

Julius Evola and Mytho-Reactionary Politics in 20th Century Italy

by

Sean Calvert

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək^wəŋən (Songhees and X^wsepsəm/ Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək^wəŋən and W̱ SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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by

Sean Calvert

B.A., University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2017

MISt, McGill University, 2020

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Perry Biddiscombe, Supervisor

Department of History

Dr. Kristin Semmens, Departmental Member

Department of History

Abstract

Italian esotericist Julius Evola (1898-1974) developed a philosophy centered on the Primordial Tradition, from which he derived a significant social and political philosophy that firmly rejected modernity, liberalism, egalitarianism, democracy, Marxism, and progress. The formation of his philosophy coincided with the rise of Fascism and National Socialism, which he unsuccessfully attempted to steer in a Traditionalist direction. His impact extended into the post-war period with Italian neofascists, who aimed to integrate aspects of Evola's philosophy into their own. Evola's connections with fascists, neofascists, and other far-right groups, both historically and currently, often categorize him within the fascist camp. However, a closer examination of his philosophy reveals that it is distinct and aligns with the lesser-known paradigm of political reaction, albeit as a unique strand: mytho-reaction.

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Introduction

In May 1951, Italian officials arrested philosopher Julius Evola along with thirty-six members of the neo-fascist group *Fasci di Azione Rivoluzionaria* (Fascies of Revolutionary Action/FAR). Founded in 1946, the group had published a plan detailing their intentions to seize power in Italy. Evola was accused of being the mastermind behind the group, which was blamed for bombing the United States Embassy, the Yugoslav Legation, and the headquarters of the Republican Party in Rome the previous year. The bombs did minor damage. FAR, as well as Evola, was also accused of attempting to reinstate the Italian Fascist Party. After six months of imprisonment, Evola and the neo-fascists went on trial.¹ Although the prosecution did not cite specific passages of his work against him, it attempted to establish a connection between “the general spirit” of Evola’s anti-democratic writings and FAR’s terroristic activities. Evola answered that his writings were part of a long tradition of anti-democratic polemic and could not be linked to Benito Mussolini’s Fascism of the 1920s-1940s. Nor was he ever a member of the Italian Fascist Party as his accusers claimed. “If I have ever defended a ‘Fascist’ view of the state,” he exclaimed:

I have done so not because such a view is ‘Fascist’ but because it embodies the ideals of the great political tradition of the European Right. My ideas could certainly be brought to trial, but in that case so could those of Plato (author of the *Republic*), Metternich, Bismarck, Dante (author of the *De Monarchia*) and countless others would have to be tried. Evidently, I argued, everything in our sad times is classed as either

¹ For more details on the trial, see “Arrestati Dopo 8 Mesi d’indagini Gli Attentatori Dinamitardi Di Roma.” *La Stampa*. 1951, Anno 7, no. 130.

http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option.com_lastampa/task_search/mod_libera/action_viewer/Itemid,3/page_6/articleid,0045_01_1951_0130_0006_11235050/, 6; Carbone, Fabrizio. “Il ‘Dossie’ Sulle Violenze Neo-fasciste Presentato Nel Processo a Ordine Nuovo.” *La Stampa*. 1973, Anno 107, no. 252.

http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option.com_lastampa/task_search/mod_libera/action_viewer/Itemid,3/page_11/articleid,1117_01_1973_0252_0011_21956271/, 11.

Fascist or anti-Fascist; and those who are neither democratic, nor socialist, or Communist are automatically branded 'Fascists.'²

Evola's defense proved effective. After deliberation, the judges accepted Evola's argument that his ideas could not be held directly responsible for FAR's criminal acts and dropped the charges against him. The twenty-three other defendants received light or suspended sentences.³

It might have helped Evola's case that most of the judges at the trial had served under Mussolini's Fascist regime just a few years earlier. Although the Fascists lost the war, relatively few supporters of Mussolini were prosecuted or taken to task in the conflict's aftermath. Unhappy with the contours of Italy's postwar liberal democracy, they may have been sympathetic to Evola's dissident spirit.⁴

Giulio Cesare Andrea "Julius" Evola (1898-1974) was a prominent figure in the reactionary movements of twentieth-century Europe. His works critiqued the modern world and advocated for a return to ideals that predate the French Revolution and Enlightenment. Central to his philosophy is the "Primordial Tradition," which represents the spiritual energy that transcends history and includes concepts of authority, hierarchy, discipline, order, individuality, spirituality, and qualitative differentiation. He rejected the modern notion of history as a linear and progressive process and instead believed in a cyclical and downward path parallel to the Hindu Yuga sequence. The decay, he believed, culminated in two archetypal modern political cultures: the liberal democratic one modeled on the United States and focused on individual rights, and the

² Julius Evola, *The Path of Cinnabar: An Intellectual Autobiography*. Translated by Sergio Knipe and John Morgan. London, England: Arktos Media Ltd, 2010, 187.

³ See Evola's *Autodifesa*, his "self-defense" against the postwar criminal charge of having "glorified Fascism," as an appendix to Evola, *Men Among the Ruins: Post-War Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), 287-97. See also Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1989), 125.

⁴ Elisabetta Cassina Wolff, "Evola's Interpretation of Fascism and Moral Responsibility," *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol. 50, issue 4/5, (Sept.-Dec. 2016), 491.

Communist one, wholly immersed in materialism and manifested in the Soviet Union. In place of alleged modern decadence, Evola proffered a spiritually alive world that was not reduced to mechanical interactions. He conjured a caste-like, spiritually racialized social structure as part of the order of the cosmos. Evola called the person able to access this higher-order the “differentiated man.”

In the 1930s, he was drawn to Mussolini’s Fascist Party, which he attempted to influence in the direction of his reactionary world vision, although with paltry success. During World War II, he encouraged the National Socialists in Germany to adopt his transcendent worldview, but again, to limited avail. After the war, he attracted the interest of the cohort of young, radical right militants who emerged in Italy to contest Italy’s nascent liberal order and, by extension, the politics of the European continent, and it was among these neo-fascists that he attained his greatest hearing.

This thesis examines how a thinker with a strong interest in metaphysics, who critiqued the foundations of modernity and aimed to reconstruct ancient systems of state and society, rose to prominence in right-wing and fascist circles during the turbulent mid-twentieth century. Evola was never a member of any political group or organization, even though he stood trial for alleged sedition against Italy’s newly established postwar democracy.

Was Evola a fascist whose ideas encouraged terrorism, as the prosecution claimed? Or was he something else—a man “out of time” whose engagement with fascist and neo-fascist movements was incidental to his primary goal of recapturing the fundamentals of the Primordial Tradition, which he believed had flourished until the onset of the Enlightenment? How can we explain Evola’s influence in modern anti-establishment discourse, much of which originates from right-wing spaces?

Although Evola could not steer the fascist movements in the direction he had set for them, his ideas held a certain attraction for fascists and right-leaning intellectuals. The Romanian comparative mythologist Mircea Eliade, who knew Evola personally, recognized his prominence in 1935, describing him as "one of the most interesting minds of the war generation."⁵ Psychologist Carl Gustave Jung read Evola's work *The Hermetic Tradition* (1931),⁶ hailing it as a "magisterial portrayal of hermetic philosophy,"⁶ and German philosopher Martin Heidegger had a passing familiarity with his ideas.⁷ In the 1980s, Franco Ferraresi, a scholar of Italy's postwar political scene, confirmed Eliade's judgment, writing that Evola is "possibly the most important intellectual figure for the Radical Right in contemporary Europe,"⁸ an assessment also echoed by the late political scientist Giorgio Galli, who described Evola as "one of the most qualified representatives [of right-wing culture] in this century."⁹ Likewise, Hugh Urban, a researcher in the History of Religions at Ohio State University, holds that "to this day, Evola remains one of the most enigmatic, poorly understood, and yet influential figures in the

⁵ Mircea Eliade, review of *Rivolta Contro il Mondo Moderno*, by J. Evola, *Vremea* 8, no. 382 (March 31, 1935): 6. Quoted in Baroni, Francesco. "The Philosophical Gold of Perennialism. Hans Thomas Hakl, Julius Evola and the Italian Esoteric Milieus." *Religiographies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2023): 39–58.

⁶ Carl Jung, "Gesammelte Werke" (1972), vol. xii, *Psychologie und Alchemie*, 267 and 282 (first edition, 1944), quoted in Peter Forshaw, ed., *Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 354. Evola does not expand upon the concepts anima and animus outside of the article "Animus e Anima". To see Evola's views on anima and animus, see Evola, Julius. "Animus e Anima." *La Stampa*. July 2, 1943, no. 157, 3.

⁷ While it is unclear to what extent Heidegger read Evola, we know Heidegger read Evola's 1935 German translation of *Revolt Against the Modern World*. Found in a note Heidegger wrote: "If a race has lost contact with what alone has and can give resistance — with the world of Being — then the collective organisms formed from it, whatever be their size and power, sink fatefully down into the world of contingency."] "The quotation is taken verbatim from the book *Revolt Against the Modern World*, which was first published in German in 1935; only the spelling of "Being" has been Heideggerized.", Greg Johnson, "Notes on Heidegger & Evola", <https://counter-currents.com/2016/02/notes-on-heidegger-and-evola>, February, 10, 2016

⁸ Franco Ferraresi, "Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction, and the Radical Right," *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Europeennes de Sociologie/Europaisches Archiv fur Soziologie*, vol. 28, No. 1 *Uber politisches Handlim* (1987), 107.

⁹ Francesco Baroni, "The Philosophical Gold of Perennialism. Hans Thomas Hakl, Julius Evola and the Italian Esoteric Milieus," *Religiographies*, vol. 2, No. 1 (2023), 44, quoting Furio Jesi, *Cultura di destra. Con tre inediti e un'intervista* (Milan: Nottetempo, 2011; first edition 1979), 145

scholarship and politics of modern Europe.”¹⁰

The so-called “hipster fascists” of *CasaPound Italia*, the political party founded in 2003 as heir to the moribund MSI, cite Evola as one of their primary inspirations.¹¹ So, too, does the current Prime Minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni, leader of the right-wing *Fratelli d’Italia* (Brothers of Italy) party, who attended the summer camp of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) Youth Front during which attendees read Evola, Ernst Jünger, and J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, whose Hobbits and shires evoked an Evolian world of spiritual hierarchy and ennobling warfare.¹² On October 17, 2024, newly appointed Italian Minister of Culture, Alessandro Giuli, delivered a speech at the *Frankfurter Buchmesse* (Frankfurt Bookfair) in which he channeled Evola, stating, “I can say that we are here to reaffirm the centrality of what can be called solar thinking...the meeting point between the rigidity of ideologies, of the battle of ideas, which dissolves in the midday light of the Mediterranean spirit.”¹³

Since the mid-1970s, a center for the study of Evola has been operating in Paris, and his

¹⁰ Hugh Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 173.

¹¹ “Fascism in Italy: The hipster fascists trying to bring Mussolini back into the mainstream” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3x-ge4w46E&t=53s>; Elisabetta Cassinia Wolff, “CasaPound Italia: ‘Back to Believing. The Struggle Continues.’” *Fascism: Journal of Comparative fascist Studies* 8 (2019), 61-88. The contributors to *Rigenerazione*, an online forum devoted to Traditionalist ideas, whose authors are published by Libreria Cinabro, a bookstore and publisher in Rome near the Mausoleum of Santa Constanza, espouses Evola’s ideas. The Fondazione Julius Evola organizes seminars, talks, and lectures on Evola’s works in Rome and Milan and has a semi-annual publication, *Studi Evoliani*. In 1977, MSI leaders held a two-day “back to nature” retreat called “Camp Hobbit” and three sequels, the most recent, “Campo Hobbit 40,” held in July 2017. See John Last, “How ‘Hobbit Camps’ Rebirthed Italian Fascism,” *Atlas Obscura*, Oct. 3, 2017, at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/hobbit-camps-fascism-italy>.

¹² Ellen Rivera, “Italy’s Fascist Heirs: The Brothers of Italy under Giorgia Meloni,” *Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies* (Occasional Paper), no. 14, November 2011, 7-8; Jason Horowitz, “Hobbits and the Hard Right: How Fantasy Inspires Italy’s Potential New Leader,” *New York Times*, Sept. 21, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/21/world/europe/giorgia-meloni-lord-of-the-rings.html>

¹³ Alessandro Giuli, 2024. Quoted in Lattanzi, di Andrea. “Il Manifesto Del Ministro Giuli Alla Buchmesse Di Francoforte: ‘Riaffermare La Centralità Del Pensiero Solare.’” *La Stampa*, October 22, 2024. https://www.lastampa.it/politica/2024/10/17/video/il_manifesto_del_ministro_giuli_alla_buchmesse_di_francoforte_riaffermare_la_centralita_del_pensiero_solare-14724812/.

Giuli was joined the youth wing of MSI when he was 14. See <https://www.ilpost.it/2024/09/06/alessandro-giuli-ministro-della-cultura-sangiuliano/>.

philosophy has had a significant influence on Alain de Benoist, a founding figure of the French *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right) movement. In the Soviet Union, the underground occultist group, the Yuzhinsky/Iuzhinskii Circle, introduced the works of Evola to Russia in the 1960s. Geopolitical guru Aleksandr Dugin's Eurasianist ideology was inspired, in part, by his discovery of Evola's work *Imperialismo pagano* (Pagan Imperialism) in Moscow's Lenin Library in 1981.¹⁴ Today, the Ukrainian neo-Nazi Azov Battalion frequently organizes lectures on Evola.¹⁵ The Greek neo-fascist political party *Golden Dawn* publishes articles on Evola. Gábor Vona, former leader of Hungary's far-right *Jobbik* party, wrote a forward to Evola's collection of essays, *A Handbook for Right-Wing Youth* (2017). The Albanian neo-fascist organization *Pozicioni i Tretë Shqiptar* (Albanian Third Position) cited Evola in its work *National Shield* (2021). The online magazines *American Renaissance* and *Counter-Currents* tout Evola in the United States. At the same time, the American media executive, political influencer, and right-wing populist Steve Bannon has openly acknowledged Evola as a significant influence.¹⁶ Elements within niche political groups that emerged in the early 2000s, such as Neo-Reaction (NRx), also known as the Dark Enlightenment, take Evola as a lodestar.

Yet, Evola's precise place within the broader framework of right-wing cultural and political thought is contested. Many scholars and journalists place him, and his followers by extension, squarely within fascism. This tendency is understandable given Evola's emphasis on social order, the necessity of political hierarchy, racial distinctiveness, and the Nietzschean Will

¹⁴ Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland, "Is Aleksandr Dugin a Traditionalist? 'Neo-Eurasianism' and Perennial Philosophy," *The Russian Review* 68, no. 4 (October 2009): 662–78. Benjamin Teitelbaum, *War for Eternity: The Return of Traditionalism and the Rise of the Populist Right* (New York: HarperCollins, 2020), 43.

¹⁵ Nina Boichenko, "Inside Ukraine's Ideological Renewal," *New Eastern Europe*, October 4, 2017 <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2017/10/04/inside-ukraines-ideological-renewal>

¹⁶ Horowitz, Jason. "Steve Bannon Cited Italian Thinker Who Inspired Fascists." *The New York Times*, February 10, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/10/world/europe/bannon-vatican-julius-evola-fascism.html>.

to Power. Italian scholar Franco Ferraresi sees Evola's "carefully nurtured ambiguities towards Fascism and Nazism" as masking his determined effort to rally the forces of the right against the postwar liberal-democratic government.¹⁷ Roger Griffin identifies Evola as a "post-war fascist"¹⁸ and an "outstanding example of the unbroken continuity between interwar and post-war Eurofascism."¹⁹ According to Roger Eatwell, Evola's ideas represented the "quintessential fascist blend of rationality and myth."²⁰ In his articles and 1989 monograph, Richard Drake also interprets Evola as a fascist, although one that stands slightly apart from the fascist mainstream.²¹ In 1987, Evola's countryman, the semiologist and novelist Umberto Eco (1932-2016), who grew up during the Fascist era and witnessed its excesses, labeled Evola as "a sad and senseless figure that in recent years, the New Right has re-purposed as a thinker of rank." In a later article published in the *New York Review of Books*, Eco continued with his diatribe: "Add a cult of Celtic mythology and the Grail mysticism, and you have one of the most respected fascist gurus, Julius Evola."²² Other scholars similarly hold to the idea that Evola intended to subvert the politico-social order of Europe in the name of fascism.²³ Since the early 2000s, numerous long-

¹⁷ Ferraresi, "Julius Evola and the Radical Right," 130, 143 *et passim*; *Threats to Democracy*, 43-50.

¹⁸ Roger Griffin, in Griffin (ed.), *Fascism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 111.

¹⁹ Roger Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, ed. Matthew Feldman (N.Y.: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), 156. See also Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 37, 169, 187.

²⁰ Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (New York: Penguin, 1997), p. 254.

²¹ Richard Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique*, 114-134; "Julius Evola and the Ideological Origins of the Radical Right in Contemporary Italy," in *Political Violence and Terror: Motifs and Motivations*, ed. Peter H. Merkl (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 61-89.

²² Umberto Eco, "La bustina di Minerva," *L'Espresso*, April 12, 1987; quoted in Francesco Baroni, "The Philosophical Gold of Perennialism," 45. See also Eco's oblique critique of Evola in "Ur-Fascism," *The New York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995, accessed August 25, 2024, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/22/ur-fascism>; and "Pointing a Finger at the Fascists," *Guardian*, 19 August 1995, p. 27.

²³ Thomas Sheehan, "Myth and Violence: The Fascism of Julius Evola and Alain de Benoist," *Social Research* 48, no. 1 (1981), 45-73; Benjamin Teitelbaum, *War for Eternity: The Return of Traditionalism and the Rise of the Populist Right*; Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 97; Matthew Rose, *A World After Liberalism*, 39-63; Joseph Cerrone, "Looking Back to the Future: Uncovering the (Neo)fascist Origins of Today's Italian far Right," Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies, *Occasional Papers*, no. 21, Feb. 2024.

form articles in nationally prominent journals and magazines have warned readerships about the “alt-right’s Intellectual Darling.”²⁴

Other scholars take issue with this assessment. While admitting congruence between fascism and some of Evola’s ideas, they say the differences far outweigh the similarities, especially when Evola’s thought is measured against prominent definitions of fascism. These include Roger Griffin, who holds fascism to be “a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a *palingenetic* form of populist ultra-nationalism” aimed at the rebirth, or *palingenesis*, of a nation from perceived decay,²⁵ or James Gregor’s case-specific portrayal of Italian Fascism as a revolutionary form of nationalism aiming to utilize state power to boost industrial growth and maintain social order.²⁶ Rather than prioritize the ethnic nation and the economic development, Evola aimed to restore the metaphysical order he believed was the foundation of the “True State.” For these scholars, it makes more sense to interpret Evola as he identified himself, namely, an esotericist, albeit one who flirted with Fascism and National Socialism. Here, we define “esotericism” as a belief in a universal, secret tradition at the core of all world religions. This belief is based on rejecting positivism and is accessible only to initiates. Its opposite, “exoteric,” refers to the external elements of religion: rituals, symbols, myths, and theology.

²⁴ Anna Momigilano, “The Alt-Right’s Intellectual Darling: The Italian Philosopher Julius Evola is an Unlikely hero for defenders of the ‘Judeo-Christian’ West,” *The Atlantic*, Feb.21, 2017; Morgan Jones, “How Julius Evola Became the Internet’s favorite Fascist,” *Jacobin*, 12/ 07/ 2022.

²⁵ Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 26. Griffin’s attempt to provide a concise and encompassing definition of generic fascism is criticized by scholars like Stanley Payne and Robert Paxton, who argue that fascism cannot be understood without considering its historical manifestations. Payne, in *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (1995), provides a detailed typology of fascism that includes its negations (anti-liberalism, anti-communism, anti-conservatism) and its goals (the creation of a nationalist dictatorship). Paxton, in *The Anatomy of Fascism* (2004), introduces a dynamic model of fascism through the stages of its development, arguing that actions speak louder than ideology. John Lukacs is also critical of the concept of generic fascism, arguing that it is misleading to lump various authoritarian movements under a single label. See his *The Hitler of History* (1993).

²⁶ A. James Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979).

A. James Gregor carefully demonstrates that Evola strongly criticized Italy's Fascist Party and Germany's National Socialism. He argues that Evola opposed these movements because he viewed them as populist and pseudo-socialist, placing too much emphasis on economic development—qualities Evola associated with societal decay. According to Gregor, "It is difficult to see Julius Evola as any fascist. ...he was and always remained an occultist, a pagan 'magus,' a devotee of "initiatic science" – the lifetime advocate of a 'science' predicated on 'different criteria of truth and knowledge from those predominant in modern culture and thought.'" ²⁷ Paul Furlong concurs, writing that Evola's works challenged what he perceived as the limitations of Fascism. ²⁸ Similarly, Elisabetta Wolff states that although Evola's thought "had indirect consequences that were practical and political," his vision was primarily meta-political, with his philosophy's inner core remaining consistent throughout his life. ²⁹ The independent Austrian scholar of esotericism, Hans Thomas Hakl, points to the fundamental disjunction between Evola and fascism. "Any political reading of Evola needs, above all, to notice the primacy of the transcendent." ³⁰ Hakl states that Evola's focus on the otherworldly makes him an unlikely fascist progenitor: "His teachings are too aristocratic, too demanding, and too much directed against progress and modernity." ³¹ In 1964, Mircea Eliade was alarmed at how his friend was unjustly vilified as a fascist, especially in the United States. Eliade wrote in his diary, "Abroad, poor J. Evola is viewed as an ultra-fascist. ... The copy of the English translation of his book on Buddhism in Swift Library is disfigured with polemical annotations (written in indelible

²⁷ Gregor, *The Search for Neo-fascism*, 87.

²⁸ Paul Furlong, *Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 139.

²⁹ Elisabetta Cassina Wolff, "Apolitia and Tradition in Julius Evola as Reaction to Nihilism," *European Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2014), 258–273.

³⁰ Hakl, *Julius Evola and Tradition*, 67. The journal *Religiographies* vol. 2. No. 1 (2023) published by the Giorgio Cini Foundation's Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilizations and Spiritualities devoted to Hans Thomas Hakl (aka Hansen) in which the contributors note Hakl's scholarly contributions to the field of esoterica.

³¹ Quoted in Baroni, *The Philosophical Gold of Perennialism*, 47 n. 44.

lead!): they say (even on the cover) that Evola is a fascist and a ‘racist,’ that his theories about ‘Aryans’ were borrowed from A. Rosenberg.”³² Mark Sedgwick likewise argues that Evola must be understood within the framework of esotericism, not fascism *per se*.³³

None of the scholars in this second group offer an apology for Evola. Each understands that Evola’s writings were not innocent of the blood that was shed in the name of Fascism and Nazism, even if he cannot be accurately classified as a proponent of those ideologies. They also recognize that Evola's ideas can pose a potential danger to the stability of the Western liberal order today, as some far-right political groups, which may or may not be considered neo-fascists, draw inspiration from them. At the same time, they understand that Evola’s ideas are rooted in sources that are anterior to and separate from fascism, namely, the critique of Enlightenment-infused modernity.

This thesis will confirm and advance the claim of this second group of scholars by placing Evola in an intellectual genealogy that emerged in response to the progressive momentum of the French Revolution, namely, reaction. Current scholarship often highlights the connection between Julius Evola and Counter-Enlightenment philosophers, but it generally stops short of categorizing Evola explicitly as a reactionary. In this thesis, I will argue that Evola not only qualifies as a reactionary but represents a specific type of reactionary: a "mytho-reactionary."

Reaction receives less attention in the academic world than revolution and progressive change. According to historian Mark Lilla, the genesis of the concept of “reaction” can be traced

³² Liviu Bordaș, “The difficult encounter in Rome. Mircea Eliade’s post-war relation with Julius Evola - new letters and data,” *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology* 4, no. 2 (Autumn–Winter 2011), 139.

