



Julius Evola (1898-1974)

Julius Evola (1898-1974) was one of the leading authorities on the world's esoteric traditions and wrote *Revolt Against the Modern World*, *Introduction to Magic*, *The Mystery of the Grail*, *The Hermetic Tradition*, *The Yoga of Power*, *Meditations on the Peaks*, *The Doctrine of Awakening*, and *Eros and the Mysteries of Love*.

”Lovers live between dreams and death.”

– A. Husson quoted by Julius Evola (*The Metaphysics of Sex*, p.27)

”In classical time the courtesans were publicly held in high regard by men such as Pericles, Pheidias, and Alcibiades; Solon had a temple built in honor of the goddess of "prostitution," and such temples existed in Rome for the worship of certain forms of the goddess Venus. In the days of Polybius, statues of courtesans stood in temples and public buildings near those of soldiers and statesmen. Such women in Japan have also been honored with monuments. And, as with every art in the traditional world, there is associated with this are a secret knowledge, Priestess prostitutes of the *ars amandi* were linked to certain initiation cults”.

– Julius Evola (*The Metaphysics of Sex*, p.18)

It is noteworthy that the word "orgy," now associated only with the unleashing of the senses and sexuality, was linked in the beginning to the attribute "holy," the "holy" orgies. In fact, *orgia* meant the state of inspired exaltation that began the initiatory process in the ancient greek mysteries.

– Julius Evola (*The Metaphysics of Sex*, p.48)

According to Plato a primordial race existed "whose essence is now extinct," a race of beings who contained in themselves both principles, male and female. This hermaphroditic race "was extraordinarily strong and brave, and they nourished in their hearts very arrogant designs, even unto an attack upon the god themselves...."

According to Plato the gods did not strike the hermaphrodites with lightning...but paralyzed their power and broke them in two. Thenceforth there arose beings of one sex or the other, male or female; they were, however, beings who retained the memory of their earlier state and in whom the impulse to reconstitute the primordial unity was kindled. According to Plato, in that impulse should be sought the ultimate metaphysical and everlasting meaning of eros: "From such an ancient time has love goaded human beings one toward the other; it is inborn and seeks to renew our ancient nature in an endeavor to unite in one single being two distinct beings...."

"It is really the burning longing for this unity which bears the name of love." – Julius Evola (The Metaphysics of Sex, p.42)

"Das, was von einem gewissen Standpunkte aus als Regelwidrigkeit und Unordnung gilt, ist gleichwohl notwendiger Bestandteil einer umfassenderen Ordnung, eine unvermeidliche Folge der Gesetze, welche die Entfaltung jedweder Kundgebung beherrschen. Indes, sagen wir es sogleich, besteht hier kein Grund, in untätigem Erdulden sich zu bescheiden, wenn Verwirrung und Dunkelheit im Augenblicke anscheinend Sieger sind; wenn dem so wäre, hätten wir nur zu schweigen. Im Gegenteil, es ist ein Grund, mit aller erdenklichen Anstrengung den Heraustritt aus diesem 'düsteren Zeitalter' vorzubereiten, dessen mehr oder weniger nahes, wenn nicht ganz dicht bevorstehendes Ende schon zahlreiche Anzeichen ahnen lassen." - RENÉ GUÉNON

On the Secret of Degeneration

By Baron Julius Evola (from *Deutsches Volkstum*, Nr. 11, 1938)

Anyone who has come to reject the rationalist myth of "progress" and the interpretation of history as an unbroken positive development of mankind will find himself gradually drawn towards the world-view that was common to all the great traditional cultures, and which had at its centre the memory of a process of degeneration, slow obscuration, or collapse of a higher preceding world. As we penetrate deeper into this new (and old) interpretation, we encounter various problems, foremost among which is the question of the *secret of degeneration*.

In its literal sense, this question is by no means a novel one. While contemplating the magnificent remains of cultures whose very name has not even come down to us, but which seem to have conveyed, even in their physical material, a greatness and power that is more than earthly, scarcely anyone has failed to ask themselves questions about the death of cultures, and sensed the inadequacy of the reasons that are usually given to explain it.

We can thank the Comte de Gobineau for the best and best-known summary of this problem, and also for a masterly criticism of the main hypotheses about it. His solution on the basis of racial thought and racial purity also has a lot of truth in it, but it needs to be expanded by a few observations concerning a higher order of things. For there have been many cases in which a culture has collapsed even when its race has remained pure, as is especially clear in certain groups that have suffered slow, inexorable extinction despite remaining as racially isolated as if they were islands. An example quite close at hand is the case of the Swedes and the Dutch. These people are in the same racial condition today as they were two centuries ago, but there is little to be found now of the heroic disposition and the racial awareness that they once possessed. Other great cultures seem merely to have remained standing in the condition of mummies: they have long been inwardly dead, so that it takes only the slightest push to knock them down. This was the case, for example, with ancient Peru, that giant solar empire which was annihilated by a few adventurers drawn from the worst rabble of Europe.

If we look at the secret of degeneration from the exclusively traditional point of view, it becomes even harder to solve it completely. It is then a matter of the division of all cultures into two main types. On the one hand there are the traditional cultures, whose principle is identical and unchangeable, despite all the differences evident on the surface. The axis of these cultures and the summit of their hierarchical order consists of metaphysical, supra-individual powers and actions, which serve to inform and justify everything that is merely human, temporal, subject to becoming and to "history." On the other hand there is "modern culture," which is actually the anti-tradition and which exhausts itself in a construction of purely human and earthly conditions and in the total development of these, in pursuit of a life entirely detached from the "higher world."

From the standpoint of the latter, the whole of history is degeneration, because it shows the universal decline of earlier cultures of the traditional type, and the decisive and violent rise of a new universal civilization of the "modern" type.

A double question arises from this.

First, how was it ever possible for this to come to pass? There is a logical error underlying the whole doctrine of evolution: it is impossible that the higher can emerge from the lower, and the greater from the less. But doesn't a similar difficulty face us in the solution of the doctrine of involution? How is it ever possible for the higher to fall? If we could make do with simple analogies, it would be easy to deal with this question. A healthy man can become sick; a virtuous one can turn to vice. There is a natural law that everyone takes for granted: that every living being starts with birth, growth, and strength, then come old age, weakening, and disintegration. And so forth. But this is just making statements, not explaining, even if we allow that such analogies actually relate to the question posed here.

Secondly, it is not only a matter of explaining the possibility of the degeneration of a particular cultural world, but also the possibility that the degeneration of one cultural cycle may pass to other peoples and take them down with it. For example, we have not only to explain how the ancient Western reality collapsed, but also have to show the reason why it was possible for "modern" culture to conquer practically the whole world, and why it possessed the power to divert so many peoples from any other type of culture, and to hold sway even where states of a traditional kind seemed to be alive (one need only recall the Aryan East).

In this respect, it is not enough to say that we are dealing with a purely material and economic conquest. That view seems very superficial, for two reasons. In the first place, a land that is conquered on the material level also experiences, in the long run, influences of a higher kind corresponding to the cultural type of its conqueror. We can state, in fact, that European conquest almost everywhere sows the seeds of "Europeanization," i.e., the "modern" rationalist, tradition-hostile, individualistic way of thinking. Secondly, the traditional conception of culture and the state is hierarchical, not dualistic. Its bearers could never subscribe, without severe reservations, to the principles of "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and "My kingdom is not of this world." For us, "Tradition" is the victorious and creative presence in the world of that which is "not of this world," i.e., of the Spirit, understood as a power that is mightier than any merely human or material one.

This is a basic idea of the authentically traditional view of life, which does not permit us to speak with contempt of merely material conquests. On the contrary, the material conquest is the sign, if not of a spiritual victory, at least of a spiritual weakness or a kind of spiritual "retreat" in the cultures that are conquered and lose their independence. Everywhere that the Spirit, regarded as the stronger power, was truly present, it never lacked for means - visible or otherwise - to enable all the opponent's technical and material superiority to be resisted. But this has not happened. It must be concluded, then, that degeneracy was lurking behind the traditional facade of every people that the "modern" world has been able to conquer. The West must then have been the culture in which a crisis that was already universal assumed its acutest form. There the degeneration amounted, so to speak, to a knockout blow, and as it took effect, it brought down with more or less ease other peoples in whom the involution had certainly not "progressed" as far, but whose tradition had already lost its original power, so that these peoples were no longer able to protect themselves from an outside assault.

With these considerations, the second aspect of our problem is traced back to the first one. It is mainly a question of explicating the meaning and the possibility of degeneracy, without reference to other circumstances.

For this we must be clear about one thing: it is an error to assume that the hierarchy of the traditional world is based on a tyranny of the upper classes. That is merely a "modern" conception, completely alien to the traditional way of thinking. The traditional doctrine in fact conceived of spiritual action as an "action without acting"; it spoke of the "unmoved mover"; everywhere it used the symbolism of the "pole," the unalterable axis around which every ordered movement takes place (and elsewhere we have shown that this is the meaning of the swastika, the "arctic cross"); it always stressed the "Olympian," spirituality, and genuine authority, as well as its way of acting directly on its subordinates, not through violence but through "presence"; finally, it used the simile of the magnet, wherein lies the key to our question, as we shall now see.

Only today could anyone imagine that the authentic bearers of the Spirit, or of Tradition, pursue people so as to seize them and put them in their places - in short, that they "manage" people, or have any personal interest in setting up and maintaining those hierarchical relationships by virtue of which they can appear visibly as the rulers. This would be ridiculous and senseless. It is much more the *recognition* on the part of the lower ones that is the true basis of any traditional ranking. It is not the higher that needs the lower, but the other way round. The essence of hierarchy is that there is something living as a reality in certain people, which in the rest is only present in the condition of an ideal, a premonition, an unfocused effort. Thus the latter are fatefully attracted to the former, and their lower condition is one of subordination less to something foreign, than to their own true "self." Herein lies the secret, in the traditional world, of all readiness for sacrifice, all heroism, all loyalty; and, on the other side, of a prestige, an authority, and a calm power which the most heavily-armed tyrant can never count upon.

With these considerations, we have come very close to solving not only the problem of degeneration, but also the possibility of a particular fall. Are we perhaps not tired of hearing that the success of every revolution indicates the weakness and degeneracy of the previous rulers? An understanding of this kind is very one-sided. This would indeed be the case if wild dogs were tied up, and suddenly broke loose: that would be proof that the hands holding their leashes had become impotent or weak. But things are arranged very differently in the framework of spiritual ranking, whose real basis we have explained above. This hierarchy degenerates and is able to be overthrown in one case only: when the individual degenerates, when he uses his fundamental freedom to deny the Spirit, to cut his life loose from any higher reference-point, and to exist "only for himself." Then the contacts are fatefully broken, the metaphysical tension, to which the traditional organism owes its unity, gives way, every force wavers in its path and finally breaks free. The peaks, of course, remain pure and inviolable in their heights, but the rest, which depended on them, now becomes an avalanche, a mass that has lost its equilibrium and falls, at first imperceptibly but with ever accelerating movement down to the depths and lowest levels of the valley. This is the secret of every degeneration and revolution. The European had first slain the hierarchy *in himself* by extirpating his own inner possibilities, to which corresponded the basis of the order that he would then destroy externally.

