimusotteita uskontona, joka parhaiten kyseisen teorian kannattajien mielestä selittää totalitaarisen ideologian, jonka ympärille kiinnittyi muun muassa vahva henkilökultti, rituaalit, uskomusjärjestelmät, vahva jakolinja oikeaoppisiin ja vääräoppisiin, sekä kokonaan tämänpuoleinen pelastusoppi, joka ei nojaa käsitykseen perinteisestä tuonpuoleisesta.

Ensimmäinen artikkeli, jossa maolaisuus tulkittiin uskonnonkaltaisena järjestelmänä on Joseph Kitagawan ”One of the Many Faces of China: Maoism as a Quasi-Religion” (1974), jossa ilmiön samaistetaan suurella luottamuksella juuri uskonnonkaltaiseksi järjestelmäksi. Ensimmäinen julkaisu, josta katsotaan seuranneen vakavampi maolaisuuden käsittely ja keskustelu juuri poliittisena uskontona, ilmestyi 1991 Jiping Zuon artikkelissa ”Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China”, jossa eriteltiin laajoilla esimerkeillä ja tapauskokemukseen vedoten etenkin Kiinan kulttuurivallankumouksen aikainen Mao-hurmos, jossa oli nähtävissä maolaisuuden kytkennät perinteiseen kiinalaiseen uskonnolliseen ainekseen.

Teoreettinen viitekehys

Tapaustutkimuksista ja etenkin Emilio Gentilen vakuuttavan käsiteanalyysin ja historiikin myötä, vakuutuin valitsemaan ohjaavaksi teoriaksi poliittisen uskonnon. Gentile ei itse ole käsitettä keksinyt, mutta hän tiivisti ja muotoili siitä yhden tunnetuimman version, joka on myös herättänyt kritiikkiä, etenkin poliittisen historian oppiaineen piirissä.

Poliittinen uskonto Gentilen mukaan juontuu politiikan sakralisoitumisesta, joka syntyi modernina ilmiönä Ranskan vallankumouksen ja Yhdysvaltojen valtiokehityksen myötä,

jolloin institutionaalinen uskonto erotettiin lopulta valtiosta, luoden sekulaarille olemassaololle tarpeen pyhittää nimenomaan valtioon ja sitä johtavan ideologian uskomukset, tehtävät, myytit ja roolit. Massamedian synnyn aikakautena, totalitaariset hallitukset muokkasi politiikan sakralisoitumista väkivaltaiseen ja monopolistiseen asemaan suhteessa muihin ihmiselämää selittäviin voimiin. Poliittisella uskonnolla, toisin kuin ei-totalitaarisella kansalaisuskonnolla, on tarve korottaa oman ideologian ja puolueen teesit ylimmäksi ohjenuoraksi, joka ohjaisi ihmiset kohti tämänpuolista pelastusta. Gentile määrittä totalitaariset ideologiat kuten natsisimin, fasismin ja bolshevismen poliittiksi uskonnoiksi, joiden tarkoituksiksi syntyi antropologisen vallankumouksen voimin uudistaa ihminen ja sitä myötä yhteiskunta, joka johtaisi poliittisen uskonnon tavoitteeseen totaaliseen yhteisön hallintaan, jolloin ideologiasta tulisi kaikkien yksilöiden olemassaolon korkein merkitys.

Poliittinen uskonto asettuu tutkielmassa Emile Durkheimin klassiseen funktionalistiseen teoriaan uskonnosta yhteisönä, jossa yliluonnollinen aspekti on heijastuma oman merkitysverkoston tai yhteisön ihannoimista ja pyhinä pidetyistä periaatteista. Toisin sanoen, yhteisö tai kirkko muodostaa itsestään pyhän objektin.

Menetelmät

Pientä Punaista kirjaa pidetään laajalti Maolaisuuden ideologian ilmentymänä. Sen oppeja pakotettiin jokaiselle ihmiselle ja se osaltaan tuotti pelkästään materiaalisia Jotta Pienestä Punaiseesta kirjasta pystyisi tekemään luotettavasti ideologista analyysiä, tiivistin poliittisen uskonnon kolmeen teemaan, jotka osaltaan auttaa hahmottamaan poliittisen uskonnon ilmentymää ideologisessa teoksella. Teemat ovat omin sanoin luotuna: vihamielinen vastakkainasettelu, utopian rakentaminen ja yhteisön eettinen korostaminen. Tutkielmassa heijastan totalitarismin käsitteen kyseisiin poliittisen uskonnon ominaisuuksiin, jotka osaltaan validoi poliittisen uskonnon roolia totalitarismissa.