³³ Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 98 ff; and *Traditionalism: The Radical Project for Restoring Sacred Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), *passim*.

back, at least, to the 18th century, when it appeared as a political distinction during the Enlightenment and French Revolution to characterize those who rejected the new era that was dawning. As Lilla states, there are many theoretical and historical works about revolution but very few on reaction. The reason, he writes, is due to the common assumption of modern thinkers that “the river of time flows in one direction only,”³⁴ namely, toward human progress and emancipation. Those who resisted the river’s flow, the “reactionaries,” have little to offer and are best ignored, forgotten, or “consigned to the margins of respectable intellectual inquiry.”³⁵ Conversely, reactionaries believe the modern progressive spirit is a mistake, ending invariably in chaos and disruption in life’s political, social, and cultural spheres. Wistful for the world they had lost, reactionaries positioned themselves as the guardians, historians, and potential revivers of the old traditions and political structures. Yet, in most cases, theirs was an “invented tradition.” The reactionaries were at least as inventive as the revolutionaries in crafting narratives supportive of their stance. If the progenitors and legatees of the Enlightenment devised stories about a redemptive secular order born of change and revolution – Marx’s “All that is solid melts into air” – the reactionaries spoke of a new “dark age” of materialism and mass politics that obscured humankind's true nature and calling. For all that, reaction lacked a precise political program. Rather, it was a political attitude steeped in nostalgia but with an eye on the present. Some reactionaries emphasized religion, and others promoted a secular perspective, still others defended high culture.³⁶ Yet, reactionaries were not conservatives, for while the latter accept new values slowly and to varying degrees,³⁷ reactionaries are less tolerant of a new order and instead

³⁴ Mark Lilla, *The Shipwrecked Mind: On Political Reaction* (New York, New York: The New York Review of Books, 2016), ix-xi.

³⁵ Lilla, x.

³⁶ Richard Shorten, *The Ideology of Political Reactionaries* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 13.

³⁷ James Alexander, “Reaction in Politics,” *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 14, no. 1 (2018): 3–26, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18722636-12341393>, 19.

focus on restoring what was lost through advocacy or counterrevolution.³⁸

The great exemplar of reaction in the early modern period was Joseph De Maistre (1753-1821), who perceived the French Revolution, the Terror, and the subsequent wars as cosmic events resulting from God's punishment of humanity.³⁹ De Maistre hoped that the current situation, however fallen, was only temporary. De Maistre believed there would eventually be a restoration of a golden age both in the spiritual and material sense, and the transcendent and imminent would again be intertwined within the socio-political landscape. This restoration, said De Maistre, would not be the consequence of violence but would occur organically with the inevitable reassertion of the "natural order." The list of subsequent reactions is long but would include someone like Evola's older contemporary, Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), whose influential study *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West) (1918-1923) put forth the pessimistic view with which reactionaries are associated.

Like De Maistre and others, Evola expressed regret over the loss of the sacred in the socio-political landscape. Like the Frenchman, he sought to guide certain aspects of the regimes he associated with towards genuine restoration, aiming to reclaim the "primordial" thought world he believed had existed, albeit in a progressively diminished form, until the "catastrophic" emergence of modernity. However, unlike most other reactionaries who decried the decadence of modernity, Evola drew heavily on mythic-religious thinking. Against theorists who decried or downplayed a metaphysical conception of the Good, Evola grounded his worldview on an ostensible transcendent reality. Following the French esotericist René Guénon, he called the

³⁸ To this point, Alexander argues that reactionaries are not lost in the past but seek to influence the present, Alexander, 22).

³⁹ Oakeshott, Michael. "The Works of Joseph DeMaistre." in *The Vocabulary of a Modern European State: Essays and Reviews 1953-1988*, edited by Luke O'Sullivan, 259–61 (Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic Philosophy Documentation Center, 2008), 202.

wisdom and understanding encapsulated in this reality, Tradition,⁴⁰ elements of which existed in the esoteric dimensions of Eastern and Western religions.⁴¹ Taking his cues from Platonism, Evola distinguished between modernity, which was relative and waning, and Tradition, which was absolute, constant, and complete. He wrote of the power of myth to legitimize authority, unite people, and imbue governance and social organization with a higher purpose. According to Terry Eagleton, myth, like ideology, is a realm of symbolic meaning with social effects. However, unlike ideology, a specific, practical form of discourse that affects questions of power, myth encompasses broader metaphysical questions of birth, sexuality, death, sacred times, places, and origins. Mythical figures are privileged, exemplary, larger-than-life phenomena that distill some collective meaning or fantasy in a peculiarly pure form.⁴² For Evola, the mythic structure of the Divine Right of Kings exemplified the sacred ground of politics, suggesting that monarchs obtained their authority directly from a divine source, thereby maintaining the cosmic order. In anticipation of the full explication of Evola's ideas, we can summarize Evola's mytho-reactionary ideology as follows:

1. The right to rule comes from a divine source.
2. Religion exists at the core of society.
3. The social hierarchy reflects spiritual alignment rather than individual merit.
4. 1-3 are reflected in mythology, which points to an enduring reality, rendering mytho-reaction perennialist.

⁴⁰ Not to be confused with "tradition" in the lower case, which, for Evola, refers to conventions, cultural particularities, or beliefs passed down throughout history.

⁴¹ Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 23-24.

⁴² Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 188-9.

We will assess Evola's engagement with the various political movements of the twentieth century, including Italian Fascism, Neo-fascism, and German National Socialism, as well as his broad influence in today's far-right circles in relation to this paradigm.

Evola's philosophy is radically anti-liberal and will challenge readers. Against a view that encourages openness, secularism, mutuality, equality, and communication across group boundary lines, Evola spoke of the need for hierarchy, Spartan societies, and racial distinctions. He inspired or tried to inspire people who facilitated some of the darkest aspects of the Italian dictatorship from the 1920s to 1940s – the quasi-genocide in Libya, the repression in Ethiopia and Yugoslavia, and the eventual antisemitic program, albeit from a distinctive point of view. Also, his epistemology is unfamiliar to most contemporary readers, based as it is on his reconstruction of a premodern worldview. Given this “baggage,” it would be easy, and some would argue proper, to relegate Evola to the dustbin of history. However, to understand Evola and his influence, we must approach his philosophy in its multiple historical contexts. To this end, this thesis will carve out an analytic space for Evola's voice, adopting an attitude of empathy – not sympathy – that allows the reader to enter Evola's world of mysticism and counter-hegemonic imagining without denying its character as a pathology of modernity. This thesis is animated by the proposition that critical scholarly inquiry, especially of trends that shape the world, is necessary, even if those trends might be odious to most.

Following a biographical chapter that treats Evola's life to 1945 – the formative and most creative decades of his career – the thesis will turn to a substantive account of Evola's historical philosophy in chapter 2, paying close attention to how he conceives political hierarchy. Chapter 3 will examine Evola's thoughts on Italian Fascism and National Socialism and how they differ from these. The final chapter picks up Evola's biography, focusing on his engagement with post-

World War II neo-fascism. It examines why the neo-fascists, unlike many Mussolini-era Fascists, found Evola's ideas appealing. The conclusion reiterates the thesis' main point that Evola's philosophy emerged separately from fascism and is instead connected to a broader trend of reaction that is increasingly prominent in right-of-center political circles today for reasons that have to do with the globalization of liberal modernity within the purview of American Empire.

Chapter 1

Evola's Intellectual Trajectory to 1945

It is fitting to begin with an account of Evola's life and development as a religiopolitical theorist. Julius Evola, born Giulio Cesare Andrea Evola on May 19, 1898, was raised in a Sicilian family in Rome. Evola included very few details about his early life, viewing them as irrelevant and concealing certain aspects for unknown reasons. In his autobiographical work, *The Path of Cinnabar*, he only mentions elements of his life that pertain to critical moments in his intellectual growth.

Evola's intellectual growth was shaped by two early-life traits that he identified as having originated from a "hidden heritage" rather than his upbringing, family, and education.⁴³ In his youth, he was drawn to transcendence and sought the absolute, feeling disconnected from the worldly existence of bourgeois society. As Thomas Hakl (writing under the pseudonym H.T. Hansen) writes, "The fact that Evola never married, never wanted children, never had a middle-class job, and broke off his engineering studies before the last exam, despite his excellent record (so that he wouldn't be, as he writes, a "Doctor" or a "Professor" like the others) can be traced back to this sentiment."⁴⁴ In this view, Evola's rejection of marriage and children represented a revolt against bourgeois culture and monogamy, serving as a path toward absolute freedom.⁴⁵

Evola's philosophy had a second defining personal characteristic – what he believed was

⁴³ Julius Evola, et al., *The Path of Cinnabar*, trans. Sergio Knipe (Integral Tradition, 2009), 6.

⁴⁴ H. T. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavours," in Julius Evola, *Men Among the Ruins: Postwar Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist*, trans. Guido Stucco, ed. Michael Moynihan (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2002), 1.

⁴⁵ Intellectual Deep Web, "An Interview with Julius Evola," YouTube video, 1:05:19. June, 19th, 2018, 49:05 – 49:12, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ib2vAwM4dY4>. Hakl, in his presentation to the European Association for the Study of Religion, reported that Evola was a womanizer and had many relationships, including one with Italian feminist Sibilla Aleramo (Rina Faccio) (1876-1960), who describes her love for him in her work of fiction, *I Love Therefore I am*. See Hakl, Hans T. "Alcune Presenze Femminili Nella Vita Di Julius Evola." *La Cittadella* 34, (April 2009): 38–47.

the embodiment of the Kshatriya⁴⁶ type or the warrior. As Evola understood it, this type is drawn to both literal and existential action and affirmation and believed that following the warrior's path can lead to liberation and self-affirmation in the Dark Age. Evola believed this was evident in his self-affirmation and his texts, which developed a doctrine of autarky and a theory of the Absolute Individual. He was raised in a Catholic environment but developed mixed feelings toward Christianity at an early age after reading Dmitry Merezhkhovskiy's trilogy *Christ and Antichrist* (1896-1905), which explored the quest for self-empowerment through the lives of the pagan Roman emperor Julian, Leonardo da Vinci, and Tsar Peter I of Russia.⁴⁷ He found inspiration in the works of iconoclastic writers like Oscar Wilde⁴⁸, Gabriele D'Annunzio⁴⁹, Friedrich Nietzsche, Otto Weininger⁵⁰, and Carlo Michelstaedter⁵¹, whose strong opposition to Christianity and the conformist values of bourgeois society appealed to his rebellious spirit. Evola writes, "I used to spend days in the library, in that period, following a tight, yet freely chosen reading schedule."⁵² Despite his occasional hostility towards Christianity, Evola recognized certain aspects of Catholicism as intellectually and spiritually valid, particularly those in line with

⁴⁶ The second of the four Hindu castes, the first being the Brahmin (priests), the third, Vaishya (merchants), and the fourth Shudra (laborers). The Kshatriya were responsible for warfare and governance in peace times. See *Path*, 7.

⁴⁷ Richard Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1989), 116.

⁴⁸ Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) was an Irish poet, playwright, and novelist who participated in the Aesthetic and Decadent movement in the Victorian period.

⁴⁹ Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) was an Italian poet and novelist whose works were part of the Decadent movement. D'Annunzio was a pilot in the First World War and dictator of Fiume (part of Croatia today) from 1919 to 1920. His dictatorship served as a precursor to Fascism, which he later supported along with Mussolini, with whom he developed a rivalry.

⁵⁰ Otto Weininger (1880-1903), an Austrian-Jewish philosopher who converted to Christianity, was known for his work *Sex and Character: A Fundamental Investigation* (1903), arguing that individuals comprise male and female elements. Weininger's work influenced Evola's views on women. Weininger committed suicide at the age of 23, prompting Evola to contemplate suicide as well.

⁵¹ Carlo Michelstaedter (1887-1910) was an Italian-Jewish philosopher and artist known for his work *Persuasion and Rhetoric* (1910), one of the main influences on Evola's early philosophy. He also committed suicide, the reason for which is speculated to be the conclusion of his philosophy.

⁵² Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 8.

Tradition. Despite his misgivings about Christianity, Evola was fond of Christianity's mystical aspect. He also thought that the Carthusians were of note, as he believed they embodied the last vestiges of the "Western contemplative tradition."⁵³ Generally, however, he believed that Catholicism had deteriorated into bourgeois decadence and criticized its symbols, rites, and sacraments for lacking true transcendence and holiness.

Evola's critique of Christianity as becoming too sentimental, emotional, and moralistic is reminiscent of earlier writers such as Søren Kierkegaard⁵⁴ and Nietzsche, who, in particular, gave Evola a way out of the bourgeois world, leading him to rebel against Christian-derived bourgeois morality, democracy, and egalitarianism. However, Evola rejected the then-prevalent interpretations of Nietzsche's concept of the Übermensch, which, in Evola's reckoning, were too focused on the biological, individualistic, and life-affirming aspects. Instead, he adopted Italian philosopher Carlo Michelstaedter's philosophy of internal self-sufficiency, which influenced Evola's philosophy of existential autarky and the Absolute Individual. Although these two characteristics may seem contradictory, as he acknowledges, with one involving transcendence and the other requiring engagement with the human world, they are the foundation of his Traditionalist philosophy.

Before the start of World War I, Evola briefly associated with Italy's Futurist movement and became friends with its founder, Filippo Marinetti (1876-1944). In his *Manifesto of Futurism*, published in 1909, Marinetti railed against the "effeminacy" of the fin-de-siecle, rejecting Romanticism in favor of industrial modernity's energy, dynamism, and technological

⁵³ Julius Evola, "Meditazioni Alla Certosa." *La Stampa*. February 13, 1943, XXI edition. http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option.com_lastampa/task_search/mod_libera/action_viewer/Itemid,3/page,3/articleid,1120_01_1943_0038_0003_16172878/, 3.

⁵⁴ 1813-1855. Devout Lutheran and grandfather of existentialism whose work Evola was familiar with, and who opposed the Danish State Church for promoting a Christianity that had lost its true meaning.

advancement.⁵⁵ The Futurists abhorred bourgeois morality, preached vitality, and honored instinct – values that would soon find their way into Fascism. They communicated their dynamic outlook through the arts, sponsoring *serenatas*, poetry readings, and oratory exhibitions.⁵⁶ Evola developed a short-lived interest in painting under Futurism's influence. However, by 1915, he began to distance himself from Futurism. He disliked its “noisy and exhibitionist character”⁵⁷ and spirit-crushing emphasis on machine production and rapid industrialization, a view that would later become a cornerstone of his anti-Enlightenment philosophy. He was also angered by the movement's endorsement of Italy's participation in the war alongside the Triple Entente. Evola admired Germany and argued that if Italy were to fight against the Wilhelminian state, it should adopt German discipline, Prussian ethics, and the German concept of the state.⁵⁸ Despite this disappointment, Evola served as an artillery officer during the First World War. He enlisted in 1916 at the age of nineteen.

Evola's service in World War I was uneventful. After attending an intensive training course in ballistics, he was stationed in the mountains near Asiago's battle-scarred landscape but did not participate in significant battles. When the war ended, he returned to Rome. Like many artists and intellectuals of the postwar period, he found life dull and unbearable and experienced a personal crisis. As he writes in *The Path of Cinnabar*, “In approaching adulthood, I found the ordinary routine to which I had now returned to be insufferable, and suddenly became aware of the flimsiness and vainness of the ordinary aims of human life.”⁵⁹ He developed a desire for transcendence, leading him to seek higher states of consciousness using hallucinogenic drugs.

⁵⁵ Stromberg, 28

⁵⁶ Oxford Modernisms, p. 709

⁵⁷ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*; 13.

⁵⁸ Evola, et al., 14-15.

⁵⁹ Evola, et al., 15.

Unfortunately, instead of opening his mind, his experiments with psychotropic drugs resulted in despair: “I reached such a low point that I had planned to bring my very life to an end.”⁶⁰ Evola's discovery of the Theravada Buddhist text *Majjhimanikayo* helped him realize his desire for self-extinction was rooted in ignorance.⁶¹ Evola understood that Buddhism was an appropriate vehicle for overcoming suffering in the world.

After World War I, Evola became involved with the Dadaist movement, which he found to be more radical than Futurism. “Dadaism,” he writes, “was not merely conceived as a new avant-garde artistic tendency; rather, it stood for an outlook on life which expressed a tendency towards total liberation, conjoined with the upsetting of all logic, ethic and aesthetic categories, in the most paradoxical and baffling ways.”⁶² Evola was personally acquainted with Dadaism's founder, the Romanian artist Tristan Tzara (1896-1963), as well as the poet Giovanni Papini (1881-1956), who introduced him to the works of Christian mystic Meister Eckhart (c.1260-c.1328) whom he read in the original German and would treat with the greatest respect all his life, despite Eckhart's Christianity. In 1920, Evola published his theory on abstract art in *Arte Astratta* (Abstract Art). In 1920, he exhibited fifty-four Dada paintings in Rome's Galleria Bragaglia. Some of his works even attracted the attention of Sergei Diaghilev, director of the Ballet Russes. To the accompaniment of music by Schönberg, Satie, and Bartok, he recited his *avant-garde* poetry, some of it composed in French, in the Cabaret Grotte dell'Augusteo, “which was Italy's version of Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire, the birthplace of Dada.”⁶³

Evola saw Dada as more than just an avant-garde art movement; it was a revolutionary

⁶⁰ Evola, et al., 15.

⁶¹ Evola, et al., 16.

⁶² Evola, et al., 19.

⁶³ Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy*, 116.

philosophy on life, an assault on the staid values and morality of the bourgeoisie, a vehicle for achieving complete interiority, a gateway to absolute freedom, and a quasi-mystical encounter with the notion of the “Absolute I” that rejected the external world. Yet, within a short while, Evola came to believe that Dada was bereft of the transcendent qualities he sought and thus failed to express genuine metaphysics.⁶⁴ He wrote, “I perceive art as a disinterested elaboration, arising from a higher consciousness of the individual, transcendent and thus separate from passionate crystallization and common experience.”⁶⁵ Evola found art in modernity was generally bereft of any spiritual element. Nonetheless, he surmised it could be one of the few avenues for higher existence, but only if art was “rebuilt.”⁶⁶ In Evola's art, aesthetics was secondary to his impulse towards the absolute, which was intertwined with the consequences of his crisis with forms of “chaotic escapism.”⁶⁷ Opposites coexisted in a state “beyond identity and contradiction,” reminiscent of certain Eastern schools of philosophy, such as Taoism, which Evola continued to study during this period.⁶⁸

By 1921, Evola, realizing that cutting-edge art was solidifying into academic tradition, abandoned painting to fully concentrate on philosophical studies, strongly emphasizing German idealism and the writings of Fichte and Schelling rather than Hegel. He also delved deeper into Eastern philosophies in addition to Platonism and pseudo-religions such as Theosophy, founded in the late 19th century by the Russian mystic Madam Blavatsky, and the contemporaneous Anthroposophy, started by the Austrian occultist Rudolf Steiner, establishing his later system's

⁶⁴ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 22.

⁶⁵ Typescript of essay “Arte astratta: Posizione teorica, 10 poemi, 4 composizioni” by Julius Evola, 1920, University of Iowa Dada Digital Archive, Iowa City, Iowa. https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/islandora/object/ui%3Adada_17178, 3.

⁶⁶ Typescript, University of Iowa Digital Dada Archive, Evola, 2.

⁶⁶ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 21-22.

⁶⁷ Evola, et al., 21-22.

⁶⁸ Luca Somigli, “Evola’s Path from Futurism to Dada and beyond,” *2020*, 2020, 379–82, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110702200-022>, 3.

conceptual foundations. Initially skeptical, he admired the efforts of the occultists to revive ancient wisdom and provide an alternative to modern materialism and dogmatic religion. However, Evola later criticized his early philosophical writings, feeling that the alternative religions discredited Traditionalist philosophy, contaminating its doctrines with modern sensibilities and leading to self-indulgent escapism.⁶⁹ In 1923, he wrote an introduction to the Italian translation of the *Tao-te-Ching*, attempting to analyze the text through Idealism and incorporating Taoist philosophy into Absolute Idealism. However, he believed this approach did Taoism a disservice by injecting rationalist philosophy into a traditional doctrine.

Despite his reservations about modern occult and alternative religions, Evola recognized their value as entry points into Traditional doctrines and credited them with introducing him to various Eastern doctrines, including Tantrism.⁷⁰ Through exploring Eastern thought, Evola developed his philosophical system, “Magical Idealism” – the term is taken from the German poet Novalis (1772-1801)⁷¹ – and his theory of the Absolute Individual.

Evola aimed to establish an unwavering, fixed point as the cornerstone of his philosophy. He referred to this as the Absolute 'I,' akin to Hinduism's concept of the *atman*. The Absolute Individual signifies the transcendent basis of the self and denotes complete freedom, as it is not founded on anything except itself.⁷² This concept acts as the "center point of universal responsibility." The lived experience of the Absolute I. Deification is a central theme in Evola's Magical Idealism system, where the 'I' is the center of mastery and influence, choosing to be a

⁶⁹ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 28.

⁷⁰ Evola, et al., 27.

⁷¹ Hans Thomas Hakl, “Deification as a Core Theme in Julius Evola’s Esoteric Works,” *Correspondences* 6, no. 2 (2018), 147.

⁷² Hans Hakl, “Julius Evola and the UR Group,” *Aries* 12, no. 1 (2012): 53–90, <https://doi.org/10.1163/147783512x614830>, 59.

creator, engaging in spiritual warfare, and utilizing power to manifest ideals.⁷³

During Evola's study of Idealist philosophy, he explored Eastern doctrines from India, China, Japan, and Iran to find ways of living in the age of dissolution, as he saw it. He authored *L'uomo come potenza* (Man as Power) in 1925, which later evolved into *Lo Yoga della potenza* (The Yoga of Power) in the 1949 third edition. This work connects Evola's speculative philosophical phase and later works on Traditionalism, asserting that in an age of spiritual decline, the intellectual path alone is insufficient for dealing with modern malaise. Instead, Evola viewed Tantric yoga as a means of achieving self-liberation, claiming that it allowed one to see beyond the veil of maya,⁷⁴ the idea that actual reality is hidden.⁷⁵ According to Evola, Taoism, Buddhism, and Tantrism are among the many paths that can lead an individual to self-realization and liberation in an age of decadence. He suggests that contemplation alone may not be enough, and a path of action, i.e., the warrior's path, is necessary.

In January 1927, Evola formed the *Gruppo di Ur* (Ur Group), an association of Italian esotericists.⁷⁶ The Ur Group concerned itself with esoteric discipline and praxis, which would lead one to deification through initiation in the sense of a change in ontological state.⁷⁷ The group published the monthly issues *Ur* and *Krur*, the subjects of which revolved around the same

⁷³ Evola's first reference to deification came after examining Eckhart and then Dostoyevsky's *Demons* ("The Possessed"), where he scrutinizes the character Kirillov. Kirillov, who does not believe in God, manifests his divinity by taking his own life, thus affirming his divinity and the self's dissociation from any foundation except itself. See Hans Hakl, "Deification as a Core Theme in Julius Evola's Esoteric Works" 145–71, 149; Cologero Salvo, *Introduction to Magical Idealism* (Boca Raton, FL: Gornahoor Press, 2019), 5.

⁷⁴ *Māyā*. A Vedic word that means "illusion".

⁷⁵ Julius Evola, *The Yoga of Power: Tantra, Shakti, and The Secret Way*, trans. Guido Stucco (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1992), 4.

⁷⁶ On the specifically Italian context of modern esotericism, see Christian Giudice, *Occult Imperium: Arturo Reghini, Roman Traditionalism and the Anti-Modern Reaction in Fascist Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022). The Ur Group included the Freemason Arturo Reghini and Giovanni Colaza, a disciple of Rudolf Steiner.