If Christian mythology attributes the Fall of Man and the Rebellion of the Angels to the freedom of the will, then it comes to much the same significance. It concerns the frightening potential that dwells in man of using freedom to destroy spiritually and to banish everything that could ensure him a supra-natural value. This is a metaphysical decision: the stream that traverses history in the most varied forms of the traditional-hating, revolutionary, individualistic, and humanistic spirit, or in short, the "modern" spirit. This decision is the only positive and decisive cause in the secret of degeneration, the destruction of Tradition.

If we understand this, we can perhaps also grasp the sense of those legends that speak of mysterious rulers who "always" exist and have never died (shades of the Emperor sleeping beneath the Kyffhäuser mountain!). Such rulers can be rediscovered only when one achieves spiritual completeness and awakens a quality in oneself like that of a metal that suddenly *feels* "the magnet", finds the magnet and irresistibly orients itself and moves towards it. For now, we must restrict ourselves to this hint. A comprehensive explanation of legends of that sort, which come to us from the most ancient Aryan source, would take us too far. At another opportunity we will perhaps return to the secret of reconstruction, to the "magic" that is capable of restoring the fallen mass to the unalterable, lonely, and invisible peaks that are still there in the heights.

REGRESSION OF THE CASTES

As my intent was to offer a bird's-eye view of history, in the previous pages I have presented all the elements necessary to formulate an objective law at work in the various stages of the process of decadence, that is, the law of the regression of castes (1). A progressive shift of power and type of civilization has occurred from one caste to the next since prehistoric times (from sacred leaders, to a warrior aristocracy, to the merchants, and finally to the serfs); these castes in traditional civilizations corresponded to the qualitative differentiation of the main human possibilities. In the face of this general movement anything concerning the various conflicts among peoples, the life of nations, or other historical accidents plays only a secondary and contingent role.

I have already discussed the dawn of the age of the first caste. In the West, the representatives of the divine royalty and the leaders who embody the two powers (spiritual and temporal), in what I have called "spiritual virility" and "Olympian sovereignty," belong to a very distant and almost mythical past. We have seen how, through the gradual deterioration of the Light of the North, the process of decadence has unfolded; in the Ghibelline ideal of the Holy Roman Empire I have identified the last echo of the highest tradition.

Once the apex disappeared, authority descended to the level immediately below, that is, to the caste of the warriors. The stage was then set for monarchs who were mere military leaders, lords of temporal justice and, in more recent times, politically absolute sovereigns. In other words, regality of blood replaced regality of the spirit. In a few instances it is still possible to find the idea of "divine right," but only as a formula lacking a real content. We find such rulers in antiquity behind institutions that retained the traits of the ancient sacred regime only in a formal way. In any event in the West, with the dissolution of the medieval ecumene, the passage into the second phase became all-encompassing and definitive. During this stage, the *fides* cementing the state no longer had a religious character, but only a warrior one; it meant loyalty, faithfulness, honor. This was essentially the age and the cycle of the Great European monarchies.

Then a second collapse occurred as the aristocracies began to fall into decay and the monarchies to shake at the foundations; through revolutions and constitutions they became useless institutions subject to the "will of the nation," and sometimes they were even ousted by different regimes. The principle characterizing this state of affairs was: "*The king reigns but he does not rule.*" Together with parliamentary republics the formation of the capitalist oligarchies revealed the shift of power from the second caste (the warrior) to the modern equivalent of the third caste (the mercantile class). The kings of the coal, oil, and iron industries replace the previous kings of blood and of spirit. Antiquity, too, sometimes knew this phenomenon in sporadic forms; in Rome and in Greece the "aristocracy of wealth" reportedly forced the hand of the hierarchical structure by pursuing aristocratic positions, undermining sacred laws and traditional institutions, and infiltrating the militia, priesthood, or consulship. In later times what occurred was the rebellion of the communes and the rise of the various medieval formations of mercantile power. The solemn proclamation of the "rights of the Third Estate" in France represented the decisive stage, followed by the varieties of "bourgeois revolution" of the third caste, which employed liberal and democratic ideologies for its own purposes. Correspondingly, this era was characterized by the theory of the social contract. At this time the social bond was no longer a *fides* of a warrior type based on relationships of faithfulness and honor. Instead, it took on a utilitarian and economic character; it consisted of an agreement based on personal convenience and on material interest

that only a merchant could have conceived. Gold became a means and powerful tool; those who knew how to acquire it and to multiply it (capitalism, high finance, industrial trusts), behind the appearances of democracy, virtually controlled political power and the instruments employed in the art of opinionmaking. Aristocracy gave way to plutocracy, the warrior, to the banker and industrialist. The economy triumphed on all fronts. Trafficking with money and charging interest, activities previously confined to the ghettos, invaded the new civilisation. According to the expression of W. Sombart, in the promised land of Protestant puritanism, Americanism, capitalism, and the "distilled Jewish spirit" coexist. It is natural that given these congenial premises, the modern representatives of secularized Judaism saw the ways to achieve world domination open up before them. In this regard, Karl Marx wrote:

What are the mundane principles of Judaism? Practical necessity and the pursuit of one's own advantage. What is its earthly god? Money. The Jew has emancipated himself in a typically Jewish fashion not only in that he has taken control of the power of money, but also in that through him, money has become a world power and the practical Jewish spirit of the Christian people. The Jews have emancipated themselves insofar as the Christians have become Jews. The god of the Jews has become secularized and has become the god of the earth. The exchange is the true god of the Jews. (2)

In reality, the codification of the traffic with gold as a loan charged with interest, to which the Jews had been previously devoted since they had no other means through which they could affirm themselves, may be said to be the very foundation of the acceptance of the aberrant development of all that is banking, high finance, and pure economy, which are spreading like a cancer in the modern world. This is the fundamental time in the "age of the merchants".

Finally the crisis of bourgeois society, class struggle, the proletarian revolt against capitalism, the manifest promulgated at the "Third International" in 1919, and the correlative organization of the groups and the masses in the cadres proper to a "socialist civilization of labor" -all these bear witness to the third collapse, in which power tends to pass into the hands of the lowest of the traditional castes, the caste of the beasts of burden and the standardized individuals. The result of this transfer of power was a reduction of horizon and value to the plane of matter, the machine, and the reign of quantity. The prelude to this was the Russian Revolution. Thus, the new ideal became the "proletarian" ideal of a universal and communist civilization. (3)

We may compare the above mentioned phenomenon of the awakening and gushing forth of elemental subhuman forces within the structures of the modern world to a person who can no longer endure the tension of the spirit (first caste), and eventually not even the tension of the will as a free force that animates the body (warrior caste), and who thus gives in to the subpersonal forces of the organic system and all of a sudden reacts almost magnetically under the impulse of another life that replaces his own. The ideas and the passions of the demos soon escape men's control and they begin to act as if they had acquired an autonomous and dreadful life of their own. These passions pit nations and collectivities against each other and result in unprecedented conflicts and crises. At the end of the process, once the total collapse has occurred, it awaits an international system under the brutal symbols of the hammer and the sickle.

Such are the horizons facing the contemporary world. Just as it is only by adhering to free activity that man can truly be free and realize his own self, likewise, by focusing on practical and utilitarian goals, economic achievements, and whatever was once the exclusive domain of the inferior castes man abdicates, desintegrates, loses his center, and opens himself to infernal forces of which he is destined to become the unwilling and unconscious instrument. Moreover, contemporary society looks like an organism that has shifted from a human to a subhuman type, in which every activity and reaction is determined by the needs of the dictate of purely physical life. Man's dominating principles are those of the material part of traditional hierarchies: gold and work. This is how things are today; these two elements, almost without exception, affect every possibility of existence and give shape to the ideologies and myths that clearly testify to the gravity of the modern perversion of all values.

Not only has the quadripartite regression have a sociopolitical scope, but it also inverts every domain of civilization. In architecture the regression is symbolized by the shift from the temple (first caste) as the dominant building, to the fortress and castle (caste of warriors), to the city-state surrounded by protecting walls (age of the merchants), to the factory, and finally to the rational and dull buildings that are the hives of the mass-man. The family, which in the origins has a sacred foundation, shifted to an authoritarian model (*patria potestas* in a mere juridical sense), then to a bourgeois and conventional one, until it will finally dissolve when the party, the people, and society will supersede in importance and dignity. The notion of war underwent analogous phases: from the doctrine of the "sacred war" and of the *mors triumphalis* a shift occurred to the war waged in the name of the right and of the honor of one's lord (warrior caste); in the third stage conflicts are brought about by national ambitions that are contingent upon the plans and the interests of a supremacist economy and industry (caste of merchants); finally there arose the communist theory according to which war among nations is just a bourgeois residue, since the only just war is the world revolution of the proletarian class waged against the capitalist and the so-called imperialist world (caste of serfs). In the aesthetic dimension a shift occurred from a symbolic, sacred art closely related to the possibilities of predicting future events and magic (first caste), to the predominance of epic art and poems (caste of the warriors); this was followed by a shift to a romantic, conventional, sentimentalist, erotic, and psychological art that is produced for the consumption of the bourgeois class, until finally, new "social" or "socially involved" views of art begin to emerge that advocate an art for the use and consumption of the masses. The traditional work knew the superindividual unity characterizing the orders: in the West first came ascetics, monastic orders; these were followed by knightly orders (caste of the warriors), which in turn were followed by the unity sworn to in Masonic lodges, which worked hard to prepare the revolution of the Third Estate and the advent of democracy. Finally there came the network of revolutionary and activist cadres of the Communist International (last caste), bent on the destruction of the previous sociopolitical order.

It is on the plane of ethics that the process of degradation is particularly visible. While the first age was characterized by the ideal of "spiritual virility", initiation, and an ethics aimed at overcoming all human bonds; and while the age of the warriors was characterized by the ideal of heroism, victory, and lordship, as well as by the aristocratic ethics of honor, faithfulness, and chevalry, during the age of the merchants the predominant ideals were of pure economics, profit prosperity, and of science as an instrument of a technical and industrial progress that propels production and new profits in a "consumer society". Finally the advent of the serfs corresponds to the elevation of the slave's principle *-work-* to the status of a religion. It is the hatred harbored by the slave that sadistically proclaims: "If anyone will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thess, 3:10). The slave's self-congratulating stupidity created sacred incenses with the exaltation of

human sweat, hence expressions such as "Work ennobles man"; "The religion of work"; and "Work as a social and ethical duty". We have previously learned that the ancient world despised work only because it knew *action*; the opposition of action to work as an opposition between the spiritual, pure and free pole, and the material, impure pole impregnated only with human possibilities, was at the basis of that contempt. The loss of the sense of this opposition and the animal-like subordination of the former to the latter, characterizes the last ages. And when in ancient times every work, through an inner transfiguration owing to its purity and its meaning as an "offering" oriented upwards could redeem itself until it became a symbol of action, now, following an upheaval in the opposite direction (which can be observed during the age of the serfs), every residue of action tends to be degraded to the form of work. The degeneration of the ancient aristocratic and sacred ethics into the modern plebeian and materialistic morality is expressively characterized by such a shift from the plane of action to the plane of work. Superior men who lived in a not so distant past, either *acted* or *directed* actions. Modern man *works* (4). The only real difference today is that which exists between the various kinds of work; there are "intellectual" workers and those whose their limbs and machines. In any event, the notion of "action" is dying out in the modern world, together with that of absolute personality. Moreover, among all the commissioned arts, antiquity regarded as most disgraceful those devoted to the pursuit of pleasure -*minimaeque artes esa probandae, quae ministrae sunt voluptatum* (5), this, after all, is precisely the kind of work respected the most in this day and age. Beginning with the scientist, technician, and politician, and with the rationalized system of productive organization, "work" supposedly leads to the realization of an ideal more fitting for a human animal: an easier life that is more enjoyable and safer with the maximization of one's well-being and physical comfort. The contemporary breed of artists and of "creative minds" of the bourgeoisie is the equivalent of that class of "luxury servants" that catered to the pleasure and distractions of the Roman patriciate and later on, of the medieval feudal lords.

