Islam and Tradition: Evola’s Thoughts on Islam

by Sean Jobst

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While he examined various traditions around the world, both occidental and oriental, Julius Evola also had things to say on the tradition of Islam that is predominant in areas between those two regions. In his valuable article “Islam in the Eyes of Julius Evola,” the Italian Muslim Claudio Mutti pays homage to his ideological father in regards to the latter’s views on Islam. Among the aspects he points to in Evola’s work is “a direct connection of this tradition to the Primordial tradition itself, such that Islam is independent from both Judaism and Christianity, religions whose characteristic themes he rejects (original sin, redemption, sacerdotal meditation, etc.).”(1)

This conclusion is essential, for it demonstrates the lengths to which Evola not only rejected those who want to separate Islam from the Primordial tradition as something “foreign,” but even that he regarded it as superior in certain aspects to other traditions.

So from the outset we must not make the mistake of viewing Islam as a distinct culture, but rather as a filter of cultures that inevitably takes on the vibrant coloring of the people who accept it without detracting any from the message. With this brief but important backdrop to the Islamic tradition, let us now examine how Evola viewed different aspects of Islam.

Islam as Tradition

Evola characterized Islam as “a tradition at a higher level than both Judaism and the religious beliefs that conquered the West.”(2) Despite Islam as a message based on the Qur’an and the sunna, or way, of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) being a relatively recent phenomenon, Evola clearly includes it as a manifestation of Tradition.

Islam as an expression of the primordial din al-fitra, or natural way of disposition, is a reality expressed throughout the Qur’an.(3) It recognizes the spiritual foundations of humanity as one, with the various traditions of the world being local expressions of a common primordial origin. “Mankind! We created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you might come to know each other.”(4)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is regarded by Muslims as last in a line of 124,000 prophets, each sent to a distinct nation and tribe. “Every nation has a Messenger and when their Messenger comes everything is decided between them justly. They are not wronged.”(5)

Whereas their messages differed according to time and place, the core message remained the worship of the One God as the basis of human endeavors. Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not only the last prophet, but also the one whose scope was universal such that the Qur’an identifies him as being sent “as a mercy to all the worlds.”(6)

There are a number of aspects Evola identifies as part of Islam’s primordial links to Tradition. “Although Islam considers itself the ‘religion of Abraham,’ even to the point of attributing to him the foundation of the Kaaba (in which we find again the theme of the ‘stone,’ or the symbol of the ‘center’), it is nevertheless true that (a) it claimed independence from both Judaism and Christianity; (b) the Kaaba, with its symbolism of the center, is a pre-Islamic location and has even older origins that cannot be dated accurately; (c) in the esoteric Islamic tradition, the main reference point is al-Khadir [Khidr], a popular figure conceived as superior to and predating the biblical prophets (Koran 18:59-81).”(7)

Indeed, a popular tradition identifies the foundations of the Ka’aba being raised by Adam.(8) There is also interesting evidence to consider of the holy city of Makka being described in the Bible(9), thus linking the final relevation to those of the earlier Biblical prophets. As for what Evola terms “symbolism of the center,” then this is interesting to compare with the legend of the Grail as the Scottish Sufi master, Shaykh Abdalqadir as-Sufi (Ian Dallas) writes:

“….as the occidental world, unsatisfied spiritually, reached out past Rome and Pope to find its source of healing in the tomb of the redeemer at Jerusalem, as, unsatisfied even there, it cast its yearning gaze, half spiritual, half physical, still further towards the East to find the primal shrine of mankind, so the Grail was said to have been withdrawn from our cynical West to the pure chaste unattainable birthplace of all nations. And so, the Grail was nothing other than the Black Stone of the Ka’aba, the central shrine of the world’s largest religion, purified judaeo-christianity, Islam. Makkah is named in the Qur’an as the Mother of Cities, and thus the ‘birthplace of all nations’ and the Ka’aba is named the ‘primal shrine of all mankind.’ Embedded in one corner of the Ka’aba stands the Black Stone which every Muslim raises his lips to and kisses when he arrives dusty and exhausted as a pilgrim, kisses as if quenching his thirst.”(10)

The Holy Grail can thus be viewed as a metaphor for the spiritual quest, which in Europe extends back to pre-Christian Indo-European and other indigenous traditions. It is certainly no coincidence that Celtic, Germanic and Iberian tribes tended to adopt the gnostic and unitarian expressions of Christianity which can be traced back to remnants of the Primordial Tradition. “According to the pure doctrine of the huda, or ancient guidance that has adhered from the time of our father, Sayyidina Adam, peace be upon him, gnosis lies in the hands of the Prophet of the time….For six hundred years [before the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad] there was a living christian gnostic tradition.”(11)

Sufism is the carrier of the primordial spiritual wisdom, as bounded within the final message of that Tradition which is Islam. The inner wisdom was transmitted by the prophets to gnostic communities, and with the end of the line of prophethood this is now transferred to the spiritual pole of the age, or the qutb. The legend of Khidr can be seen here in a similar light as the “Green Man” who transmitted wisdom to seekers in medieval Europe.(12) As we will see later, Islam and specifically Sufism played an important role in shaping European chivalry.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) called others to the worship of the One God, in other words to recapture the primordial Covenant of Alast(13). Towards this end he also sent out letters to leaders, including the Byzantine emperor Heraclius. Although he refrained from accepting Islam, deep within his heart Heraclius felt drawn towards it and kept the letter in a golden casket that was passed down and gave rise to a legend that as long as the letter remained, so too would the kingdom. One Islamic scholar has identified this letter with the Holy Grail.(14)

Doctrines

Evola then moves to the spiritual doctrines of Islam, the highest pillar of which is to testify that there is only one God to be worshipped, without associating any partners to Him. Islam is distinct from all other faiths in how absolute it is in its doctrine of Divine Unity, or tawhid:

“Islam also not only rejected the idea of a Redeemer or Savior, which is so central in Christianity, but also the mediation of a priestly caste. By conceiving of the Divine in terms of an absolute and pure monotheism, without a ‘Son,’ a ‘Father,’ or a ‘Mother of God,’ every person as a Muslim appears to respond directly to God and to be sanctified through the Law, which permeates and organizes life in a radically unitary way in all of its juridical, religious, and social ramifications.”(15)

As we shall see, Evola also admires Islam for its action and it is exactly this reality that distinguishes Tawhid from monotheism. “Tawhid is not monotheism, it is not a metaphysical principle. Allah is beyond what is attributed to Him, therefore beyond logos. Allah is not a mono-theos, nor poli-theos, or tri-theos, or a-theos. Allah is not theo-logical or onto-logical. Allah is neither a theory nor a principle. Allah is not contained by definition.”(16)

Islam is not a “religion” that is confined to the realm of ideas and principles, but rather a Din or a higher wisdom that is organic in every sense of the word. It is a life transaction between an individual and their Lord, the simplicity of which serves as its greatest strength. It certainly appealed to the French anarchist Gustave-Henri Jossot, who converted to Islam and became a student of the Algerian Sufi master Shaykh Ahmad al-Alawi, as “the most rational religion in the world” because it had “no mysteries, no dogmas, no priests, almost no ceremonies.”(17)

The Tradition of Scholar-Warriors

“As in the case of priestly Judaism, the center in Islam also consisted of the Law and Tradition, regarded as a formative force, to which the Arab stocks of the origins provided a purer and nobler human material that was shaped by a warrior spirit.”(18)

One distinguishing feature of Islam is the access given to the Law, or Shari’a, such that every sincere seeker has the potential within themselves to become scholars of their own right. This is indeed the primary task of Sufism, which is to equip the seekers with the means to triumph over their own ego and through this against their external enemies. This is why the Sufi shaykhs have always been at the forefront of the struggle against temporal enemies as surely as they provided the wisdom necessary for the seekers to defeat their inner spiritual enemies:

“Such men as the Naqshbandi sheikh Shamil al-Daghestani, who fought a prolonged war against the Russians in the Caucasus in the nineteenth century; Sayyid Muhammad ‘Abdullah al-Somali, a sheikh of the Salihiyya order who led Muslims against the British and Italians in Somalia from 1899 to 1920; the Qadiri sheikh ‘Uthman ibn Fodi, who led jihad in Northern Nigeria from 1804 to 1808 to establish Islamic rule; the Qadiri sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza’iri, who led the Algerians against the French from 1832 to 1847; the Darqawi faqir al-Hajj Muhammad al-Ahrash, who fought the French in Egypt in 1799; the Tijani sheikh al-Hajj ‘Umar Tal, who led Islamic Jihad in Guinea, Senegal, and Mali from 1852 to 1864; and the Qadiri sheikh Ma’ al-‘Aynayn al-Qalqami, who helped marshal Muslim resistance to the French in northern Mauritania and southern Morocco from 1905 to 1909.

“Among the Sufis whose missionary work Islamized entire regions are such men as the founder of the Sanusiyya order, Muhammad ‘Ali Sanusi, whose efforts and jihad from 1807 to 1859 consolidated Islam as the religion of peoples from the Libyan Desert to sub-Saharan Africa; [and] the Shadhili sheikh Muhammad Ma‘ruf and Qadiri sheikh Uways al-Barawi, whose efforts spread Islam westward and inland from the East African Coast.”(19)

Although it is a complex matter whose essence has been distorted by Islamophobes and extremist Wahhabis alike(20), we must also caution against those modernists who subvert Islam and seek to “pacify” it in service of their Zionist and Globalist masters, in order to accomodate it to the global banking system. But as a corollary to this, they also deny the spiritual struggle as this primordial wisdom is contrary to any consumerist vision they support. As Evola writes,

“Islam presents a traditional completeness, since the shariah and the sunna, that is, the exoteric law and tradition, have their complement not in vague mysticism, but in full-fledged initiatory organizations (turuq) that are categorized by an esoteric teaching (tawil) and by the metaphysical doctrine of the Supreme Identity (tawhid).”(21)

It is no accident that these same modernists are generally the same individuals who seek to distort the Sufi Path as not being bounded within orthodox Islam. There is indeed some parallel between Wahhabis and Orientalists who seek to deny that Sufism is founded upon the Prophetic Sunna and the Islamic Shari’a. Sufism is the fulfillment of Tawhid, to purify one’s lower self or ego and to elevate the soul to attain true gnosis, or ma’rifa in the Islamic tradition.