⁷⁷ Mark Sedgwick, Hans Hakl, and Joscelyn Godwin, "Julius Evola and Tradition," essay, in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 54–69, 58.

problems Evola confronted in his more substantial works. These issues were eventually published as a three-volume work called *Introduction to Magic*, the first of which was published in 1955. The Ur Group was short-lived as it underwent a schism only two years after it began between members who wanted editorial control transferred from Evola to those like Reghini, who was more involved in Freemasonry.⁷⁸

In the sense of the Ur Group, Magic was the “initiatory wisdom” that stems from a self-affirming approach to spiritual matters rather than rituals or practices that lead to supernatural phenomena.⁷⁹ However, this distinction becomes muddled, even contradictory, when Evola describes one of the group's goals as awakening “higher forces.” It is unclear whether Evola participated in the supernatural practices described in “Introduction to Magic,” as he doubted their effectiveness.⁸⁰ The Group's writings suggest employing these powers to target a head of state by manipulating molecular structures within their brain.⁸¹ The Ur Group sought to address the crisis of faith that arises when one's beliefs in modern values are shattered. According to Evola and other affiliates of the Ur Group, the solution was a “science’ that existed in a primordial past. This ancient knowledge, which was exclusive to royalty and priestly castes, was accessible through the rituals and symbols of various civilizations, including that of pagan Rome.⁸² During their membership in the Ur Group, Reghini introduced Evola to the works of Rene Guénon.

⁷⁸ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 91.

⁷⁹ Evola, et al., 94.

⁸⁰In the post-war period, Evola exchanged letters with the Traditionalist René Guénon, discussing specific physical ailments that Guénon experienced, which they both surmised may have resulted from an “occult attack” (Evola, 184). It remains unclear what Evola meant by “occult attack.” He may be referring to an “attack” by anti-Traditional forces, but this does not further clarify Evola’s stance on magic.

⁸¹ Evola, et al., 94. Evola reported that in the early 1930s, following the dissolution of the Ur Group, Mussolini received reports of individuals attempting to influence him magically. However, a brief investigation yielded no conclusive evidence.

⁸² Evola, et al., 89.

René Guénon, the leading figure in European esotericism, abandoned his mathematical studies in 1904 when he came across occult beliefs, particularly Hindu doctrines, which became the basis for his Traditionalist philosophy. Guénon published his first work in 1921:

L'introduction generale a l'etude des doctrines hindoues (A General Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines), which was initially submitted as a Ph.D. thesis to the Sorbonne but rejected for its ahistorical perennialism, and *Le Théosophisme: histoire d'une pseudo-religion*, which served as a critique of theosophy.⁸³ Guénon considered the Primordial Tradition “the esoteric core from which all specific, historical, and pre-modern traditions had derived as reflections and individual forms, adaptations, and expressions.”⁸⁴ For Guénon, Tradition is equivalent to the *sophia perennis*. Traditional societies were organized hierarchically according to the Primordial Laws, which govern all of reality.⁸⁵ When societies cease to function under Divine Law, they fall into disorder. This is the case in the modern world, which, compared to Tradition, is an “anomalous and regressive civilization, born of a deep crisis and deviance within humanity.”⁸⁶ Guénon argued that the only way out was for a “spiritual elite” to re-establish the proper hierarchy.⁸⁷ Shortly after publishing his early classic, *La Crise du Monde Moderne* (The Crisis of the Modern World) (1927), Guénon moved to Cairo in 1930, where he converted to Islam and gave his *baya* (allegiance) to the shaykh of the Shadhili Sufi order, remaining in Cairo until he died in 1951.

In the beginning, Evola was not enthusiastic about Guénon's ideas, as he felt they were

⁸³ Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 51.

⁸⁴ Evola, et al., 97.

⁸⁵ Rooth, Graham. *Prophet for a Dark Age: A Companion to the Works of René Guénon*. Brighton, England: Sussex Academic Press, 2008, 13.

⁸⁶ Evola, 97.

⁸⁷ Guénon, René. *Crisis of the Modern World*. Translated by Marco Pallis, Arthur Osborne, and Richard Nicholson. Hillsdale, New York: Sophia Perennis, 2004, 73.

too intellectual; they lacked a doctrine of action. Evola was still heavily influenced by idealism and Nietzsche's philosophy while also beginning to explore his interest in Tantrism. However, upon delving deeper into Guénon's elucidation of Tradition, Evola found that it filled in the missing gaps in his philosophy. "My approach does not differ from that of Guénon with respect to the value it assigns to the world of Tradition,"⁸⁸ Evola wrote. "By 'world of Tradition,' I mean an organic and hierarchical civilization in which all human activities are both ordained from above, directed towards it, and defined by more than merely human values."⁸⁹

Guénon's writings led Evola to another source of inspiration, the book by Herman Wirth,⁹⁰ *Der Aufgang der Menschheit* (The Ascension of Mankind) (1928), in which the author discussed a primordial Nordic-Atlantic tradition in pre-history. While Evola found Wirth's scientific attempt to prove its existence dubious, it inspired him to delve into a historical study of the Primordial Tradition. This endeavor led him to translate the works of J.J. Bachofen (1815-1887)⁹¹ on ancient Mediterranean civilizations' religions, symbols, and patterns. Bachofen, a Swiss philologist whose ideas were rediscovered by conservative scholars in the Weimar Era, argued that all civilizations had progressed "from early, matriarchal, "basely sensuous" civilizations to "spiritually pure" patriarchal civilizations (such as his own)."⁹² According to Mark Sedgwick, this typology was the basis of Evola's later masculine/feminine pairings.⁹³ Yet Bachofen may have influenced Evola in another way, too. For Bachofen, it was not enough for the scholar to reconstruct the past through the assembly of facts, which unavoidably led to the

⁸⁸ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 246.

⁸⁹ Evola, et al., 246.

⁹⁰ Herman Wirth (1885-1981) was a Dutch-German historian and scholar of religion. He joined the Nazi Party in 1925, and his work on the idea of a Nordic (northern) race was influential on Nazi racialist doctrine.

⁹¹ On Bachofen, see Cynthia Eller, *Gentlemen and Amazons: The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory, 1861-1900* (University of California Press, 2011).

⁹² Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 100.

⁹³ Sedgwick, 100.

imposition of modern categories on ancient materials. He must “put himself in a position of almost religious reverence toward the vestiges of the past.”⁹⁴ Aroused by contact with the remains, his imagination would grasp their truth unimpeded by modern modes of understanding. Evola adopted a similar method of historical empathy.

Guénon’s influence is apparent in Evola’s 1928 book, *Imperialismo Pagano* (Pagan Imperialism), his first political work, which sought to apply his emergent philosophy to politics and culture. Initially, Evola had been “contemptuous of nationalist infatuations.”⁹⁵ His was a mystical as opposed to a profane path. Now, six years after Mussolini’s March on Rome and three years after the establishment of the Fascist state proper, he realized that he “could not simply reject the fascism he deplored. Rather, he would seek to influence the political system from within.”⁹⁶ Gregor summarizes Evola’s intention thus: “Only if fascism became something it was not – by becoming an agent of the hermetic ‘Wisdom’ of antiquity, abandoning all the ‘empty’ social, economic, and military programs it had made its own – might it become the harbinger of a *true* revolution.”⁹⁷ Consequently, Evola’s intention in *Imperialismo Pagano* was to show how Fascism might have a “soul.” Bluntly put, Evola wanted Fascism to follow Tradition, not the other way around. As it turned out, very few Fascists in Italy were willing to give Evola a hearing. For his part, Evola never joined the Fascist Party, though he tried, in 1939, to join the Fascist Party to serve in the Italian Army as an officer in the Second World War.⁹⁸ However, his

⁹⁴ Franco Ferraresi, “Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction, and the Radical Right,” 116 n. 19. Ferraresi makes the point that in critiquing positivistic historiography, Bachofen had in mind the pedantic work of Theodor Mommsen.

⁹⁵ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 81

⁹⁶ A. James Gregor, *The Search for Neo-fascism: The Use and Abuse of Social Science* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 89.

⁹⁷ Gregor, 90.

⁹⁸ H. T. Hansen, “Preface to the American Edition,” in Julius Evola, *Men among the Ruins: Postwar Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist*, trans. Guido Stucco, ed. Michael Moynihan (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2002), 7. Here, Hansen (Hakl) cites the research of Dana Lloyd Thomas who published the work *Julius Evola e la tentazione*

application was denied due to his attacks on Fascism and the Fascist Party and his desire to “surpass Fascism.”⁹⁹ Evola believed that Fascism was, at best, a transitional stage on the road to a genuine state, not an end.

In 1930, the Ur Group ceased publication, prompting Evola to create a new fortnightly political review called *La Torre* (The Tower). This publication aimed to foster discussion on the Primordial Tradition, attracting individuals opposed to modern civilization. “My publication of this magazine,” wrote Evola, “was yet another attempt, on my part, to enter the political and cultural arena.”¹⁰⁰ *La Torre* sought to promote the values of Tradition. Evola believed that if a political regime shared these values, it would find alignment with Tradition. Evola asserted, “To the extent Fascism embraces and defends such ideals, we shall call ourselves Fascists.”¹⁰¹ Once again, however, Evola failed to find favor with the Fascists, mainly due to particular opinions that did not fully align with those of Mussolini, especially Evola’s judgment that the Fascism of Mussolini was demagogic, open to political compromise, and failed to champion the traditional prerogatives of Italy’s fragile monarchy. Evola’s stance on Fascism provoked violent responses from some Fascist groups in Italy.¹⁰² *La Torre* was compelled to fold on 15 June 1930 after five months and ten issues. Evola retreated to the mountains, where he published articles that Mussolini read despite efforts by the official Fascist press to suppress them.

If Evola did not gain immediate acceptance in Italy, he won a favorable hearing in certain circles in the Third Reich. In 1934, Evola traveled to Germany for the first time, where he was

razzista: l’inganno del pangermanesimo in Italia (Julius Evola and the Racist Temptation: The Deception of Pan-Germanism in Italy) (2006).

⁹⁹ Peter Staudenmaier, “Julius Evola and the ‘Jewish Problem’ in Axis Europe: Race, Religion, and Antisemitism,” essay, in *Religion, Ethnonationalism, and Antisemitism in the Era of the Two World Wars*, ed. Kevin Spicer and Rebecca Carter-Chand (Montréal, Québec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2022), 72–92, 74.

¹⁰⁰ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 105.

¹⁰¹ Evola, et al., 106.

¹⁰² Evola, et al., 107.

already known among the illiberal thinkers of the *Konservative Revolution*, thanks to the German editions of *Imperialismo Pagano* and *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (Revolt Against the Modern World). Published in 1934, the same year as his trip north of the Alps, *Revolt* was Evola's magnum opus. In it, Evola treated the themes that would characterize his work in the future: A Pre-Enlightenment ethos based on the vertical trajectory of power, castes, and elitist values. Ignored in Italy, for the most part, the book gained a wide readership among Germans of Conservative and National Socialist inclinations comfortable with mythic imagery.¹⁰³ Gottfried Benn, a writer attached to the Expressivist Movement, described the book as: "A work of exceptional importance which will become evident in the years to come. Those who read it will feel transformed and will see Europe in a different light."¹⁰⁴ Evola explained his relative popularity north of the Alps by pointing out that unlike Italy, which "had lost almost all traces of its hierarchical civilization and society, Germany — and, more generally, central Europe — had preserved certain aspects of its former tradition, so that forces from its former political regimes were still partly in control of politics and society."¹⁰⁵ While in Germany, Evola spoke at the international meeting of the *Nordisches Thing* (Nordic Assembly) in Bremen and delivered a paper before a small audience at Berlin's *Herrenklub*, the club of the conservative German nobility, whose members distanced themselves from the excesses of the Nazis in favor of a more aristocratic style of politics. Although the members hoped to influence National Socialist policy, they were ignored by the Party.¹⁰⁶ Yet no Conservative Revolutionary, let alone National Socialist, explicitly identified with Evola's Traditionalist outlook.

¹⁰³ Cf. Herman Hesse: "The German intellectual has constantly rebelled against the word and against reason, and courted music." *Steppenwolf* (New York: Modern Library), 152.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Evola, *Path of Cinnabar*, 153.

¹⁰⁵ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 150.

¹⁰⁶ Evola, et al., 157.

During his travels in Europe in 1937, Evola met with Corneliu Codreanu (1899-1938), the leader of the Romanian Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Iron Guard, and Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), the up-and-coming scholar of comparative religion with whom he remained in touch, the meetings taking place at a luncheon hosted by the Legion's ideologue, Nae Ionescu, in Romania. Evola was impressed with Codreanu. In his words, he was "One of the most worthy and spiritually-oriented individuals I ever met within the national political movements of that period."¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Eastern Orthodoxy – a religion of icons and incense – was one of the Legion's pillars.

By the mid to late 1930s, Italian Fascism experienced the growing influence of National Socialism, particularly in racial ideology. Evola disapproved of *Manifesto della razza* (The Manifesto of Racism), published by Italy's Fascist regime in 1938, which prohibited marriages between Italians and Jews, banned Jews from positions in banking, government, and education, and sanctioned the confiscation of Jewish properties. Evola's ideas about race were esoteric and focused on spiritual disposition, not the biological, materialistic, and vaguely mystical determinants¹⁰⁸ that characterized the theories that came to be dominant in National Socialist Germany and then Fascist Italy. Chapter 2 of this thesis will deal with Evola's racial theory in detail.

As early as 1931, Evola began criticizing the National Socialists' biological racism in a lecture at the *Deutsche Kulturbund* (German Cultural Union).¹⁰⁹ Despite the Fascist Party's general suspicion towards Evola in Italy, he was able to publish two works on race in the

¹⁰⁷ Evola, et al., 156.

¹⁰⁸ As he rejects purely biological conceptions of race, Evola also rejects any mystical or quasi-mystical conceptions of race, such as in Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century*.

¹⁰⁹ The German Cultural Union was a Catholic aristocratic organization against German supremacy, instead favouring Pan-Europeanism.

magazines *Rassegna Italiana* (Italian Review) and *Corriere Padano* (Padanian Courier) in 1935, both of which were well-received by the Fascist Party, including Mussolini himself.¹¹⁰ These publications mainly critiqued purely biological concepts of race. A year later, Evola wrote his first significant work on race, *Il mito del sangue* (Myth of the Blood), published in 1936, essentially a genealogy of racialism up to the advent of National Socialism. This work was Evola's reflection on the spiritual concept of race.

In 1938, while Evola was sampling the political climate north of the Alps, Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945) commissioned the report on Evola by the *Schutzstaffel*,¹¹¹ which recommended Evola be ignored lest his political goal of a utopian "Roman-Germanic Imperium" cause ideological confusion.¹¹² The report on Evola by Brigadeführer S K.M. Weisther on behalf of Heinrich Himmler in 1938 stated:

The doctrine of Evola, as he has until now expressed in his books and talks, is neither Fascist nor National Socialist. With these two concepts he shares certain values; however, how he approaches them results in their being considerably altered. What especially separates them from the National Socialist worldview is his radical negligence of genuine historical events of our people's past in favor of an imaginative and spiritually abstract utopia.¹¹³

In 1941, Evola wrote a follow-up entitled *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (*Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race*). Interestingly, this work was openly endorsed by Mussolini; initially skittish about Nazi racial policy, Mussolini believed that viewing race from a "softer," primarily spiritual

¹¹⁰ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 166.

¹¹¹ The *Schutzstaffel*, or SS, was a paramilitary organization in the Third Reich. Formed in 1925 and led by Himmler from 1930 until 1945, it was originally tasked with being the bodyguards for Hitler and other Nazi officials, but later became one of the largest and most powerful organizations in Nazi Germany, having both a general, political, and security role as well as a combat role. The SS was responsible for numerous atrocities, including the management of concentration camps, war crimes, and mass political violence.

¹¹² Julius Evola and Christian Kopff, "Foreword by E. Christian Kopff," foreword, in *Notes on the Third Reich*, ed. John Morgan, trans. Christian Kopff (London, UK: Arktos Media Ltd., 2013), 2–9, 4.

¹¹³ Quoted in Gianfranco De Turreis, *Julius Evola*, 97.

perspective would allow Italy to still be in line with German National Socialist racialism while maintaining a unique view of race. In 1941, Evola proposed founding a magazine called *Sangue e spirito* (Blood and Spirit), published in German and Italian, centered around the discussion of race, which Mussolini approved.¹¹⁴ However, when Evola traveled to Berlin, he received an order from the Italian embassy to stop developing the magazine. Various groups, including the Catholic Church and the authors of *Manifesto on Race*, had successfully petitioned Mussolini to halt its publication.¹¹⁵ The main objection to Evola's notions of spiritual race was due to its occultism. Evola eventually learned that the Fascist leadership had received warnings from unknown sources of an "epidemic of esotericism" in Italy.¹¹⁶

Evola attempted to enlist in the Italian Army when his country went to war in 1940 as an ally of Germany, but he was refused for two reasons. First, his critiques of Fascism led officials to question whether he was genuinely committed to the Fascist cause. Second, he had been demoted in 1934 due to an incident involving the issue of military honor. Despite Evola's affinity for the Middle Ages and chivalric ideals, he had refused a duel with a reporter he attacked in his publication *La Torre*, claiming that the reporter was beneath him.¹¹⁷ The incident was brought before a military court, which ruled against Evola, resulting in his demotion.

The Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943 marked the beginning of the end for Mussolini's regime in Italy. Seeing that the game was up and understanding that the Italian people could endure no more, the Grand Council of Fascism removed Mussolini from power,

¹¹⁴ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 174.

¹¹⁵ Evola, et al., 176.

¹¹⁶ Staudenmaier, Peter, "Racial Ideology between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Julius Evola and the Aryan Myth, 1933–43," *Journal of Contemporary History* 55(3) (2020), 473–491, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009419855428>, 10.

¹¹⁷ Julius Evola and H.T. Hansen, "Preface to the American Edition," preface, in *Men Among the Ruins: Postwar Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist*, ed. Michael Moynihan, trans. Guido Stucco and Michael Moynihan (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), 5–9, 7.

reinstated King Victor Emmanuel III as the head of the Italian state, arrested Mussolini, and signed an armistice with the Allies. Germany intervened on behalf of its ally, rescuing Mussolini from his confinement in the Apennine Mountains on September 12, 1943, and flying him to Munich. Evola, who days earlier had left the uncertain situation in Rome for Germany with Fascist loyalists, was part of the Italian delegation that greeted the deposed Fascist leader when he arrived at Hitler's East Prussian headquarters, the Wolf's Lair, near Rastenburg, on September 13, where he met Hitler.¹¹⁸

Evola was back in Rome when Hitler imposed the Italian Social Republic (The "Salò Republic") upon Mussolini on 23 September 1943. The new Fascist state covered the regions in Italy's north outside Allied control and was a German puppet regime. Evola was not keen on the Social Fascist Republic. For one thing, he believed that the new state made too many concessions to the leveling ideology of socialism. Moreover, he considered criticism of the monarchy as a betrayal of Fascist ideals, separate from the critical attitude toward the king. His tepid stance towards the republic did not escape the notice of its supporters, who kept Evola at a distance. Yet despite his misgivings about the Salò Republic, Evola "could not avoid acknowledging [its] warrior and legionary value."¹¹⁹ Approximately 300,000 young Italians volunteered for its military after September 1943, and in Milan, 50,000 people joined the reconstituted Fascist party.¹²⁰ The obstinacy shown by "those hundreds of thousands of Italians who had chosen to remain loyal to their allies and continue the war"¹²¹ would inspire the post-war neo-fascists to make their own "last stand" against the excesses of modernity, which was

¹¹⁸ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 181.

¹¹⁹ *Path of Cinnabar*, 181; Gianfranco De Turrís, *Julius Evola: The Philosopher and Magician in War: 1943-1945*, trans. Eric Dennis Antonius Galati (Richmond, VT: Inner Traditions, 2016), 18-60.

¹²⁰ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Alternatives to Democracy in Twentieth-Century Europe: Collectivist Visions of Modernity* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2019), 181.

¹²¹ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 182.

now represented in full by American Capitalism and Soviet Communism in their view.

Following the declaration of the Salò Republic, Evola met with various Italian Fascists in Rome, including political officials in Mussolini's regime, such as Senator Carlo Costamagna and former Minister of National Education Balbino Giuliano.¹²² They planned to establish a political party called Movement for the Rebirth of Italy. It rejected any association with the Fascist Party and its ideology in favor of a more Traditional doctrine, hoping it might gain a political foothold once the war ended. Although Evola despised political parties, he believed they could be used as a tool for revolution and that the Movement for the Rebirth of Italy could eventually become an Order, the basis of a revived Traditional State. Nothing came of this project. He says this was partly due to the Allied occupation of Rome and partly to an "act of betrayal,"¹²³ the specifics of which he does not explain.

The Allies took control of Rome on June 4, 1944. Almost immediately, Evola was visited by unidentified Allied secret police at his apartment on the top floor of Corso Vittorio Emanuele 197, located in the city's vibrant heart. His mother delayed the men, allowing Evola to escape to Vienna, still under Axis control, via the railway connection through Venice. In Vienna, he lived under a false name.¹²⁴ Evola was then forty-six years old.

Evola's sojourn in the former Hapsburg capital overlapped with the Soviet Red Army's advance on the city and the heavy bombardments by the American 15th Air Force. On 21 January 1945, Evola left his apartment for a stroll around the *Schwarzenbergplatz* just as the American bombers dropped their ordnance. One of the exploding bombs hurled Evola against the wooden scaffolding that protected the equestrian statue of Prince Karl Philipp, severing his spine.

¹²² Evola, et al., 182.

¹²³ Evola, 183.

¹²⁴ Julius Evola, *Men Among the Ruins: Post-War Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), 49; Gianfranco De Turreis, *Julius Evola*, 68-69.

The ensuing paralysis of his lower limbs left him confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Why had Evola put himself in such danger? In the *Path of Cinnabar*, he suggests that he had sought “dangers as a tacit way of putting fate to the test.”¹²⁵ He tells us that earlier in his life, he had “pursued mountain climbing at dangerous altitudes” for a similar reason.¹²⁶ Evola spent much of his recovery writing “letters and articles with a copying pencil on a book stand in front of him or at a typewriter at the desk before the window.”¹²⁷ During this period, he completed revising *Revolt Against the Modern World* and made progress on his manuscript “Introduction to Magic.” With the collapse of Italian Fascism and the Third Reich, any potential for restoration of Tradition seemed dim, whether in part or total.

We will resume Evola's biography in Chapter 4. We now must examine his core ideas as they evolved during the 1930s and 1940s. This will help us better understand his unique position within the political landscape of that era.

¹²⁵ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 183.

¹²⁶ Evola, et al., 183.

¹²⁷ De Turrís, *Julius Evola*, 171.

Chapter 2

Evola's Core Ideas I: Historical and Political Philosophy

2.1 Overview of Evola's Philosophy

Evola's philosophy can be divided into two parts. The first part, which we may call ontological, concerns the individual's existence in modernity. The second part focuses on Evola's socio-political philosophy, which examines the social, religious, and political structures that surround the individual. Most of Evola's works belong to the former category and center on the individual's self-affirmation in modernity. The focus of this project, however, is the latter category, which places him within the context of political reaction, as defined above.

Evola's main interests lay in recovering human life's supposed transcendent and eternal dimensions – the worldview common to pre-Enlightenment societies. For him, the Transcendent is, or ought to be, the absolute foundation and reference point of everything from social structures and political organization to the microcosm of the individual. He believed that pre-modern civilizations imbued everything with a spiritual purpose, from large-scale structures like political organizations to the individual, which he considered to be more real than the visible world. In contrast, in modern times, the societal reference points were of a lower magnitude. The primacy of the transcendent in Evola's thought cannot be overstated.

Evola was not interested in systematically critiquing Enlightenment philosophies. Instead, he skirted these philosophies to focus on a worldview based on reality's spiritual aspects. He appealed – and this cannot be understated – to like-minded reactionaries who believed that modernity should be resisted and overcome. His effort to recover spiritual meaning was evident in his attempts to influence the anti-liberal and anti-Marxist right-wing movements of the early

and mid-twentieth century and guide them in a direction beyond their original purpose. If Fascism emerged partly in opposition to liberalism, Evola aimed to steer Fascism toward Tradition. Yet despite his rejection of liberalism, democracy, capitalism, and communism, and his opposition to Enlightenment values in general, it is incorrect to associate Evola outrightly with Fascism, as many have done. Evola aligns with Fascism and National Socialism only when their principles are consistent with the transcendent dimension of Tradition.