Then again, while the themes proper to this degradation find their most characteristic expressions on the social plane and in contemporary life, they do not fail to make an appearance on the ideal and speculative plane. It was precisely during the age of humanism that the antitraditional and plebeian theme emerged in the views of Giordano Bruno who, by inverting traditional values, extolled the age of human effort and work over and against the Golden Age (of which he knew absolutely nothing) in a masochistic fashion and with authentic stupidity. Bruno called "divine" the brutish drive of human need, since such a drive is responsible for producing "increasingly wonderful arts and inventions", for removing mankind further from the Golden Age that he regarded as animalistic and lazy, and for drawing human beings closer to God (6). In all this we find an anticipation of those ideologies that, by virtue of being significantly connected to the age of the French Revolution, regarded work as the main element of the social myth and revived the messianic theme in terms of work and machines, all the while singing the praises of progress. Moreover, modern man, whether consciously or unconsciously, began to apply to the universe and project on an ideal plane the experiences that he nurtured in the workshops and factories and by which the soul became a *product*. Bergson, who exalted the *élan vital*, is the one who drew the analogy as only a modern could between technical productive activity inspired by a mere practical principle and the ways of intelligence itself. Having covered with ridicule the ancient "inert" idea of knowledge as contemplation,

The entire effort of modern epistemology in its most radical trajectories consists in assimilating knowledge to productive work, according to the postulates: "To know is to do" and "One can only really know what one does" (7).

Verum et factum convertuntur. And since according to the unrealism typical of these currents, (a) "to be" means "to know"; (b) the spirit is identified with the idea; and (c) the productive and immanent knowing process is identified with the process of reality, the way of the fourth caste is reflected in the highest regions and posits itself as their foundational "truth". Likewise, there is an activism on the plane of philosophical theories that appears to be in agreement with the world created by the advent of the last caste and its "civilization of work".

Generally speaking, this advent is reflected in the abovementioned modern ideologies of "progress" and Evolution", which have distorted a "scientific" irresponsibility any superior vision of history, promoted the definitive abandonment of traditional truths, and created the most specious alibis for the justification and glorification of modern man. The myth of evolutionism is nothing else but the profession of faith of the upstart. If in recent times the West no longer believes in the nobility of the origins but in the notion that civilization arises out of barbarism, religion from superstition, man from animal, (Darwin), thought from matter, and every spiritual form from the "sublimation" or transposition of the stuff that originates the instinct, libido, and complexes of the "collective unconscious" (Freud, Jung), and so on-we can see in all this not so much the result of a deviated quest, but rather, and above all, and alibi or something that a civilization created by both lower beings and the revolutions of the serfs and pariahs against the ancient aristocratic society necessarily *had* to believe in and wish to be true. There is not a dimension in which, in one form or another, the evolutionary myth had not succeeded in infiltrating with destructive consequences; the results have been the overthrow of every value, the suppression of all sense of truth, the elaboration and connecting together (as in an unbreakable magical circle) of the world inhabited by a deconsecrated and deluded mankind. In agreement with historicism, so-called post-Hegelian Idealism came to identify the essence of the "Absolute Spirit" with its "becoming" and its "self-creation" -this Spirit was no longer conceived as a Being that *is*, that dominates, and that possesses itself; the self-made man has almost become the new metaphysical model.

It is not easy to separate the process of regression along the way of gold (age of merchants) from the regression along the way of work (age of serfs), since these ways are interdependent. For all practical purposes, just as today work as a universal duty is no longer perceived as a repugnant, absurd, an unnatural value, likewise, to be paid does not seem repugnant but on the contrary it seems very natural. Money, which no longer "burns" the hands it touches, has established an invisible bond of slavery that is worse and more depraved than that which the high spiritual "stature" of lords and conquerors used to retain and justify.

Just as any form of action tends to become yet another form of work so is it always associated with payment. And while on the one hand action reduced to work is judged by its efficiency in contemporary societies, just as man is valued by his practical success and by his profit; and while, as someone has remarked, Calvin acted as a pimp by seeing that profit and wealth were shrouded in the mysticism of a divine election-on the other hand, the specter of hunger and unemployment lurks upon these new slaves as a more fearful threat than the threat of the whip in ancient times.

In any event, it is possible to distinguish a general phase in which the yearning for profit displayed by single individuals who pursue wealth and power is the central motif (the phase that corresponds to the advent of the third caste) from a further phase that is still unfolding, characterized by a sovereign economy that has become almost independent or collectivized (the advent of the last caste)

In this regard, it is interesting to note that the regression of the principle of "action" to the form proper to the inferior caste (work, production) is often accompanied by an analogous regression with regard to the principle of "asceticism". What arises is almost a new asceticism of gold and work, because as it is exemplified by representative figures of this phase, to work and amass a fortune become things that are yearned for and loved for their own sake, as if they were a vocation. Thus we often see, specially in America, powerful capitalists who enjoy their wealth less than the last of their employees; rather than owing riches and being free from them and thus employing them to fund forms of magnificence, quality, and sensibility for various precious and privileged spectacles (as was the case in ancient aristocracies), these people appear to be merely managers of their fortunes. Rich though they may be, they pursue an increasing number of activities; it is almost as if they were impersonal and ascetical instruments whose activity is devoted to gathering, multiplying, and casting into ever wider nets (that sometimes affect the lives of millions of people and the destinies of entire nations) the faceless forces of money and of production (8). *Fiat productio, pereat homo*, Sombart correctly remarked when noticing that the spiritual destruction and emptiness that man has created around himself, after he became "homo economicus" and a great capitalist entrepreneur, force him to turn his activity (profit, business, prosperity) into an end in itself, to love it and will it for its own sake lest he fall victim to the vertigo of the abyss and the horror of a life is totally meaningless (9).

Even the relationship of the modern economy to the machines is significant with regard to the arousal of forces that surpass the plans of those who initially evoked them and carry everything along them. Once all interest for anything superior and transcendent was either lost or laughed at, the only reference point remaining was man's need, in a purely material and animal sense. Moreover, the traditional principle of the limitation of one's need within the context of a normal economy (a balanced economy based on consumption) was replaced with the principle of acceptance and multiplication of need, which paralleled the so-called Industrial Revolution and the advent of the age of the machines. Technological innovations have automatically led mankind from production to overproduction. After the "activist" frenzy was awoken and the frantic circulation of capital—which is multiplied through production in order to be put again in circulation through further productive investments—was set in motion, mankind has finally arrived at a point where the relationship between need and machine (or work) have been totally reversed; it is no longer need that requires mechanical work, but mechanical work (or production) that generates new needs. In a regime of superproduction, in order for all the products to be sold it is necessary that the needs of single individuals, far from being reduced, be maintained and even multiplied so that consumption may increase and the mechanism be kept running in order to avoid the fatal congestion that would bring about one of the following two consequences: either war, understood as the means for a violent affirmation by a greater economic and productive power that claims not to have "enough space", or unemployment (industrial shutdowns as a response to the crisis on the job and market and in consumerism) with its ensuing crises and social tensions precipitating the insurrection of the Fourth Estate.

As a fire starts another fire until an entire area goes up in flames, this is how the economy has affected the inner essence of modern man through the world that he himself created. This present "civilization", starting from Western hotbeds, has extended the contagion to every land that was still healthy and has brought to all strata of society and all races the following "gifts": restlessness, dissatisfaction, resentment, the need to go further and faster, and the inability to possess one's life in simplicity, independence, and balance. Modern civilization has pushed man onward; it has generated in him the need for an increasingly greater number of things; it has made him more and more insufficient to himself and powerless. Thus, every new invention and

technological discovery, rather than a conquest, really represents a defeat and a new whiplash in an ever faster race blindly taking place within a system of conditionings that are increasingly serious and irreversible and that for the most part go unnoticed. This is how the various paths converge: technological civilization, the dominant role of the economy, and the civilization of production and consumption all complement the exaltation of becoming and progress; in other words, they contribute to the manifestation of the "demonic" element in the modern world (10).

Regarding the degenerated forms of asceticism, I would like to point out the spirit of a phenomenon that is more properly connected to the plane of "work" (that is, of the fourth caste). The modern world knows a sublimated version of work in which the latter becomes "desinterested", disjoined from the economic factor and from the idea of a practical or productive goal and takes an almost ascetic form; I am talking about *sport*. Sport is a way of working in which the productive objective no longer matters; thus, sport is willed for its own sake as mere activity. Someone has rightly pointed out that sport is the "blue collar" religion (11). Sport is a typical counterfeit of action in the traditional sense of the word. A pointless activity, it is nevertheless still characterized by the same triviality of work and belongs to the same physical and lightless group of activities that are pursued at the various crossroads in which plebeian contamination occurs. Although through the practice of sport it is possible to achieve a temporary evocation of deep forces, what this amounts to is the enjoyment of sensations and a sense of vertigo and at most, the excitement derived from directing one's energies and winning a competition-without any higher and transfiguring reference, any sense of "sacrifice" or deindividuating offering being present. Physical individuality is cherished and strengthened by sport; thus the chain is confirmed and every residue of subtler sensibility is suffocated. The human being, instead of growing into an organic being, tends to be reduced to a bundle of reflexes, an almost to a mechanism. It is also very significant that the lower strata of society are the ones that show more enthusiasm for sports, displaying their enthusiasm in great collective forms. Sport may be identified as one of the forewarning signs of that type of society represented by Chigalev in Dostoyevsky's *The Obsessed*; after the required time has elapsed for a methodical and reasoned education aimed at extirpating the evil represented by the "I" and by free will, and no longer realizing they are slaves, all the Chigalevs will return to experience the innocence and the happiness of a new Eden. This "Eden" differs from the biblical one only because work will be the dominating universal law. Work as sport and sport as work in a world that has lost the sense of historical cycles, as well as the sense of true personality, would probably be the best way to implement such a messianic idea. Thus, it is not a coincidence that in several societies, whether spontaneously or thanks to the state, great sports organizations have arisen as the appendices of various classes of workers, and vice versa.

NOTES:

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1. The idea of regression of the castes, which I had previously referred to in my pamphlet *Imperialismo Pagano* (Rome, 1927), was detailed by V. Vezzani and by R. Guénon in his *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel* (Paris, 1929); finally, it has been expounded in an independent fashion by H. Berls in *Die Heraufkunft des fünften Standes* (Karlsruhe, 1931). This idea has an analogical correspondence with the traditional doctrine of the four ages, since each of the four traditional castes embodies the values that have predominated during the quadripartite process of regression.

2. *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher*, Paris, 1844, pp. 190-212.