The four stages of understanding within Sufism are the (1) Shari’a, the Law which is the foundation for the next three stages and provides guidance within this world; (2) Tariqa, the inner practices as instructed by a Shaykh with a true path of initiation; (3) Haqiqa, the inner meaning of the practices and guidance found within the Shari’a and Tariqa; and (4) Ma’rifa, the highest stage or gnosis which is superior wisdom or knowledge of spiritual truth. It is a deeper level of knowing beyond haqiqa and is the highest stage of Reality attained by few although each have the potential.(22)

The great Sufi Imam Junayd of Baghdad, who has truly defined the essence of Sufism to an extent that even modern seekers describe themselves as following the path of Junayd, said: “Surely all the paths (turuq) are choked off by the creation except those following the footsteps of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, those following his Sunna and his Tariqa.”

One later Sufi who treaded this path of a scholar-warrior, or what Evola would admire as the “asceticism of action,” was the Shehu Uthman dan Fodio of West Africa. He defined the scholar-warrior as the one who lived in simplicity and among the people, like all true zahids (people of asceticism) and awliya (friends of Allah). They walked the path and actually lived the Qur’an through their actions.

Umma as a Race of the Spirit

“It is precisely through the holy war, and not through preaching or missionary endeavor, that Islam came to enjoy a sudden, prodigious expansion, originating the empire of the Caliphs as well as forging a unity typical of a race of the spirit, namely, the umma or ‘Islamic nation’.”(23)

This spiritual nation called the Umma is, in every sense of the word, the fullest expression of the race of the spirit as it is founded on the Idea that is superior to and transcends the blood: “The Idea, only the Idea must be our true homeland. It is not being born in the same country, speaking the same language or belonging to the same racial stock that matters; rather, sharing the same Idea must be the factor that unites us and differentiates us from everybody else.”(24) As Claudio Mutti said about the Islamic stance on race:

“Islam affirms in a radical way the prominence of the spiritual factor over the biological; but that does not mean that Islam does not recognize the racial differences at all and does not hold it in account. The Islamic doctrine relative to this argument is expressed synthetically in the following Qur’anic verse: ‘Among his signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the differences of your languages and colors’ (XXX, 22). Islam therefore considers ‘languages and colors’, that is, the factors of cultural and racial identity, as ‘divine signs’.”(25)

The Islamic Roots of Medieval Chivalry

In his work, The Mystery of the Grail, Evola describes parallels between Sufis and Gnostic communities that survived in Europe into the medieval times. He identified the legend of the Grail with the Ghibelline tradition, as represented by Friedrich II der Hohenstauffen, who built a pan-European imperium and refused Crusades against Muslims and the Cathars in opposition to the Papacy.(26) He then makes reference to the Knights Templars:

“Moreover, the Templars were charged with keeping secret liaisons with Muslims and being closer to the Islamic faith than to the Christian one. This last charge is probably best understood by remembering that Islam too is characterised by the rejection of Christ worship. The “’secret liaisons’ allude to a perspective that is less sectarian, more universal, and thus more esoteric than that of militant Christianity. The Crusades, in which the Templars and in general the Ghibelline chivalry played a fundamental role, in many respects created a supra-traditional bridge West and East. The crusading knighthood ended up confronting a facsimile of itself, namely, warriors who abided by corresponding ethics, chivalrous customs, ideals of a ‘holy war,’ and initiatory currents’.”(27)

Shaykh Abdalqadir as-Sufi described how these knights were devoted to honor, valor, and victory. The Crusades were partly an effort by the Church to break the chivalry code, but interaction with the Middle East intensified it. This took the form of efforts to break the knights’ tournament. In the ninth canon of the Council of Clermont in 1130, Pope Innocent II condemned the tournament and commanded knights killed in them not be given Christian burials. But the effort was largely unsuccessful and Pope John XXII reluctantly lifted the ban in 1316. Chivalry, or what Evola would undoubtedly identify as the struggle between the Ghibelline Hohenstauffens and the Papacy, was also symbolized in treatment of women:

“The final element of the new chivalric religion, having replaced a celibate and misogynist priesthood with a new elite brotherhood of warriors, was to introduce the honour due to women. Women were pure by nature and not, as the priests claimed, corrupted vessels of the flesh pulling men down to punishment and death. Part of chivalry was not only the respect due to good women but also the task of protecting them from slander and danger.”(28)

Thus, the medieval Christian “knightly attitude towards women is Islamic in origin.”(29) In his book on the history of medieval literature, the early nineteenth century French-Swiss historian Jean Charles de Sismondi described how Arabic literature and specifically that written by Sufis, was the source for “that tenderness and delicacy of sentiment and that reverential awe of women….which have operated so powerfully on our chivalrous feelings.”(30)

Chivalry manifested within the Indo-European traditions, but experienced decline over the centuries. Just as the Muslims preserved and transmitted ancient texts back to the Europeans, so too was it revived by the Muslims and passed back to the Europeans. “Between the seventh and twelfth centuries it was known among the Arabs, who became the instruments of the revival, in the medieval West, of the older legacy of the pre-Christian wisdom tradition.”(31)

Love Is Divine

Islam does not hold “the idea of sexuality as something blameworthy and obscene,” to the extent that the Spanish Sufi Shaykh al-Akbar (Great Shaykh) Ibn al-Arabi “goes so far as to speak of a contemplation of God in woman, of a ritualisation of the sexual orgasm in conformity with metaphysical and theological values.”(32)

In The Metaphysics of Sex, Evola describes the important role that Love plays in the Sufi Islamic tradition. Ibn al-Arabi says in Fusus al-Hikam that “the dissolution through woman” is the symbol of extinction in Divinity.(33) In applying the masculine symbolism to the seeker’s soul, “divinity is considered as a woman: she is not the ‘celestial bride’, but the ‘Beloved’ or the ‘Lover’. That is, for instance, the case in Attar, Ibn Farid, Gelaleddin el-Rumi, etc.”(34)

Evola admires the idea of love as a “force that kills” the individual self or ego.(35) He then quotes the Persian Sufi Shaykh and poet Jalal ad-Din Rumi, “He who knows the power of the dance of life does not fear death, because he knows that love kills,” as representing “the key to the practices of a chain or school of Islamic mysticism that has been transmitted for centuries and which considers Jalal ad-Din Rumi as its master.”(36) Evola concludes about divine love:

“In this Sufistic theology of love, one must see the amplification and the elevation to a more lucid conscience of the ritual world with which man from that civilisation has more or less distinctly assumed and experienced conjugal relationships in general, starting from the sanctification which the Qur’anic Law confers to the sexual act in not only a monogamist, but also polygamist structure. Whence derives the special meaning which procreation can acquire, understood precisely as the administration of the prolongation of the divine creating force existing within man.”(37)

Imam Ali: A Perfect Example of Chivalry

The Sufis have a culture of chivalry (futuwwa) and courtesy (adab) consciously woven into nearly every aspect of their lives. The key to Islamic chivalry and good manners is to struggle against the ego. “Our master, may Allah be pleased with him, said, ‘The truly sincere faqir [impoverished one] is the one who is such that his enemy cannot find a way to injure him. This is his sign since his only constant occupation is his Beloved. His occupation with his Beloved veils him from his enemy. The Lover and the enemy are never joined’.”(38)

The Islamic Guilds were based upon futuwwa, and out of this futuwwa grew the tariqas or the orders of Sufism. Many of these guilds were founded by the Caliph An-Nasir and modelled after the character of Imam Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who served as the fourth caliph. The descendents of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali, are called the Ahl al-Bait (people of the Household) and hold a special place within Islam.

In addition to his prophethood (nubuwwa) and receiving revelation (wahy), the Prophet (peace be upon him) also possessed the spiritual guidance and initiation (walaya) which he transferred to his Household. This is why the spiritual lineage, or silsila, of nearly all the major Sufi tariqas are transmitted from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through Ali and the Household. The earliest Sufi ascetics surrounded themselves with the company of the Household. This is what Evola would consider a true chain of orthodox initiation.

Within the Islamic tradition, what Evola called the “divine kingship” was manifested in the khilafa (caliphate), which was the political leadership. However, there was a second which was the wilaya (spiritual leadership) that manifested within the character of the Prophetic Household. The manifest caliphs coexisted with the hidden caliphate of Ahl al-Bait, that was a spiritual position designed to transmit the spiritual wisdom down to succeeding generations of seekers.(39)

The perfect combination of physical heroism on the battlefield with a sanctity wholly detached from the worldly life, was personified in the character of Imam Ali. The Qur’anic verse, “You did not kill them; it was Allah who killed them; and you did not throw, when you threw; it was Allah who threw”(40), was revealed during a battle when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) threw a handful of dust towards the enemy.

Rumi also explains it as an inner reality that all actions derive from Allah; actions are “good” only if one is conscious of this reality, and one is effaced in this consciousness.(41) This is similar to a verse from the Bhagavad-Gita: “Who thinks that he can be a slayer, who thinks that he is slain, both these have no [right] knowledge: He slays not, is not slain.”(42) Rumi devotes a poem in his Mathnawi to Imam Ali:

“He said, ‘I am wielding the sword for Allah’s sake, I am the servant of Allah, I am not under the command of the body.

“I am the Lion of Allah, I am not the lion of my passion: my deed bears witness to my religion.