Evola embraced the modern observer's panoptic perspective to explore the world's myths, legends, and sagas, linking them to an interpretive mode that emphasized life's spiritual dimension in contrast to modernity's dull, materialistic nature worldview. It is important to note that Evola's examination of myths relied heavily on secondary sources, meaning he did not necessarily read them in their original language. For example, Evola's interpretation of Hindu mythology was not performed in the original Sanskrit but rather based on translated works, which may have led to a distorted understanding. Myths, for Evola, were metahistorical. They were windows that allowed modern people to peer into a time when transcendent values, now elapsed, ruled supreme. His method was that of the Hermeticists in the medieval period, who discerned homologies among different planes and levels of reality. Evola called this method "the principle of correspondence."¹²⁸ According to Evola, the images and symbols that populated the structure of an organism had an ordering function. They provided guiding principles below the levels of politics and culture, unaffected by the temporal world's contingencies. Unlike concepts and ideas produced through rational thinking, which, in Evola's view, were lifeless and inert, myths linked people to what was foundational in human life. Evola writes, "[there was] a time when the symbol was reality and the reality a symbol and history and metahistory were not two

¹²⁸ Julius Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World: Politics, Religion, and Social Order in the Kali Yuga*, trans. Guido Stucco (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2018), xxxv.

separated parts but rather two parts reflecting each other.”¹²⁹

Evola’s conception of history, the world, and metaphysical reality were primarily explained in his magnum opus, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, first published in 1934, in which he attempted to “provide a broader perspective and emphasize those points of reference that contribute to shedding light on the true nature of the modern world and its crisis.”¹³⁰ Evola’s method in *Revolt* was to provide a “mytho-historical” perspective and a morphology of civilizations through the regression of cycles. According to Evola, modernity glorifies progress and believes in endless development. On the contrary, Evola argued, society had regressed from conditions of spiritual superiority to inferiority despite occasional rebounds and the promise of complete restoration. In the modern period, matter ruled over form, and social leveling replaced the hierarchies of excellence, a decline symbolized by the dominance of the lunar (feminine) over the solar principle (masculine). *Revolt* is divided into two parts: the first is a description of traditional concepts and structures, and the second is a historical examination of civilizations, including modernity, from the point of view of Tradition. For Evola, modernity represented the dark age, in the literal sense of the term: an age devoid of divine luminosity.

Evola's thinking was entirely hierarchical. One of the key elements in Evola’s philosophy is the dichotomy between two natures: Being and Becoming. In the metaphysical order of things, Being, the invisible and intangible dimension, was the foundation of its opposite: the realm of becoming.¹³¹ This duality was expressed hierarchically in many forms: Being was above Becoming, the celestial world above the terrestrial, the solar above the lunar, form above matter, and the sky-father above the earth mother (spatially and spiritually in this case, derived

¹²⁹ Evola, et al., 188.

¹³⁰ Evola, et al., *The Path of Cinnabar*, 135.

¹³¹ Evola, et al., *Revolt against the Modern World*, 3.

mythically from the sky-god Uranus and Earth goddess Gaia). These structures existed simultaneously and were represented in mythical and historical forms. For example, the Traditional social structure was the caste system, which placed the spiritual and virile warrior-priestly caste¹³² at the top of the hierarchy. Politically, the State (conceived as masculine) existed above society (conceived as feminine), giving form to society, characterized as matter. In modern times, there was no clear idea of the realm of existence, and the Traditional hierarchy had broken down. By contrast, the Traditional man did not see nature as existing only in the physical realm. Instead, he believed it was connected to an invisible reality. Evola argued that Traditional societies believed all authority, laws, institutions, and life were meaningless unless they originated from and were directed toward this realm of Being. From Evola's perspective, a civilization's purpose was to uplift the masses from worldly desires and guide them towards something higher than themselves, such as the world of archetypal forms, God, or the gods.

In Evola's view, modernity inverted or flattened the Traditional hierarchy. The operating principle of life was no longer vertical but horizontal. Modern social structures no longer revered the superior realm of Being represented by so-called "solar" rulers. Instead, they embraced egalitarianism, which defined social relations as a person's relationship with lower principles such as production and physical traits. This represented a downward pull, with parliamentary democracy in his day reflecting the influence of the masses, the lowest caste, in the political sphere.

Evola's conception follows the supposedly Traditional dualism. In Evola's view, Myth was more important than history. Evola regarded ancient civilizations such as Sparta, Rome, and the Hohenstaufen Empire as significant historical points where the mythic dimension (the

¹³² While the caste system is Traditionally conceived of as having the Brahmin (priestly) caste at the top, Evola believed the warrior and priestly caste were combined.

transcendent) intermingled with the temporal. By his principle of correspondence, he saw them as manifestations of Tradition. Evola believed that counter-enlightenment philosopher Giambattista Vico knew of these ideas, calling them “the natural laws of an eternal republic that varies in time and different places.”¹³³ Evola was not very concerned with the historical details of religions and pre-modern and pre-Enlightenment social and political organizations. Evola looked at these manifestations and found that each had an esoteric core, which he believed to be the Primordial Tradition. Echoing Vico, Evola stated, “Even when these [Traditional] principles are objectified in historical reality, they are not at all conditioned by it; they always point to a higher, meta-historical plane, which is their natural domain and where there is no change. These ideas, which I call ‘Traditional,’ must be thought of along the same lines.”¹³⁴

2.2 Historical Philosophy

Evola posited a cyclical theory of history that followed that of Guénon, who, in turn, derived it from studying the world’s myths. Evola’s cyclical theory attempted to explain a regression encompassing all of reality. This cyclical progression occurred on cosmological, civilizational, and spiritual levels within what he calls a metacycle. The metacycle begins with the Golden Age, characterized by spiritual primacy, which regresses to a Dark Age, characterized by spiritual absence. Each regress represented an increasingly temporal epoch. It must be noted that Evola did not conceive of decline as a straight line but that small golden ages and dark ages existed within the grand decline. For instance, according to Evola, the Roman period was a minor golden age, which regressed into a small dark age (the fall of Rome) and returned to a golden age during the Middle Ages. What followed – the Renaissance and the Enlightenment –

¹³³ Quoted in Evola, et. al., *Men Among the Ruins*, 104.

¹³⁴ Evola, et al., 104.

heralded *the* Dark Age, the end of the megacycle. As the cycle progressed in its downward arch, knowledge of the Primordial Tradition diminished. What was left was contained within the mystical and esoteric dimensions of the world's religions.

Evola found the cyclical notions of history in various religions, such as Ancient Greece, particularly in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Hindu mythology, and Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the Biblical Book of Daniel. The Egyptians and Aztecs also had notions of cyclical regressions, which were tripartite and quintipartite, respectively. The Traditionalists used the language of Hindu mythology (Krita/Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga, and Kali Yuga) to describe the meta-historical cycle as they believed it to be the most comprehensive iteration of a cyclical conception. According to Evola, we are currently in the Kali Yuga.

For Evola, the Golden Age was manifested in a singular, primordial, master civilization characterized by a transcendent spirituality. This civilization existed in the mythical far north, what Evola called Hyperborea,¹³⁵ which represented a divine landscape characterized by symbols of the sun or light and spiritual authority.¹³⁶ This land is sometimes referred to as the pole and symbolizes an axis of transcendence, spiritual stability, and the center of the world (the *axis mundi* described by Eliade).

According to Evola, in this pristine northern land, a primordial race that was spiritually androgynous—meaning that the masculine and feminine spiritual principles were united—

¹³⁵ Hyper-meaning “above” or “beyond” and Boreas, the name given to the North wind by the Greeks.

¹³⁶ Other traditions had their names for a far northern land. Evola pointed out that the Greeks mentioned a location known as Thule, the Land of the Sun, or Island of Heroes, similar to the Toltec's Tlappallan, meaning “place of the sun (Evola, et al., *Revolt against the Modern World*, 187).” Hindu mythology posits *Shveta-dvipa*, the Island of Glory, where Narayana, the “one who is light,” resides. *Airyānem Vaejah* is the original land of the Persians and is associated with the god of light. It is also the place where the warrior religion Zoroastrianism was revealed to Zarathustra and the origin point of *hvareno*, the divine-mystical force that, in Evola's view, pervades the Aryan peoples, especially in kings, which gives kings their right to rule (Evola, et al., *Pagan Imperialism*, 13).

dwelt.¹³⁷ While the exact origin of this idea is unclear (it was perhaps influenced by Plato's *Symposium*), it fits logically within Evola's cosmology. He suggested that subsequent cycles were marked by the interplay between the separated masculine and feminine principles, often resulting in one principle dominating the other, thus breaking their complementary unification. Oneness is characteristic of the Golden Age, where "that which is below" was unified with "that which is above": the unification of the spiritual and material worlds of myth and history. Evola labels the "race" that inhabited the primordial civilization as "Olympian" (Evola's conception of race will be discussed below), meaning that it was "solar" or "like the gods."¹³⁸

The Golden Age led to the Silver Age, characterized by lunar spirituality and a priestly gynocracy. During this period, the figure of the Divine Mother and her cult emerged. The priestly gynocracy then declined, sparking the revolt of a degenerated warrior caste (represented mythologically by the Titans) against the feminine lunar principle characterized by the Amazons. According to Evola, this conflict, won by the Titans, represents the end of the Silver Age and the beginning of the mythical Bronze Age.¹³⁹

The Bronze Age was mythologically characterized by the revolt of the Titans against the gods, leading to one final cycle before the ushering in of a golden age. The Heroic cycle, according to Evola, was when heroes emerged to overcome the Titanic principle with the aid of the feminine principle, represented by such myths as the Greek *Gigantomachy*, where Heracles is aided by Athena, and in the Arthurian legends, where Morgan Le Fay aided the Grail Knights. Succeeding in a hero's quest would restore the Olympian principle; failure indicates a

¹³⁷ Evola, et al., *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 218.

¹³⁸ Evola, et al., *The Mystery of the Grail*, 17.

¹³⁹ The term "mythical" is used to indicate that Evola was not referring to the historical period from approximately 3300 to 1200 BC, but rather to an age characterized by Bronze, which directly aligns with the Dvapara yuga in Hindu mythology. What is discussed here is inherently mythological. Evola primarily focuses on the metahistorical realm—the realm often described in myths and its relation to the historical *zeitgeist*.

continuation of the metacycle. Historically, Evola believed the heroic principle manifested itself with the emergence of certain civilizations, notably Rome and the Hohenstaufen Empire.

2.3 Tradition and Race

As with nearly everything in Evola's philosophy, his conception of race was grounded in metaphysics, and it is the most complex and challenging aspect of his thought to understand. Evola followed, to some extent, the writings of materialist racialists such as Arthur de Gobineau and Wirth but argued that they lacked a metaphysical understanding. Evola posited a spiritual determinant to the concept of race that was, in his view, far more important and relevant than a person's biological characteristics. Evola's racialist and antisemitic works are, notably, not given a second edition, most of which were published in the 1930s and early 1940s. Furlong notes that, while Evola did not distance himself from them, he did attempt to reinterpret them in later works, particularly regarding his antisemitic writings.¹⁴⁰ To quote Furlong, "[I]n any case, his final position may not be fundamentally any more satisfactory than his starting point."¹⁴¹

Evola maintained that materialist-oriented racial studies, such as phrenology, revealed little about race. In contrast to Nazi racialists like Walter Gross and Alfred Rosenberg, Evola believed that the issue of race was not scientific but belonged to the realm of metaphysics. Evola stated, "That race which, on the other hand, is a construct of science and a little figurine from the anthropological museum, we leave to that pseudo-intellectual bourgeoisie that still clings to the nineteenth-century idols of positivism."¹⁴² Evola's disdain for the National Socialists' *Völkisch* understanding of race was expressed in two of his books, *Myth of the Blood: The Genesis of Racialism* (1937) and *Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race* (1941), as well as in several of his

¹⁴⁰ Furlong, *The Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola*, 123.

¹⁴¹ Furlong, 123.

¹⁴² Julius Evola, "L'equivoco del razzismo scientifico", *Vita Italiana* no. 138 (July 1942). Quoted in Hansen, H.T., Introduction to *Revolt Against the Modern World* by Julius Evola, trans. Guido Stucco, 69.

essays. *Myth of the Blood* examines racialism from its early history to the Third Reich. However, it is only in *Synthesis* that Evola provided his unique racial theory.

It must be said that even though Evola claimed to follow a pre-modern conception of race, which was primarily metaphysical rather than biological, his concept was nonetheless predicated on essentialist and discriminatory classifications long since disproven.¹⁴³ Yet, Evola's concept of racialism was distinct from prevailing theories and served as a basis for his critiques of National Socialism. So different was Evola's concept of race that it resulted in a variety of attacks from "orthodox racists" and Fascist officials.¹⁴⁴ Some, such as Guido Landra, director of the Office of Racial Studies in Fascist Italy, accused Evola of campaigning against racism in Italy. At the same time, Ugoberto Alfassio Grimaldi, a prominent Fascist racialist, reviewed Evola's work on race and accused him of anti-racism.¹⁴⁵

Evola followed what may be called a Traditional conception of the human being, generally conceived of in a tripartite formulation of soul, body, and spirit, which is found in the Hindu tradition as *sthulua-sharira*, *liunga-sharira*, and *karana-sharira*, in the Greco-Roman tradition as *soma/corpus*, *psyche/anima*, and *nous/mens*, and Aristotelian and Scholastic philosophy as the three "souls:" vegetative, sensory, and intellectual. Spirit serves as the ground "on which every virile asceticism and every heroic elevation rests, every effort to achieve, in life, what is "more-than-life."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Evola follows the Nordic, Mediterranean, East Baltic, etc. classification scheme when discussing physical and metaphysical race.

¹⁴⁴ Ferraresi, "Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction, and the Radical Right," 128.

¹⁴⁵ Julius Evola and H.T. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," introduction, in *Men Among the Ruins: Postwar Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist*, ed. Michael Moynihan, trans. Guido Stucco and Michael Moynihan (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), 73, referencing Grimaldi's thoughts on Evola's racialism. A. James Gregor also mentions this in *Mussolini's Intellectuals: Fascist Social and Political Thought* (2004), p. 207, n. 63.

¹⁴⁶ Evola, et al., *Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race*, 32.

In Evola's conception, the race of the body and the soul were common to all individuals. Race of the body refers to physical traits common to a particular group. As Evola claimed, the race of the soul referred to a group's common behavioral and psychological traits. It comprised the external manifestations, desires, and activities common to humanity. The race of the soul was manifested in a group's culture, socio-political structures, etiquette, and social hierarchy, essentially, its general mode of being. This can be considered akin to the concept of *Volksgeist*.

Evola considered the race of the spirit the most critical aspect of his tripartite conception of race. He conceived it as having two forms, which comprised a "meta-biological force"¹⁴⁷ in a group of people. The first is the lower of the two and was believed to be common to all individuals. It was connected to the impulse and relation towards transcendence and "inner mastery." Of note is how Evola believed spiritual race was expressed in the various exoteric elements of a religion, such as its symbols and mystical experiences, which reflected how the group interacted with the absolute principles represented by the gods.

The second category within the race of the spirit lived at the top of a caste-like social hierarchy – the aristocracy, priests, warriors, and the king; they exemplified a higher mode of being superior to the masses.¹⁴⁸ They were, in essence, more than human. Evola stated, "it is here that the action and the meaning of the individual, of personality, manifests itself. In the superior men, race is fulfilled and actualized at its highest point, simultaneously at the peak of the values of the true personality."¹⁴⁹

While all individuals had the potential for the "second form of race," not all could attain

¹⁴⁷ Evola, et al., *Pagan Imperialism*, 197.

¹⁴⁸ Evola, et al., 5.

¹⁴⁹ Julius Evola, *Elements of a Racial Education*, trans. Bruno Cariou (Quimper, France: Cariou Publishing, n.d.), 13.

it. It required a person to engage in certain initiatory rites and rituals that allowed the meta-biological force to act upon the individual, resulting in an inner transformation. According to Evola, the result was the experience of oneness with the divine, the realization of the self in Hinduism, where a connection to and awareness of absolute principles was forged. Those at the top of the caste forged a microcosm of the divine order within their particular society (i.e. the creation and proliferation of civilization). Essentially, “men of race” led the masses to higher ontological states and oriented them to the purported transcendent principles from which the elites derived authority.

Evola, and Guénon for that matter, did not believe in the idea of an Aryan race as it was conceived of in the works of racialists such as Gobineau and National Socialist ideology. Evola used the term Aryan in a sense derived from the Hindu Rigveda and the Iranian Avesta, whereby the Sanskrit and Iranian word *Arya* referred to a self-described nobility. Evola argued, as did Guénon, that *Arya* referred to the first three castes: the priestly, warrior, and merchants.¹⁵⁰

Aryan, for Evola, referred to the supposed Hyperborean spirituality, a “race of the spirit” that included certain biological elements such as the bloodlines of royalty; here, Evola gave the example of the Iranian king of kings. Yet Evola did not believe the “race of the spirit” was inherent to any group. For instance, he believed that the races of India, Iran, Egypt, and certain Indigenous North American peoples, such as the Inuit, were closer to the primordial Nordic race than many Indo-European groups, such as the “Aryo-Germanic” peoples and thus belonged to the “Aryan family.”¹⁵¹ Evola surmised that the primordial Nordic race's superior spirit lay latent in all humanity's depths and could be reawakened given certain conditions.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Evola, et al., *Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race*, 137.

¹⁵¹ Evola, et al., 56.

¹⁵² Evola, et al., 56.

In the context of the caste system, a person is born as an Aryan (noble) but does not fully embody the meaning of being an Aryan until he or she undergoes initiation to be "reborn"—a process known as *upanayana* in Hinduism or baptism in Christianity. Only then does a person enter the realm of the second, higher understanding of race, which is based on the spirit.¹⁵³ Evola noted that being born Aryan did not make one superior to those in the lowest caste, the serfs. Only the rite of initiation differentiated the one from the other.

Evola was wholly uninterested in the concept of a “White race.” Nor did he believe in biological purity and racial homogeneity, as did the National Socialists.¹⁵⁴ For Evola, if such a thing as racial purity existed, it could only exist on the level of the metaphysical. He claimed that true “racial purity” occurs when an individual’s body, soul, and spirit are in harmonious balance. Evola did not care about the “color” of a person. Instead, he considered whether a person was a “man of race” if he knew about heroism, the legacy of the civilization he was a part of, and what the individual knew about death and sacrifice in service to the transcendent reality. These were the elements that Evola valued, not membership in a biologically conceived racial group. This is how Evola evaluated officials of the Italian Fascist Party and the Third Reich.

Evola criticized National Socialist racism for its blend of biological reductionism and pan-German nationalist ideology, which he dismissed as a form of "zoological materialism."¹⁵⁵ He regarded this perspective as a materialist approach that overlooked the spiritual and soulful dimensions of humanity, tying race to reductionist and modern scientific principles rather than to any transcendent or traditional foundation where he believed racialism properly belonged. Evola rejected the biological racism espoused by figures like Alfred Rosenberg, arguing that it lacked

¹⁵³ Evola, et al., 138.

¹⁵⁴ Evola, *Elements of a Racial Education*, 14.

¹⁵⁵ Evola, et al., *Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race*, 28.

the spiritual depth necessary to underpin a cohesive and hierarchical society. While acknowledging the catastrophic consequences of Nazi racial policies—including the misuse of science, loss of life, and erosion of the rule of law—Evola distinguished between the collectivist, materialist view of race promoted by the Nazis and his vision of a spiritualist conception of racial identity.¹⁵⁶ Evola found Hitler’s racism to be ridiculous as Hitler considered a German street sweeper potentially superior to a foreign king. Evola described Hitler’s racism as a “demagogic aberration.”¹⁵⁷ Evola was critical of the obsessive fanaticism with which it was treated in the Third Reich. Evola described Hitler’s antisemitism as a manic zeal that bordered on paranoia. Biologically, Evola argued it would be impossible to prove that being a Jew was innately undesirable.¹⁵⁸

Evola’s views on race branched into a peculiar form of antisemitism. Notably, he wrote an introduction to the Italian 2nd edition of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*¹⁵⁹ and a work entitled “Three Aspects of the Jewish Problem” (1936). Like his views on race, this is an unsavory aspect of Evola’s philosophy that warrants examination. His views on the Jews were

¹⁵⁶ Julius Evola, “Notes on the Third Reich.” trans. E. Christian Kopff. In *Fascism and Tradition: Collection of Traditionalist Critiques of Fascist Movements and Regimes*, 108–83. Wewelsburg Archives, 2018, 152-155. Evola did not have much to say about the Holocaust outside of “Notes on the Third Reich.” In “Notes,” he chastised other Western powers for their treatment of Jewish refugees, including Britain for not allowing Jewish refugees to be received in Egypt, and the United States for its handling of the MS St. Louis debacle. See “Notes on the Third Reich”, 153-154. On the extermination of the Jewish people in the Third Reich and its territories, Evola stated, “For these massacres, about which the greater part of the German people learned only later, no justification or excuse can be accepted (155).”

¹⁵⁷ Evola et al., “Notes on the Third Reich,” 151.

¹⁵⁸ Evola et al., 152.

¹⁵⁹ Evola’s introduction to the *Protocols* served as an endorsement of its contents, although he did not care whether the document was authentic or fabricated. As he stated, his objective was to highlight his view that, regardless of the document’s authenticity, it accurately described a “global subversion” for which Judaism was not uniquely responsible (*Path of Cinnabar*, 178). He contended that extreme antisemitism was a tactic of a so-called “occult war” waged by the hidden forces of anti-Tradition, which used individuals as puppets, including figures like Philip the Fair, who destroyed the Knights Templar, and Hitler. According to Evola, the Jewish people were victims of this occult war, where they were made into scapegoats, diverting attention from other “subversive elements” that he does not explain. For more on Philip IV and the Templars, see Evola’s *The Mystery of the Grail: Initiation and Magic in the Quest for the Spirit*, 128. See *Men Among the Ruins*, 206-219, regarding the occult war.

largely shaped by Weininger, who, despite his Jewish heritage, was hostile to Judaism; Weininger identified with what he perceived to be modern decadence with an alleged “Jewish spirit.”

Evola’s main goal in “Three Aspects of the Jewish Problem” was to discuss the antisemitism presented by other authors, including Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927). However, as Furlong notes, “Three Aspects” was notably vague, as Evola did not clearly articulate his ideas, even though he highlighted the limitations of other antisemitic theories.¹⁶⁰ Evola believed that the alleged Jewish spirit was part of a broader Semitic, lunar spirit, which opposed the Aryan (noble) solar spirit. However, he also thought that the Kingdom of Israel exhibited characteristics similar to those of “Solar-Aryan civilizations,” such as priest-kings and the concept of a chosen people. As is the case with all civilizations, the Kingdom of Israel eventually declined, and Evola believed that the degraded spirituality following its conquest influenced Jewish culture and was carried forth by the Jews into the modern age.

As was the case with race in general, Evola focused on the purported spiritual aspect of the Jews, which was the target of his criticism. His antisemitic theories distinguished between traditional Judaism, which, as he stated, he had “little to object to,”¹⁶¹ and secular Judaism, which was the general target of his antisemitism. Unlike the antisemitism of the National Socialists and Italian Fascists, Evola’s “spiritual antisemitism” did not blame the Jews for the decline of European civilization.¹⁶² As Evola stated, “A serious formulation of the Jewish problem cannot overlook that which concerns the ‘Aryan’ peoples themselves: the Jew must be prevented from becoming a kind of scapegoat for everything that in reality the non-Jews also

¹⁶⁰ Furlong, *Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola*, 125-126.

¹⁶¹ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 177.

¹⁶² Evola et al., *Men Among the Ruins*, 77.

have to answer for.”¹⁶³ And again, in an essay entitled “The Misunderstanding of Scientific Racism,” Evola stated,

Because it is useless to try to hide it from oneself, people today are often wondering if the Jew was not ultimately a kind of scapegoat. The cases are so frequent in which the characteristics that our doctrine attributes to the Jews are fully and brazenly exhibited by ‘Aryan’ speculators, profiteers, upstarts, and—why not—even by journalists, who do not hesitate to use the most twisted and disloyal means for polemical ends.¹⁶⁴

Based on these passages, we can conclude that Evola held the antisemitic belief of a “Jewish problem” but, at the same time, believed the Jewish people were only one group among many responsible for the “subversion” of Tradition. They were, in his mind, made scapegoats and blamed, in totality, for the actions perpetrated by gentiles whose transgressions were ignored. Evola believed that there were Traditional elements and symbols within Old Testament Judaism. He stated that Kabbalah was one of the few remaining valid esoteric paths in the West for self-realization, something that one could not say for Christianity.