3. D. Merezhkovsky, *Les Mysteres de l'Orient*: "The word "proletarian" comes from Latin *proles*, which means posterity, generation. Proletarians 'produce' and generate with their bodies, but are spiritual eunuchs. They are not men or women, but anonymous 'comrades', impersonal ants which are part of the human anthill".
4. O. Spengler, *Untergang des Abendlandes* (Wien-Leipzig, 1919, vol. I, pp. 513, 619). Eng. trad.: *The decline of the West*. The term "action" is here used as synonymous with a spiritual and disinterested activity; thus it may be applied to contemplation, which in the classical idea was often regarded as the most pure form of activity; it had its object and goal in itself and did not need "anything else" in order to be implemented.
5. Ciceron, *De offic.*, I, 42.
6. Giordano Bruno, *Spacio della Bestia trionfante*, dialogue III.
7. See A. Tilgher, *Homo faber*, pp. 120-121, 87.
8. See M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in which the Protestant roots of such an "ascetical" version of capitalism are discussed. Originally there was a separation between earning as a "vocation" and the enjoyment of the riches, the latter being looked down upon as a sinful element of the deification and pride of the human creature. Naturally, in the course of the history the original religious considerations were eliminated; today we only find purely secular and unscrupulous forms.
9. W. Sombart, *Il borghese*.
10. The word "demonic" is obviously not to be understood in the Christian sense of the word. The expression "demonic people" found in the *Bhagavadgita* applies very much to our contemporaries: "Thus they are beset with innumerable cares which last long, all their life, until death. Their highest aim is sensual enjoyment, and they firmly think that this is all." (16, 11).
11. A. Tigher, *Homo Faber*, p. 162.

AMERICAN "CIVILIZATION"

The recently deceased John Dewey was applauded by the American press as the most representative figure of American civilisation. This is quite right. His theories are entirely representative of the vision of man and life which is the premise of Americanism and its 'democracy'.

The essence of such theories is this: that everyone can become what he wants to, within the limits of the technological means at his disposal. Equally, a person is not what he is from his true nature and there is no real difference between people, only differences in qualifications. According to this theory anyone can be anyone he wants to be if he knows how to train himself. This is obviously the case with the 'self-made man'; in a society which has lost all sense of tradition the notion of personal aggrandisement will extend into every aspect of human existence, reinforcing the egalitarian doctrine of pure democracy. If the basis of such ideas is accepted, then all natural diversity has to be abandoned. Each person can presume to possess the potential of everyone else and the terms 'superior' and 'inferior' lose their meaning; every notion of distance and respect loses meaning; all life-styles are open to all. To all organic conceptions of life Americans oppose a mechanistic conception. In a society which has 'started from scratch', everything has the characteristic of being fabricated. In American society appearances are masks not faces. At the same time, proponents of the American way of life are hostile to personality.

The Americans' 'open-mindedness', which is sometimes cited in their favour, is the other side of their interior formlessness. The same goes for their 'individualism'. Individualism and personality are not the same: the one belongs to the formless world of quantity, the other to the world of quality and hierarchy. The Americans are the living refutation of the Cartesian axiom, "I think, therefore I am": Americans do not think, yet they are. The American 'mind', puerile and primitive, lacks characteristic form and is therefore open to every kind of standardisation. In a superior civilisation, as, for example, that of the Indo-Aryans, the being who is without a characteristic form or caste (in the original meaning of the word), not even that of servant or shudra, would emerge as a pariah. In this respect America is a society of pariahs. There is a role for pariahs. It is to be subjected to beings whose form and internal laws are precisely defined. Instead the modern pariahs seek to become dominant themselves and to exercise their dominion over all the world.

There is a popular notion about the United States that it is a 'young nation' with a 'great future before it'. Apparent American defects are then described as the 'faults of youth' or 'growing pains'. It is not difficult to see that the myth of 'progress' plays a large part in this judgement. According to the idea that everything new is good, America has a privileged role to play among civilised nations. In the First World War the United States intervened in the role of 'the civilised world' par excellence. The 'most evolved' nation had not only a right but a duty to interfere in the destinies of other peoples.

The structure of history is, however, cyclical not evolutionary. It is far from being the case that the most recent civilisations are necessarily 'superior'. They may be, in fact, senile and decadent. There is a necessary correspondence between the most advanced stages of a historical cycle and the most primitive. America is the final stage of modern Europe. Guenon called the United States 'the far West', in the novel sense that the United States represents the *reductio ad absurdum* of the negative and the most senile aspects of Western civilisation. What in Europe exist in diluted

form are magnified and concentrated in the United States whereby they are revealed as the symptoms of disintegration and cultural and human regression. The American mentality can only be interpreted as an example of regression, which shows itself in the mental atrophy towards all higher interests and incomprehension of higher sensibility. The American mind has limited horizons, one conscribed to everything which is immediate and simplistic, with the inevitable consequence that everything is made banal, basic and levelled down until it is deprived of all spiritual life. Life itself in American terms is entirely mechanistic. The sense of 'I' in America belongs entirely to the physical level of existence. The typical American neither has spiritual dilemmas nor complications: he is a 'natural' joiner and conformist.

The primitive American mind can only superficially be compared to a young mind. The American mind is a feature of the regressive society to which I have already referred.

American Morality

The much-vaunted sex appeal of American women is drawn from films, reviews and pin-ups, and is in large part fictitious. A recent medical survey in the United States showed that 75 per cent of young American women are without strong sexual feeling and instead of satisfying their libido they seek pleasure narcissistically in exhibitionism, vanity and the cult of fitness and health in a sterile sense. American girls have 'no hang-ups about sex'; they are 'easy going' for the man who sees the whole sexual process as something in isolation thereby making it uninteresting and matter-of-fact, which, at such a level, it is meant to be. Thus, after she has been taken to the cinema or a dance, it is something like American good manners for the girl to let herself be kissed - this doesn't mean anything. American women are characteristically frigid and materialistic. The man who 'has his way' with an American girl is under a material obligation to her. The woman has granted a material favour. In cases of divorce American law overwhelmingly favours the woman. American women will divorce readily enough when they see a better bargain. It is frequently the case in America that a woman will be married to one man but already 'engaged' to a future husband, the man she plans to marry after a profitable divorce.

"Our" American Media

Americanisation in Europe is widespread and evident. In Italy it is a phenomenon which is rapidly developing in these post-war years and is considered by most people, if not enthusiastically, at least as something natural. Some time ago I wrote that of the two great dangers confronting Europe - Americanism and Communism - the first is the more insidious. Communism cannot be a danger other than in the brutal and catastrophic form of a direct seizure of power by communists. On the other hand Americanisation gains ground by a process of gradual infiltration, effecting modifications of mentalities and customs which seem inoffensive in themselves but which end in a fundamental perversion and degradation against which it is impossible to fight other than within oneself.

It is precisely with respect to such internal opposition that most Italians seem weak. Forgetting their own cultural inheritance they readily turn to the United States as something akin to the parent guide of the world. Whoever wants to be modern has to measure himself according to the American standard. It is pitiable to witness a European country so debase itself. Veneration for America has nothing to do with a cultured interest in the way other people live. On the contrary, servility towards the United States leads one to think that there is no other way of life worth considering on the same level as the American one.

Our radio service is Americanised. Without any criterion of superior and inferior it just follows the fashionable themes of the moment and markets what is considered 'acceptable' - acceptable, that is, to the most Americanised section of the public, which is to say the most degenerate. The rest of us are dragged along in its wake. Even the style of presentation on radio has become Americanised. "Who, after listening to an American radio programme, can suppress a shudder when he considers that the only way of escaping communism is by becoming Americanised?" Those are not the words of an outsider but of an American sociologist, James Burnham, professor at the University of Princeton. Such a judgement from an American should make Italian radio programmers blush for shame.

The consequence of the 'do your own thing' democracy is the intoxication of the greater part of the population which is not capable of discriminating for itself, which, when not guided by a power and an ideal, all too easily loses sense of its own identity.

The Industrial Order in America

In his classic study of capitalism Werner Sombart summarised the late capitalist phase in the adage Fiat productio, pareat homo. In its extreme form capitalism is a system in which a man's value is estimated solely in terms of the production of merchandise and the invention of the means of production. Socialist doctrines grew out of a reaction to the lack of human consideration in this system.

A new phase has begun in the United States where there has been an upsurge of interest in so-called labor relations. In appearance it would seem to signify an improvement: in reality this is a deleterious phenomenon. The entrepreneurs and employers have come to realise the importance of the 'human factor' in a productive economy, and that it is a mistake to ignore the individual involved in industry: his motives, his feelings, his working day life. Thus, a whole school of study of human relations in industry has grown up, based on behaviourism. Studies like Human Relations in Industry by B. Gardner and G. Moore have supplied a minute analysis of the behaviour of employees and their motivations with the precise aim of defining the best means to obviate all factors that can hinder the maximisation of production. Some studies certainly don't come from the shop floor but from the management, abetted by specialists from various colleges. The sociological investigations go as far! as analysing the employee's social ambience. This kind of study has a practical purpose: the maintenance of the psychological contentment of the employee is as important as the physical. In cases in which a worker is tied to a monotonous job which doesn't demand a great deal of concentration, the studies will draw attention to the 'danger' that his mind may tend to wander in a way that may eventually reflect badly on his attitude towards the job.

The private lives of employees are not forgotten - hence the increase in so-called personnel counselling. Specialists are called in to dispel anxiety, psychological disturbances and non-adaptation 'complexes', even to the point of giving advice in relation to the most personal matters. A frankly psycho-analytic technique and one much used is to make the subject 'talk freely' and put the results obtainable by this 'catharsis' into relief.

None of this is concerned with the spiritual betterment of human beings or any real human problems, such as a European would understand them in this "age of economics". On the other side of the Iron Curtain man is treated as a beast of burden and his obedience is maintained by

terror and famine. In the United States man is also seen as just a factor of labour and consumption, and no aspect of his interior life is neglected and every factor of his existence is drawn to the same end. In the 'Land of the Free', through every medium, man is told he has reached a degree of happiness hitherto undreamed of. He forgets who he is, where he came from, and basks in the present.

American "Democracy" in Industry

There is a significant and growing discrepancy in the United States between the shibboleths of the prevailing political ideology and the effective economic structures of the nation. A large part of studies of the subject is played by the 'morphology of business'. Studies corroborate the impression that American business is a long way from the type of organisation which corresponds to the democratic ideal of U.S. propaganda. American businesses have a 'pyramid' structure. They constitute at the top an articulate hierarchy. The big businesses are run in the same way as government ministries and are organised along similar lines. They have co-ordinating and controlling bodies which separate the business leaders from the mass of employees. Rather than becoming more flexible in a social sense the "managerial elite" (Burnham) is becoming more autocratic than ever - something not unrelated to American foreign policy.