“I have removed the baggage of self out of the way, I have deemed (what is) other than God to be non-existence.”(43)

These lines allude to an incident one day when Imam Ali was in battle and his opponent’s sword broke. The man fell and Ali stood above him, holding his sword to the man’s neck but refusing to kill him, despite the opponent’s personal insults. Ali then told him:

“I am not your enemy. The real enemies are the evil qualities within us. You are my brother, yet you spit in my face. When you spat upon me, I became angry, and the arrogance of that came to me. If I had killed you when I was in that state, then I would be a sinner, a murderer. I would have become the very thing I was fighting against. That crime would be recorded against my name, and I would have to answer for it later, when Allah questions me. That is why I cannot slay you.”(44)

Imam Ali described the battle that is waged in the soul: The intellect is the leader of the forces of ar-Rahman (the Compassionate); al-hawa (whim, caprice, desire) commands the forces of ash-shaytan (the devil); the soul itself is between them, undergoing the attraction of both (mutajadhiba baynahuma). The soul “enters into the domain of which ever of the two will triumph.”(45)

The Greater Jihad

In another section of Revolt Against the Modern World, Evola discusses the hadith (narration from the Prophet), “Raja’na min al-jihad al-asghar ila-l jihad al-akbar” (“You have returned from the lesser struggle to the greater struggle”). While the chain of narrators (isnad) for this hadith has been considered by classical Islamic scholars as being inauthentic(46), the essence of its meaning is confirmed in several verses from the Qur’an(47), as well as several sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that scholars of hadith have classified as authentic:

“The mujahid is he who makes jihad against his nafs (ego) for the sake of obeying Allah.”(48) “The strong one is not the one who overcomes people, the strong one is he who overcomes his nafs [ego].”(49)

It is the inner warfare that distinguishes the true “warriors of the spirit” form the mass of ordinary believers. The Qur’an describes the companions of the right (ashab al-yamin) and the foremost (as-sabiqun). The spirituality of jihad, which is conducted within an established framework, is not synonymous with the modern nihilistic ideology of Jihadism, exactly because in Islam the ends do not justify the means:

“The true warrior of Islam smites the neck of his own anger with the sword of forbearance; the false warrior strikes at the neck of his enemy with the sword of his own unbridled ego. For the first, the spirit of Islam determines jihad; for the second, bitter anger, masquerading as jihad, determines Islam. The contrast between the two could hardly be clearer.”(50)

For Evola, this greater and lesser jihad “represents the general conception that the world of Tradition attributes to the warrior experience, and, generally speaking, to action as a path to realisation.”(51) As Evola writes in Revolt Against the Modern World:

“The relationship between the ‘greater’ and the ‘lesser holy war,’ however, mirrors the relationship between the soul and the body; in order to understand the heroic asceticism or ‘path of action,’ it is necessary to recognize the situation in which the two paths merge, ‘the lesser holy war’ becoming the means through which ‘a greater holy war’ is carried out, and vice versa: the ‘little holy war,’ or the external one, becomes almost a ritual action that expresses and gives witness to the reality of the first. Originally, orthodox Islam conceived a unitary form of asceticism: that which is connected to the jihad or ‘holy war’.

“The ‘greater holy war’ is man’s struggle against the enemies he carries within. More exactly, it is the struggle of man’s higher principle against everything that is merely human in him, against his inferior nature and against chaotic impulses and all sorts of material attachments.”(52)

This inner struggle is the animalistic instinct, the disorganized multiplicity of impulses, the limitations imposed on us by a fictitious slef, and thus also including fear, wickedness, and uncertainty. Subduing the internal enemy is the only way to achieve inner liberation or the rebirth in a state of deeper inner unity and “peace” in the triumphal sense of the world. In the midst of external jihad, the inner enemy emerges and puts up a fierce resistance through these instincts; it is the task of the true warrior to overcome these instincts before entering the battlefield if he hopes to triumph over his enemies. The intention (niya) is what preserves the sacred character and heroism of jihad.(53)

Parallels with the Indo-European Tradition

Just as with the role of Islamic mysticism in transmitting ancient Indo-European chivalry, so too did Evola see in jihad a “late rebirth of a primordial Aryan heritage,” such that “the Islamic tradition serves here as the transmitter of the Aryo-Iranian tradition.”(54) There is mention of this reality of the inner struggle in the verses of the Bhagavad-Gita: “Know Him therefore who is above reason; and let his peace give thee peace. Be a warrior and kill desire, the powerful enemy of the soul”(Bhagavad-Gita, 3:43).

Throughout the Qur’an, the verses about striking against the enemies and maintaining the upper hand are presupposed on the verses about sacrificing the illusions of this worldly life for the truth of the struggle. The Hereafter is regarded as the ultimate destination, and those who fall in battle are promised heavenly rewards so long as their intention was pure and they fought within the balance and justice of Shari’a.

There is a parallel here to a saying from the Bible, “Whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:25). Similar to the saying of the Qur’an that those who are slain are alive in Paradise, is a saying from Plato’s The Republic: “And of those who are slain in the field, we shall say that all who fell with honor are of that golden race, who when they die, according to Hesiod, ‘Dwell here on earth, pure spirits, beneficent, Guardians to shield us mortal men from harm.”(55) Throughout Indo-European traditions can be found this view that the slain warrior becomes immortal. Evola draws parallel between the Islamic view of the martyr (shahid) with the mors triomphalis of the Roman tradition.(56)

Distinguishing Features of Islamic Mysticism

Comparing Christian and Islamic mysticism, Evola notes that what lacks among Christian ascetics is going further than the vows of silence, “the practice of the most interiorised degree of this discipline, that does not only consist of putting an end to the spoken word, but also to thought (Ibn ‘Arabi’s notion of ‘not speaking with oneself’).”(57) He compares the practice of Sufi dhikr (remembrance of Allah) with the Hindu mantra and the repetition of sacred names practiced in the Hesychasm of some of the Orthodox Christian and Eastern Catholic churches.(58)

Evola describes these doctrines as “recognizing in man the condition in which the Absolute becomes conscious of itself, and that professes the doctrine of Supreme Identity,” so that Islam constitutes “a clear and eloquent example of a system that, although including a strictly theistic domain, recognizes a higher truth and path of realization, the emotional and devotional elements, love and all the rest losing here….every ‘moral’ signification, and every intrinsic value, acquiring only that of a technique among others.”(59)

Within Sufism, “the word qutb, ‘pole’, does not only designate the sovereign, but, more generally, he who dictates the law and is the head of tradition of a given historical period.”(60) The Sufi masters such as Ibn al-Arabi, illustrate “the inversion of roles in relation to the state where, duality having been created, the divine image incarnating the superior I become to the mystic like a different being.”(61)

The objective of the Sufi is to be continuously in a state of change, of waging the struggle against the lower self or the ego, and to continuously strive towards elevating the soul towards higher levels seeking the Divine Presence: “It is interesting to note that in Islamic esoterism there is a specific term to indicate that change: shath, which literally means ‘exchange of parts’ and expresses the level at which the mystic absorbs the divine image, feels it as himself and feels himself, instead, as something else, and speaks as a function of that image. There are, in fact, in Islam, certain ‘sure signs’ by which to distinguish the objective shath from a mere illusionary feeling in a person.”(62)

Conclusion

The current author makes reference to his attachment to the faith of Islam, although he remains proud of his European descent. There is no contradiction in the two, but rather through recapturing the essence of Islam that is primordial and a cultural filter, in every sense of the word it is valuable as an internal aid for spiritual awareness that allows him to hold onto the primordial traditions of his ancestors at the same time.

We have focused in Tasawwuf as the latest expression of the timeless spiritual wisdom that was always transmitted through the ages to sincere seekers, usually in the midst of fierce opposition. The way of Islam is the final expression of the previous messengers who were sent to Indo-European nations and tribes, just as the reality of Tasawwuf is further the way of those communities of gnostics and mystics who protected the spiritual wisdom.

Just as these communities were responsible for the best of European art, architecture, literature, chivalry, and music, so too will it be left to a core vanguard of devoted men and women – European in blood, Islamic in faith, Sufi in devotion – to continue planting the seeds of a new Indo-European renaissance. We will do so infused with the doctrines of the Qur’an and its accompanied spiritual wisdom, and through it recapture the essence of what was lost from our primordial traditions.

NOTES:

(1) Claudio Mutti, “Islam in the eyes of Julius Evola,” February 11, 2007, <[www.claudiomutti.com/index.php?url=6&imag=1&id\_news=130](http://www.claudiomutti.com/index.php?url=6&imag=1&id_news=130)>.

(2) Julius Evola, Revolt Against the Modern World, Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1995, p. 245.

(3) All verses are from the interpretation of the meaning written by Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley, The Noble Qur’an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English, Norwich, UK: Bookwork, 1420/1999.

(4) Qur’an, Sura Al-Hujurat, 49:13.

(5) Qur’an, Sura Yunus, 10:47.

(6) Qur’an, Sura Al-Anbiya, 21:107.

(7) Revolt Against the Modern World, p. 244.

(8) A popular tradition holds that Adam first built the Ka’aba but it was destroyed, until the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael later rebuilt the foundations. In this sense, not only is the Ka’aba primordial but also a reflection of the so-called “Abrahamic tradition” and thus its location as a place of worship predates its current status within Islam.

(9) Makka is identified in the Bible as being in “the wilderness of Paran” (Genesis 21), and as the place where Abraham built a “House of God” (Genesis 35:15, 28:18). The Prophet David speaks of “Bakka” (Psalm 84:6), a parallel noted in the Qur’an (Sura Al-Muddaththir, 74:1-3).

(10) Ian Dallas, The New Wagnerian, Freiburg Books, 1990, p. 171.

(11) ibid., pp. 288-289.

(12) Pierre Ponsoye, L’Islam et le Graal: Étude sur l’ésoterisme du Parzival de Wolfram von Eschenbach, Paris: Donoel, 1958.

(13) Qur’an, Sura Al-A’raf, 7:172-173.

(14) Shaykh Riyadh ul Haq, al-Tajrid al-Sarih, Lesson 7.

(15) Revolt Against the Modern World, p. 244.

(16) Umar Ibrahim Vadillo, The Esoteric Deviation in Islam, Cape Town: Madinah Press, 2003, p. 332.

(17) Dépêche tunisienne, 10th February 1913.

(18) Revolt Against the Modern World, p. 244.

(19) Shaykh Nuh Keller, Reliance of the Traveller: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law, Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications, 1997, p. 863.

(20) As on so many issues, there are more commonalities than differences between the Islamophobes and Wahhabis. Each have a monolithic view of Islam that denies its true inner spiritual realities, by turning it into an ideology and presenting an interpretation of Islam that contradicts the classical scholarship upon which this faith has been sustained. The Qur’an is the perfect remedy to both these maladies.

(21) Revolt Against the Modern World, p. 244.

(22) James Fadiman and Robert Frager, Essential Sufism, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997, pp. 12-13.

(23) Revolt Against the Modern World, p. 244.

(24) Evola, Gli uomini e le rovine, Roma: Edizioni Settimo Sigillo, 1990, p. 41.

(25) “Interview with Claudio Mutti,” Junges Forum, no. 3, January 2005, <<http://www.regin-verlag.de/index.php?id=3,12,0,0,1,0>>.

(26) Evola, The Mystery of the Grail: Initiation and Magic in the Quest for the Spirit, Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions/Bear and Company, 1997.

(27) ibid., pp. 130-131.

(28) Ian Dallas, The Interim is Mine, Cape Town: Madinah Press, 2010, p. 54.

(29) Titus Burckhardt, Moorish Culture in Spain, London: Allen & Unwin, 1972, p. 93.

(30) Quoted in Roger Boarse, The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love, Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1977, p. 20.