Yet, according to Evola, like many other peoples and religious traditions, the Jews were possessed of a degraded spirit due to the overarching cyclical decline. Evola’s caustic antisemitism comes in when he talks of certain forces, where the “Jew” acts as an archetype in the same way he uses “European” and “Christian.” In an essay entitled “We Anti-Europeans,” he uses “European” to denote the perceived secularist bourgeois decadence that has overtaken Western Europe, similarly to how he uses “Christianity,” more specifically early Christianity, as an epithet for socialism and communism. Here, this notion of “Jew” as a particular archetype is attributable to the influence of Weininger, whose method Evola likely saw as congruent with his “principle of analogy.” Here, Evola followed general antisemitic tropes, although he had significant disagreements with them. Particularly, Evola did not agree with the supposition that

¹⁶³ Evola et al., 77.

¹⁶⁴ Evola et al., 77.

Jewish influence permeated certain fields such as the arts, sciences, literature, and culture. Nor did Evola believe that the Jews were uniquely responsible for rationalism and materialism, both of which were commonly seen as elements of modernity.¹⁶⁵ Furlong points out that Evola did not deny that the Jews dominated the cultural sphere, only that modernity could not specifically be attributed to them.¹⁶⁶ Other groups, such as the “Aryans” (in the manner the National Socialists conceived), also had a hand in fashioning “abject” modernity. According to Furlong, Evola decried the idea of a grand Jewish conspiracy for world domination and revenge for past and present discrimination.¹⁶⁷ This is not to exonerate Evola from charges of antisemitism, as he did refer to universalism and the “internationalization of culture” as “viruses,”¹⁶⁸ facets commonly attributed to the Jews by antisemites. We merely point out the differences between Evola’s antisemitism and that which was common to the period.

Evola’s spiritual antisemitism is reminiscent of Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s “inner enemy” or “spiritual Jew.” Did Chamberlain influence Evola? We can say for certain that Chamberlain was not taken seriously by Evola, given he called Chamberlain an amateur and argued that he did not deserve the respect he was given in racialist circles. The similarities begin and end with attributing a spiritual aspect to the Jewish people. Again, Evola’s racial theories are, first and foremost, metaphysical. His theory of the “race of the spirit” concerns a relation between the subject and the divine. “Jewishness” was undesirable, for Evola, in the same way that “Europeanness” was undesirable, in that these groups had lost their connection with the Transcendent. In contrast to the National Socialists’ contemptible notion that Jewishness was irredeemable, Evola did not hold that the race of the spirit was fixed. He believed that it was

¹⁶⁵ Evola, “Three Aspects of the Jewish Problem”, 26.

¹⁶⁶ Furlong, *Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola*, 127.

¹⁶⁷ Furlong, 127.

¹⁶⁸ Evola, “Three Aspects of the Jewish Problem”, 19.

subject to transformation. Ideally, for Evola, all groups would rediscover the esoteric core that lay at the center of their particular traditions as a means of self-realization in the Dark Age. Nazi and Fascist racists criticized Evola for claiming that an “Aryan” could have “a Jewish soul or inner race and vice versa.”¹⁶⁹ Grimaldi, who was highly critical of Evola’s spiritual racialism, called him a “Jew lover.”¹⁷⁰ Evola was critical of the obsessive and virulent antisemitism found in the Third Reich and elsewhere. It cannot be said that Evola had a complete antipathy towards the Jews, as his philosophy was influenced by Weininger and Michaelstaedter, both of whom were Jews. He distinguished between the Jewish religion and the Jewish people. The latter he used as a symbol of the spirit of “Mammon” and noted that the Jews are not unique in this regard. Even though Evola’s spiritual racism diverged from what was common in fascist and non-fascist movements, it was nonetheless essentialist and highly prejudicial of those who fell short of Evola’s ideal, thus rendering them potentially vulnerable to discriminatory policies and attitudes. Speculatively, we might suppose that his focus on “spiritual racism” was inspired by his aristocratic pretensions, which he cultivated against the evidence of his prosaic, middle-class origins.

2.4 Political Philosophy

Evola’s political philosophy was first and foremost predicated on spiritual legitimacy, something he noted was present in the majority if not all, pre-modern civilizations. All the values, forces, traditions, and ideas that Evola holds dear preceded the French Revolution, the Third Estate, the “world of the masses,” and “bourgeois and industrial culture.”¹⁷¹ His political philosophy was profoundly aristocratic and elitist. He rejected democracy, fascism, and

¹⁶⁹ H.T. Hansen, “Julius Evola’s Political Endeavors,” 76, citing Evola.

¹⁷⁰ H.T. Hansen, 74, referencing Grimaldi.

¹⁷¹ Evola et al., “Fascism Viewed from the Right,” 16.

communism because they were quantitative rather than qualitative. Though some have associated Evola with fascism, he was distinctly reactionary in his political ideals in that he shared the vision of De Maistre, Vico, de Bonald, Chateaubriand, and Cortés. Evola's political philosophy was *idealist* in that he tried to recover the form of Traditional political organization common in the pre-modern era. His examination of Traditional notions of kingship focused on intertwining its historical form and mythical underpinnings.

A vertical axis runs through Evola's political philosophy, emblematic of his hierarchical thinking and ideal of a symbiotic relationship encompassing meta, macro, and microstructures. The harmony in the metaphysical, or divine, realm was supposed to be reflected within the structures of civilization. Thus, the celestial kingdom should be reflected in the temporal kingdom. It was the case, then, that Evola's entire political philosophy, like his ontological philosophy, aimed at imbuing the individual, the State, and all civilization with spiritual meaning. All human institutions should reflect the divine order. For Evola, the ideal historical manifestation of this integration was the Ghibelline Holy Roman Empire, whose central myth of the Grail upheld the feudal order of pope and emperor.

We need to understand Evola's political ideals, as they provide a foundation for his critical analysis of Fascism and National Socialism, which will be explored in Chapter 3. Some references to similar ideas from reactionaries—those associated with the counter-enlightenment and critical of modernity—will emphasize Evola's position within this intellectual lineage and indicate that his philosophy was distinct, sometimes radically so, from fascism. Evola's political philosophy has five aspects: the ruler, the state, the aristocracy, the caste system, and corporatism. All of these have an esoteric aspect, meaning that myth underlies each element. We will begin with Evola's ideas about rulership and end with the economy.

2.4.1 – The Ruler

For Evola, the Traditional political organization of the State was the institution of monarchy. This is not to say that only those civilizations with kings or emperors were “true civilizations.” “King” and “divine kingship” were general terms Evola used to denote what could be called the Traditional Form of rulership. Evola was not concerned whether a ruler was called pharaoh, king, chieftain, *huēyi tlahtoāni*, *huángdì* (黃帝), *tennō* (天皇), *šāhanšāh* or any other title. He was concerned that, in his view, they all participated in the Traditional notion of divine rulership, just as he viewed that all religions participated in the Integral Tradition.

True political authority was predicated on a vertical axis of power and was absolute. Monarchical authority and legitimacy were always derived from a divine source, from that which is “above.” Following Nietzsche, Evola believed in a “pathos of distance” between rulers and the masses. Various religious rituals and rites were performed, which, metaphysically speaking, bestowed upon the ruler a divine power, regality, and right to rule. These rituals and rites, historically, manifested in two forms, according to Evola. The first can be seen in the Jewish tradition and medieval consecration ceremonies, particularly the anointing of kings, which was emblematic of the divine power inhabiting the king. It was a rite that transferred the king from the profane world to the realm of the sacred.¹⁷² The second is China, where the emperor received his right to rule directly from Heaven.¹⁷³ In some cases, this right to rule was derived from the idea that the king was from a divine lineage, as seen in some Nordic peoples (Nordic here refers to the North Germanic peoples), such as the Amals. Evola also gives the example of the emperors of Japan, where, in Shinto mythology, the first emperor was a descendant of the sun goddess.

¹⁷² Evola et al., *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 66.

¹⁷³ Evola et al., 64.

The consecration ceremony was one of the initiation rites that allowed the ruler to obtain the second, higher spiritual form of race. The divine (meta-biological force) acted upon the ruler, bestowing spiritual chrism and granting an inner transformation. The ruler became *arya*, noble, as in the one who followed the “solar path.” The ruler was thus connected directly to and experienced the divine. According to Evola, this is similar to De Maistre’s notion that “God makes kings in the literal sense. He prepares royal races, maturing them under a cloud that conceals their origin. The truth is that they arise as it were of themselves, without violence on their part... .”¹⁷⁴

The divine ruler was the unification of sacred and temporal power: *sacerdotum* and *regnum*. While this was not the case in Christendom, nevertheless, Evola found that the Roman Empire in the East—Byzantium—preserved elements of Tradition in its imperial idea: The Byzantine emperor was, at the same time, Basileus Autokrator and head of the church, with his authority bestowed upon him by a transcendent source.¹⁷⁵ Following this, the Traditional notions of kingship were conceived of as the bridge between the realm of humanity and the realm of the divine. In Ancient Rome, the *Pontifex*, meaning “bridge-builder,” was exemplary and referred to the ruler. Thus, according to the Traditional notion of kingship, monarchs were “priest-kings” who bridged the immanent and transcendent. In China, while it was not as explicit as other

¹⁷⁴ Evola et al., 15.

¹⁷⁵ Evola, et al., 288. Solar and empyrean symbolism and association were a common aspect of pre-modern rulership. In Egypt, the Pharaohs were associated with Ra and Horus, the sun, the sky, and kingship. In Persian tradition, the shah is seated on the same throne as Mithras and rises with the Sun (Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 9). In Rome, some emperors were depicted with an orb, which represented universal dominion, supposedly given to them by Sol, the personification of the Sun. In various traditions, including Scandinavian, Egyptian, Greco-Roman, and Iranian, rulers were considered incarnations of their various solar deities (Evola, *Pagan Imperialism*, 39). Solarity was associated with regality, pointing to notions of glory, victory, and spiritual superiority. Evola gives examples: Pharaohs were depicted with a radiate crown represented by a disk between two horns. In the Byzantine Empire, some kings were depicted with a solar halo behind their heads, especially if they were canonized as saints. Saints across the medieval Christian world were also drawn with halos, as was Christ, known in Christianity as the king of kings, who had the Greek letters O Ω N (roughly, “He who is”).

formulations, the monarch was a third power between heaven and earth.¹⁷⁶ According to Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia*, this was also the case in Persia, where the *shah* was not only the image of the god of light but was the head of the Magi, or priestly, caste, as was the case in Rome, where the emperor was *pontifex maximus*.¹⁷⁷ The monarch acted as the embodiment of the *axis mundi* and a gravitational force reflective of an inner state of equilibrium. If the ruler lacked an inner state, the divine force that gave the monarch the right to rule would pass to another. The ruler's inner state, or being, was reflected outwards in the mystical sense; his glory was the divine force.¹⁷⁸ Thus, the ruler commands without compelling, acting as the Sun does.

Given that the power wielded by the ruler does not compel, loyalty to the sovereign was given freely because loyalty to the sovereign is loyalty to the divine. This pre-Christian notion survived into Medieval Christendom. Faithfulness to the Christian ruler demonstrated one's faithfulness to God through free will. This bond of fidelity existed in the modern period, particularly in Japan, which Evola saw in his own time as a largely Traditional society in an age of dissolution. He noted an example during the Russo-Japanese War where the Japanese general Nogi Maresuke committed suicide after his emperor's death to follow him into the afterlife.¹⁷⁹

2.4.2 The State

Evola argued that the Traditional notion of the State consists of three main elements. The first element is that, like the ruler, the State has a "transcendent" basis, which places it qualitatively above society. This contrasts with the conception of the State as merely a

¹⁷⁶ Evola, et al., 11.

¹⁷⁷ Evola, et al., 12.

¹⁷⁸ According to Evola, this was formulated in the Taoist tradition as *wei wu wei*, "acting without acting," in that the divine force emanates from the ruler through his presence. Only the ruler who is bestowed with a divine force can harmonize society. For Evola, this resembles De Maistre's description of kings as "a species of magnificent tranquility" (revolt 15, cite DM). The immutable inner state points to spiritual stability, reminiscent of the Golden Age.

¹⁷⁹ Evola, et al., 99.

representative of society or an embodiment of a specific group. The second element was that the State was all-powerful. The third element was the notion that the State was organic. These concepts form the foundation of what he termed the “True State.”

Evola used the Roman term *imperium* to describe the idea of a sacred and transcendent authority inherent in the State, representing a power that transcended mere physical and material existence. It was characterized as a mystical command and a higher order, contrasting with naturalistic associations and societal aggregations based on social or economic factors. We find such a notion in reactionaries such as Donoso Cortés and De Maistre. Historically, *imperium* was manifested in pre-modern forms of absolute rule, found in Rome, the Byzantine Empire, China, Japan, and Tsarist Russia, to name a few. *Imperium* emphasized a political unity that stood apart from the lower principles of the masses, which degraded the essence of statehood through materialistic pursuits, as in democratic and communistic regimes. The True State was thus above society, not an expression of it, and distinct from the masses, economics, and biological factors. Rather, in the True State, the political realm was defined by hierarchy, heroism, and transcendent authority.¹⁸⁰ As the ultimate reference point was spiritual, it necessarily transcended the particularities of various ethnic groups.¹⁸¹ Sovereignty, Traditionally speaking, has always been sacral. The Roman term *auctoritas* describes the authority embodied by Traditional rulers. In Imperial Rome, the transcendent point of reference was the emperor, who was considered a divine being embodied in the idea of the *imperium* itself. Faithfulness and engagement in the sacred rites of the imperial cult were the requirements for all those subject to Rome, as fidelity to the emperor was fidelity to the empire, which, in turn, was seen as a product of a transcendent

¹⁸⁰ Evola, *Men Among the Ruins*, 111.

¹⁸¹ Evola, et al., *Metaphysics of Power*, 165.

power.

The True State was all-powerful but did not *do* everything. It was the ultimate decision maker, outside the rule of law in necessary cases, but it did not inject itself into the private sphere. The True State respected the individual's liberty by not forcing conformity but freely acknowledging loyalty,¹⁸² a commitment between the sovereign and his followers and between individuals.¹⁸³ Of course, because the state was all-powerful, it was beset with the temptation of force, but this was avoided as much as possible. Evola conceived the True State as organic, where every component worked in concert, pointing towards a transcendent ideal, achieving a stable and synergistic social and political function. To this point, he believed that the State should honor individual autonomy and that loyalty to the sovereign was given freely. According to Evola, the subjects of Rome were generally not leveled (reduced to numerated abstractions) or destroyed, as he supposed was the case in modern political projects, whether Fascist, communist, or liberal. Organicism was not unique to Evola, as one can find varying degrees of the notion of an organic state in Aristotle, Aquinas, Hegel, and Burke.¹⁸⁴

Centralization in the True State was nonexistent, as the integration of sectors and particularities created a kind of pluralism. The True State recognized the liberty of the forces under its direction and channeled them into a greater unity. For Evola, this integration was present in the symbol of the Roman Pantheon, which brought together various deities while maintaining axial, religious, and temporal authority above any particularities. Another example was the depiction of ancient Pharaohs with a crook and flail, where, symbolically, the flail drove

¹⁸² Evola et al., 28, 35.

¹⁸³ Evola et al., 37.

¹⁸⁴ See Phillip Goggans, "Political Freedom and Organic Theories of States," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 38 (2004): 531-543, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10790-005-5318-7> and Michael Wolff, "Hegel's Organicist Theory of the State: On the Concept and Method of Hegel's 'Science of the State'," in *Hegel on Ethics and Politics* (2009).

the people forward into higher modes of being, and the crook reined in disorder and the collective wills of fractured individuals. Thus, the Traditional state is a gravitational force that commands but does not compel and to which parts are drawn.¹⁸⁵

2.4.3 – Aristocracy and the Idea of an “Order”

Evola argued that an Order should be the foundation of a state, serving a role similar to that of an aristocracy. Evola's concept of the elite vastly differed from that of modern elites. He believed that the elites of his time, whether in the democratic West, the Soviet Union, or Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, were spiritually inferior and did not possess the qualities of true spirituality or nobility. The elites Evola spoke about were of a “higher race,” Aryan in this case, but not at all in the Nazi sense of the term, rather in its esoteric and “true meaning” of higher spiritual individuals who follow the solar path of the gods. When Evola discussed the idea of an Order, he had in mind the knightly orders of the Crusading period, which, at their core, were continuations of the Traditional *Männerbunde*, the purported Indo-European “men’s societies,” warrior bands united by a common purpose and oriented towards the transcendent, where young men underwent rites of passage to transform them into true men.¹⁸⁶

Following Nietzsche, Evola contended that a genuine aristocracy must consider itself as the bedrock of society rather than just a product of it. In other words, it should not depend on an external authority like a monarchy or a commonwealth for its legitimacy. Rather, its power and justification should stem from its higher spirituality. Evola saw the internal manifestation of aristocracy in Nietzsche’s moral framework, which distinguished between master morality, which is associated with rulers and nobility, and slave morality, which is associated with the

¹⁸⁵ Evola et al., “Fascism Viewed from the Right” 35.

¹⁸⁶ Evola, et al., *Men Among the Ruins*, 112.

masses. In this perspective, the noble individual defined what is good based on his elevated status and dismissed the values of those he considered inferior.¹⁸⁷ As with a ruler, there should be a sense of distance based on a spiritual distinction between those lower in the social hierarchy and those higher. The aristocracy was not above the masses because of merit, exceptionality, or any other material factor but because it embodied transcendent principles and had a “regal impersonality.”¹⁸⁸ Evola rejected Machiavelli's prince, whose authority came from strength and propensity for political machinations rather than *virtus*.¹⁸⁹ Even Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, understood as individual and naturalistic power, lacked a higher foundation or justification since its doctrine views the higher aspects of life as decadent.¹⁹⁰ The basis for aristocracy was, above all, spiritual, something lacking in degraded forms of political authority. Support for aristocracy was a common feature of reactionaries, from Chateaubriand and De Maistre to Charles Maurras, though, Evola's conception differed with his idea of an Order.

In Evola's view, the significance of the Knights Templar and other Orders, such as the *hashishin*, was that the general principles, structures, rites, and functions common to all Orders were twofold. Orders were ascetic groups of warriors whose mysterious initiation rites and symbols pointed to a primordial spirituality beyond their religious affiliations. Asceticism, for Evola, was Olympian initiation, *dharma*, and the path between action and contemplation.¹⁹¹ True asceticism was achieved when the two paths were unified, and neither path dominated.¹⁹² The balance between the two was the pathway to the world of being, similar to the Daoist “Way” and

¹⁸⁷ Nietzsche, “Beyond Good and Evil”, aphorism 258, cited in Evola, *Men Among the Ruins*, 258.

¹⁸⁸ Evola, et al., *Men Among the Ruins*, 142.

¹⁸⁹ Evola et al., “Fascism Viewed from the Right,” 31.; *virtus* referred to masculine qualities of honor, courage, service to the people and state in the public sphere. If *virtus* were to be pursued as a personal goal, i.e. in the private sphere, it was not worthy of respect.

¹⁹⁰ Evola et al., *Metaphysics of Power*, 244; *Ride the Tiger*, 38.

¹⁹¹ Evola, et al., 111.

¹⁹² Evola, et al., 115.

the Golden Age primordial race who were supposedly spiritually androgynous. Asceticism involved contemplation and detachment, the goal of liberation: the transcendence of the human condition. Evola's notion of asceticism is more in line with Eastern conceptions, which, as he believed, aimed to free oneself from the bonds of the human and divine to become the absolute individual, achieving supreme autonomy. Of course, he read his philosophy into Eastern religions. Evola noted that Buddhism exemplified this: "A sense of superiority, clarity, and an indomitable spirit permeates Buddha's doctrine."¹⁹³ In the West, such a notion was found in the Neoplatonic philosophy of Plotinus, who argued that the individual should aspire to become god, not that the individual should go to the gods, essentially arguing for a transcendence of morality. Despite Evola's assertion that Christianity's asceticism was lower, he acknowledged a higher form in the Rhineland mystics. Johannes Tauler's concept of *Entwerdung* (mystical annihilation) was similar to Plotinus' concept of *aplosis* (self-renunciation), as well as Buddhism's destruction of the samsaric element of becoming (essentially escaping samsara) to achieve awakening.¹⁹⁴ In *On Detachment*, a work attributed to Meister Eckhart, Evola described *Abegescheidenheit* (detachment) as breaking the bonds from all things and becoming uninvested in that which is conditioned and external.

There were socio-political implications for asceticism. When warriors united to fight for purposes beyond their group interests, territory, and particularist political concerns, they were filled with spiritual universalism beyond individual inclinations. This was the Ghibelline ideal Evola spoke about, which was realized during the Crusades when European armies marched on the Holy Land, which, as the object of conquest, was, in some sense, analogous to the Grail.

¹⁹³ Evola, et al., 113.

¹⁹⁴ Evola, et al., 114.

During the Crusades, the warriors of Christendom put aside their desires and followed a transcendent purpose achieved through warfare. However, Evola believed a stable and well-ordered society required a balance between a path of action and contemplation, echoing counter-revolutionary philosopher Donoso Cortés' statement that "there must be a certain balance, known only to God, between contemplative life and that of action."¹⁹⁵ Evola found this to be true in Dante Alighieri and Emperor Frederick II.

The idea of an Order-based aristocracy implied a qualitative distinction between the state and society. Symbolically, "The State is under the masculine aegis, while 'society' and, by extension, the people, or demos, are under the feminine aegis."¹⁹⁶ While the masculine element was superior to the feminine element, one could not exist without the other; their roles were complementary, something seen in the Chinese tradition's *taiji* (the union of yin and yang) as well as in the Jewish and Christian traditions' notion of the "two shall becoming one flesh".¹⁹⁷ This notion had been demonstrated in Evola's historical philosophy, which stated that the domination of one spirit over the other leads to deviation or decline. Let us recall that the domination of the lunar, or feminine, spirituality over the solar, or masculine, spirituality was characteristic of the first regression from the Golden Age to the Silver Age, in which priestly passivity dominated.

2.4.4 – The Caste System

The caste system was the manifestation of the Traditional sociopolitical order. It was a hierarchical order categorizing individuals based on their functions and societal roles. Evola

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in Julius Evola, "Meditazioni Alla Certosa." *La Stampa*. February 13, 1943, XXI edition. http://www.archiviola stampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod.libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,3/articleid,1120_01_1943_0038_0003_16172878/, 3.

¹⁹⁶ Evola et al., *Men Among the Ruins*, 113.

¹⁹⁷ *Holy Bible, New King James Version*, Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:8, Ephesians 5:31.

likened it to a living organism where every part has its purpose, from the “undifferentiated and impersonal energies of matter and of mere vitality,” guided by the will, to the center, which is the sovereign power of the entire organism. At the bottom of the caste system were the workers, called *sudras*, in the Hindu tradition, who were guided by the merchant class (*vaishyas*); then, the warrior class (*ksatriya*), with whom Evola himself identified. At the top of the hierarchy were the brahmins, or *pontifices* (in Roman terms), the spiritual authority. In Europe, a similar arrangement existed during the feudal Middle Ages in the form of servants, burghers, nobility, and clergy.¹⁹⁸ The echelon in which a person was born was not accidental or an effect of material conditions. On the contrary, Traditional doctrine posited that one was born into a particular caste due to a metaphysical element. In Hindu doctrine, this determinism is described as *karma*.¹⁹⁹ Hellenistic tradition had a similar concept that suggested the soul's quality is pre-existent and serves as the determining and organizing factor of the body. In Kant and Schopenhauer's philosophies, this idea was found in the theory of an intelligible noumenal character that precedes the phenomenal world.²⁰⁰ Essentially, the caste reflected a given nature. When a person was born into a specific caste, it is because, on a metaphysical level, it has been determined that his or her spirit precluded him or her from other levels. In other words, one's nature decides which caste a person was born into. Thus, the caste system exists not by the imposition of human authority but by Transcendent authority, a law of nature, as conceived in the Traditional, metaphysical sense. It followed that the person ought to recognize his or her place within the caste system for the harmonious function of the social organism; it was a function that the Traditionalists focused on. If one were to properly fulfill the role of the caste they were born into,

¹⁹⁸ Evola, et al., *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 89.