This is the end of yet another American illusion. America: the 'land of opportunity', where every possibility is there for the person who can grasp it, a land where anyone can rise from rags to riches. At first there was the 'open frontier' for all to ride out across. That closed and the new 'open frontier' was the sky, the limitless potential of industry and commerce. As Gardner, Moore and many others have shown, this too is no longer limitless, and the opportunities are thinning out. Given the ever increasing specialisation of labour in the productive process and the increasing emphasis on 'qualifications', what used to seem obvious to Americans - that their children would 'go further' than they would - is for many people no longer obvious at all. Thus it is that in the so-called political democracy of the United States, the force and the power in the land, that is to say the industry and the economy, are becoming ever more self-evidently undemocratic. The problem then is! : should reality be made to fit ideology or vice-versa? Until recently the overwhelming demand has been for the former course of action; the cry goes out for a return to the 'real America' of unfettered enterprise and the individual free of central government control. Nevertheless, there are also those who would prefer to limit democracy in order to adapt political theory to commercial reality. If the mask of American 'democracy' were thereby removed, it would become clear to what extent 'democracy' in America (and elsewhere) is only the instrument of an oligarchy which pursues a method of 'indirect action', assuring the possibility of abuse and deception on a large scale of those many who accept a hierarchical system because they think it is justly such. This dilemma of 'democracy' in the United States may one day give place to some interesting developments.

Against the Neo-Pagans Extract from "Grundrisse" (1942) by Julius Evola

The Misunderstandings of the New "Paganism"

It is perhaps appropriate to point out the misunderstandings that are current at the moment in some radical circles, who believe that a solution lies in the direction of a new paganism. This misunderstanding is already visible in the use of terms such as "pagan" and "pagandom". I myself, having used these expressions as slogans in a book that was published in Italy in 1928, and in Germany in 1934, have cause for sincere regrets.

Certainly the word for pagan or heathen, *paganus*, appears in some ancient Latin writers such as Livy without an especially negative tone. But this does not alter the fact that with the arrival of the new faith, the word *paganus* became a decidedly disparaging expression, as used in early Christian apologetics. It derives from *pagus*, meaning a small town or village, so that *paganus* refers to the peasant way of thinking: an uncultured, primitive, and superstitious way. In order to promote and glorify the new faith, the apologists had the bad habit of elevating themselves through the denigration of other faiths. There was often a conscious and often systematic disparagement and misrepresentation of almost all the earlier traditions, doctrines, and religions, which were grouped under the contemptuous blanket-term of paganism or heathendom. To this end, the apologists obviously made a premeditated effort to highlight those aspects of the pre-Christian religions and traditions that lacked any normal or primordial character, but were clearly forms that had fallen into decay. Such a polemical procedure led, in particular, to the characterization of whatever had preceded Christendom, and was hence non-Christian, as necessarily anti-Christian. One should consider, then, that "paganism" is a fundamentally tendentious and artificial concept that scarcely corresponds to the historical reality of what the pre-Christian world always was in its normal manifestations, apart from a few decadent elements and aspects that derived from the degenerate remains of older cultures.

Once we are clear about this, we come today to a paradoxical realization: that this imaginary paganism that never existed, but was invented by Christian apologists, is now serving as the starting-point for certain so-called pagan circles, and is thus threatening for the first time in history to become a reality--no more and no less than that.

What are the main traits of today's pagan outlook, as its own apologists believe and declare them to be? The primary one is the imprisonment in Nature. All transcendence is totally unknown to the pagan view of life: it remains stuck in a mixture of Spirit and Nature, in an ambiguous unity of Body and Soul. There is nothing to its religion but a superstitious deification of natural phenomena, or of tribal energies promoted to the status of minor gods. Out of this there arises first of all a blood- and soil-bound particularism. Next comes a rejection of the values of personality and freedom, and a condition of innocence that is merely that of the natural man, as yet unawakened to any truly supra-natural calling. Beyond this innocence there is only lack of inhibition, "sin," and the pleasure of sinning. In other domains there is nothing but superstition, or a purely profane culture of materialism and fatalism. It is as though only the arrival of Christianity (ignoring certain precursors which are dismissed as insignificant) allowed the world of supra-natural freedom to break through, letting in grace and personality, in contrast to the fatalistic and nature-bound beliefs ascribed to "paganism," bringing with it a catholic ideal (in the etymological sense of universality) and a healthy dualism, which made it possible to subjugate Nature to a higher law, and for the "Spirit" to triumph over the law of flesh, blood, and the false gods.

These are the main traits of the dominant understanding of paganism, i.e., of everything that does not entail a specifically Christian world-view. Anyone who possesses any direct acquaintance with cultural and religious history, however elementary, can see how incorrect and one-sided this attitude is. Besides, in the early Church Fathers there are often signs of a higher understanding of the symbols, doctrines, and religions of preceding cultures. Here we will give only a sampling. What most distinguished the pre-Christian world, in all its normal forms, was not the superstitious divinization of nature, but a symbolic understanding of it, by virtue of which (as I have often emphasized) every phenomenon and every event appeared as the sensible revelation of a supra-sensible world. The pagan understanding of the world and of man was essentially marked by sacred symbolism.

Moreover, the pagan way of life was absolutely not that of a mindless innocence, nor a natural abandonment to the passions, even if certain forms of it were obviously degenerate. It was already aware of a healthy dualism, which is reflected in its universal religious or metaphysical conceptions. Here we can mention the dualistic warrior-religion of the ancient Iranian Aryans, already discussed and familiar to all; the Hellenistic antithesis between the "two natures," between World and Underworld, or the Nordic one between the race of the Ases and the elementary beings; and lastly the Indo-Aryan contrast between sams'ra, the "stream of forms," and m(o)kthi, "liberation" and "perfection."

On this basis, all the great pre-Christian cultures shared the striving for a supra-natural freedom, i.e., for the metaphysical perfection of the personality, and they all acknowledged Mysteries and initiations. I have already pointed out that the Mysteries often signified the reconquest of the primordial state, the spirituality of the solar, Hyperborean races, on the foundation of a tradition and a knowledge that were concealed through secrecy and exclusivity from the pollutions of an environment already in decay. We have also seen that in the Eastern lands, the Aryan quality was already associated with a "second birth" achieved through initiation. As for natural innocence as the pagan cult of the body, that is a fairy-tale and not even in evidence among savages, for despite the inner lack of differentiation already mentioned in connection with races "close to nature," these people inhibit and constrict their lives through countless taboos in a way that is often stricter than the morality of the so-called "positive religions." And as for that which seems to the superficial view to embody the prototype of such "innocence," namely the classical ideal, that was no cult of the body: it did not belong on that side of the body-spirit duality, but on the other side.

As already stated, the classic ideal is that of a Spirit that is so dominant that under certain favorable spiritual conditions it molds Body and Soul to its own image, and thereby achieves a perfect harmony between the inner and the outer.

Lastly, there is an aspiration away from particularism to be found everywhere in the "pagan" world, to which was due the imperial summons that marked the ascending phase of the Nordic-derived races. Such a summons was often metaphysically enhanced and refined, and appeared as the natural consequence of the expansion of the ancient sacred state-concept; also as the form in which the victorious presence of the "higher world" and the paternal, Olympian principle sought to manifest itself in the world of becoming. In this respect we might recall the old Iranian concept of Empire and of the "King of kings," with its associated doctrine of the hvarenŪ (the "celestial glory" with which the Aryan rulers were endowed), and the Indo-Aryan tradition of the "World-king" or cakravartī, etc., right up to the reappearance of these signifiers in the "Olympian" assumptions of the ancient Roman idea of State and Empire. The Roman Empire,

too, had its sacred contents, which were systematically misunderstood or undervalued not only by Christendom, but also by the writers of "positive" history. Even the Emperor-cult had the sense of a hierarchical unity at the top of a pantheon, which was a series of separate territorial and ancestral cults belonging to the non-Roman peoples, which were freely respected so long as they kept within their normal boundaries. Finally, concerning the "pagan" unity of the two powers, spiritual and temporal, this was very far from meaning that they were fused. As a "solar" race understood it, it expressed the superior rights that must accrue to the spiritual authority at the center of any normal state; thus it was something quite different from the emancipation and "supremacy" of a merely secular state. If we were to make similar amendments in the spirit of true objectivity, the possibilities would be overwhelming.

Further Misunderstandings Concerning the "Pagan" World-View

This having been said, there remains the real possibility of transcending certain aspects of Christianity. But one must be quite clear: the Latin term "transcendere" means literally leaving something behind as one rises upwards, and not downwards! It is worth repeating that the principal thing is not the rejection of Christianity: it is not a matter of showing the same incomprehension towards it as Christianity itself has shown, and largely continues to show, towards ancient paganism. It would rather be a matter of completing Christianity by means of a higher and an older heritage, eliminating some of its aspects and emphasizing other, more important ones, in which this faith does not necessarily contradict the universal concepts of pre-Christian spirituality.

This, alas, is not the path taken by the radical circles we have mentioned. Many of these neo-pagans seem to have fallen into a trap deliberately set for them, often ending up by advocating and defending ideas that more or less correspond to that invented, nature-bound, particularistic pagandom, lacking light and transcendence, which was the polemical creation of a Christian misunderstanding of the pre-Christian world, and which is based, at most, on a few scattered elements of that world in its decline and devolution. And as if this were not enough, people often resort to an anti-Catholic polemic which, whatever its political justification, often drags out and adapts the old clichés of a purely modern, rationalist and enlightenment type that have been well-used by Liberalism, Democracy, and Freemasonry. This was also the case, to a degree, with H. S. Chamberlain, and it appears again in a certain Italian movement that has been trying to connect racial thinking with the "idealistic" doctrine of immanence.

There is a general and unmistakable tendency in neo-paganism to create a new, superstitious mysticism, based on the glorification of immanence, of Life and Nature, which is in the sharpest contrast to that Olympian and heroic ideal of the great Aryan cultures of pre-Christian antiquity. It would indicate much more a turning towards the materialistic, maternal, and telluric side, if it did not exhaust itself in foggy and dilettantish philosophizing. To give an example, we might ask what exactly is meant by this "Nature," on which these groups are so keen? It is little use to point out that it is certainly not the Nature that was experienced and recognized by ancient, traditional man, but a rational construct of the French Encyclopedist period. It was the Encyclopedists who, with definitely subversive and revolutionary motives, made up the myth of Nature as "good," wise, and wholesome, in opposition to the rottenness of every human "Culture." Thus we can see that the optimistic nature-myth of Rousseau and the Encyclopedists marches in the same ranks as "natural right," universalism, liberalism, humanitarianism, and the denial of any positive and structured form of sovereignty. Moreover, the myth in question has absolutely no basis in natural history. Every honest scientist knows that there is no room for "Nature" in the framework of his theories, which have as their object the determination of purely abstract equivalences and mathematical relationships. As far as biological research and genetics are concerned, we can

already see the disequilibrium that would occur the moment one held certain laws to be final, when they only apply to a partial aspect of reality. What people call "Nature" today has nothing to do with what nature meant to the traditional, solar man, or to the knowledge of it that was accessible to such a man thanks to his Olympian and regal position. There is no sign of this whatever in the advocates of this new mysticism.

Misunderstandings of more or less the same kind, arise regarding political thought. Paganism is here often used as the synonym for a merely worldly and yet exclusive concept of sovereignty, which turns the relationships upside-down. We have already seen that in the ancient states, the unity of the two powers meant something quite different. It provided the basis for the spiritualization of politics, whereas neo-paganism results in actually politicizing the spiritual, and thereby treading once again the false path of the Gallicans and Jacobins. In contrast, the ancient concept of State and Empire always showed a connection to the Olympian idea.