(31) The Mystery of the Grail, p. 150.

(32) Evola, Metafisica del sesso, Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1969, pp. 256-257.

(33) ibid., p. 349.

(34) ibid., p. 293fn1.

(35) ibid., pp. 108-109, 288, 345.

(36) ibid., p. 370.

(37) ibid., p. 258.

(38) Shaykh Mawlay al-Arabi ad-Darqawi, The Darqawi Way, Norwich, UK: Diwan Press, 1979, p. 179.

(39) Shaykh Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri, The Ghadir Declaration, Lahore: Minhaj-ul-Qur’an Publications, 2002, pp. 5-10.

(40) Qur’an, Sura Al-Anfal, 8:17.

(41) Reza Shah-Kazemi, “Recollecting the Spirit of Jihad,” in Islam, Fundamentalism and the Betrayal of Tradition, ed. Joseph Lombard, Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2004.

(42) Hindu Scriptures, trans. R.C. Zaehner, London: Dent, 1966, p. 256.

(43) The Mathnawi of Jalalu’ddin Rumi, trans. R.A. Nicholson, London: Luzac, 1926, book 1, p. 205.

(44) Quoted in M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, Islam & World Peace: Explanations of a Sufi, Philadelphia: The Fellowship Press, 1987, pp. 82-83.

(45) Cited in Abd al-Wahid Amidi, Ghurar al-Hikam, Qom, Iran: Ansariyan Publications, 2000, 2:951, no. 9.

(46) Ibn Hajar, Takhrij Ahadith al-Kashshaf, p. 114; and Al-Ahdab, Zawa’id Tarikh Baghdad, 9:309-311, no. 2077. Also, the more recent scholars of hadith such as Shaykh Ahmad al-Ghumari, Tahsin al-Khabar al-Warid fil-Jihad al-Akbar; and Shaykh Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghudda, margin notes on al-Lacknawi’s al-Ajwibat al-Fadila, p. 156.

(47) Qur’an, Suras Al-A’raf 7:176, Al-Furqan 25:43, Al-Ankabut 29:6, 69, Al-Nazi’at 79:40-41, and Ash-Shams 91:7-10.

(48) Ibn Hibban, nos. 1624, 2519; Tirmidhi, Ahmad, al-Hakim, and Tabarani.

(49) Ibn Hajar Al-Haythami, Majma’ al-Zawa’id.

(50) Shah-Kazemi, op. cit.

(51) Mutti, “Islam in the eyes of Julius Evola,” op. cit.

(52) Revolt Against the Modern World, p. 118.

(53) ibid., pp. 118-119.

(54) Evola, The Metaphysics of War, Integral Tradition Publishing, 2007, p. 96.

(55) Revolt Against the Modern World, p. 137.

(56) ibid., p. 120.

(57) Evola, Introduzione alla Magia, a cura del Gruppo di Ur, III, Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1971, p. 281.

(58) ibid., I, pp. 396-397.

(59) Evola, Oriente e Occidente, Milano: La Queste, 1984, p. 212.

(60) Evola, Ricognizioni. Uomini e problemi, Roma: Mediterranee, 1974, p. 50.

(61) Introduzione alla Magia, a cura del Gruppo di Ur, I, p. 71.

(62) ibid.

Comments (7)

CLAUDO EVOLA HOLY WAR ISLAM JIHAD MUTI PERENNIS TRADITION TRADITIONALISM

7 COMMENT

290. MOTAHHARI: WESEN UND FAKTOREN DER ISLAMISCHEN REVOLUTION « SÄGEFISCH

May 2, 2012 at 12:54

[…] <http://kali-yuga.org/?p=1650> […]

MOTAHHARI, CHOMEINIS WEGBEREITER « SCHARIAGEGNER

May 2, 2012 at 13:40

[…] <http://kali-yuga.org/?p=1650> […]

Z'ANA'AS

May 9, 2012 at 10:46

Okay. Islam, Moslem Religion, Quran, is expressed as ‘the update’ to Torah, to Judeaism, Old and New Testament, and to the Christian Faith; that God meant to correct the misunderstandings, and so had Gabriel bring the Quran down with the express Intent to Do just that. This is of course Claudio Mutti explaining Julius Evola. God Forbid I should know who any of these people are.

‘The core message remained the worship of the One God,’ now, that is already an oft’ expressed Moslem theme in ‘interfaith discussions;’ one oft’ quickly abandoned by the ‘other confessions’ present and their co-religionists, as the jews and Xtians have other things to say on Religious Faith and Religion than just ‘ltes we all agree now that we all believe in the One God.’ (Such as Jesus and other items of belief.)

My friend re-prints from Claudio Mutti elaborating Julius Evola on the construction of the Holy Site in Mecca and then inserts quickly an opinion of Sean Alabama Jobst that ‘Sufism is the carrier of the primordial spiritual wisdom.’ Okay. . . okay, Islam is a ‘higher wisdom’ . . . okay, this appealed to a French anarchist, someone by the name of Gustave-Henri Jossot; and French anarchist Gustave-Henri Jossot re-verted to become a Moslem and seemed to had personally favored ‘Sufism.’ Okay.

‘The efforts and jihad of Muhammad ‘Ali Sanusi from 1807 to 1859 consolidated Islam as the religion of peoples from the Libyan Desert. By the way, there is a Clifton Heights in suburban Philadelphia.

FOOTNOTE NUMBER 20 apparently is opion of my Alabama friend and not further referenced other than to say : “As on so many issues, there are more commonalities than differences between the Islamophobes and Wahhabis. Each have a monolithic view of Islam that denies its true inner spiritual realities, by turning it into an ideology and presenting an interpretation of Islam that contradicts the classical scholarship upon which this faith has been sustained. The Qur’an is the perfect remedy to both these maladies.” One may assumage, myself or rather My SELF, being the ‘one,’ that my friend Mister Jobst does not very much enjoy company of either ‘wahhabis’ or ‘Islamophobes.’ Okay.

‘Traditional’ completeness in exoteric law and tradition is found in full-fledged initiatory organization. Allrighty. Yah. Okay on paragraph twenty four.

FOOTNOTE thirty seven quotes L’orranggio Julius, [from] Metafisica del sesso, Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1969, p. 258: ”

“In this Sufistic theology of love, one must see the amplification and the elevation to a more lucid conscience of the ritual world with which man from that civilisation has more or less distinctly assumed and experienced conjugal relationships in general, starting from the sanctification which the Qur’anic Law confers to the sexual act in not only a monogamist, but also polygamist structure. Whence derives the special meaning which procreation can acquire, understood precisely as the administration of the prolongation of the divine creating force existing within man.” And then continues writing such as to insert that Ali, the son in law of Mohammed, is the ‘perfect example of chilvalry.’ (Or, at least, not to mis-quote, ‘A perfect example of chilvalry,’ if not, precisely,the singular ‘perfect example of chilvalry.’)

FOOTNOTE fifty two is for “The greater holy war is man’s struggle against the enemies he carries within.” And is cited, as are many of Mister Jobst’s other footnoted bites, as being from ‘p. 118’ of Mister Julius Evola’s Revolt Against the Modern World, Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1995 And we can spend nine dollars and ninety five cents to learn Arabic in ten days. Okay. All right now.

LE KEMAL

June 11, 2012 at 10:47

Friend, with all respect, what exactly is your problem with Sean Jobst?

Can you articulate this without insult, in a cogent way what problem do you have with his thoughts.

ECGWINE

January 23, 2013 at 10:39

Well, I can see how Islam would have appealed to Evola and how he would have cast it in terms of capital-T Tradition, and I can see the appeal of the radical ideology of “oneness”. To the point of claiming that “tawhid does not mean monotheism” (that’s of course exactly what it means) or “Islam is not a religion” (which is in fact exactly what it is), just to drive home the point just how monolithic, singular, and thus removed from the possibility of comparison and therefore definition these things supposedly are.

Ultimately the same factors are in play here for which which fascism appealed to Evola, and in a sense Islam at its core is essentially a radical expression of the ideals of fascism.

Please note that I am not using “fascism” as a slur here, but in its historical meaning of the radical ideology of the early 20th century which envisaged a strong, unified society by means of indoctrination and discipline. Which is of course as good a definition of the project of Islam as of the (failed) fascist ideal.

But, as with fascism, you really have to ask yourself, something must have gone terribly, terribly wrong with this.

Or how else can you explain that radical Islamists are blowing up Sufi tombs and burning medieval Islamic manuscripts in Mali as we speak? The radical ideal of “oneness”, appealing as it might be to the mystic or the intellectual, if imposed on the population in general always leads to fanaticism and ultimately to hatred, loss of tradition (since, if ‘all is one’, why keep records of anything, or why allow variety in the first place?) and self-destruction.

This sad tendency made “fascism” the bad word it is today. And the word “Islam” is certainly in danger of suffering exactly the same fate. My thinking is that this is what happens to the mystic dream of ultimate oneness as soon as it is taken out of its mystical context and applied to society.

LE KEMAL

January 25, 2013 at 10:58

Thanks for posting. I can see where you are going with this but disagree, on a few grounds that would take more time than I have to go into. Here are a few reasons why I think what you are arguing ultimately lacks coherence.

One, On Mali, has it not dawned on you that these people have been Muslim for like 600 years, and only now are people running around burning books? The same with Libya, Muslims for over 1000 years, only now, under very specific global and historical tensions is this happening. If it was at all normative it would have been normative in the past, it wasn’t with any real serious examination of history

Evola – as slightly fond as he was of Islam was far more fond of ancient Paganism, and saw himself as a neo-Pagan and by some accounts actually invented the term itself in modern discourse. Also historical fascism had more of a fondness for – whether on just an emotive and sentimental level or a deep ideological level – Paganism. The antithesis of the sort of intense focus on oneness and unicity that Islam makes into a metaphysical priority. Benoist is an example of a thinker fond of looking at the potentially totalitarian tendencies of Abrahamic Semitic religions, like Islam and Judaism, the entire 20th century Fascist project in Europe was tinged with a sentimental or actual heathen and pagan ethos, so obviously something else is going on here beyond the mystical and metaphysical urge towards oneness.

Next, with fascism as a case for comparison, historically Islam as a civilization has been the very opposite of strong, unified society by means of indoctrination and discipline. Historically speaking 99% of Islamic history has been more of a matter of immense diversity and disunion, theologically, philosophically, and politically with the centralized Khilafate as more of a textbook ideal than an actual reality. Even when it was closer to being a reality the Khilafate was always strongly decentralized, allowing vast amounts of local control and policy making in comparison to, say, the Imperial Chinese model or Ancient Rome.