Tarkempaan menetelmänä käytän merkityspainotteista diskurssianalyysiä, jonka yhdistän tekstipainotteiseen kriittiseen diskurssianalyysiin. Analyysi on sekä teoreettinen että empiirinen, sillä olen etenkin kiinnostunut millä tavoin poliittinen uskonto sellaisena kun se Gentilen muotoilemana on ymmärretty, rakentuu kontekstuaalisesti tutkimuskentän historiallisen ja sosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen seurauksena ilmentämään merkityksiä –eli diskursseja aineistossa. Diskurssi siis käsitetään tutkielmassani ideologiaa ylläpitävänä ja uusintavana yksikkönä kommunikaatiossa, joka vaikuttaa sosiaalisen konstruktion kautta samalla toimintaorientoituvana merkityksen rakenteena.

Analyysi

Analyysin pohjustamisessa tutkijan ratkaisuni oli luoda narratiivi puhtaasti suoraviivaista aineiston käsittelyä pro-gradun aikamääreen mukaiseksi. Toisaalta narratiivinen alustus kartoitti makro-analyysin mukaisesti tekstistä pääasiallisen substanssin, josta konstruoida poliitiskonnollisen aineiston.

Maolaisuus ja siinä ilmentyvä poliittinen uskonto rakentui suoraan marksilaiseen käsityksiin ja teoriaan historiasta deterministisenä prosessina, joka luonnollisesti vastakkainasettelujen voimalla etenisi kohti lopullista päämäärää: kommunistista paratiisia, jossa vääristynyt luokkataistelu pahojen imperialistien toimesta lakkaisi. Aineistosta kävi ilmi lukemattomia kertoja, kuinka väkivallan ihannointi ja militarisaatio saavat oikeutuksensa vallankumouksellisten vihollisten leimaamisella vääräoppisiksi. Sama mekaniikka toimi suhteessa vallankumouksen tehtävään ja ylimmän puoluejohdon korottamisessa monopolistiseen tulkinnalliseen asemaan poliittisen uskonnon auktoriteettina: Gentilen poliittinen uskonto näyttäytyy analyysin postuloiduista diskursseista validina teoriana Pienen Punaisen kirjan sisältämän ideologian ja siitä juontuvien historiallisten ilmiöiden selittämiseen.

Lopuksi

Diskurssit kytkeytyivät totalitaariseen ainekseen, sillä analyysissä korostui yliluonnollisen kosmologian piirin takaisinmuuttaminen sekulaariin, eli maalliseen alueeseen. Stanley Paynen tunnetuksi tekemän käsitteen palingenesiksen mukaan, tämä paluu utopistiseen aikaan, on sekulaarin uskonnon; tutkielmani tapauksessa poliittinen uskonnon ytimessä. Perinteisesti poliittinen uskonto voidaan nähdä Judeokristillisen käsitteistön tavoin luovan ideologiaa, jossa tämänpäällinen pelastus korvaa tuonpuoleisen pelastuksen. Totalitaarinen ominaisuus kumpuaa juuri tästä vallan piirin vaihdosta, jossa poliittinen ideologia muodostuu itse kaiken kattavaksi olemassaolon määrittelijäksi. Huomasin Kiinan aatehistoriallisessa kontekstissa olevan jotain, mikä on jäänyt osalta tutkijoilta huomaamatta. Chensan Tianin 2005 julkaisemassa kirjassaan *Chinese Dialectics: From Yijing to Marxism* Tian mainitsee kiinalaisen henkisen ja ontologisen perustan olevan ”immanentissa transendentissa”. Eräs johtopäätöksistäni analyysin suhteen koski käsitettä ”transendentiaalisesta immanensista”, jonka argumentoin olevan pääsyy miksi Maolaisuus yltyi ilmiöksi, jota voi tutkia poliittisena uskontona: Ajatus tuonpuoleisen pelastuksen vaihtamisesta tämänpuoleiseen ei ikinä ollut yksinkertainen kosmologinen vaihto, vaan sekulaarissa merkitysverkossa oli jääne tästä

”immanentista transendentista”, joka harmonisoitui yhdessä totalitaariseen poliittiseen uskoon.