¹⁹⁹ Evola, et al., 91.

²⁰⁰ Evola, et al., 91.

they were superior to the one who did not. A peasant or serf who performed his or her duties was superior to the priest who did not.²⁰¹ The European medieval feudal order was essentially what Evola supported, albeit with some modifications. In fact, it was De Maistre who persuaded Evola that the feudal order was a superior form of social organization.

A civilization's decline reflected Evola's concept of the regression of the castes, signifying a transition from a spiritually focused social structure to one increasingly driven by materialistic values. However, this was not just a phenomenon limited to civilizations but also globally. At the top of the caste system resided the spiritual authorities, sacred leaders, and the priesthood. Once the apex disappeared, power immediately descended to the next level, the warriors.²⁰² With the regality of blood replacing the regality of spirit, rulers no longer fulfilled the role of *pontifex maximus* and were instead military leaders or lords of temporal justice. This decline was present during the Medieval era and was fully apparent toward its conclusion. This caste regression was evident in all aspects of society. In the family structure, the sacral notion of *patria potestas* devolved to have merely a legal and authoritarian meaning, which declined further to a bourgeois conception of the family (nuclear family).²⁰³ Eventually, Evola says, the family would be superseded, in totality, by the party or society. War shifted from a conception of sacred combat, which, at its core, was ascetic and seen as a victory over death, to one where war was waged in the name of one's lord, for honor and right, then to wars that denoted a means of asserting economic domination, and, finally, to the communist conception of wars as bourgeois and unjust. From the communist perspective, the only just war was the war fought by the

²⁰¹ Evola's description makes it easy to conclude that the caste system was rigid and closed. However, moving up the hierarchy was possible if one conducted oneself in a positive manner. The reverse was also true. This notion is exemplified in "The Laws of Manu," where the text states that if an individual properly conducted himself within the echelon, he could, in theory, be reborn into a higher caste in the next life. See Evola, et al., *Revolt*, 98, note 19.

²⁰² Evola, et al., *Revolt.*, 327.

²⁰³ Evola, et al., 330.

proletariat against the capitalists and imperialists.

A further decline of the castes occurred when the aristocracies in the West collapsed, and monarchical power weakened through revolutions and the rise of constitutions. The aristocracy and monarchy were subject to the “will of the nation”; thus, “the king reigns but does not rule.”²⁰⁴ Power shifted to the third caste, the merchants, with the emergence of parliamentary republican governments and capitalist oligarchies. These new systems replaced the traditional rule of kings based on lineage and character, with power now being held by those involved in industry and commerce. Domination by the merchant class is not solely a modern phenomenon. Ancient and Medieval civilizations experienced the merchant class forcing their way into the aristocracy, forming communes, and establishing mercantile empires at the expense of Traditional authority. However, the rise of the Third Estate and its demand for rights represented the final and most decisive historical moment that set the stage for the bourgeois revolution. Social relations were no longer characteristic of the warrior caste, where a bond of fidelity was marked by faithfulness and honor, but instead was based upon economics and utilitarianism. With the breakdown of traditional social bonds and the rise of capitalism and republican political organizations, the aristocracy devolved into a plutocracy, and financial speculators and industrialists replaced warriors. In modernity, the vital element that animated the human spirit is smothered to the point where the individual acts as if it does not exist. As Evola stated,

“the market man does not know what to do with the inner fire [that illuminates humanity]: everything he has built and from which he lives is indolence, cowardice, corruption, a symbolically static element instead of a vital element, and the inner flame that lies abandoned at his feet if possessed, would unhinge all his lukewarm cities, destroy all his ridiculous ideals, comforts, voluptuous absences, idols: it would annihilate him.”²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Evola, et al., 328.

²⁰⁵ Typescript, University of Iowa Digital Dada Archive, Evola, 1.

If modern man were to rekindle the Traditional flame, Evola believed the mediocrity and the quantitative existence that characterizes the modern world would be destroyed entirely.

A regress to the fourth caste marks the current crisis in the world. The crisis of capitalism and the upper class led to a rebellion of the working class. The spread of the ideas of the 1919 Comintern and the Russian Revolution marked the shift towards materialism and what Guénon referred to as the dominance of quantity over quality. Evola believed that the Soviet Union and the United States were exemplars of caste regression. In his view, they are more similar than dissimilar in the context of the fourth caste. Both civilizations lacked spiritual structures. Whereas the Soviet Union explicitly expressed atheism, the United States subordinated its native Protestantism to consumerism and Calvinist-sanctioned pursuit of wealth.²⁰⁶

Despite Evola's disdain for communism, he saw America as the more dangerous of the two civilizations. While he characterized Soviet Russia as an iron-fisted dictatorship of "radical nationalization and rationalization" whose government dictated reality, the American spiritual crisis arose spontaneously. He argued that although the American man was not forced to accept a controlling, spiritually vacuous regime, which reduced him to a cog in a machine, he accepted it if he could maintain his physical well-being. In America, work was done to generate more work and productivity, not for the fruits of one's efforts. So, in Evola's mind, the endless cycle of generating work and profits was similar to the Soviet Union's aim of satisfying productivity quotas. Each system – the capitalist and the communist – was a manifestation of the "reign of quantity" and the centralized structures surrounding the individual rather than of any spiritual or transcendent purpose. In some sense, America was the embodiment of bourgeois existence. In spirit, if not in practice, Evola's dual critique of Soviet Communism and American political and

²⁰⁶ Evola, et al., *Revolt*, 352.

cultural power finds resonance with the non-aligned and post-colonial movements that appeared in Africa, Asia, and Latin America throughout the post-World War II era.

2.4.5 - Conclusion

In this chapter, we have elaborated on the parameters of Evola's political philosophy, which is crucial for understanding his views on Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. Evola argued that a lack of traditional political and social organization characterized modernity. He contended that the decline of the caste system is evident in contemporary society, which is marked by plebeian revolutions, the dominance of materialism, the rise of totalitarianism, and the erosion of individuality in favor of the collective.

If we were to summarize Evola's entire political philosophy in a few main points, we can say that:

1. Evola advocated for a king whose legitimacy and authority came from a divine source. The ruler acted as a bridge between the transcendent and the immanent, enacting the purpose of civilization, which was to properly orient the masses upwards to the transcendent realm.
2. The State was a reflection of the transcendent order. It was all-powerful, organic, and qualitatively above society. It operated through a naturally recognized authority granted to it from "above" to properly integrate various sectors into a harmonious order. While it was all-powerful, it was not totalitarian. It allowed for zones of autonomy and only intervened when necessary.
3. The basis of the state should be aristocratic—those who are spiritually superior. Ideally, an Order akin to the religious warrior groups embodied historically by the Hashashin and Knights Templar would serve the same function as an aristocracy.

4. Evola's ideal social organization was the caste system, with the priestly caste at the top, the warrior caste, the merchants, and the workers. Ideally, Evola wanted the warrior and priestly castes combined.
5. Corporatism and feudal economics were the preferred economic modes as they were exemplary of the ideal organic unity, having a spiritual basis and a bond of fidelity found in macrostructures, such as the relation between lord and subject and the military between soldiers.

As we have consistently reiterated, Evola's political philosophy was primarily concerned with metaphysics. He believed this had social, economic, and political implications exemplified in myths, which manifested historically in civilizations across cultures and time. With this in mind, we will move on to Evola's views on Fascism and National Socialism, focusing on the key elements where they differ.

Chapter 3

Evola's Core Ideas II: Tradition, Fascism, and National Socialism

Like many esotericists in Italy, Evola was initially enthusiastic about the arrival of Fascism in the early 1920s. *Pagan Imperialism*, published in 1928, reflected Evola's initial enthusiasm for Italy's new order. However, as time passed, his enthusiasm for Fascism waned. In Evola's maturing view, Fascism proved demagogic and plebian, not the Traditionalist movement he had envisaged, written about, and hoped for. Evola's negative critique of Fascism culminated in his post-war work, *Fascism Viewed from the Right*. In the book's second edition, Evola applied the same critical examination to the German Third Reich. Even more so than Italian Fascism, Evola found Nazism wanting. He decried the personality-driven cult of the Führer and the vulgar biological racism even while he acknowledged the importance of recognizing Hitler's significance.²⁰⁷ Evola did not try to influence the National Socialists to the same extent he did Germany's Conservative Revolutionaries, some of whom hailed from the German aristocracy. Indeed, Evola found that the disparate ideas of the Conservative Revolutionaries were more in line with his Traditionalism than with National Socialism. The Conservative Revolutionaries' ideas of aristocracy, rejection of the Enlightenment, notions of a strong state, and criticism of Marxism and capitalism appealed more to Evola than the Third Reich's "plebian" *Völkisch* nationalism. The Conservative Revolutionaries showed a greater enthusiasm for Evola's ideas than the Fascists or National Socialists, although this enthusiasm was limited. The German edition of *Pagan Imperialism* was widely circulated among Conservative Revolutionary circles. However, as with Fascism, Evola did not effectively guide the Conservative Revolutionaries

²⁰⁷ Evola et al., "Notes on the Third Reich," 115.

toward a Traditionalist path.

Evola critically analyzed Fascism, National Socialism, and, to a lesser extent, other European fascist movements using a Traditionalist framework. His criticisms were more focused on practice than on doctrine. He typically examined the rhetoric and doctrinal elements of fascism to assess how they were implemented, particularly regarding the potential for Traditionalist thought within fascism. It is important to emphasize that he aimed to identify points of agreement with Tradition rather than seeking alignment in the opposite direction.

The most significant distinction between Evola and fascism is their ultimate reference points. For Evola, this reference point was the Transcendent, a concept reiterated throughout this work. This transcendent reference point pertains to the realm of the supernatural, encompassing the gods, God, or the Forms.

Despite Evola's generally critical view of Fascism and National Socialism, he acknowledged some positive aspects of these ideologies. Specifically, he noted elements that aligned with Traditional concepts of politics or, at the very least, approached Traditional ideas about social, economic, or political organization. However, Evola concluded that these positive aspects were never fully realized; they remained merely a shadow of their potential. This was due in part to the ephemeral nature of the Fascist and National Socialist regimes, as well as their failure to look beyond the physical realm.

As previously mentioned, Evola's ideal was a "Romano-Germanic Imperium." This concept represented his desire to resurrect the Ghibelline Holy Roman Empire, ideally without its Christian elements. However, he envisioned extending this "imperium" beyond Italy and Germany to unite all of Europe; this was Evola's vision of Empire. He likened the Empire to a body that only becomes whole when united under a guiding soul (which he viewed as pagan).

For Evola, Empire was inherently supranational and could not be fully realized without a proper gravitational force—specifically, a divine ruler oriented toward something greater than himself. His model for Empire was based on the Roman and Holy Roman prototypes.

Evola believed that fascism and National Socialism should abandon their fascist elements and return to the Traditional principles of kingship, aristocracy, and the feudal order. He considered these fascist movements, along with others in Europe, as preliminary steps toward a more advanced form of political organization. For Evola, the True State would serve as a grand gravitational center, much like a divinely appointed ruler functioned in pre-modern civilizations. Drawing on Vico's ideas, he argued that the “haughtiness of nations” must be overcome to establish a True State. He believed a “supra-ordained authority, one recognized as such, ought to act as the bond and center of a system conceived as an ‘organism composed of other organisms. A limitation of the sovereignty of individual states is only acceptable — I suggested — if it serves the interests of such a ‘legally pre-eminent’ authority.”²⁰⁸ Here, Evola reaffirmed his ideal of a “Holy European Empire,” emphasizing three major elements of Traditional politics that, in many cases, opposed fascism. The first was the notion of authority, of the ruler and the State, that derived from a supernatural power. The second was organicism, which was opposed to fascism’s totalitarianism. The third was a rejection of nationalism, as it was conceived of under fascism. Evola discerned a Traditional echo in fascism and sought to awaken these buried elements to transform it into something higher. For instance, nationalism had the potential for a higher unity. There is no doubt that there are similarities between Evola’s philosophy and fascism, which he acknowledges. However, for Evola, fascism was, at best, an emergency ideology—something he hoped would lead to something greater. We will contrast Evola’s political ideas with fascism in

²⁰⁸ Evola et al., *The Path of Cinnabar*, 197.

the following sections. As Evola wrote in a 1959 article, “Those of us who, while defending an order of ideas only partially coincident with Fascism, collaborated with this movement despite knowing its flawed or deviant aspects, did so counting on its possible further developments.”²⁰⁹

3.1 The “True Right”

Evola’s critical examination of Fascism came from the Right, but a Right beyond Fascism, from what he terms the “True Right.” Evola’s works on Fascism and National Socialism are unique as they critically analyze fascist regimes from a reactionary perspective. He noted where Fascism aligned with Tradition and where it fell short. Evola noted that Fascism was mythologized by both its supporters and opponents. While supporters of Fascism idealized Mussolini and ignored Fascism's shortcomings, opponents constructed a view of Fascism that tendentiously foregrounded its most problematic aspects at the expense of its purported positive features.²¹⁰ It must again be emphasized that Evola’s critiques of Fascism and National Socialism were meant for those seeking a spiritual basis for a socio-political doctrine.

It is first necessary to understand what Evola meant by “the Right” or “True Right.” The Right for Evola had little or no relation to the conventional political definition, which lumped monarchists, Fascists, and conservative-leaning democrats in an ostensible rightist camp within the context of Italy’s parliamentary system. For Evola, the “True Right” was the recipient and affirmer of the values derived from a transcendent and sacral source. The True Right should not see itself as one of several parties or simply as the negation of the Left. Indeed, according to Evola, the entire edifice of democracy and party politics was misguided. Instead, the True Right

²⁰⁹ Julius Evola, “La Destra, Il fascismo, e la mitologizzazione.” In *I testi de Il Conciliatore*, ed. Anna Valerio, (Avellino, Italy: Edizioni di Ar, 2002), 42.

²¹⁰ Julius Evola, “Fascism Viewed from the Right,” trans. E. Christian Kopff. In *Fascism and Tradition: Collection of Traditionalist Critiques of Fascist Movements and Regimes* (Wewelsburg Archives, 2018), 1–99, 18.

should represent a “higher demand,” the embodiment of the values derived from the forces, traditions, and super-national unities that had formative effects on pre-modern states.²¹¹ In Evola’s view, the small yet notable presence of democratic elements in Mussolini’s Fascist State, exemplified by the Grand Council of Fascism, where members were allowed to vote, weakened the structure of the State. The True Right must reinstate the structures of divine kingship within an organic state while emphasizing the values of aristocracy and the warrior caste as opposed to bourgeois conceits and intellectual fetishism.²¹² In Evola’s view, military traditions like Prussianism are among the values of the warrior caste. However, he seems to have overlooked the irony that Prussian virtues were partly derived from bourgeois culture and the Enlightenment. Evola’s notion of Right, according to his definition, has nothing to do with modern notions of conservatism or even Fascism but has everything to do with Traditional values. As Evola believed, these political, social, and ontological structures were the norm in pre-modern, pre-Enlightenment, and pre-revolutionary civilizations.

3.2 Nationalism

One of the main features of fascism is an extreme form of nationalism – “ultra-nationalism,” as Roger Griffin calls it.²¹³ Evola was highly critical of nationalism, seeing it as plebeian in nature. For Evola, nationalism, as it was conventionally conceived, must be overcome if there was to be a restoration of Traditional principles. Nationalism emerged after the medieval aristocracy, guilds, and caste systems dissolved in the wake of the French Revolution. Evola described nationalism as subversive, anti-hierarchical, collectivist, and demagogic.²¹⁴ According

²¹¹ Evola et al., 16.

²¹² Julius Evola, “What it Means to Belong to the Right,” in *A Handbook for Right-Wing Youth* (London: Arktos Media, 2017), 50.

²¹³ Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 36-38.

²¹⁴ Evola et al., *Men Among the Ruins*, 217.

to Evola, leaders were no longer associated with a higher purpose but became civil functionaries who influenced the political structure linked to the economy, the basis for the collectivist conception of the nation.²¹⁵ For Evola, the unity in nationalism is artificial, given the lack of a spiritual hierarchy and ties. The caste system allowed individuals to function within a cohesive unity, which was eventually replaced by the impersonal concept of the masses. Nationalism then acted upon the masses, using the galvanizing power of myth to instill perspectives and fantasies of supremacy, exclusivism, and power.²¹⁶ Even when nationalism appealed to heritage, it was different from Tradition. Evola agreed with G.K. Chesterton that the nationalist tradition was the “democracy of the dead.”²¹⁷ The substance of nationalism was not an *ethnos*, such as Evola found in the Middle Ages, but *demos*, representing a mass of individuals. According to Evola, nationalism had no natural element that integrated individuals into a harmonious system through participation in a hierarchy. In the caste system, everyone had a specific function, and there was a superior authority to which the individual was "organically" connected through a bond of fidelity. In nationalism, individuality is suppressed in favor of a collective identity that sees the individual only as a *citoyen* or *l'enfant de la patrie*. In contrast, in Traditional unities, the individual integrated the universal principle, the Form, in Aristotelian terms, into his or her nature, connecting himself or herself to a source of transcendent authority.²¹⁸ Under nationalism, spiritual authority is always subordinated to collective unity.²¹⁹ This is the case in National Socialism, which defers to the will of the *Volk*. Evola had very little appreciation for nationalism

²¹⁵ Julius Evola and Cologero Salvo, “Pagan Imperialism,” in *Pagan Imperialism and Metaphysics of War* (Wewelsburg Archive, 2018), 1–104, 96.

²¹⁶ Evola, et al., *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 339.

²¹⁷ Evola et al., 340.

²¹⁸ Evola et al., 338.

²¹⁹ Evola et al., *Men Among the Ruins*, 114.

throughout history. He believed that, since the French Revolution, nationalism had aligned itself with revolutionary, constitutional, liberal, and democratic forces. This alignment ultimately undermined whatever remnants of the Traditional order remained in Europe.²²⁰ Low or common forms of nationalism are present whenever the collectivity is defined by material and sub-intellectual notions, such as blood and soil.²²¹ The nation, understood in terms of ethnicity or biological race, becomes the foundation upon which authority is established. Evola argued that a democratic aspect arises when the 'mob' challenges a leadership that does not reflect the people's will.

Nationalism, however, was not beyond redemption. If the nation were envisioned in a genuine spiritual sense, as opposed to the pseudo-spirituality of Fascism, it could embody a form of "higher nationalism." To elevate nationalism, it is essential to promote higher spiritual values that transcend collective identities based on ethnicity and biological race. This form of nationalism does not focus on the will of the people and is not rooted in the traditional concept of the nation. Instead, it shapes the emerging Traditional political system comprised of spiritual elites capable of leading the masses into higher ontological states. In such a system, soldiers fight not for the nation or rights but for the king, who was given authority and sovereignty from a transcendent source.²²² The purpose of a higher form of nationalism is to elevate individuals by connecting them to something greater than themselves. It aims to "re-personalize" the individual, giving them a meaningful role within the larger community. Additionally, it seeks to foster a sense of loyalty to a superior authority that represents a divine ideal. In a sense, the individual's spiritual development is the end goal of nationalism. Evola hoped that Fascism could serve as the

²²⁰ Evola et al, 114.

²²¹ Evola et al., 230.

²²² Julius Evola, "Two Faces of Nationalism," trans. E. Christian Kopff. In *Fascism and Tradition: Collection of Traditionalist Critiques of Fascist Movements and Regimes* (Wewelsburg Archive, 2018), 226.

bridge to the higher form of nationalism, explaining his desire to influence Fascist officials. Perhaps, if nationalism were to embody this “higher” form, it would cease to be nationalism at all.

We have mentioned Evola’s concept of “supranational unity.” Evola believed that a unity of a higher order, i.e. a spiritual unity, can only exist if there was a universal, transcendent point of reference. Evola conceived of supranational unity as one that was not particular to a group but transcends borders. For instance, Evola points to the Crusades, where the European kingdoms united to occupy the Holy Land in a military effort that looked much like a Grail quest. The unity in the Crusades went beyond ethnic, cultural, or linguistic differences. Considering the history of the Crusading Period, we can conclude that this supposed “supranational unity” was merely an ideal for Evola. Historically, the Crusades did not prevent conflicts between European kingdoms or Muslim factions. In essence, supranational unity was another word for Evola’s ideal of imperium.

Griffin argues that fascist groups saw one another as “kindred spirits,” thus creating the basis for alliances.²²³ However, in its classic, mid-twentieth-century forms, fascist ideology is particular to individual nations. The proposed unity expressed by fascist groups across national borders had no spiritual point of reference. Evola, by contrast, wanted to unite Europe under the banner of a “Roman-Germanic Imperium” by resurrecting the esoteric meaning of the Middle Ages, the “Age of the Center,” in which, mythologically speaking, the Universal Ruler would awaken from his slumber, the legendary Dry Tree would bloom, and the hero of the Grail would appear. The ruler of the *imperium – dominium mundi* or Son of Heaven - would be the

²²³ Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 13.

gravitational force around which society orbited and the bridge between the physical and metaphysical realms.

3.3 Divine Rulers and Fascist Dictators

Let us review and summarize Evola's ideal notion of the ruler. First and foremost, a Traditional ruler's legitimacy, authority, and sovereignty came from a divine source. The bestowment of the ruler's right to rule was expressed in initiatory rites and rituals. This was done either through a mediator, i.e., an individual from the priestly caste, or came directly from the divine itself, whether through initiatory rites, divine lineage, or some combination thereof, as seen in various traditions. Through these rites and rituals, the ruler obtained the second, higher form of race, directly connected to the transcendent. In a sense, the ruler was the icon or manifestation of the divine. The ruler's function was anagogic, as one of the main purposes was to serve as a bridge between the transcendent and immanent, to orient society upwards to the metaphysical realm. There was a "distance" between the ruler and society, a qualitative distinction of spiritual superiority that separated the ruler and the aristocracy from the masses.

Fascist dictators governed primarily through a single party, seeking to generate public enthusiasm while maintaining control over conservative forces such as churches, armies, and organized economic interests. They aimed to mobilize and harness popular support for their regimes, distinguishing themselves from traditional authoritarian dictatorships, which often "demobilized public opinion".²²⁴ The cult of personality that Evola identified in Fascism and National Socialism was antithetical to the idea of a freely given loyalty to the ruler. The mobilization of the masses found in democracies and various fascist regimes was done by emotionally manipulating the masses. Evola argued that there was a transient characteristic to the

²²⁴ Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 9, note 34.

cult of leadership. He likened it to a magnet (Mussolini or Hitler) that initially attracted all particles (the masses). But the magnetic field failed, and the metal particles fell from the magnet and instantly became scattered.²²⁵

In these cults of leadership, there is no pathos of distance. Instead, there was, as Paxton notes, “a mysterious direct communication with the *Volk* or *razza*.”²²⁶ In National Socialism, in particular, the *Führer* was seen as the embodiment of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Evola was highly critical of the overwhelming figure of the leader in fascism. Evola found that the emotional bond of the people to Hitler bordered on hysteria.²²⁷ Evola considered whether Hitler himself might have been possessed, as his personality exhibited obsessive, paranoid, and fanatical traits, showing a complete disregard for limits. This lack of moderation and restraint led to numerous disasters, with Nazi policies spiraling out of control and culminating in genocide. Evola criticized these dictators for their plebeian backgrounds, noting that none came from the nobility and their authority lacked a spiritual foundation. He noted that Mussolini’s legitimacy was primarily derived from political maneuvers, legislative manipulation, and the exploitation of crises in Italy. Nevertheless, he hoped Mussolini would eventually relinquish his power to Victor Emmanuel III. Little did he know that Mussolini privately regarded Victor Emmanuel III contemptuously, calling him “the little sardine” behind his back.²²⁸

Evola's critique of fascist dictators emphasizes their departure from the Traditional ideal of leadership, which is based on divine authority and spiritual legitimacy. Instead of serving as anagogic rulers oriented toward the Transcendent, Hitler, and Mussolini relied on political manipulation, charisma, and mass mobilization. This approach fostered emotional and irrational

²²⁵ Evola et al., “Fascism Viewed from the Right,” 53.