Through much of Umayyad history they didn’t even attempt to push an idea of Islamic governance on conquered regions and more or less let non-Muslim elite families in huge areas continue to rule – until and unless they rebelled. The Abbassids, almost 200 years after the rise of Islam, did eventually carve out a more centralized state that lasted, maybe, 3 generations and then returned to mostly local ostensible rule.

Even when the Ummayyads were at their most centralized and unified (barely) they more or less gave complete independence to some regions – like the Kingdom of Nador, a Berber independent kingdom set up in what’s now the Rif region of Morocco. Some of the regions of Khorasan or Transoxania or elsewhere in central Asia were allowed near independence in return for tribute at times.

There was no attempt to Arabicize from a centralized basis vast regions of the Muslim world. They didn’t bother, and the few people who argued for it were more or less ignored. A problematic thing for people who like to babble that Islam is Arab nationalism – most non-Arab regions that embraced Islam didn’t culturally or linguistically Arabicize until long later, and often out of interest of their own local elites. For example what drove much of the Arabiczation of Southern Spain were Christian European elites, a whole vast literature of Chruch anathema and polemic exists singling out elite and wealthy Spaniards for seeking Arab norms, forgetting Latin, learning Arabic rhetoric (in particular, rhetoric and poetry were some of the major attractions of Latin Christians to Arabic learning and language) – In Persia the only reason Arabic was pushed n non-Arabs (and barely so) was constant revolts along the Abu Muslim and Babak model. And even there, it never took. In the Maghrib it was mainly in response to certain key revolts and rebellions. And still didn’t take until almost 1000 years later.

When it did occur, even still it was half hearted. non Arabic speaking Turks pretty much ran much of the Sunni Khilafate, some not even Sunni, 200 years before the crusades even began. Arabs would openly complain that the people running their affairs didn’t even understand Arabic. Comic prose and verse would lampoon the image of the swaggering slant eyed turk with moustach who spoke in gargles. It’s kind of fascinating actually, from a historical perspective.

The only areas heavily Arabicized early on were Semitic Areas, inhabited by people who spoke dialects almost intelligible with Arabic, or that were practically dialects of the same language itself. Assyrians will hate me for this, but when you look at it far less divides an Assyrian or Aramaic speaking semite from an Arab, 1400 years ago the languages and their intonations were far more similar than today, they all shared the same basic worldview, basic vocabulary for everyday objects, they pretty much ate the same things, and constantly intermingled. Half of Syria and Iraq were ruled by Christian Arabs (The Bani Ghasan) and the Semitic population that wasn’t Arab, ethnically or linguistically, were so close to being Arab anyway in origins and culture that assimulation was rapid and didn’t need centralized pushing.

In all of these regions by mideval and ancient norms there really was no fanaticism, I mean people can judge things on 21st century norms all day long if they wanted to, but by the standards of the day Muslim Arabs were just about the least fanatical least centralizing civilizations of history. Well into the 5th century you still had Jewish and Christian intellectual elites occupying strategic positions and ministries in Egypt Syria and Iraq. This is recorded history. After the Frankish Crusaders slaughtered Jerusalem elite Jewish families who escaped the decimation of the Jewish quarter found their way into Egyptian government service and consolidated themselves as public administrators, Vizirs, and so on. This lasted through Ayyubid times even into Mamluke times. Muslim Egyptians started complaining that the only way to get a government job would be to become Jewish.

There was far more diversity in administration, governance, intellectual affairs, religious and spiritual movements, than people like to pretend when you look at the real history across the board – the very opposite of any sort of centralizing consolidating urge which is natural to fascism.

In theory and practice Islam has almost never, until modern times, been obsessed with book burnings or tomb destructions or loss of tradition, we are talking about 99% of its history here. If anything Muslims have been obsessed with collecting and preserving other people’s traditions. This is the very opposite of the fascist state (in an objective non-slur sense as you point out) I can hardly imagine Hitler or Franco or El Duce going out of their way to give autonomy or independence without heavily imposing their central ideology as long as people paid their taxes on time, much less than collecting and preserving VAST amounts of information that openly contradicted their ideology.

There is a Christian slander, a slur cooked up in the crusades by some monks in Syria that alleged that The Khilafate destroyed the library of Alexandria. Truly the guilty have no pride, a Christian mob destroyed it and lynched its high priestess about 200 years before The Prophet(s) was even born. And for a bunch of Totalitarian fascists intent on only promulgating their ideology, early Muslims certainly went out of their way to preserve their pagan past and traditions in writing. The Prophet’s wife Aisha hereself used to collect and memorize pagan poetry and was known to have collected thousands of verses. She also recorded and preserved many of the marriage and domestic customs of their pagan past. Other examples exist in the first century, and as we all know in the second century Muslims went on a frenzy of collecting translating and preserving Hindu, Chinese, and Graeco-Roman literature and traditions. This was at the height of the Khilafate’s (unsuccessful) centralizing attempts.

LE KEMAL

January 25, 2013 at 11:27

A couple more thoughts.

The Roman Empire was massively centralizing and modern fascism is largely modeled on it, in the Italian model, yet you have the very opposite of Islamic monotheism here, as a spiritually and social organizing tendency.

On the question of forced Arabicization in the Levant and the ineligibility of Semitic dialects and Arabic, here’s a modern consideration. I found posted on some Human Biodiversity forum an ancient Akkadian wordlist, with its modern Syriac cognates (modern Syriac is pretty much a direct descendant from Babylonian and Assyrian Akkadian) and gave them to a Moroccan friend of mine. He’s a Berber, not an Arab, but reads and speaks classical Arabic fluently as well as modern standard, and a couple of Berber dialects.

He translated the lost without blinking an eye and then said “this stuff is like classical Arabic for babies”

This brings to mind something one Arabic grammarian once said about inflections “‘irab” I can’t remember the grammarian, perhaps it was el Asma’i, I do not recall. Anyway he said “Without ‘irab you don’t have Arabic, you have Aramaic.”

He meant it as a joke but the comparison itself shows how immediately similar a native Arabic speaker in the day would have recognized the two tongues. Aramaic to him is what Arabic sounded like when you removed its proper inflections. in other words, to him Aramaic was dumbed down Arabic. Sort of what my Moroccan friend noticed (who remember isn’t even an Arab, he’s a Berber with not love lost for Arabs mind you)

There were a couple of words that gave him slight problems, he could figure out the literal meaning but they were idioms meaning somewhat different things in the actual language , once he knew what the idioms meant he could immediately see where it came from the literal original Semitic and Arabic meaning. Other than a couple of words, the vast bulk of the list he had no problem with.

A really odd thing is that a few words would be extremely rare or extinct in Arabic usage (though present in Classical lexicons) but had similar forms in North African Berber tongues. Which makes sense considering they are all from the same language family.

Now this is written text, there are always inflections and spoken patterns of course, pronunciation. I once had him listen to some youtube videos of Church songs in Syriac. He could follow along, get the general gist of what was being said, and in some cases get the literal meaning, in other parts it was difficult following along. Overall he could comprehend about 60% of what he was listening to.

The written wordlist was about 95% comprehension. 95% written 60% spoken/heard comprehension of mostly dead languages 2000-1400 years after their heyday isn’t bad at all. Most modern British and Americans could barely get 60% comprehension of Shakespeare unless they were highly educated. And Shakespeare was only about 500 years ago

So an Arabic speaking Army 1400 years ago with a much better grasp of classical Arabic than my friend, as a living spoken language, and its register of dialects would have had little problem with other semitic dialects. Ditto for Assyrians and Aramaeans and even to some degree Egyptian Copts. The Syro-Palestine Levant was also constantly interacting with Arab merchants and had a few local Christian dynasties of Arabic ethnic identity spread throughout it? You wouldn’t have to push Arabicization on people like this, they were already swimming in a highly Arabicized polyglot environment long before Islam appeared,

Also keep in mind that there were Christian minorities through these regions well after the high middle ages, Iraq was an immensely diverse place in religions languages and ethnic identities. Even though people found it easy to mutually communicate in Arabic, there was no centralized fascist consolidation or expulsion of minorities, some got absorbed over 1000 years but their remnants still exist.

European fascism’s project involved immediate liquidation of European minorities.

You cannot easily compare apples to tomatoes, the situations are that different. I mean both are fruit, but an apple pie is much different from a tomato one…

On the Islamic tradition (Julius Evola)

by Brett Stevens on August 30, 2002

Julius Evola, Revolt Against The Modern World

Islam, which originated among the Semitic races also consisted of the Law and Tradition, regarded as a formative force, to which the Arab stocks of the origins provided a purer and nobler human material that was shaped by a warrior spirit. The Islamic law (shariah) is a divine law; its foundation, the Koran, is thought of as God’s very own word (kalam Allah) as well as a nonhuman work and an “uncreated book” that exists in heaven ab eterno. Although Islam considers itself the “religion of Abraham” it is nevertheless true that (a) it claimed independence from both Judaism and Christianity; (b) the Kaaba, with its symbolism of the center, is a pre-Islamic location and has even older origins that cannot be dated accurately; (c) in the esoteric Islam tradition, the main reference point is al-Khadir, a popular figure conceived as superior to an pre-dating the biblical prophets (Koran 18:59-81). In early Islam the only form of asceticism was action, that is, jihad, or “holy war”; this type of war, at least theoretically, should never be interrupted until the full consolidation of the divine Law has been achieved. Finally, Islam presents a traditional completeness, since the shariah and the sunna, that is, the exoteric law and tradition, have their complement not in vague mysticism, but in full-fledged initiatory organizations (turuq) that are categorized by an esoteric teaching (tawil) and by the metaphysical doctrine of the Supreme Identity (tawhid). In these organizations, and in general in the shia, the recurrent notions of the masum, of the double perogative of the isma (doctrinal infallibility), and of the impossibility of being stained by any sin (which is the perogative of the leaders, the visible and invisible Imams and the mujtahid), lead back to the line of an unbroken race shaped by a tradition at a higher level than both Judaism and the religious beliefs that conquered the West.

