

Events in Greece and Arab countries have prompted interest in the idea that individualistic strategies for survival can, in the right circumstances, become unstoppable and interlinked channels of mass rejection of political status quo (see, eg, Asef Bayat *Life As Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East Life*). In my paper I seek to explain both why this is more evident in these particular cultures and why it represents a challenge to the occidental unitarian (and deistic) understanding of political agency that underlies either 'constitutive or 'constituted' power; I argue with reference to a comparative occidental, eastern Christian and Islamic political theologies and accompanying legal doctrines. Byzantine and classic Islamic political and legal history are interpreted as entailing models of unholy, deficient and hence transitory authority in contrast with the occidental model where the singular God's absolute salvation power has been sequestered in medieval western Europe and turned into a model of coherent-if-dual, permanent-if-contestable, sacred-if-secular, 'collective salvation' authority first seen as blessed then as rightful.