What shall we think of the attitude that regards Jewry, Rome, the Catholic Church, Freemasonry, and Communism as more or less one and the same thing, just because their presuppositions differ from the plain thinking of the Folk? The Folk's thinking along these lines threatens to lose itself in the dark, where no differentiation is possible any more. It shows that it has lost the genuine feeling for the hierarchy of values, and that it cannot escape the crippling alternative of destructive internationalism and nationalistic particularism, whereas the traditional understanding of the Empire is superior to both these concepts.

To restrict ourselves to a single example: Catholic dogmatism actually fulfils a useful preventive role by stopping worldly mysticism and suchlike eruptions from below from passing a certain frontier; it makes a strong dam that protects the area where transcendent knowledge and the genuinely supra-natural and non-human elements reign--or at least where they should reign. One may well criticize the way in which such transcendence and knowledge have been understood in Christianity, but one cannot cross over to a "profane" criticism that seizes on some polemical weapon or other, fantasizes over the supposed Aryan nature of the immanence-doctrine, of "natural religion," the cult of "life," etc., without really losing one's level: in short, one does not thereby attain the world of primordial beginnings, but that of the Counter-Tradition or the telluric and primitive modes of being. This would in fact be the very best way of re-converting those people with the best "pagan" talents to Catholicism!

One must be wary of falling into the misunderstandings and errors that we have mentioned, which basically serve only to defend the common enemy. One must try to develop the capacity to place oneself at that level where didactic confusion cannot reach, and where all dilettantism and arbitrary intellectual activity are excluded; where one resists energetically every influence from confused, passionate desires and from the aggressive pleasure in polemics; where, finally and fundamentally, nothing counts but the precise, strict, objective knowledge of the spirit of the Primordial Tradition.

THE MEANING AND CONTEXT OF ZEN

We know the kind of interest Zen has evoked even outside specialized disciplines, since being popularized in the west by D.T. Suzuki through his books *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* and *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. This popular interest is due to the paradoxical encounter between East and West. The ailing West perceives that Zen has something "existential" and surrealistic to offer. Zen's notion of a spiritual realization, free from any faith and any bond, not to mention the mirage of an instantaneous and somehow gratuitous "spiritual breakthrough", has exercised a fascinating attraction on many Westerners. However, this is true, for the most part, only superficially. There is a considerable difference between the spiritual dimension of the "philosophy of crisis", which has become popular in the West as a consequence of its materialistic and nihilist development, and the spiritual dimension of Zen, which has been rooted in the spirituality of the Buddhist tradition. Any true encounter between Zen and the West, presupposes, in a Westerner, either an exceptional predisposition, or the capability to operate a *metanoia*. By *metanoia* I mean an inner turnabout, affecting not so much one's intellectual "attitudes", but rather a dimension which in every time and in every place has been conceived as a deeper reality.

Zen has a secret doctrine and not to be found in scriptures. It was passed on by the Buddha to his disciple Mahakassapa. This secret doctrine was introduced in China around the sixth century C.E. by Bodhidharma. The canon was transmitted in China and Japan through a succession on teachers and "patriarchs". In Japan it is a living tradition and has many advocates and numerous *Zendos* ("Halls of Meditation").

As far as the spirit informing the tradition is concerned, Zen may be considered as a continuation of early Buddhism. Buddhism arose as a vigorous reaction against the theological speculation and the shallow ritualism into which the ancient Hindu priestly caste had degraded after possessing a sacred, lively wisdom since ancient times. Buddha mad tabula rassa of all this: he focused instead on the practical problem of how to overcome what in the popular mind is referred to as "life's suffering". According to esoteric teachings, this suffering was considered as the state of caducity, restlessness, "thirst" and the forgetfulness typical of ordinary people. Having followed the path leading to spiritual awakening and to immortality without external aid, Buddha pointed the way to those who felt an attraction to it. It is well known that Buddha is not a name, but an attribute or a title meaning "the awakened One", "He who has achieved enlightenment", or "the awakening". Buddha was silent about the content of his experience, since he wanted to discourage people from assigning to speculation and philosophizing a primacy over action. Therefore, unlike his predecessors, he did not talk about *Brahman* (the absolute), or about *Atman* (the transcendental Self), but only employees the term *nirvana*, at the risk of being misunderstood. Some, in fact, thought, in their lack of understanding, that *nirvana* was to be identified with the notion of "nothingness", an ineffable and evanescent transcendence, almost bordering on the limits of the unconscious and of a state of unaware non-being. So, in a further development of Buddhism, what occurred again, mutatis mutandi, was exactly the situation against which Buddha had reacted; Buddhism became a religion, complete with dogmas, rituals, scholasticism and mythology. It eventually became differentiated into two schools: *Mahayana* and *Hinayana*. The former was more grandiose in metaphysics an *Mahayana* eventually grew complacent with its abstruse symbolism. The teachings of the latter school were more strict and to the point, and yet too concerned about the mere moral discipline which became increasingly

monastic. Thus the essential and original nucleus, namely the esoteric doctrine of the enlightenment, was almost lost.

At this crucial time Zen appeared, declaring the uselessness of these so-called methods and proclaiming the doctrine of *satori*. *Satori* is a fundamental inner event, a sudden existential breakthrough, corresponding in essence to what I have called the "awakening". But this formulation was new and original and it constituted a radical change in approach. *Nirvana*, which had been variously considered as the alleged Nothingness, as extinction, and as the final end result of an effort aimed at obtaining liberation (which according to some may require more than one lifetime), now came to be considered as the normal human condition. By these lights, every person has the nature of Buddha and every person is already liberated, and therefore, situated above and beyond birth and death. It is only necessary to become aware of it, to realize it, to see within one's nature, according to Zen's main expression. *Satori* is like a timeless opening up. On the one hand, *satori* is something sudden and radically different from all the ordinary human states of consciousness; it is like a catastrophic trauma within ordinary consciousness. On the other hand, *satori* is what leads one back to what, in a higher sense, should be considered as normal and natural; thus, it is the exact opposite of an ecstasis, or trance.

It is the rediscovery and the appropriation of one's true nature: it is the enlightenment which draws out of ignorance or out of the subconscious the deep reality of what was and will always be, regardless of one's condition in life. The consequence of *satori* is a completely new way to look at the world and at life. To those who have experienced it, everything is the same (things, other beings, one's self, "heaven, the rivers and the vast earth"), and yet everything is fundamentally different. It is as if a new dimension was added to reality, transforming the meaning and value. According to the Zen Masters, the essential characteristic of the new experience is the overcoming of every dualism: of the inner and outer; the I and not I; of finitude and infinity; being and not-being; appearance and reality; "empty" and "full"; substance and accidents. Another characteristic is that any value posed by the finite and confused consciousness of the individual, is no longer discernible. And thus, the liberated and the non-liberated, the enlightened and the non-enlightened, are yet one and same thing. Zen effectively perpetuates the paradoxical equation of *Mahayana* Buddhism, *nirvana-samsara*, and the Taoist saying "the return is infinitely far". It is as if Zen said: liberation should not be looked for in the next world; the very world is the next world; it is liberation and it does not need to be liberated. This is the point of view of *satori*, of perfect enlightenment, of "transcendent wisdom" (*prajnaparamita*). Basically, this consciousness is a shift of the self's center. In any situation and in any event of ordinary life, including the most trivial ones, the ordinary, dualistic and intellectual sense of one's self is substituted with a being who no longer perceives an "I" opposed to a "non-I", and who transcends and overcomes any antithesis. This being eventually comes to enjoy a perfect freedom an incoercibility. He is like the wind, which blows where it wills, and like a naked being which is everything after "letting go" -abandons everything, embracing poverty.

Zen, or at least mainstream Zen, emphasizes the discontinuous, sudden and unpredictable character of *satori* disclosure. In regard to this, Suzuki was at fault when he took issue with the techniques used in Hindu schools such as *Samkya* and *Yoga*. These techniques were also contemplated in early Buddhist texts. Suzuki employed the simile of water, which in a moment turns into ice. He also used the simile of an alarm, which, as a consequence of some vibration, suddenly goes off. There are no disciplines, techniques or efforts, according to Suzuki, which by themselves may lead one to *satori*. On the contrary, it is claimed that *satori* often occurs spontaneously, when one has exhausted all the resources of his being, especially the intellect and

logical faculty of understanding. In some cases *satori* it is said to be facilitated by violent sensations and even by physical pain. Its cause may be the mere perception of an object as well as any event in ordinary life, provided a certain latent predisposition exists in the subject.

Regarding this, some misunderstandings may occur. Suzuki acknowledged that "*generally speaking, there are no indications on the inner work preceding satori*". However, he talked about the necessity of first going through "*a true baptism of fire*". After all, the very institution of the so-called "Halls of Meditation" (*Zendo*), where those who strive to obtain a *satori* submit themselves to a regimen of life which is partially analogous to that of some Catholic religious orders, bespeaks the necessity of a preliminary preparation. This preparation may last for several years. The essence of Zen seems to consist in a maturation process, identical to the one in which one almost reaches a state of an acute existential instability. At that point, the slightest push is sufficient to produce a change of state, a spiritual breakthrough, the opening which leads to the "*intuitive vision of one's nature*". The Masters know the moment in which the mind of the disciple is mature and ready to open up; it is then that they eventually give the final, decisive push. This push may sometimes consist of a simple gesture, an exclamation, in something apparently irrelevant, or even illogical and absurd. This suffices to induce the collapse of the false notion of individuality. Thus, *satori* replaces this notion with the "*normal state*", and one assumes the "*original face, which one had before creation*". One no longer "*chases after echoes*" and "*shadows*". This under some aspects brings to mind the existential theme of "failure", or of "being shipwrecked" (*das Scheitern*, in Kierkegaard and in Jaspers). In fact, as I have mentioned, the opening often takes place when all the resources of one's being have been exhausted and one has his back against the wall. This can be seen in relation to some practical teachings methods used by Zen. The most frequently employed methods, on an intellectual plane, are the *koan* and the *mondo*. The disciple is confronted with a saying or with questions which are paradoxical, absurd and sometimes even grotesque and "surrealistic". He must labor with his mind, if necessary for years, until he has reached the extreme limit of all his normal faculties of comprehension. Then, if he dares proceed further on that road he may find catastrophe, but if he can turn the situation upside down, he may achieve *metanoia*. This is the point where *satori* is usually achieved.

Zen's norm is that of absolute autonomy; no gods, no cults, no idols. To literally empty oneself of everything, including God. "*If you meet Buddha on the road, kill him*", a saying goes. It is necessary to abandon everything, without leaning on anything, and then to proceed forward, with one's essence, until the crisis point is reached. It is very difficult to say more about *satori*, or to compare it with various forms of initiatory mystical experience whether Eastern or Western. One is supposed to spend only the training period in Zen monasteries. Once the disciple has achieved *satori*, he returns to the world, choosing a way of life that fits his need. One may think of *satori* as a form of transcendence which is brought to immanence, as a natural state, in every form of life. The behavior which proceeds from the newly acquired dimension, which is added to reality as a consequence of *satori*, may well be summarized by Lao Tzu's expression: "*To be the whole in the part*". In regard to this, it is important to realize the influence which Zen has exercised on the Far-Eastern way of life. Zen has been called "the samurai's philosophy," and it had also been said that "the way of Zen is identical to the way of archery," or to the "way of the sword". This means that any activity in one's life, may be permeated by Zen and thus be elevated to a higher meaning, to a "wholesomeness" and to an "impersonal activity". This kind of activity is based on a sense of the individual's irrelevance, which nevertheless does not paralyze one's actions, but which rather confers calm and detachment. This detachment, in turn, favors an absolute and

"pure" undertaking of life, which in some cases reaches extreme and distinct forms of self-sacrifice and heroism, inconceivable to the majority of Westerners (e.g. the *kamikaze* in WWII).