Julius Evola

On Islam and Tradition, (Revolt Agains The Modern World, pages 243 – 244)

Even though it began relatively recently, I will briefly refer to another tradition, Islam, which originated among the Semitic races and succeeded in overcoming those negative motifs. As in the case of priestly Judaism, the center in Islam also consisted on the Law and Tradition, regarded as a formative force, to which the Arab stocks of the origins provided a purer and nobler human material that was shaped by a warrior spirit. The Islamic law (shariah) is a divine law; its foundation, the Koran, is thought of as God’s very own word (kalam Allah) as well as a nonhuman work and an “uncreated book” that exists in heaven ab eterno. Although Islam considers itself the “religion of Abraham”, even to the point of attributing to him the foundation of the Kaaba (in which we find again the theme of the “stone”, or the symbol of the “center”), it is nevertheless true that (a) it claimed independence from both Judaism and Christianity; (b) the Kaaba, with its symbolism of the center, is a pre-Islamic location and has even older origins that cannot be dated accurately; (c) in the esoteric Islam tradition, the main reference point is al-Khadir, a popular figure conceived as superior to an pre-dating the biblical prophets (Koran 18:59-81). Islam rejects a theme found in Judaism and that in Christianity became the dogma and the basis fof the mystery of the incantation of the Logos; it retains, sensibly attenuated, the myth of Adam’s fall without building upon it the theme of “original sin”. In this doctrine Islam saw a “diabolical illusion” (talbis Iblis) or the inverted theme of the fall of Satan (Iblis or Shaitan), which the Koran (18:48) attributed to his refusal, together with all his angels, to bow down before Adam. Islam also not only rejected the idea of a Redeemer or Savior, which is so central in Christianity, but also the mediation of a priestly caste. By conceiving the Divine in terms of an absolute and pure monotheism, without a “Son”, a “Father”, or a “Mother of God”, every person as a Muslim appears to respond directly to God and to be sanctified through the Law, which permeates and organizes life in a radical unitary way in all of its juridicial, religious, and social ramifications. In early Islam the only form of asceticism was action, that is, jihad, or “holy war”; this type of war, at least theoretically, should never be interrupted until the full consolidation of the divine Law has been achieved. it is precisely through the holy war, and not through preaching or missionary endeavor, that Islam came to enjoy a sudden, prodigious expansion, originating the empire of the Caliphs as well as forging a unity typical of a race of the spirit, namely, the umma or “Islamic nation”. Finally, Islam presents a traditional completeness, since the shariah and the sunna, that is, the exoteric law and tradition, have their complement not in vague mysticism, but in full-fledged initiatory organizations (turuq) that are categorized by an esoteric teaching (tawil) and by the metaphysical doctrine of the Supreme Identity (tawhid). In these organizations, and in general in the shia, the recurrent notions of the masum, of the double perogative of the isma (doctrinal infallibility), and of the impossibility of being stained by any sin (which is the perogative of the leaders, the visible and invisible Imams and the mujtahid), lead back to the line of an unbroken race shaped by a tradition at a higher level than both Judaism and the religious beliefs that conquered the West.

Islam and Evola

Islam in the eyes of Julius Evola [inglese]