²²⁶ Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 126.

²²⁷ Evola et al., “Notes on the Third Reich,” 139.

²²⁸ Neville, Peter. *Mussolini*. 2nd ed. New York, New York: Routledge, 2015, 52.

connections with the people, which Evola regarded as hysterical and plebeian. Their inability to demonstrate restraint or recognize limits—particularly in Hitler's case—led to destructive policies and a failure to establish a higher and enduring order. Their rule was transient for Evola, lacking the spiritual legitimacy and structural permanence a monarchical and aristocratic system would have provided.

3.4 Organicism, Corporatism, and Totalitarianism

Julius Evola was highly critical of the economism that characterized liberal governments in Italy and elsewhere in the West during the post-war period. In this system, economic interests took precedence over all other considerations, leading to a situation in which the state became subordinate to the economy; in stark contrast to the values of pre-modern civilizations. Evola's perspective aligned closely with Leo Strauss, who argued that modern politics and economics had diverged too far from classical and traditional thought. Taking additional cues from the work of Oswald Spengler, he asserted that the dominance of the economy was a sign of a culture in its later stages. In this line of thought, the idea of *homo economicus*, which suggests that “the economy is our destiny,” was only plausible in a decadent culture where economic interests are paramount.

For Evola, the fascists' rejection of economism and their resistance to the dominance of capitalist forces over politics were positive aspects of their ideologies. As he saw it, fascist Corporatism, in theory, reaffirmed the primacy of the State, where the economy was integrated within the socio-political system without being overshadowed by free market competition, excessive state intervention, or centralization. The corporatist principle moved away from class animosities in the interests of national integration. However, in Evola's view, fascist Corporatism did not go far enough in reviving the pure organicism of the Medieval socio-economic model. In

particular, Evola decried Mussolini's half-measures in curbing Italy's potentially destabilizing union movement; under the influence of the Syndicalist Georges Sorel, who argued that unions had revolutionary potential, Mussolini placed the unions under nationalist oversight. Evola found this compromise problematic. He argued that Mussolini's union policy created the conditions for a "state within a state" as unions demanded rights and justice, which traditionally fell under the aegis of the Traditional state.²²⁹ In his view, unions solidified the divisions between employers and workers instead of fostering a climate of harmonious unity.²³⁰ For Evola, the "true" corporation concept drew on a legacy from the Middle Ages. It was associated with artisan workmanship, which offered a model for reconstructive action guided by the organic principle.

Evola identified certain corporatist elements within National Socialism, Spain's Falangism, and Salazar's Portugal, suggesting that these regimes were closer to achieving an organic unity than Italian Fascism. He believed that the Nazi Work Order Act of 1934 represented a step towards achieving a higher form of organic unity than what Italian Fascism offered. The Act established a relationship between factory owners and workers that aimed to transcend the profit-seeking motives of capitalists and the "salary-seeking" mindset of workers. However, although the Work Order Act included provisions requiring owners to care for the well-being of their workers, it failed to create a personal relationship between owners and workers akin to that found in pre-modern societies, diminishing the overall sense of unity.

Evola criticized totalitarianism because it was incompatible with the idea of a Traditional, organic state that valued spiritual principles and the significance of the individual. Right-wing totalitarianism was concerned with upward transcendence stemming from a climate of high tension where the individual was called to move beyond material self-interest to

²²⁹ Evola et al., "Fascism Viewed from the Right," 68.

²³⁰ Evola et al., 69.

something higher: the nation in the case of Fascism or the *Volk* in the case of National Socialism. These were not the transcendent movements that Evola envisioned, as what transcended the individual under fascism did not imply anything otherworldly; even if expressed in quasi-mystical terms, it remained immanent.

Evola opposed the Fascist state because it substituted itself for everything else, as expressed in Mussolini's formulation of, "Everything in the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state." He likened the character of the Fascist state to that of a schoolteacher who exercised pressure on the individual's morality.²³¹ Evola was critical of the Fascists' program of repressing and inhibiting sex as well as their pro-natalist campaigns, which he opposed because the approach was quantitative rather than qualitative. The Fascist state's preoccupation with "little morality," a morality centered around conformism, was, in Evola's view, bourgeois and differed little from the regime of the Christian Democrats.²³² The True State respected individual liberty. It did not force conformity but acknowledged a free commitment to loyalty.²³³ The True State's power may have been absolute. Still, it recognized the liberty of the various forces under its direction and aimed to channel them into participating in a greater unity. We may use the example of ancient Pharaohs with a crook and flail, where, symbolically, the flail drives the people forward into higher modes of being, and the crook reins in disorder and the collective wills of fractured individuals. Thus, it can be said that the traditional state acts as a gravitational center that commands without compelling and to which its constituent parts are drawn.²³⁴

²³¹ Evola et al., 38.

²³² Evola et al., 38, 105.

²³³ Evola et al., 28, 35.

²³⁴ Evola et al., 35.

3.5 Transcendence and Time

One of the major disagreements between Evola's ideas and fascism hinged on the notion of transcendence, meaning "above" or "beyond" the self and the physical realm, and the conception of time with regard to civilizational creation. Whereas Evola's notion of transcendence was oriented toward a metaphysical goal, fascist transcendence did not exceed the temporal realm. Griffin explains in *Modernism and Fascism* that fascism attempted to address modernity's spiritual and cultural crises by creating new meaning within modern socio-political systems. This was a "temporalized utopia," in which fascists sought to overcome societal "decadence" and construct a regenerative national order infused with sacred or mythic qualities.²³⁵ However, as Emilio Gentile noted, these sacred and mythical qualities were not genuinely religious. Rather, they were approximations of the sacred because they were tied to the secular, political realm.²³⁶

Unlike the Fascists, National Socialists, Soviets, or anarchists, who offered an alternative modernity, Evola sought to overcome modernity by reinstating the metaphysical order that, he believed, formed the basis of pre-modern civilizations. We can thus distinguish between two types of transcendence: actual transcendence, pointing to that which is beyond the physical realm (the metaphysical, the realm of the Forms, of the gods, Heaven, or some "place" beyond time and space in which the Absolute resides), which Evola touted, and immanent transcendence, common to the fascists, which referred to that which is "beyond" conventional politics but did not point to a metaphysical reality. Evola believed that the True State, represented by its ruler and

²³⁵ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 89.

²³⁶ "The sacralisation of politics is a modern phenomenon: it takes place when politics, after having secured its autonomy from traditional religion by secularising both culture and the state, acquires a truly religious dimension (Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics*, 22)."

aristocracy and structured through a caste system, was superior to the fascist state because it possessed just such a sacred character. In contrast, the Italian Fascist State lacked an “upward pull;” it did not have a reference point outside itself, as it served as “the source of all values in the individuals composing it.”²³⁷ According to Evola, the political sphere was always a manifestation of the sacred realm whose laws came from above. In this sense, the temporal kingdom was an image of the celestial kingdom; genuine authority came with spiritual chrism obtained either directly from the sacred or representative of the sacred. In Evola’s view, if Mussolini were a genuine leader and not a plebian demagogue, he would have had to have been, at the very least, anointed by the pope. Evola’s Traditionalist perspective demanded that genuine authority and civilization emerge from an alignment with immutable, transcendent laws, a standard that he believed fascism’s revolutionary ethos and temporal ambitions could never meet.

There is a stark difference between how Evola and the fascists conceived of time. This difference had political implications. We have already explained Evola’s historical philosophy, that he believed in a grand, cosmic cycle that regresses from an age characterized by the primacy of spiritual forces to an age of materialism. Evola's emphasis on myth and religious understanding is rooted in a belief in sacred time, what Eliade referred to as the “actualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past.”²³⁸ Evola argued that civilization emerges only when the Transcendent acts within history, such as when a competition between Athena and Poseidon resulted in the foundation of Athens. Evola did not believe this founding event *literally* took place, but that as a myth, it was metaphysically and archetypally true.

²³⁷ Gentile, Giovanni. “The Philosophic Basis of Fascism.” *Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 2 (1928): 290–304. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20028606>, 301.

²³⁸ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959), 68-69.

Fascism, on the other hand, aimed at regenerating the nation and eventually all of Europe through an immanent mythopoesis. Mussolini saw Fascism as the agent that shaped history, a cosmogonic power made evident in the declaration of *Anno I* of the Fascist Era. Mussolini's idea of the recreation of the Roman Empire was an act of Fascism, not of some otherworldly power. While other cultures may have founding myths that have a past, a "time of the gods," Fascism's conception of historical time was focused on human agency.

Evola's political philosophy exhibits a unique blend of Traditionalism and critique of modernity, positioned distinctly from other reactionary thinkers and movements of his time. He envisioned a transcendent conception of the state and society that drew legitimacy from metaphysical rather than populist principles. Unlike Mussolini's Fascism and Hitler's National Socialism, which were anchored in the mobilization of the masses and radical nationalism, Evola advocated for a return to a hierarchical order based on spiritual aristocracy and a divinely ordained monarchy. His ideal ruler would act not merely as a political leader but as a metaphysical conduit, imbuing the state with sacred legitimacy and orienting society towards higher spiritual goals. This vision starkly contrasts with both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, where the state was centered around charismatic leadership and mass politics. Evola's detachment from these movements stemmed from his belief that they failed to embody the true traditional values and instead succumbed to modernity's degradation, rendering them insufficient vehicles for the transcendent renewal he envisaged.

Chapter 4

Evola and Neo-Fascism, 1945-1974

For Evola, the emergence of Fascism and National Socialism represented a potential starting point for what he referred to as the “revolution from above.” However, over time, he recognized that neither Fascism nor National Socialism was the suitable vehicle for the restoration he had envisioned. The alignment between Evola and these movements ultimately proved to be imperfect. While Evola believed that the Fascists and Nazis replaced the Transcendent source of authority with demagogic nationalism, the Fascists and Nazis regarded Evola with indifference or as eccentric. As we shall see in this chapter, Evola’s ideas found better purchase with the cohort of young postwar neo-fascists for whom Evola’s brand of Traditionalism was a panacea in the new global era of American and Soviet materialism. Yet again, the fit between Evola and the political firebrands, this time represented by the neo-fascists, proved imperfect.

4.1 “Men Among the Ruins”

After three years and eight months in various Austrian hospitals, Evola returned to Italy on October 28, 1948. Italy was then a newly formed liberal democracy with a parliament dominated by the right-of-center and American-supported Christian Democrat Party – the converse of all that Evola stood for. Evola was still in a weakened condition, and he spent some time in a recovery hospital in Bologna²³⁹ before returning to his old apartment on Corso Vittorio Emanuele II in 1950, where he resumed reading, writing, and receiving visitors. Among those who called were Pino Rauti (1926-2012) and Enzo Erra (1926-2011), who were leaders in the

²³⁹ De Turris, 206-7.

“Intellectualist-aristocratic” youth wing of a neo-fascist organization²⁴⁰ called *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (The Italian Social Movement, MSI), who first met Evola during his convalescence in Bologna. The MSI was established in 1946 by Giorgio Almirante and other progenitors of the short-lived Salò Republic.

Unlike the national Fascism of the *Ventennio* (the Twenty Years of Rule), the MSI shifted from the narrow nationalist purview typical of the interwar movements to an outlook that was not just anti-liberal and anti-Communist but also pan-European, and concentrated “on the primacy of the ‘cultural’ over ‘political hegemony.’”²⁴¹ Whereas the original fascist movements were propelled by the need for social integration and the conflict between or among nations, this postwar iteration of fascism responded to more expansive, transnational phenomena, namely, the global face-off between America and the USSR and the accentuation of globalization processes thereafter. In 1950 and 1951, MSI held two meetings, one in Rome and the other in Malmö, Sweden, from which emerged the European Social Movement, which sought to promote a pan-Europeanism opposed to America and the Soviet Union, mainly on the claim that they were materialist and culturally decadent.²⁴² We can thusly say this part of the “neo-fascist” project was *civilizational* in scale.

While Rauti, Erra, and their colleagues agreed with the main lines of MSI’s politico-cultural project, they decried the movement’s decision at the 1956 national congress to formally

²⁴⁰ As A. James Gregor points out in his book *The Search for Neo-fascism: The Use and Abuse of Social Science* (2006), the term “neo-fascism” is nebulous given the relative lack of academic precision applied to studying the phenomenon.

²⁴¹ Roger Griffin. “Fascism’s Evolution Since 1945.” In *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, edited by Matthew Feldman, 132–180. Basingstoke, (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 166.

²⁴² Anna Cento Bull. “Neo-Fascism.” in *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, 586–605. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 592. According to Bull, the German magazine *Nation und Europa* emerged from these meetings under the editorship of former SS commander Arthur Ehrhardt. The magazine hosted Evola and members of the *Nouvelle Droite*, like Alain de Benoist. Evola’s contribution to the discussion was to pitch pan-Europeanism as a union held together by common deference to Tradition. See Evola’s *Pagan Imperialism*, 93.

ally with moderate conservatives to oppose the common enemy of communism within the parliamentary arena. In their view, MSI's willingness to contest elections undercut fascism's original anti-democratic and extra-parliamentary orientation. But more than that, the young neo-fascists emphasized spirituality more than what was seen in MSI. In their view, the worldwide tsunamis of materialism, environmental degradation, runaway capitalism, and superpower hegemony could only be checked through recourse to what "metapolitics" – the term popularized by the French Nouvelle Droite in the 1970s that referred to politics in terms of "timeless truths" or the world's "natural order."²⁴³ Possessed of notions and feelings but lacking a cohesive doctrine, they looked to Evola's notions of *uomo differenziato* ("the differentiated man") and *spirito legionario* (the "legionary spirit") and other core concepts of his philosophy as the way forward. Evola's mytho-reactionary doctrine accepted no compromise, made no attempts to conform to the dictates of the American Century, and stood as its absolute antithesis. As Francesco Baroni put it, "Based on a sophisticated and polemical counter-narrative, Evola's idea of 'Tradition' could serve as an ideological anchor in today's chaotic transformations and as a matrix for new identity constructions."²⁴⁴

The retrospective testimonies of persons affiliated with the young, dissident faction of neo-fascists lend weight to this assessment. Fausto Gianfranceschi, a one-time member of MSI who joined FAR and was imprisoned following the 1951 trial, recalled how the Italian post-war period shaped his political outlook, setting him on a path to find the works of Evola and eventually meeting the philosopher. He recalled the humiliation they felt when crowds cheered the American troops when they entered Rome triumphantly. This humiliation was intensified by

²⁴³ Ferraresi, "Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction and the Radical Right," 142.

²⁴⁴ Baroni, "The Philosophical Gold of Perennialism: Hans Thomas Hakl, Julius Evola and the Italian Esoteric Milieus," 56.

the sight of the speculators and businessmen who hurried to rebuild Italy's shattered economy, motivated not by national interest but by the prospect of profit. He and his compatriots spent hours in the National Library, enlightening their minds about the reasons for Italy's postwar condition. Then, Gianfranceschi stumbled upon Evola's *Revolt Against the Modern World*, which gave him the answers he sought. Gianfranceschi concluded that his aversion to current affairs was rooted in a specific way of being, rooted in what Evola referred to as a "hidden heritage" that transcends contingent factors.²⁴⁵

The neo-fascist writer Romano Cattaneo wrote similarly of the existential state of the right-wing youth in Italy after the war. He stated, "We were born in time to suffer through the end of a badly lost war, and burning inside of us was the desire for something that transcended the misery of those days and of those that would follow."²⁴⁶ Cattaneo discovered that Evola's works, especially *Men Among the Ruins*, had profoundly "changed [his] being."²⁴⁷

Evola was gladdened by these young men who "sought to avoid falling prey to the general collapse."²⁴⁸ He, too, was disenchanted with MSI's willingness to participate in the parliamentary system, leading him to compare it with what he viewed to be its compromising predecessor, the Fascist state of the "Twenty Years."²⁴⁹ Assuming the role of sage,²⁵⁰ though not leader, he wrote a pamphlet for the MSI youth wing, *Orientamenti* (Guidelines), published in

²⁴⁵ Fausto Gianfranceschi, "L'influenza Di Evola Sulla Generazione Che Non Ha Fatto in Tempo a Perdere La Guerra," ,” essay, in *Testimonianze Su Evola*, ed. Gianfranco de Turris (Rome, Italy: Edizioni Mediterranee - Roma, 1973), 133.

²⁴⁶ Quoted in Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy*, 130.

²⁴⁷ Quoted in Drake, 130.

²⁴⁸ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 185

²⁴⁹ Elisabetta Cassina Wolff. "Apolitia and Tradition in Julius Evola as Reaction to Nihilism." *European Review* 22, no. 2 (2014): 258–73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S106279871400009X>, 265. In the mid-60s, Evola evaluated Fascism and released the second edition of *Il Fascismo vista dalla Destra, con Note sul III Reich* (Fascism Viewed from the Right with Notes on the Third Reich), in which he reiterated his conclusion that fascism is wanting.

²⁵⁰ Gianfranceschi, "L'influenza Di Evola Sulla Generazione Che Non Ha Fatto in Tempo a Perdere La Guerra," 129–34, 133.

1950 in its journal *Imperium*, which provided it with ideological instruction. Evola envisaged the seeds of a true Traditionalist polity in these new disciples. “Ideal, Order, elite, Men of the Order, thus the ranks should be held, as far as possible.”²⁵¹ It was partly on account of *Orientalmenti* that Evola was caught in the police dragnet that followed the bombings undertaken by FAR, leading to the 1951 trial. Evola’s subsequent major work, *Men Among the Ruins* (1953), was an offshoot of *Orientalmenti*.²⁵² Unfazed by his imprisonment and subsequent trial, Evola outlined in this book a political perspective and principles for life that rejected all ideologies arising from the French Revolution. With the neo-fascists in mind, he called for a cadre of “reactionary supermen” imbued with Tradition to arise from the wreckage (“the ruins”) of postwar Europe²⁵³ and reverse the downward spiral of the top-level leaders enslaved by blind faith in progress and the rise to power of the masses.²⁵⁴ Such men, Evola enthused, must be idealistic and reject materialism and the nihilism of the age. They must be organized in an *Ordine*, a “male society” that took its cues from the supposed *Männerbund* and Teutonic Knights or the Knights Templar.

In 1956, Rauti, who remained close to Evola, broke off from MSI to create a more radical political movement that he believed was “immune to the democratic viruses”²⁵⁵ infecting the parent body. The name given to the new organization, *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order), reflected

²⁵¹ Quoted in Franco Ferraresi, “Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction, and the Radical Right,” *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 28, n. 10 (1987), 130.

²⁵² It is a testimony to the book’s impact on the neo-fascists that Prince Valerio Borghese wrote its introduction. Valerio Borghese was the son of one of Rome’s most ancient families, a veteran of the Second Abyssinian War, and a World War II submarine officer who was active in the MSI. Nicknamed the “Black Prince,” Borghese would be involved in a botched neo-fascist coup attempt against the government in late 1970. See Jack Greene and Alessandro Massignani, *The Black Prince and the Sea Devils: The Story of Valerio Borghese and the Elite Commandos of the Decima MAS* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004), 200-228.

²⁵³ Fausto Gianfranceschi, “L’influenza Di Evola Sulla Generazione Che Non Ha Fatto in Tempo a Perdere La Guerra,” essay, in *Testimonianze Su Evola*, ed. Gianfranco de Turreis (Rome, Italy: Edizioni Mediterranee - Roma, 1973), 129–34.

²⁵⁴ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 188.

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Wolff, Elisabetta Cassina. "CasaPound Italia: ‘Back to Believing. The Struggle Continues’", *Fascism* 8, 1 (2019): 61-88, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00801004>, 69.

Evola's idea that an Order should form the basis of a state, serving a role similar to that of an aristocracy (see above in chapter 2).²⁵⁶ Rauti and his initial 600 followers adopted Evolian spiritual considerations in their avowed effort to rescue Italy, and by extension, the rest of Europe, from the controlling influences of America and the Soviet Union. According to *La Stampa*, they gave themselves the Evola-inspired name, the "children of the sun," and claimed to represent a high form of spirituality.²⁵⁷ Rauti so thoroughly incorporated Evola's philosophy of heroic ideals, the Knights Templar and the myth of the Grail, and the Traditional Warrior aristocracy into *Ordine Nuovo's* ideology that he warranted accusations of plagiarism.²⁵⁸ By the late 1960s, Rauti's organization, adorned with its distinctive fasces and double-ax symbol, had "around 3,500 militants...and between ten and eleven thousand members."²⁵⁹ Evola was more impressed with *Ordine Nuovo* than he was with other neo-fascist groups. "The only group that has remained faithful to its original ideas and has made no compromises," Evola wrote, "is the one we know as 'Ordine Nuovo.'"²⁶⁰ In addition to *Ordine Nuovo*, Stefano Chiaie founded another group called *Avanguardia Nazionale* (National Vanguard) in 1960. This group was also a response to MSI's compromise with democratic politics but was more militaristic than *Ordine Nuovo*, which tended to focus on ideology and doctrine.²⁶¹ It must be emphasized that none of these breakaway parties was completely "Evolian." Rather, the members of each group were influenced by Evola's thinking to greater or lesser degrees.

²⁵⁶ *Ordine Nuovo* kept its distance from the MSI until 1969 when Rauti rejoined the party.

²⁵⁷ Carbone, Fabrizio. "Il 'Dossie' Sulle Violenze Neo-fasciste Presentato Nel Processo a Ordine Nuovo." *La Stampa*. 1973, Anno 107, no. 252. http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option.com_lastampa/task.search/mod.libera/action.viewer/Itemid.3/page_11/articleid.1117_01_1973_0252_0011_21956271/, 11.

²⁵⁸ Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy*, 218.

²⁵⁹ Elisabetta Cassina Wolff, "CasaPoundItalia: 'Back to Believing. The Struggle Continues,'" *Fascism* 8 (21019), 71.

²⁶⁰ Evola, et al., *Path of Cinnabar*, 237.

²⁶¹ Ferraresi, "Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction and the Radical Right," 135.

While the young neo-fascists were attracted to Evola, he was not equally interested in them. His initial enthusiasm for the youth was diminished when it became clear that, like the Classical Fascists of the 1930s and 1940s, they were not the capable and ready carriers of the Tradition he had envisioned. Evola believed the forces of mass society were too well entrenched for groups like MSI or *Ordine Nuovo* to make headway. As Evola wrote in *Orientamenti*. “There is no point indulging in wishful thinking with the illusions of any kind of optimism: today we find ourselves at the end of a cycle.”²⁶² Moreover, Evola understood that, despite his guidance and their enthusiasm, the neo-fascists had a limited grasp of Tradition. Rather than embrace the metaphysical, they cherry-picked his work, reading it through the lens of their fascist predisposition, which, despite the revisions mentioned above, remained tied to an understanding of the state as a regenerative project rather than one expressing transcendent hierarchic, aristocratic and feudal values. This was especially true of MSI, whose leaders he called “imbeciles.”²⁶³ But he felt it was also the case with the young radicals. Giulio Salierno, a teenage follower of Evola in the early 1950s, recalled in mid-life that Evola disparaged him and his neo-fascist associates because he believed they had not read widely and knew nothing about foundational thinkers like Oswald Spengler and Friedrich Nietzsche.²⁶⁴ Evola believed that the neo-fascist groups like MSI and *Ordine Nuovo* offered no genuine doctrine and were primarily centered on polemics, attacks, and invective as if their purpose relied on the existence of a political enemy.²⁶⁵ They evinced no forward vision or articulate plan of action. Thus, Evola wondered what they stood for.²⁶⁶

²⁶² Julius Evola, “Orientations: Eleven Points,” 1.

²⁶³ Giulio Salierno, *Autobiografia di un Picchiatore Fascista*. (Torino: Einaudi, 1976), 142.