Thus, what C.G. Jung claims is simply ridiculous, namely that Psychoanalysis, more than any other Western school of thought, is capable of understanding Zen. According to Jung, *satori* coincides with the state of wholeness, devoid of complexes or inner splitting, which psychoanalytic treatment claims to achieve whenever the intellect's obstructions and its sense of superiority are removed, and whenever the conscious dimension of the soul is reunited with the unconscious and with "Life". Jung did not realize that the methods and presuppositions of Zen, are exactly the opposite of his own. There is no "subconscious", as a distinct entity, to which the conscious has to be reconnected; Zen speaks of a superconscious vision (enlightenment, *bodhi* or "awakening"), which actualizes the "original and luminous nature" and which, in so doing, destroys the unconscious. It is possible though, to notice similarities between Jung's view's and Zen', since they both talk about the feeling of one's "totality" and freedom which is manifested in every aspect of life. However, it is important to explain the level at which these views appear to coincide.

Once Zen found its way to the West, there was a tendency to "domesticate" and to moralize it, playing down its potential radical and "antinomian" (namely, antithetical to current norms) implications, and by emphasizing the standard ingredients which are held so dear by "spiritual" people, namely love and service to one's neighbor, even though these ingredients have been purified in an impersonal and non-sentimental form. Generally speaking, there are many doubts on the "practicability" of Zen, considering that the "doctrine of the awakening" has an initiatory character.

Thus, it will only be able to inspire a minority of people, in contrast to later Buddhist views, which took the form of a religion open to everyone, for the most part a code of mere morality. As the re-establishment of the spirit of early Buddhism, Zen should have strictly been an esoteric doctrine. It has been so as we can see by examining the legend concerning its origins. However, Suzuki himself was inclined to give a different account; he emphasized those aspects of *Mahayana* which "democratize" Buddhism (after all, the term *Mahayana* has been interpreted to mean "Great Vehicle", even in the sense that it extends to wider audiences, and not just to a few elect). If one was to fully agree with Suzuki, some perplexities on the nature and on the scope of *satori* may arise. One should ask whether such an experience merely affects the psychological, moral or mental domain, or whether it affects the ontological domain, as is the case in every authentic initiation. In that event, it can only be the privilege a very restricted number of people.

* Artículo aparecido originalmente en "Lo Zen", Roma, Fondazione Julius Evola, Quaderni di testi evoliani, n° 15, 1981. Trad. inglesa de Guido Stucco en Holmes Publishing Group, 1994.

FASCISM: MYTH AND REALITY

(Il fascismo [Giovanni Volpe: Rome, 1979; 1st edn. 1964], 13-17)

Fascism has undergone a process which can be called mythologization, and the attitude which many adopt towards it is of a passionate and irrational kind rather than a critical, intellectual one. This is especially true of those who retain an idealistic loyalty towards the Italy that was. [...] Mythologization has naturally gone hand in hand with idealization, so that only the positive aspects of the Fascist regime are highlighted, deliberately or unconsciously playing down the negative ones. The same procedure is practiced the other way round by those who represent anti-nationalist forces, their mythologization leading to systematic denigration, the aspects with a view to discrediting it and making everyone hate it. [...]

Over and above any polemical one-sidedness, those who, unlike the 'nostalgics' of the younger generation, have lived through Fascism and have thus had a direct experience of the system and its men, know and acknowledge that not everything about it was in order. As long as Fascism existed and could be considered a movement of reconstruction in the making, one of yet unrealized and uncrystallized possibilities, it was still permissible not to criticize it beyond a certain limit. And those who, like ourselves, while defending a set of ideas which only partially coincided with Fascism (and with German National Socialism), did not condemn these movements, even though fully aware of their questionable or aberrant aspects, did so precisely because we counted on future possible developments--to be encouraged with every means and strength we could muster--which might have corrected or eliminated these aspects.

Today, when that Fascism lies behind us as a historical reality, or attitude cannot be the same. Instead of idealizing it in a way consistent with the 'myth' of Fascism, what is necessary now is to separate the positive from the negative, not just for theoretical reasons, but for practical guidance with an eventual political struggle in mind. Thus we should not accept the adjective 'fascist' or 'neo-fascist' tout court; we should call ourselves fascist (if we feel we must) in respect of what was positive about Fascism, not fascist in respect of what Fascism was not.[...]

Even in the search for the positive, there is in practice an essential difference between on the one hand those whose only reference point is Fascism (or possible analogous movements of other nations--German National Socialism, Belgian Rexism, the early Falange in Spain, Salazar's Regime, the Romanian Iron Guard: at one point it was possible to talk of a 'world revolution', a general movement of opposition to the proletarian revolution), seeing in it the be-all and end-all of their political, historical, and doctrinal horizons, and on the other those who consider what emerged from such movements as particular manifestations, some more perfect than others, of ideas and principles based in that earlier Tradition of which we have spoken, but adapted to particular circumstances. These principles are to be associated with 'normality' and permanence, relegating what is original and in the strict sense 'revolutionary' about those movements to secondary, contingent traits. In other words, it is a question of making linkages as far as it is possible between the great European political Tradition and discarding what at bottom can be seen as compromises, divergent or even deviant possibilities, or phenomena which were products of the very evils which people set out to take a stand against and fight.

Hitler and the Secret Societies

By Julius Evola (from *Il Conciliatore*, no. 10, 1971; translated from the German edition in *Deutsche Stimme*, no. 8, 1998)

It is remarkable that some authors in France have researched the relationship of German National Socialism to secret societies and initiatic organizations. The motivation for this was the supposed occult background of the Hitler movement. This thesis was first proposed in the well-known and very far-fetched book by Pauwels and Bergier, "Le Matin des Magiciens" (English ed., "The Dawn of Magic"), in which National Socialism was defined as the union of "magical thinking" with technology. The expression used for this was "Tank divisions plus René Guénon": a phrase that might well have caused that eminent representative of traditional thought and esoteric disciplines to turn indignant in his grave.

The first misunderstanding here is the confusion of the magical element with the mythical, whereas the two have nothing to do with one another. The role of myths in National Socialism is undeniable, for example in the idea of the Reich, the charismatic Führer, Race, Blood, etc. But rather than calling these "myths," one should apply to them Sorel's concept of "motivating energy-ideas" (which is what all the suggestive ideas used by demagogues commonly are), and not attribute to them any magical ingredient. Similarly, no rational person thinks of magic in connection with the myths of Fascism, such as the myth of Rome or that of the Duce, any more than with those of the French Revolution or Communism. The investigation would proceed differently if one went on the assumption that certain movements, without knowing it, were subject to influences that were not merely human. But this is not the case with the French authors. They are not thinking of influences of that kind, but of a concrete nature, exercised by organizations that really existed, among which were some that to various degrees were "secret."

Likewise, some have spoken of "unknown superiors" who are supposed to have called forth the National Socialist movement and to have used Hitler as a medium, though it is unclear what goals they could have had in mind in so doing. If one considers the results, the catastrophic consequences to which National Socialism led, even indirectly, those goals must have been obscure and destructive. One would have to identify the "occult side" of this movement with what Guénon called the "Counter-Initiation." But the French authors have also proposed the thesis that Hitler the "medium" emancipated himself at a certain point from the "unknown superiors," almost like a Golem, and that the movement then pursued its fatal direction. But in that case one must admit that these "unknown superiors" can have had no prescience and very limited power, to have been incapable of putting a stop to their supposed medium, Hitler. A lot of fantasy has been woven on the concrete level about the origin of National Socialism's themes and symbols. Reference has been made to certain organizations as forerunners, but ones to which it is very difficult to attribute any genuine and factual initiatic character. There is no doubt that Hitler did not invent German racial doctrine, the symbol of the swastika, or Aryan antisemitism: all of these had long existed in Germany.

A book entitled "Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab" [The man who gave Hitler his ideas] reports on Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (the title of nobility was self-bestowed), who had formerly been a Cistercian monk and had founded an Order that already used the swastika; Lanz edited the periodical "Ostara" from 1905 onwards, which Hitler certainly knew, in which the Aryan and antisemitic racial theories were already clearly worked out.

But much more important for the "occult background" of National Socialism is the role of the Thule Society. Things are more complex here. This society grew out of the Germanenorden, founded in 1912, and was led by Rudolf von Sebottendorf, who had been in the East and had published a strange booklet on "Die Praxis der alten türkischen Freimaurerei" [The practice of ancient Turkish Freemasonry]. Practices were described therein that involved the repetition of syllables, gestures, and steps, whose goal was the initiatic transformation of man, such as alchemy had also aimed at. It is unclear what Turkish masonic organization Sebottendorf was in contact with, and also whether he himself practiced the things in question, or merely described them.

Moreover, it cannot be established whether these practices were employed in the Thule Society that Sebottendorf headed. It would be very important to know that, because many top-ranking National Socialist personalities, from Hitler to Rudolf Hess, frequented this society. In a way, Hitler was already introduced to the world of ideas of the Thule Society by Hess during their imprisonment together after the failed Munich Putsch.

At all events, it must be emphasized that the Thule Society was less an initiatic organization than it was a secret society, which already bore the swastika and was marked by a decided antisemitism and by Germanic racial thinking. One should be cautious about the thesis that the name Thule is a serious and conscious reference to a Nordic, Polar connection, in the effort to make a connection with the Hyperborean origins of the Indo-Germans--since Thule appears in ancient tradition as the sacred center or sacred island in the uttermost North. Thule may just be a play on the name "Thale," a location in the Harz where the Germanenorden held a conference in 1914, at which it was decided to create a secret "völkisch" band to combat the supposed Jewish International. Above all, these ideas were emphasized by Sebottendorf in his book "Bevor Hitler kam" [Before Hitler came], published in Munich in 1933, in which he indicated the myths and the "völkisch" world-view that existed before Hitler.

Thus a serious investigation into Hitler's initiatic connections with secret societies does not lead far. A few explanations are necessary in regard to Hitler as a "medium" and his attractive power. It seems to us pure fantasy that he owed this power to initiatic practices. Otherwise one would have to assume the same about the psychic power of other leaders, like Mussolini and Napoleon, which is absurd. It is much better to go on the assumption that there is a psychic vortex that arises from mass movements, and that this concentrates on the man in the center and lends him a certain radiation that is felt especially by suggestible people.

The quality of medium (which, to put it bluntly, is the antithesis of an initiatic qualification) can be attributed to Hitler with a few reservations, because in a certain respect he did appear as one possessed (which differentiates him from Mussolini, for example). When he whipped up the masses to fanaticism, one had the impression that another force was directing him as a medium, even though he was a man of a very extraordinary kind, and extremely gifted. Anyone who has heard Hitler's addresses to the enraptured masses can have no other impression.