The auspicious reception of Evola’s works in the Islamic world probably dates back to the early 1990’s, when the Muslim nationalist philosopher Gedjar Dzemal (1), founder of the Party for Islamic Renaissance, supplied the first channel on Russian television with a transmission devoted to Julius Evola. In 1993, Revolt against the modern world was evoked, in an interview published in issue n.77 of “Éléments,” by another Muslim intellectual: the Algerian Rachid Benaissa, disciple and heir of that maître à penser of the “Islamic Renaissance” who was Malek Bennabi. In 1994, due to the initiative of a professor in Islamic theology at the University of Marmara, Insan, a publisher from Istanbul, published a book titled Modern Dünyaya Baçkaldïrï, namely the Turkish translation of Revolt against the modern world. The editorial presentation made express reference to René Guénon, an author two works of whom appeared the same year in Turkish, The crisis of the modern world (Modern Dünyanin Bunalimi, Agac, Istanbul) and The reign of quantity and the signs of the times (Niceligin egemenligi ve çagin alâmetleri, Iz, Istanbul).If Julius Evola’s name is not unknown in the Islamic world, what was Evola’s breadth of knowledge of Islam?The portrayal of Islam in Revolt against the modern world occupies but a few pages, but presents with sufficient depth the aspects of Islam that, from the Evolian perspective, allow it to be characterised as “a tradition at a higher level than both Judaism and the religious beliefs that conquered the West,” (RMM 245) that is to say, Christianity. In the first place, Evola points out that Islamic symbolism clearly indicates a direct connection of this tradition to the Primordial tradition itself, such that Islam is independent from both Judaism and Christianity, religions whose characteristic themes he rejects (original sin, redemption, sacerdotal meditation, etc.) Again in Revolt against the modern world one can read: “As in the case of priestly Judaism, the center in Islam also consisted of the Law and Tradition, regarded as the formative force, to which the Arab stocks of the origins provided a purer and nobler human material that was shaped by a warrior spirit. The Islamic law (shariah) is a divine law; its foundation, the Koran, is thought of as God’s very own word (kalam Allah) as well as a nonhuman work and an “uncreated book” that exists in heaven ab eterno. Although Islam considers itself the “religion of Abraham,” even to the point of attributing to him the foundation of the Kaaba (in which we find again the theme of the “stone,” or the symbol of the “center”), it is nevertheless true that (a) it claimed independence from both Judaism and Christianity; (b) the Kaaba, with its symbolism of the center, is a pre-Islamic location and has even older origins that cannot be dated accurately; (c) in the esoteric Islamic tradition, the main reference point is al-Khadir, a popular figure conceived as superior to and predating the biblical prophets (Koran 18:59-81). Islam rejects a theme found in Judaism and that in Christianity became the dogma of the basis of the mystery of the incarnation of the Logos; it retains, sensibly attenuated, the myth of Adam’s fall without building upon it the theme of “original sin.” In this doctrine Islam saw a “diabolical illusion” (talbis Iblis) or the inverted theme of the fall of Satan (Iblis or Shaitan), which the Koran (18:48) attributed to his refusal, together with all the angels, to bow down before Adam. Islam also not only rejected the idea of a Redeemer or Saviour, which is so central in Christianity, but also the mediation of a priestly caste” (RMM 244).Absolute purity of the doctrine of Unity, exempt from every trace of anthropomorphism and polytheism, integration of every domain of existence in a ritual order, ascesis of action through jihad, ability to model a “race of the spirit”: these are, respectively, the aspects in Islam that retain Evola’s attention. He writes:“By conceiving of the Divine in terms of an absolute and pure monotheism, without a “Son,” a “Father,” or a “Mother of God,” every person as a Muslim appears to respond directly to God and to be sanctified through the Law, which permeates and organizes life in a radically unitary way in all of its juridical, religious and social ramifications. In early Islam the only form of asceticism was action, that is, jihad, or “holy war”; this type of war, at least theoretically, should never be interrupted until the full consolidation of the divine Law has been achieved. It is precisely through the holy war, and not through preaching or missionary endeavour, that Islam came to enjoy a sudden, prodigious expansion, originating the empire of the Caliphs as well as forging a unity typical of a race of the spirit, namely, the umma or “Islamic nation”” (RMM 244).Finally, Islam, Evola points out, is a complete traditional form, in the sense that it is endowed with a living and operational esoterism that can provide those who possess the necessary qualifications the means to attain a spiritual realisation that goes beyond the exoteric goal of “salvation”: “Finally, Islam presents a traditional completeness, since the shariah and the sunna, that is, the exoteric law and tradition, have their complement not in a vague mysticism, but in full-fledged initiatory organisations (turuq) that are characterised by an esoteric teaching (tawil) and by the metaphysical doctrine of the Supreme Identity (tawhid). In these organizations, and in general in the shia, the recurrent notions of the masum, of the double prerogative of the isma (doctrinal infallibility), and of the impossibility of being stained by any sin (which is the prerogative of the leaders, the visible and invisible Imams and, the mujtahid) lead back to the line of an unbroken race shaped by a tradition at a higher level than both Judaism and the religious beliefs that conquered the West” (RMM 244-245).Of all these themes, the one to which Julius Evola, given his “personal equation”, is most directly receptive, is obviously the theme of action, sacralised action. Evola’s gaze is thus fixed on the notion of jihad and on its double-application, in conformity to the famous hadith of the Prophet: “Raja'nâ min al-jihâd al-açghar ilâ-l jihâd al akbar", that is to say: “You have returned from a lesser struggle to the greater struggle;” or, if we prefer: “from the lesser to the greater holy war.” That hadith, which provides the title for a chapter in Revolt against the modern world (“The Greater and the Lesser Holy War”), is additionally commented by Evola:“In the Islamic tradition a distinction is made between two holy wars, the “greater holy war” (el-jihadul-akbar) and the “lesser holy war” (el-jihadul-asghar). This distinction originated from a saying (hadith) of the Prophet, who on the way back from a military expedition said: “You have returned from a lesser holy war to the greater holy war.” The greater holy war is of an inner spiritual nature; the other is the material war waged externally against an enemy population with the particular intent of bringing “infidel” populations under the territory of “God’s Law” (dar al-Islam). The relationship between the “greater” and the “lesser holy war” , however, mirrors the relationship between the soul and the body; in order to understand the heroic asceticism or “path of action,” it is necessary to recognise the situation in which the two paths merge, “the lesser holy war” becoming the means through which “a greater holy war is carried out, and vice versa: the “little holy war,” or the external one, becomes almost a ritual action that expresses and gives witness to the reality of the first. Originally, orthodox Islam conceived a unitary form of asceticism: that which is connected to the jihad or “holy war.” The “greater holy war” is man’s struggle against the enemies he carries within. More exactly, it is the struggle of man’s higher principle against everything that is merely human in him, against his inferior nature and against chaotic impulses and all sorts of material attachments” (RMM 118).Elsewhere, Evola sees in the idea of jihad a “late rebirth of a primordial Aryan heritage,” such that “the Islamic tradition serves here as the transmitter of the Aryo-Iranian tradition” (MW 96).The Islamic doctrine of the lesser and of the greater “holy war” occupies in Evola’s work a privileged position and acquires a paradigmatic value; it exemplifies, in fact, and represents the general conception that the world of Tradition attributes to the warrior experience, and, generally speaking, to action as a path to realisation. The teachings regarding the warrior action of various traditional milieus are thus considered in the light of their essential concurrence with the doctrine of jihad and are exposed through a notion that is also of Islamic derivation: the notion of “Allah’s way” (sabil Allah).“In the world of traditional warrior asceticism the “lesser holy war,” namely, the external war, is indicated and even prescribed as the means to wage this “greater holy war”; thus in Islam the expressions “holy war” (jihad) and “Allah’s way” are often used interchangeably. In this order of ideas action exercises the rigorous function and task of a sacrificial and purifying ritual. The external vicissitudes experienced during a military campaign cause the inner “enemy” to emerge and to put up a fierce resistance and a good fight in the form of the animalistic instincts of self-preservation, fear, inertia, compassion, or other passions; those who engage in battles must overcome these feelings by the time they enter the battlefield if they wish to win and to defeat the out enemy of the “infidel.”Obviously the spiritual orientation and the “right intention” (niyya), that is, the one toward transcendence (the symbols employed to refer to transcendence are “heaven,” “paradise,” “Allah’s gardens” and so on), are presupposed as the foundations of jihad, lest war lose its sacred character and degenerate into a wild affair in which true heroism is replaced with reckless abandonment and what counts are unleashed impulses of the animalistic nature” (RMM 118-119).Evola refers to an entire series of Koranic passages (from Luigi Bonelli’s Italian translation, which he slightly modifies) related to the ideas of jihad and “Allah’s way” (RMM 119-120): 4:76; 47:4; 47:37; 47:38; 9:38; 9:52; 2:216; 9:88-89; 47:5-7. Moreover, he cites two maxims to illustrate these ideas: “Paradise lies under the shade of the swords” and “The blood of the heroes is closer to God than the ink of the philosophers and the prayers of the faithful” (RMM, 125; cf. DF, 308). However, if the former saying is effectively a hadith, the latter, extracted perhaps from some dubious Orientalist study, is poles apart with the hadith, cited by Suyuti in his Al-jami’ al-saghir, which literally says: “On the day of Last Judgment, the savants’ ink will be weighed with the blood of martyrs, who gave their lives for the sake of Allah, and the ink will weigh heavier.”Before passing on to the exegesis on the doctrine of “holy war” in non-Islamic traditional milieus (especially India and medieval Christendom), Evola makes an analogy between the death of the mujahid and the mors triomphalis of the Roman tradition (RMM 120); this theme is again taken up later, when the significance of “immortalisation” attributed to the warrior’s victory by certain European traditions is measured with “the Islamic idea according to which the warriors slain in a ‘holy war’ (jihad) have never really died” (RMM 137). A Koranic verse is cited to illustrate this: “Do not say that those who were slain in the cause of Allah are dead; they are alive, although you are not aware of them” (Koran 2:153). The specific parallel to this is also found in Plato (Republic, 468c), whom Evola cites: “And of those who are slain in the field, we shall say that all who fell with honour are of that golden race, who when they die, according to Hesiod, ‘Dwell here on earth, pure spirits, beneficent, Guardians to shield us mortal men from harm’” (RMM 137).In Revolt against the modern world, another subject allows Evola to make certain references to the Islamic doctrine: that of the chapter “The Law, the State, the Empire”. Noting that “up to and including medieval civilisation, rebellion against authority and the imperial law was considered as serious a crime as religious heresy and that the rebels were considered just like heretics, namely, as free enemies of their own natures and as beings who contradict the law of their very own being” (RMM 21-22), Evola mentions an analogous concept in Islam and refers the reader to the 4th Koranic surat, v. III. Another link is then drawn between, on the one hand, the Romano-Byzantine concept that opposes law and the pax of the imperial ecumenism to the barbarian’s naturalism, while affirming the universality of its right, and, on the other hand, the Islamic doctrine, in which Evola notes can be found “the geographical distinction between Dar al-Islam, or ‘Land of Islam,’ ruled by divine laws, and Dar al-Harb, or ‘Land of War,’ the inhabitants of which must be brought into Dar al-Islam by means of jihad or ‘holy war’” (RMM 27).In the same chapter, evoking the imperial function of Alexander the Great, conqueror of the peoples of Gog and Magog, Evola refers to the Koranic figure of Dhul-Qarnain, generally identified to Alexander, and to what is said in the 18th surat of the Koran (RMM 26).-2-The analogies existing between certain aspects of Islam and elements corresponding to other traditional forms are also mentioned in The Mystery of the Grail; but whereas Revolt against the modern world deals with purely doctrinal parallels – comparing to Islam traditional forms that never came in contact with the Islamic world – in the essay on the “imperial Ghibelline idea,” the similarities between Islam and the Templars are, on the contrary, brought in the concrete historical framework of the relations maintained by representatives of Christian esotericism and Islamic esotericism. For instance, in the following passage: “Moreover, the Templars were charged with keeping secret liaisons with Muslims and being closer to the Islamic faith than to the Christian one. This last charge is probably best understood by remembering that Islam too is characterised by the rejection of Christ worship. The “secret liaisons” allude to a perspective that is less sectarian, more universal, and thus more esoteric than that of militant Christianity. The Crusades, in which the Templars and in general the Ghibelline chivalry played a fundamental role, in many respects created a supra-traditional bridge West and East. The crusading knighthood ended up confronting a facsimile of itself, namely, warriors who abided by corresponding ethics, chivalrous customs, ideals of a “holy war,” and initiatory currents” (MG 130-131).This is followed by a summary description of what Evola inappropriately calls “the Arab Order of the Ismaelis”, namely the heterodox movement that was closely linked to the Templars: “Thus the Templars were the Christian equivalent of the Arab Order of the Ismaelis, who likewise regarded themselves as the “guardians of the Holy Land” (in an esoteric and symbolic sense), and who had two hierarchies, one official and one secret. Such an order, which had a double character, both warrior and religious, almost met the same fate as that of the Templars, and for analogous reasons: its initiatory character and its upholding an esotericism that despised the literal meaning of the sacred scriptures. In Ismaeli esotericism we find again the same theme of the Ghibelline imperial saga: the Islamic dogma of the “resurrection” (kiyama) is here interpreted as the new manifestation of the Supreme Leader (Mahdi), who became invisible during the so-called period of “absence” (ghayba). This is so because the Mahdi at one point disappeared, thus eluding death, leaving his followers under the obligation of swearing allegiance and obedience unto him as if he were Allah himself” (MG 131).Islamic esotericism is defined by Evola as a doctrine that goes as far as “recognising in man the condition in which the Absolute becomes conscious of itself, and that professes the doctrine of Supreme Identity” (OO 212), such that Islam constitutes “a clear and eloquent example of a system that, although including a strictly theistic domain, recognises a higher truth and path of realisation, the emotional and devotional elements, love and all the rest losing here (...) every “moral” signification, and every intrinsic value, acquiring only that of a technique among others” (OO 212).Indeed, Islamic esotericism, in the teachings of its masters and its universe of notions and symbols, offers Evola bases and references of some importance. Regarding symbols and notions, it is imperative to highlight the importance attributed to the polar function in Evola’s works. As he explains, in the “Near East” (to speak of the Islamic world would be more accurate), “the word qutb, ‘pole’, does not only designate the sovereign, but, more generally, he who dictates the law and is the head of tradition of a given historical period.” (R 50) (More precisely, the qutb, “the pole”, represents the peak of the initiatic hierarchy). However, an entire chapter in Revolt against the modern world, the third of the first section, rests on the idea of this traditional function and makes use precisely of the terms “pole” and “polar”. What is strange is that that chapter contains no explicit reference to the Islamic tradition, although the names of Islamic esoteric masters such as Ibn ‘Arabi, Hallaj, Rumi, Hafez, Ibn Ata’, Ibn Farid, and Attar are mentioned in several works by Evola.The first mention of Ibn ‘Arabi, al-shaykh al-akbar (= doctor maximus), appears in an unsigned glossary to Introduction to Magic, but which is certainly due to Evola: the case of Ibn ‘Arabi is cited to illustrate “the inversion of roles in relation to the state where, duality having been created, the divine image incarnating the superior I becomes to the mystic like a different being” (IaM, I, 71). To expand on this idea, Evola refers to the corresponding doctrine in Sufism:It is interesting to note that in Islamic esoterism there is a specific term to indicate that change: shath, which literally means “exchange of parts” and expresses the level at which the mystic absorbs the divine image, feels it as himself and feels himself, instead, as something else, and speaks as a function of that image. There are, in fact, in Islam, certain “sure signs” by which to distinguish the objective shath from a mere illusionary feeling in a person (IaM, I, 71).In addition, he recalls that “the end of Al-Hallaj, who is considered as one of the main masters of Islamic esotericism (Sufism),” was a consequence of his divulging the secret that is connected to the realisation of the highest condition. Evola returns to this point elsewhere in his work, writing:“In reality, if certain initiates with undoubted qualification were condemned and even at times killed (the most popular case being that of al-Hallaj in Islam), that is because they had ignored that rule (the rule of secrecy); it was therefore not a question of ‘heresy’, but of practical and pragmatic reasons. According to one saying: “The sage must not trouble with his wisdom the one who does not know” (AC 108).The other brief allusion to Ibn ‘Arabi found in Introduction to Magic is also due to Evola; in the text titled Esotericism and Christian mysticism and signed with the pseudonym ‘Ea’, he notes that what lacks in Christian asceticism, despite the discipline of silence, is “the practice of the most interiorised degree of this discipline, that does not only consist of putting an end to the spoken word, but also to thought (Ibn ‘Arabi’s notion of ‘not speaking with oneself’)” (IaM, III, 281).In Metaphysics of sex, having pointed out that Islam, “law destined for the person engaged in the world, not for the ascetic” (MS 262), does not hold “the idea of sexuality as something blameworthy and obscene” (MS 256), such that prior to sexual congress with woman man pronounces the ritual formula “Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim” (In the name of God, the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful), Evola observes that Ibn ‘Arabi “goes so far as to speak of a contemplation of God in woman, of a ritualisation of the sexual orgasm in conformity with metaphysical and theological values” (MS 257). That is followed by two long citations from Fusus al-hikam (The Seals of Wisdom), from Titus Burckhardt’s translation, followed by this conclusion:“In this Sufistic (sic, editor’s note) theology of love, one must see the amplification and the elevation to a more lucid conscience of the ritual world with which man from that civilisation has more or less distinctly assumed and experienced conjugal relationships in general, starting from the sanctification which the Qur’anic Law confers to the sexual act in not only a monogamist, but also polygamist structure. Whence derives the special meaning which procreation can acquire, understood precisely as the administration of the prolongation of the divine creating force existing within man” (MS 258). Another passage of Fusus-al-hikam serves to illustrate, in Metaphysics of sex, the “key to Islamic technique” (MS 349), which consists of assuming “the dissolution through woman” as a symbol of the extinction in Divinity. Related to the same order of ideas is the significance of Gallus’ (pseud. of Enrico Galli Angelini) “Experience among the Arabs”, a text in Introduction to Magic from which Evola cites some certain extracts related to the “orgiastic practices for mystical ends (...) attested (...) in the Arabo-Persian world” (MS 372).In what Jalal ad-Din Rumi had to say on dance (“He who knows the power of the dance of life does not fear death, because he knows that love kills”) (MS 128), Evola distinguishes another “key” of Islamic initiatic techniques, “the key to the practices of a chain or school of Islamic mysticism that has been transmitted for centuries and which considers Jalal ad-Din Rumi as its master” (MS 370).In Arabo-Persian Sufi poetry, known to Evola through M.M. Moreno’s Antologia della mistica arabo-persiana (Laterza, Bari 1951), he discerns themes of a certain relevance to his “metaphysics of sex”: for instance, in applying masculine symbolism to the initiate’s soul, such that, as he writes, “divinity (...) is considered as a woman: she is not the “celestial bride”, but the “Beloved” or the “Lover”. That is, for instance, the case in Attar, Ibn Farid, Gelaleddin el-Rumi, etc” (MS 293 footnote 1).In Sufi poetry, Evola also finds the idea of love as a “force that kills” the individual self, an idea which he traces in Rumi (MS 108-109 and 345) and Ibn Farid (MS 288). An entire glossary in Introduction to Magic, which we think can be attributed to Evola, is dedicated to a characteristically Sufi technique, the dhikr. The correspondence between this Islamic technique, the Hindu mantra and the repetition of sacred names practised in Hesychasm is particularly underscored (IaM, I, 396-397). The glossary also mentions Al-Ghazzali, citing him in other pages that are surely attributable to Evola (IaM, II, 135-136 and 239). Even more fruitful was Evola’s encounter with Islamic Hermeticism: in fact, of all Muslim authors, the one most often cited by Evola is Geber, that is Jabir ibn Hayyan. Regarding the role played by the Islamic Hermetists, Evola writes:“Between the seventh and twelfth centuries it was known among the Arabs, who became the instruments of the revival, in the medieval West, of the older legacy of the pre-Christian wisdom tradition” (MG 150). In his special study on Hermetic tradition, Evola uses a very large number of citations taken from Islamic texts compiled by Barthelot and Manget. As we have said, he privileges Geber: but if we consider the mass of Geber’s corpus, this is not surprising; Razi is also mentioned and a number of anonymous books are cited, of which the famous Turba Philosophorum, translated into Italian in the second volume of Introduction to Magic. About the Turba Philosophorum, Evola says that it is “one of the oldest of western hermetic-alchemical texts” (HT 8); in reality, in 1931, the year the first edition of The Hermetic Tradition was published, J. Ruska indisputably demonstrated the Arabic origin of the text in question. -3-As is known, a large part of Evola’s work is based on certain traditional teachings that were made widely accessible by the writings of René Guénon. Evola thus owed a great deal to the latter’s works, from which he took up concepts and adapted them to his own “personal equation”. Even so, given Guénon’s belonging to Islam and the Islamic derivation of certain fundamental teachings in his work, it would not be irrelevant to consider what Evola wrote about Guénon’s integration in the Islamic tradition:“Guénon was convinced that certain depositaries of Tradition still survived, despite everything, in the East. Practically speaking, he had firsthand contacts with the Islamic world where initiatic chains (Sufi and Ismaeli) continued to exist parallel to the exoteric (i.e. religious) tradition. He then “Islamised” completely. Having settled in Egypt, he received the name of Sheikh Abdel Wahid Yasha (sic, editor’s note) and also the Egyptian nationality. He had a second marriage to an Arab” (R 210).“In Guénon’s case, this (initiatic) connecting must have been realised – as we’ve said before – through Islamic initiatic “chains.” But to people who do not want to turn themselves into Muslims and Orientals, Guénon’s personal path has very little to offer” (R 212).“Guénon’s case” therefore made Evola admit that there still exist, despite everything, possibilities of initiatic connection; furthermore, Evola affirms that, given the present conditions, the choice of Islam is practically necessary for those who are not satisfied with mere theory.“We can also mention an Islamic report proper to the Ismaeli initiatic current, more precisely to that of the so-called “Twelve-Imam.” The Imam, the supreme chief of the Order, manifestation of a superior power and the highest initiator, went into “occultation.” His reappearance is awaited, but the present epoch is that of his “absence.” “In our opinion, this does not mean that initiatic centres, strictly speaking, no longer exist. It is certain that some still exist, even if the West is not concerned here and that one would have to turn to the Islamic world and the East” (AC 227).We take this opportunity to note that Evola probably mistook the Twelver-Imam Shi’a movement as a particular branch of the Ismaeli movement, and such an oversight would be truly excessive, especially coming from an “insider”. In the same way, Evola seems to think that the Imam is “the supreme chief of the Order” as much in the Ismaeli perspective as in that of the “so-called Twelver-Imam”; and this would also be a significant inaccuracy, since for the Twelver-Imam Shi’a, the Imam, as a successor of the Prophet, is not only the supreme chief of an Order, but of the entire community. Nonetheless, that is of importance here. What matters, rather, is that according to Evola an initiatic connection in the present epoch is still possible, provided one turns “to the Islamic world and the East.” In the same context, Evola raises a problem regarding the relationship existing between initiatic centres and the course of history: “The course of history is generally interpreted as an involution and dissolution. But what is the position of initiatic centres with respect to the forces that operate in that direction?” (AC 228)This problem obviously implies Islam, as Evola writes:“For instance, though it is certain that initiatic organisations exist in the Islamic world (those of the Sufis), their presence has been far from stopping the “evolution” of Arab countries in an anti-traditional, progressist, and modernist direction, with all its inevitable consequences” (AC 228).This question was raised by Evola as part of an exchange of ideas with Titus Burckhardt (1), a well-known Swiss scholar who had associated with Islamic esotericism and resided in an Islamic country, and who, with full knowledge of the facts, “had remarked that possibilities of this type (that is to say, of an initiatic connection) survived in non-European regions” (CC 204). We do not know if, and how, the Swiss writer replied to Evola’s objections; in any case, it may be said, first of all, that the “Arab countries”, with which Evola seems to identify the “land of Islam”, in reality constitute but one tenth of the Islamic world, and therefore that it would not be accurate to make their “evolution” coincide with the development of the general condition of the Islamic ummah. Secondly – and, today, we are in a better position to observe this than during Evola’s time – an “Islamic awakening” that has been taking ground in some Arab countries seems to be announcing a radical change of orientation. Finally, even when the “(Sufi) initiatic centres” do not oppose, by their action, the process of general involution, it is not justified to claim that their function is illusionary (2). In fact, connection to initiatic centres – from which proceeds every regular transmission of spiritual influences – constitutes the only possible solution for whoever considers reacting to the degenerative course of the modern world: an unavoidable course, since it is bound to the precise cyclic laws that govern manifestation. It is the function of connection to an initiatic centre – and through it to the supreme centre – to ensure the continuity of transmission of spiritual influences for the entire period of the present human cycle, and thus to allow participation to the Spirit realm until the closure of the cycle. From such a perspective, the involution process appears as illusionary: in fact, it concerns but manifestation – which, given its fundamentally contingent character, represents absolutely nothing with respect to the Absolute.