²⁶⁴ Salierno, *Autobiografia di un Picchiatore Fascista*, 137.

²⁶⁵ Julius Evola, “Outlining the Ideal: The Trial of Air,” in *A Handbook for Right-Wing Youth* (London: Arktos Media, 2017), 37.

²⁶⁶ Evola stated in this regard, “The problem of pro- or anti-Atlanticism, that of tactical coalitions or alliances, the relationship with the Church, and so on are only strategic issues and contingent questions; and in any case, a clear

Giulio Salerino (1935-2006), former neo-fascist and follower of Evola, recalled that during a meeting with Evola, the *maestro* seemed distant and uninterested in conversing with him and his colleagues, although he consented to their questions. Consequently, the young men felt rejected by the man they held up as a mentor. This emotion turned to pity when Evola interrupted the conversation to noisily slurp the soup the housekeeper delivered to him on a cart. “His figure as a wizard and prophet lost much of the exotic aura that had struck me before,” wrote Salerino.²⁶⁷

4.2 “Riding the Tiger”

Evola concluded that it might be better for these men to refrain from action, as the logical outcome of their ideas could lead to a socialistic betrayal of the party's principles. According to Evola, the MSI demonstrated its weakness, similar to Fascism, by prioritizing activism over doctrine; in his view, principles, and vision had to be thought through clearly before action was taken. Such had not been the case with the neo-fascist groups. Consequently, Evola advocated a sort of “inner emigration” from the world—using an expression borrowed from Heidegger—that removed him entirely from active political engagement while aiming for self-transcendence. In *Cavalcare la Tigre* (Ride the Tiger), written in the early 1950s but published in 1961,²⁶⁸ Evola wrote, “Thus, the principle to follow could be that of letting the forces and processes of this epoch take their course, keeping oneself firm and ready to intervene when the tiger, which cannot leap on the person riding it, is tired of running.”²⁶⁹

solution to them could only be found starting from a well-defined doctrine concerning the values and principles of political organization. “Outlining the Ideal,” 38.

²⁶⁷ Salierno. *Autobiografia di un Picchiatore Fascista*, 142-144.

²⁶⁸ Furlong, *Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola*, 90.

²⁶⁹ Julius Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*. Translated by Joscelyn Godwin and Constance Fontana. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2003.

Evola called this policy of political disengagement *apoliteia*, a Greek word used by the Stoics to mean “political disengagement.” While political works such as *Men Among the Ruins*, published in 1953, were proscriptive, emphasizing the transcendent nature of the organic state, and were written with political action in mind, *Ride the Tiger* made the point that “[there is a] lack of necessary premises to reach any concrete, appreciable results in a struggle of this kind.”²⁷⁰ Thus, Evola, examining the state of politics in the mid-20th century, seeing the last, albeit weak, potential for renewal completely fail, concluded that it was pointless to have an interest in politics, let alone engage with politics in the public arena. Surveying the postwar political landscape, Evola concluded that nothing could be done. Esoterically speaking, the struggle between Americanism and Soviet Communism, in which Italy was a pawn, transpired on the lowest of the material planes. It was a demoralizing contest between two segments of the lowest caste, the Śūdras. Evola concluded that the “differentiated man” must existentially detach himself from politics and adopt an attitude of indifference towards all political regimes and ideologies, as none had transcendent foundations. *Apoliteia* is an “inner distance” where the individual of a higher type defends the world of being and his dignity against the values and principles of modernity.²⁷¹

4.3 *Azione Diretta*

Yet, as Ferrarasi points out, Evola’s followers interpreted *apoliteia* differently. One way closest to Evola’s original meaning was to take *apoliteia* literally and focus on inner development and culture-building at the expense of political engagement; this was the tact of groups such as *Nuova Destra*, which was formed in 1977 by dissident members of MSI. For this group, Evola’s doctrine provided a psychic shield against what they perceived as the

²⁷⁰ Evola, et al., *Ride the Tiger*, 172.

²⁷¹ Evola, et al., 174.

entrenchment of liberal decadence in the West.²⁷² Others thought they should reject engaging with the system, distance themselves from politics, and seek the fusion of theory and praxis through violent action to destroy the system in a "holy war" or "heroic path."²⁷³ When action is freed from moral and ethical constraints and becomes existential, the justification for violence comes easily. The neo-fascist *Fronte Nazionale Rivoluzionario* (FNR) interpreted Evola's philosophy of *apoliteia* to rationalize their violence. The group stated in its journal: "We are not interested in seizing power, not even, per se, in establishing a new order... what interests us is combat, action in itself, the daily struggle to assert our nature."²⁷⁴ The radical groups, many of them spin-offs, such as *Ordine Nuovo*, saw "combat as an existential duty befitting the just battle of the *Kshatriya*."²⁷⁵ Given this emphasis on combat as an existential duty, it is unsurprising that Evola's earlier, heavily charged works, such as *Metaphysics of War*, were popular among the neo-fascists of this period.²⁷⁶

Taking advantage of the political unrest caused by student revolts in 1968 and the "Hot Autumn" workers' strikes in 1969, the terrorist groups carried out a series of violent actions, including mass bombings intended to undermine faith in Italy's democratic system. In December 1969, the organization joined with the short-lived *Terza Posizione* (Third Position) to bomb the Piazza Fontana in Milan, killing 17 people and injuring scores of others; in 1974, the group bombed a night train as it left Florence, killing 12. Other terrorist outrages included the notorious

²⁷² Franco Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy: The Radical Right in Italy after the War*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 50.

²⁷³ Ferraresi, *Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction, and the Radical Right*, 138-139.

²⁷⁴ Quoted in Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy*, 158.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy*, 138.

²⁷⁶ As a point of interest, the concept of *apoliteia* resembles the *jihadi* doctrine of *takfir wa al-Hijra* – "anathema and withdrawal" – whereby Muslim activists mentally and sometimes physically excised themselves from the corrupt environments of the neoliberal Arab societies either to focus on religious life or build up their spiritual resources preparatory to eventual struggle in emulation of the Prophet Muhammad. The cross-cultural correspondence points to the primacy of practical strategic and tactical considerations in ideological formulations. See, for example, Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), 90-91.

bombing of the Bologna railway station on 2 August 1980 by *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari* (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei), killing 85 people and wounding more than two hundred, mainly station workers, passengers, and tourists.

Among Evola's admirers were these militant neo-fascists who hailed him as the "celestial warrior."²⁷⁷ Stefano Delle Chiaie, the "black bomber" who founded the MSI breakaway group *Avanguardia Nazionale* (National Vanguard), portrayed his followers as an Evolian "elite of heroes."²⁷⁸ Yet Evola's complicity in the terrorist atrocities was not clear-cut. The court's judgment in the 1951 trial regarding Evola's responsibility for terrorism appeared to apply throughout the entire period. There was no conclusive evidence that Evola explicitly encouraged or endorsed terrorist attacks. In a revealing interview with Hans Thomas Hakl in 1972, the ailing and aged Evola expressed disappointment that the young fascists who looked up to him "didn't really engage with his thought on a deep level. Instead they wanted to go out immediately and revolutionize the world without first becoming clear in their minds about their own spiritual orientation."²⁷⁹ It seems the closest Evola came to advocating political violence was during the private conversation he had with Salerino in which he made the offhand remark that the "communist cancer" in Italy could only be eradicated with "blood and fire" in a Spanish-style civil war.²⁸⁰ There is little doubt that Evola's sharp division between what he considered the corrupt, fallen world of post-1789 modernity—particularly exemplified during the postwar period by American-Soviet hegemony—and the sociopolitical ideals of Tradition encouraged neo-fascist terrorists to act decisively, a stimulus that could easily be interpreted to justify violence. According to scholar Elisabetta Cassina Wolff, although Evola cannot be held directly

²⁷⁷ Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy*, 125.

²⁷⁸ Drake, 131.

²⁷⁹ Quoted in Baroni, "The Philosophical Gold of Perennialism," 42.

²⁸⁰ Salerino, *Autobiografia di un Picchiatore Fascista*, 143.

accountable for terrorism, his concept of a “metaphysical evil” that should be resisted makes him morally and historically responsible.²⁸¹

In the Spring of 1974, as the terrorist outrages rolled on, Evola collapsed and lost consciousness due to heart failure. After a few days at a private clinic, he was brought back to his house at Corso Vittorio Emanuele 197. A month later, on 11 June, he asked a visitor to help him get out of his wheelchair and dress so that he could look out his upper-floor window across the Tiber to the Fontanone del Gianicolo high on Janiculum Hill. Weak and trembling and hanging onto his desk, he suffered another heart attack; he died on his feet.²⁸² He was seventy-six years old. He had refused a Catholic burial. According to his wishes, his ashes were scattered in a crevasse on Monte Rosa, which straddled Switzerland and Italy in the Pennine Alps, whose massif he climbed as a youth.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Elisabetta Cassina Wolff, “Evola’s Interpretation of Fascism and Moral Responsibility,” 493.

²⁸² Mario Coen Belinfanti, “The Last Hours of Julius Evola.”
https://x.com/Daily_Evola/status/1751085430722674848

²⁸³ Julius Evola, *Meditations on the Peaks: Mountain Climbing as a Metaphor for the Spiritual Quest*, edited and translated by Renato del Ponte, xiii.

Conclusion

Evola's philosophy is antithetical to conventional historical or scientific inquiry. Likewise, his ideas fly in the face of contemporary standards of tolerance and liberalism. A salient example of his illiberal attitude was his stigmatizing modernity's democratic, egalitarian, and materialistic features. The goal of this thesis has not been to moralize or pass judgment on Evola – though he is worthy of that – but to discern his purposes and the reasons for his persistent popularity in broadly defined right-of-center political and cultural circles. This thesis has attempted two things: This thesis contributes to the study of Evola's philosophy by placing it within the paradigm of reaction, which, following Mark Lilla and others, I have defined as the political attitude that rejects the Enlightenment, hyper-skeptical of the notion of progress and modernity, and is desirous of restoring the *status quo ante*.

Evola's relationship with Italian Fascism, National Socialism in Germany, the post-World War II neo-fascist groups in Italy, and other right-wing groups throughout the 20th century, as well as his socio-political ideas, including his noxious notions of spiritual racism and antisemitism, have prompted some observers to place him squarely in the fascist or neo-fascist camps. This is unwarranted. As has been demonstrated in this thesis, Evola is something else entirely. That is because the ground of Evola's philosophy was the Transcendent, that which is "above." He was only interested in political organization and social identity if they referred to higher principles. He believed that fascism did not go far enough in the direction of Tradition, which he defined as the timeless wisdom present in various pre-modern states and societies. In these societies, all activities are aligned towards something greater than mere human concerns.

Some scholars, such as Sheehan, argue that Evola wanted to give fascism a metaphysical hue.²⁸⁴ This is only partially true. His goal was more radical than that. Rather, he wanted Fascism and Nazism to discover their “true” metaphysical foundations so they could move beyond themselves into the realm of “Being” rather than “Becoming.” In practical terms, this included rekindling a so-called “ur-monarchism,” which Evola claimed was rooted in the original, divine kingship in which he supposed most pre-Enlightenment civilizations participated. Ultimately, Evola failed in his quest to influence Italian Fascism. However, he did gain an audience with Mussolini regarding race. He was a touchstone for the generation of mostly young neo-fascists who emerged in Italy and elsewhere in the decades following World War II. In Germany, he garnered some support among conservative circles and attracted the attention of certain Nazis; however, Hitler and his inner circle largely dismissed his ideas.

Evola’s thought emerged in a Nietzschean *theothanatic* (theos- God, -thanatic, derived from the Greek personification of death) world where absolute foundations for the socio-political and cosmological order are absent. By “theothanatic,” we mean the professed loss of an absolute ground for meaning, cosmological order, and morality addressed by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who, in *The Gay Science* (1882), famously announced the death of God. “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him,”²⁸⁵ Nietzsche has the “madman” of his parable proclaim. At the outset of the French Revolution, various intellectuals, such as De Maistre and Edmond Burke, examined the goals and actions of the revolutionaries, concluding that the Revolution was a disrupter of the sacred order. Power no longer flowed downward from God or the gods. Nor was society any longer imbued with a sacred core of meaning and identity.

²⁸⁴ Thomas Sheehan, “Diventare Dio: Julius Evola and the Metaphysics of Fascism,” in *Nietzsche in Italy*, edited by Thomas Harrison (Stanford: Stanford University, 1988), 283.

²⁸⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 184.

These foundational Counter-Enlightenment, counterrevolutionary, reactionary philosophers, and critics of modernity, in addition to Belle Epoque critics like Nietzsche and twentieth-century philosophers like Heidegger, Voegelin, and Adorno, claimed that the Enlightenment failed to provide an anchor of meaning necessary for a purposeful life, resulting in nihilism. Evola represented the radical end of this spectrum, concluding from his studies of Tradition that every worthy civilization before his time had been predicated on sacred foundations. His political approach differed from that of other metaphysically oriented critics of modernity, such as Jung and Eliade, who opted for a “soft” approach and attempted to influence institutions like the Academy from within.

Evola chose not to compromise with the modern world but to confront it, viewing it as entirely negative, leading him to reject its paradigms and scientific references. He never joined a political organization or attempted an academic career; he was an outsider who styled himself a sage or what today we might call an “influencer.” Moreover, more explicitly than other reactionaries, Evola’s philosophy is grounded in myth; hence, in this thesis, I have called him “mytho-reactionary.” His desire to revive a vertical trajectory of sacred power in politics and society derives from an understanding alien to most modern ways of thinking. Paraphrasing Mark Lilla, we may say that if reaction is a river, “then it is like the Nile Delta, with its hundreds of tributaries branching out in every imaginable direction.”²⁸⁶ I suggest that Evola’s mytho-reaction is one such stream.

Although Evola addressed existential challenges in modernity by appealing to a supposed universal essence of religion, he interpreted the traditions he utilized from a Western perspective. In addition, Evola grafted his idiosyncratic views onto these traditions. For instance, we

²⁸⁶ Mark Lilla, *The Shipwrecked Mind*, xi.

mentioned that Evola translated the *Tao Te Ching* and wrote extensively on Buddhism and yogic practices. None of these works is considered authoritative by experts in their respective fields. Evola's translation of the *Tao Te Ching* is not a translation but a speculative reworking of a previous translation meant to confirm his idea of the Absolute Individual.²⁸⁷ We see a similar method of appropriation and refashioning in the *Yoga of Power* and *The Doctrine of Awakening*.²⁸⁸ Evola sought to use Taoist and Buddhist philosophy to confirm his theories of the Absolute Individual, spirituality, and race. In each case, Evola demonstrated his anti-modern stance by using a deductive approach to knowledge rather than an inductive one, building his argument from first principles.

Moreover, he made no effort to culturally immerse himself in the traditions he cited, unlike his colleagues Eliade and Guénon, who spent much time abroad. We can only speculate that circumstances – the unsettled state of the world, his lack of adequate financial resources, and, after 1945, his debilitating disability – precluded travel. Given his ignorance of Eastern languages, he depended on translations and Orientalist interpretations that defined the East and pre-modern civilizations as the “Other.” Unlike the Anglo-French Orientalists studied by Edward Said, who often denigrated ancient and Eastern civilizations as backward compared to the modern West, Evola, following Guénon, viewed the East as spiritually superior to the West. According to Evola, cultures in India, Japan, China, and elsewhere were mirror images of the West in keeping aspects of fading Tradition alive even in the dismal present age. Given Evola's

²⁸⁷ For a critique of Evola's use and interpretation of the *Teo-te-Ching* see Marino, Davide. "The Tao of Julius Evola", *Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies* (published online ahead of print 2024), doi: <https://doi.org/10.30965/25217038-01501015>.

²⁸⁸ For a critique of Julius Evola's view of Zen Buddhism, see Pedretti, Filippo. “Race and Zen: Julius Evola, Fascism, and D.T. Suzuki.” *Arc: The Journal of the School of Religious Studies* 49 (December 1, 2021): 48–82. <https://doi.org/10.26443/arc.v49i.293>.

dichotomy between a materialistic West and a Spiritual East, we might describe his philosophy as an example of what the Syrian critic Jalal al-Azm called “Orientalism in reverse.”²⁸⁹

Although Evola received limited attention from the Fascists and Nazis, he found a more receptive audience among Italy's postwar neo-fascists. This thesis argues that Evola's appeal to these predominantly young men—who were not alive during the fascism of the 1930s and 1940s—can be attributed to changes that occurred in the post-World War II period, including increasing cultural homogenization, concerns about Italy and other European nations being overshadowed by either the US or the USSR, and the rise of seemingly unbridled materialism and commercialism underway by the 1960s. Evola's philosophy spoke to what his acolytes saw as the pervasive and abstract nature of modernity's globalizing hegemony. While the cadres of MSI adopted the expedient of operating within the political system, the radical neo-fascists responded with morally charged outrage to what they perceived to be the oppressive conditions imposed on Italy and the rest of Europe by the American Empire and its ostensible collaborators within the country, killing dozens of innocent people in the process. I have argued that although Evola was not directly implicated in the attacks, the confrontational posture of his philosophy makes him ethically, if not legally, culpable.

The metaphysical currents that emerged in reaction to the Enlightenment are on the rise today, spurred on by the “Crisis of Meaning.”²⁹⁰ In 2025, Evola has more readers than ever before, not only among those who see him as an avatar of the right but also seekers trying to understand, for personal reasons, what they perceive to be the divine order of the world. British far-right activist Johnathan Bowden quoted the late English cabinet minister Robin Cook, who

²⁸⁹ Azm, Sadiq Jalal al-. “Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse - Sadik Jalal al-'Azm.” libcom.org, 2014. <https://libcom.org/article/orientalism-and-orientalism-reverse-sadik-jalal-al-azm>.

²⁹⁰ The term is Viktor Frankl's. See his *The Unheard Cry for Meaning* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), 28.

said, “The dark clammy hand of religiosity is rising again, and secular Leftists like us are feeling the winds of this force coming from the side and behind.”²⁹¹ Not only in the Atlantic world has this been the case, but over the past century, it has become a salient feature of Islam, which in the form of Islamism has challenged the liberal hegemony in its conceptual and political manifestations in the name of a higher metaphysical truth, thus posing a trans-cultural problematic in modernity.²⁹²

One salient example of the Islamist trend was the Egyptian ideologue Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), Evola’s contemporary. Coming of age in the 1930s, Qutb belonged to a wave of Muslim Arabs who were prone to distinguish between an ostensibly spiritual East and a coarse and worldly West, the distinction having political overtones.²⁹³ In his multivolume Qur’anic exegesis, parts of which he wrote in prison, Qutb underscored the purported illegitimacy of the Egyptian Republic by equating its moral universe with the condition of *jahiliyya*, “ignorance” of the divine mandate. Muslim exegetes in the pre-modern period commonly took *jahiliyya* to denote the moral failings of the peninsular Arabs before the advent of the Qur’an.²⁹⁴ Qutb, however, referred to any government system, ideology, or institution that reflected a human, rather than a divine, source, thus rendering it imperfect and self-serving. According to Qutb, *jahiliyya* pervades the modern world, not only in the West, where one might expect it, but also in ostensibly Muslim countries where the shari‘a has been diminished or even replaced by man-made laws, ideologies, and life-ways.

²⁹¹ *Fire & Energy & Glory & Thinking: The Jonathan Bowden Archive*, “Julius Evola: The World’s Most Right Wing Thinker,” 27th *New Right Meeting*, London, June 5, 2010 at: <https://jonathanbowden.org/speeches/julius-evola/>

²⁹² See Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Mark Lilla, *The Shipwrecked Mind: On Political Reaction* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2016), pp. 105-129.

²⁹³ We may surmise that this same distinction was partly responsible for Guenon’s turn to Sufi Islam.

²⁹⁴ William E. Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of 'Jāhiliyya'" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Nov., 2003), pp. 521-545.

Like Evola, Qutb did not have an explicit political program, but he did speak on the general nature of an ideal Islamic society. He described the ideal Islamic civilization as hierarchical, with a vertical trajectory of power; God is sovereign, and below Him is the community of believers. Qutb claimed that in the modern era, God's position as sovereign has been usurped by politicians who act as if they are God. Like Evola, Qutb's Islamic social order is complementary, or, dare we say, organic, in that every component has a particular function that exists to complement other parts so that civilization might achieve equilibrium, just as it is exemplified by the union of the solar and lunar elements in Evola's philosophy. We may mention that Iranian philosopher and scholar of Islam Seyed Houssain Nasr, who met Evola at some point after 1945, has similar criticisms of modernity and whose philosophy is heavily influenced by Traditionalism.

Contemporary movements such as France's *Nouvelle Droite*, which extols Evola as one of its major influences, put forward similar notions of social and political organization, focusing on ontological elements that follow Evola's hierarchical conception of the State.²⁹⁵ The Evolian articulation of reactionary ends and means is also evident in the European New Right (ENR), which was founded in 1968 and took the form of a European network of likeminded groups, including Italy's *Nuova Destra*, alluded to above, which broke off from MSI in 1977. As Roger Griffin notes, the ENR advocated for "a new higher consciousness"²⁹⁶ to regenerate European society, turning away from political strategy to cultural issues and making the movement staunchly anti-materialist.²⁹⁷ The pan-European and Traditionalist orientation of ENR is evident in the names of mentors from the past whose alleged spiritual dispositions made them relevant

²⁹⁵ Thomas Sheehan, "Myth and Violence: The Fascism of Julius Evola and Alain de Benoist," *Social Research* 48, no. 1 (1981): 45–73, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40970798>, 66.

²⁹⁶ Griffin, "Fascism's Evolution Since 1945", 166.

²⁹⁷ Griffin, 166.

over the entire postwar period. According to right-wing journalist Stenio Solinas, the men of the New Right “have chosen Codreanu and Evola as their teachers, the ancient codes of honor and the taste for intransigence; who respect Drieu La Rochelle because with his suicide he honored a signature, and [Ezra] Pound because with his silence he despised the world.”²⁹⁸ Thus, they draw more heavily upon reaction, including its Traditionalist wing, than the fascism of the interwar period.²⁹⁹ Similar to the Italian neo-fascists, contemporary groups drawing on Evola do not fully embrace his philosophy. Some groups, such as the Albanian Third Position and the Neo-reactionaries, are significantly influenced by Evola, incorporating elements of his thought to develop syncretic political ideologies. However, they do not necessarily advocate for a return to divine kingship. They are not strictly prescriptive but define themselves in opposition to egalitarianism, multiculturalism, and Christianity. Others even promote varying ideal political modes of organizations, such as is it is with the neo-reactionaries who may argue for a revival and update of cameralism, such as Curtis Yarvin, or argue for society to be governed by an AI god, such as is the case with Nick Land.

If we accept that the metaphysical urges of sectors of the illiberal right are on the rise around the world – witness the religiously-tinged civilizational projects in Narendra Modi’s India, Vladimir Putin’s Russia, the Ayatollah’s Iran, and Donald Trump’s America – then we must ask why. Evola provides insights into the perspectives of critics of modern ideologies and political programs, including liberalism, who believe it is necessary to revive the metaphysical foundations of individual and collective life and to reintroduce enchantment through myth and political ritual to a world that has become disenchanted. Few today would accept Evola’s system

²⁹⁸ Stenio Solinas, “Nuova Desta,” *Roma* (quotidiano locale di Napoli), 21 June, 1977.

²⁹⁹ Roger Griffin, “Between Metapolitics and Apoliteia: The Nouvelle Droite’s Strategy for Conserving the Fascist Vision in the ‘Interregnum,’” *Modern & Contemporary France* 8, no. 1 (2000): 35–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/096394800113349>, 3-5; 9-10.

of hierarchical principles as in any way attainable; the galloping horse of modernity has left the stable, so to speak. Yet, the fact that many are interested in Evola *despite* his esotericism points to a much more profound and fundamental point: the problematic exceptionality of liberal modernity. Modernity has been scrutinized from the Romantics to Zygmunt Bauman and Keiji Nishitani for its promises and failures. Evola is a significant, though lesser-known, participant in this broad effort within the particular anti-modernist strand of reaction.

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