Since we have already expressed our reservations about the assumption that "unknown superiors" were involved, it is not easy to define the nature of this supra-personal force. In respect to National Socialist theosophy [Gotteserkenntnis], i.e. to its supposed mystical and metaphysical dimension, one must realize the unique juxtaposition in this movement and in the Third Reich of mythical, Enlightenment, and even scientific aspects. In Hitler, one can find many symptoms of a typically "modern" world-view that was fundamentally profane, naturalistic, and materialistic; while on the other hand he believed in Providence, whose tool he believed himself to be, especially in regard to the destiny of the German nation. (For example, he saw a sign of Providence in his survival of the assassination attempt in his East-Prussian headquarters.)

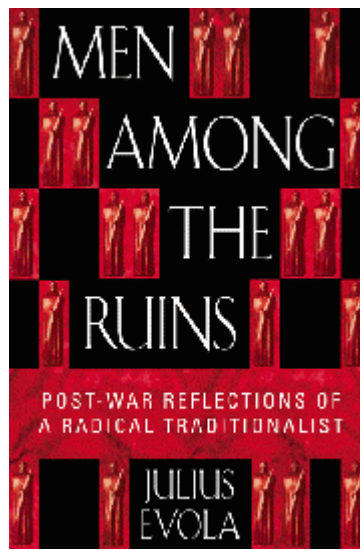
Alfred Rosenberg, the ideologist of the movement, proclaimed the myth of Blood, in which he spoke of the "mystery" of Nordic blood and attributed to it a sacramental value; yet he simultaneously attacked all the rites and sacraments of Catholicism as delusions, just like a man of the Enlightenment. He railed against the "Dark men of our time," while attributing to Aryan man the merit of having created modern science. National Socialism's concern with runes, the ancient Nordic-Germanic letter-signs, must be regarded as purely symbolic, rather like the Fascist use of certain Roman symbols, and without any esoteric significance. The program of National Socialism to create a higher man has something of "biological mysticism" about it, but this again was a scientific project. At best, it might have been a question of the "superman" in Nietzsche's sense, but never of a higher man in the initiatic sense.

The plan to "create a new racial, religious, and military Order of initiates, assembled around a divinized Führer," cannot be regarded as the official policy of National Socialism, as René Alleau writes, when he presents such a relationship and even compares it, among others, to the Ishmaelites of Islam. A few elements of a higher level were visible only in the ranks of the SS. In the first place, one can see clearly the intention of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler to create an Order in which elements of Prussian ethics were to be combined with those of the old Orders of knighthood, especially the Teutonic Order. He was looking for legitimation of such an organization, but could not obtain it, since these old Orders of Catholicism were openly opposed by the radical wing of National Socialism. Himmler was also seeking, without the possibility of any traditional connection, a relationship to the Nordic-Hyperborean heritage and its symbolism (Thule), albeit without those "secret societies" discussed above having any influence over it. He took notice, as did Rosenberg, of the researches of the Netherlander Herman Wirth into the Nordic-Atlantic tradition. Later Himmler founded, with Wirth, the research and teaching organization called the "Ahnenerbe." This is not without interest, but there was no "occult background" to it.

So the net result is negative. The French authors' fantasy reaches its high point in the book "Hitler et la tradition cathare" by Jean-Michel Angebert (Paris, 1971). This deals with the Cathars, also called Albigensians, who were a heretical sect that spread especially in Southern France between the 11th and 12th centuries, and had their center in the fortress of Montségur. According to Otto Rahn, this was destroyed in a "crusade against the Grail," which is the title of one of his books. Whatever the Grail and its Grail-Knights had to do with this sect remains completely in the dark. The sect was marked by a kind of fanatical Manicheism: sometimes its own believers would die of hunger or some other cause as a demonstration of their detachment from the world and their hostility to earthly existence in flesh and matter. Now it is assumed that Rahn, with whom we corresponded during his lifetime and tried to persuade of the baselessness of his thesis, was an SS man, and that an expedition was sent on its way to retrieve the legendary Grail which was supposedly brought to safety at the moment when the Cathars' fortress in

Montségur was destroyed. After the fall of Berlin, a unit is said to have reached the Zillertal and hidden this object at the foot of a glacier, to await a new age.

The truth is that there was talk of a commando unit, which however had a less mystical commission, namely the rescue and concealment of the Reich's treasures. Two further examples show what such fantasies can lead to when they are given free rein. The SS (which included not only battle units but also researchers and scholarly experts) mounted an expedition to Tibet in order to make discoveries in the fields of alpinism and ethnology, and another one to the Arctic, ostensibly for scientific research but also with a view to the possible situation of a German military base. According to these fantastic interpretations, the first expedition was seeking a link to a secret center of the Tradition, while the other was seeking contact with the lost Hyperborean Thule...



Men Among the Ruins

Post-War Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist

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About the Book

Men Among the Ruins is Evola's frontal assault on the predominant materialism of our time and the mirage of progress. For Evola and other proponents of Traditionalism, we are now living in an age of increasing strife and chaos: the Kali Yuga of the Hindus or the Germanic Ragnarok. In such a time, social decadence is so widespread that it appears as a natural component of all political institutions. Evola argues that the crises that dominate the daily lives of our societies are part of a secret occult war to remove the support of spiritual and traditional values in order to turn man into a passive instrument of the powerful.

Evola is often regarded as the godfather of contemporary Italian fascism and right-wing radical politics, but attentive examination of the historical record--as provided by H. T. Hanson's definitive introduction--reveals Evola to be a much more complex figure. Though he held extreme right-wing views, he was a fearless critic of the Fascist regime and preferred a caste system based on spirituality and intellect to the biological racism championed by the Nazis. Ultimately, he viewed the forces of history as comprised by two factions: "history's demolition squad" enslaved by blind faith in the future and those individuals whose watchword is Tradition. These latter stand in this world of ruins at a higher level and are capable of letting go of what needs to be abandoned in order that what is truly essential not be compromised.

Reviews

“Disgusted by the cruelty and artificiality of communism, scorning the dogmatic, self-centered fascism of his age, Evola looks beyond man-made systems to the eternal principles in creation and human society. The truth, as he sees it, is so totally at odds with the present way of thinking that it shocks the modern mind. Evola was no politician, trying to make the best of things, but an idealist, uncompromising in the pursuit of the Best itself.” - John Michell, *The New View Over Atlantis*

“*Men among the Ruins* is Julius Evola’s most notorious work: an unsparing indictment of modern society and politics. Evola rises above the usual dichotomies of left and right, liberal and conservative, through a trenchant critique of the metaphysics that lies at the base of modern values, challenging us to reconnect our lives and our institutions to the timeless spiritual standard that guided our ancestors. *Men among the Ruins* is not a work for complacent, self-satisfied minds . . . it is a shocking and humbling text that will be either loved or hated. Evola’s enemies cannot refute him; they can only ignore him. They do so at their peril.” - Glenn A. Magee, author of *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*

Excerpt from chapter 13, "The Occult War"

Various causes have been adduced to explain the crisis that has affected and still affects the life of modern peoples: historical, social, socioeconomic, political, moral, and cultural causes, according to different perspectives. The part played by each of these causes should not be denied. However, we need to ask a higher and essential question: are these always the first causes and do they have an inevitable character like those causes found in the material world? Do they supply an ultimate explanation or, in some cases, is it necessary to identify influences of a higher order, which may cause what has occurred in the West to appear very suspicious, and which, beyond the multiplicity of individual aspects, suggest that there is the same logic at work?

The concept of occult war must be defined within the context of the dilemma. The occult war is a battle that is waged imperceptibly by the forces of global subversion, with means and in circumstances ignored by current historiography. The notion of occult war belongs to a three-dimensional view of history: this view does not regard as essential the two superficial dimensions of time and space (which include causes, facts, and visible leaders) but rather emphasizes the dimension of depth, or the "subterranean" dimension in which forces and influences often act in a decisive manner, and which, more often than not, cannot be reduced to what is merely human, whether at an individual or a collective level.

Having said that, it is necessary to specify the meaning of the term "subterranean." We should not think, in this regard, of a dark and irrational background which stands in relation to the known forces of history as the unconscious stands to consciousness, in the way the latter relationship is discussed in the recently developed "Depth Psychology." If anything, we can talk about the unconscious only in regard to those who, according to the three-dimensional view, appear to be history's objects rather than its subjects, since in their thoughts and conduct they are scarcely aware of the influences which they obey and the goals that they contribute toward achieving. In these people, the center falls more in the unconscious and the pre-conscious than in the clear reflected consciousness, no matter what they—who are often men of action and ideologues—believe. Considering this relation, we can say that the most decisive actions of the occult war take place in the human unconscious. However, if we consider the true agents of history in the special aspects we are now discussing, things are otherwise: here we cannot talk of the subconscious or the unconscious, since we are dealing with intelligent forces that know very well what they want and what are the means most suited to achieve their objectives.

The third dimension of history should not be diluted in the fog of abstract philosophical or sociological concepts, but should rather be thought of as a "backstage" dimension where specific "intelligences" are at work.

An investigation of the secret history that aspires to be positivist and scientific should not be too lofty or removed from reality. However, it is necessary to assume as the ultimate reference point a dualistic scheme not dissimilar from the one found in an older tradition. Catholic historiography used to regard history not only as a mechanism of natural, political, economic, and social causes, but also as the unfolding of divine Providence, to which hostile forces are opposed. These forces are sometimes referred to in a moralistic fashion as "forces of evil," or in a theological fashion as the "forces of the Anti-Christ." Such a view has a positive content, provided it is purified and emphasized by bringing it to a less religious and more metaphysical plane, as was done in Classical and Indo-European antiquity: forces of the cosmos against forces of chaos.

To the former correspond everything that is form, order, law, spiritual hierarchy, and tradition in the higher sense of the word; to the latter correspond every influence that disintegrates, subverts, degrades, and promotes the predominance of the inferior over the superior, matter over spirit, quantity over quality. This is what can be said in regard to the ultimate reference points of the various influences that act upon the realm of tangible causes, behind known history. These must be taken into account, though with some prudence. Let me repeat: aside from this necessary metaphysical background, let us never lose sight of concrete history.

Methodologically speaking, we need to be careful to prevent valid insights from degenerating into fantasies and superstition, and not develop the tendency to see an occult background everywhere and at all costs. In this regard, every assumption we make must have the character of what are called "working hypotheses" in scientific research: as when something is admitted provisionally, thus allowing the gathering and arranging of a group of apparently isolated facts, only to confer on them a character not of hypothesis but of truth when, at the end of a serious inductive work, the data converge in validating the original assumption. Every time an effect outlasts and transcends its tangible causes, a suspicion should arise, and a positive or negative influence behind the stages should be perceived. A problem is posited, but in analyzing it and seeking its solution, prudence must be exercised. The fact that those who have ventured in this direction have not restrained their wild imaginations has discredited what could have been a science, the results of which could hardly be overestimated. This too meets the expectations of the hidden enemy.

After considering the state of society and modern civilization, one should ask if this is not a specific case that requires the application of this method; in other words, one should ask whether some situations of real crisis and radical subversion in the modern world can be satisfactorily explained through "natural" and spontaneous processes, or whether we need to refer to something that has been concerted, namely a still unfolding plan, devised by forces hiding in the shadows.