(1) ‘Il cammino del cinabro’ was published in 1963. The “exchange of ideas” with Burckhardt thus necessarily dates back earlier than 1963.

(2) Evola, in fact, wrote exactly: “The realistic point of view which I thought necessary to assume in ‘Ride the Tiger’ led me, eventually, to some polemical exchanges with milieus which still delude themselves about the possibilities offered by the “traditional residues” existing in the world today” (CC 203).

Abbreviations of the works by Julius Evola cited in the text:

AC = L’arco e la clava (Milano, Scheiwiller, 1971) CC = Il cammino del cinabro (Scheiwiller, Milano, 1963)

HM = The Hermetic Tradition (Inner Traditions, Vermont, 1994)

IaM = Introduzione alla Magia, a cura del Gruppo di Ur. (Mediterrane, Roma, 1971)

MG = The Mystery of the Grail (Inner Traditions, Vermont, 1997)

MS = Metafisica del sesso (Edizioni Mediterranee, Roma 1969)

MW = Metaphysics of War (Integral Tradition Publishing, 2007)OO = Oriente e Occidente (La Queste, Milano, 1984)

R = Ricognizioni. Uomini e problemi (Mediterrane, Roma, 1974)

RMM = Revolt against the Modern World (Inner Traditions, Vermont, 1995)

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Nietzsche

“Christianity destroyed for us the whole harvest of ancient civilization, and later it also destroyed for us the whole harvest of Mohammedan civilization. The wonderful culture of the Moors in Spain, which was fundamentally nearer to us and appealed more to our senses and tastes than that of Rome and Greece, was trampled down (—I do not say by what sort of feet—) Why? Because it had to thank noble and manly instincts for its origin—because it said yes to life, even to the rare and refined luxuriousness of Moorish life!… The crusaders later made war on something before which it would have been more fitting for them to have grovelled in the dust—a civilization beside which even that of our nineteenth century seems very poor and very “senile.”—What they wanted, of course, was booty: the orient was rich…. Let us put aside our prejudices! The crusades were a higher form of piracy, nothing more! The German nobility, which is fundamentally a Viking nobility, was in its element there: the church knew only too well how the German nobility was to be won…. The German noble, always the “Swiss guard” of the church, always in the service of every bad instinct of the church—but well paid…. Consider the fact that it is precisely the aid of German swords and German blood and valour that has enabled the church to carry through its war to the death upon everything noble on earth! At this point a host of painful questions suggest themselves. The German nobility stands outside the history of the higher civilization: the reason is obvious…. Christianity, alcohol—the two great means of corruption…. Intrinsically there should be no more choice between Islam and Christianity than there is between an Arab and a Jew. The decision is already reached; nobody remains at liberty to choose here. Either a man is a Chandala or he is not…. “War to the knife with Rome! Peace and friendship with Islam!”: this was the feeling, this was the act, of that great free spirit, that genius among German emperors, Frederick II. What! must a German first be a genius, a free spirit, before he can feel decently? I can’t make out how a German could ever feel Christian….”

(Friedrich Nietzsche, Antichrist, 60).